

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Assembly**

**THURSDAY, 22 SEPTEMBER 1949**

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THURSDAY, 22 SEPTEMBER, 1949.

The ACTING SPEAKER (The CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES, Mr. Mann, Brisbane) took the chair at 11 a.m.

QUESTIONS.

AMBULANCE COLLECTORS ON RAILWAY PREMISES.

Mr AIKENS (Mundingburra) asked the Minister for Transport—

“In view of the statement of the superintendent and secretary of Townsville centre of the Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade that collectors are absolutely prohibited from entering railway premises in Townsville, and the expressed desire of many Townsville railway employees to make weekly contributions to the local Ambulance, will he consider permitting authorised deductions from employees fortnightly pay as is the practice at Ipswich?”

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

“Part of the allegations made by the hon. member is not in accordance with fact. The general question of permitting railway employees to have weekly contributions deducted from their pay and the amounts remitted to the Townsville Ambulance Brigade formed the subject of a discussion which the hon. members for Townsville and Kennedy, Messrs. Keyatta and Jesson, had with me on Tuesday last. I dictated a letter to them in the following terms, which cover the points raised by the hon. member. ‘With reference to the interview which you had with me this afternoon, relative to the request of the Townsville Ambulance Brigade that the contributions of railway employees to ambulance funds be deducted by the Department, I wish to advise that, unfortunately, because of the limited period in which the pay has to be prepared, it has been necessary to decline a number of requests from various organisations—including the State Housing Commission—for deductions to be made from pay due to employees. A large number of deductions already are made on account of such items as departmental rentals, income tax, court judgments, &c., which are unavoidable, and if requests of the nature referred to were granted a great deal of extra work and delay to the pay would be involved. Fortnightly deductions on account of employees’ contributions to the Q.A.T.B. are not made at Ipswich Workshops, but in continuance of a long-standing arrangement certain deductions are made quarterly. However, it is not considered desirable to extend the making of such deductions. I understand that for many years it has been the practice of the Superintendent of the Q.A.T.B., Townsville, to nominate collectors in the Townsville Workshops, and these men make collections on behalf of the Q.A.T.B. during the lunch hour period on pay days, the collections being handed to a Q.A.T.B. Ambulance Bearer who calls at the workshops during the lunch hour.’”

## SETTLEMENT OF SOLDIERS ON LAND.

**Mr. NICKLIN** (Murrumba—Leader of the Opposition) asked the Secretary for Public Lands and Irrigation—

“1. Exclusive of loans and sugar assignments or increased assignments, how many ex-service men of World War 2 had benefited to 31 August, 1949, by securing selections under the provisions of the Commonwealth-States land settlement scheme for ex-servicemen?”

“2. How many of such ex-service men are in occupation of their selections?”

**Hon. T. A. FOLEY** (Normanby) replied—

“1 and 2. To 31 August, 1949, assistance has been given to 3,037 returned men on grazing, mixed farming, sugar and tobacco lands. During the months of September, October, and November, 1949, ballots will be held for 58 mixed farming blocks and 30 sugar blocks. Inspection work on approximately 1,000,000 acres is proceeding as fast as possible. Further details will be available in the Land Administration Board's Report to Parliament at a later date.”

## GUARANTEED PRICE FOR COTTON.

**Mr. NICKLIN** (Murrumba—Leader of the Opposition) asked the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock—

“1. What was the total production of raw cotton in 1948?”

“2. In view of the tremendous decline from an average annual production of 5,757,230 lb. for the five-year period 1935-1939 and the increased price of raw cotton from dollar sources caused by the devaluation of the Australian £1, will he endeavour to expedite the decision of the Commonwealth Government in regard to the application of the Queensland Cotton Board for an increased price for raw cotton?”

**Hon. H. H. COLLINS** (Cook) replied—

“1. 1,439 bales, or 712,920 lb. of lint.

“2. The Commonwealth Government has already been asked to expedite action on the Tariff Board's report when presented.”

**Mr. PIE** (Windsor) asked the Premier—

“In view of the Tariff Board's continued delay in announcing its decision in regard to a guaranteed price to cotton growers in this State, and in view of the failure of the Commonwealth to take any steps to retrieve the rapidly deteriorating position of the industry, will his Government take similar steps to those of 1920 and give growers the guarantee they seek of a world parity price for a period of three years and thus save the industry from extinction?”

**Hon. E. M. HANLON** (Ithaca) replied—

“Following my representations at the Premiers' Conference in August last in support of the application by the Queensland cotton growers for a guaranteed price for their product, the Prime Minister gave an assurance that there would be no delay

on the part of the Commonwealth Government in arriving at a decision once the report and recommendations of the Tariff Board were received. Immediately following the State Cabinet meeting on Monday last, I telegraphed the Prime Minister and emphasised that if the cotton industry were to be revived an early announcement by the Commonwealth Government of its decision on the industry's application for a guaranteed price was essential. The Prime Minister replied to the effect that the Tariff Board's report and recommendations were expected very shortly. As apparently the Tariff Board's report is almost completed, and in view of the statements which appeared in yesterday's Brisbane “Telegraph” and this morning's “Courier-Mail,” which indicate the Commonwealth Government's determination to encourage the production of cotton in Australia, it would seem reasonable to await the declaration of Commonwealth Government policy on the application by the cotton industry for a guaranteed price, which it is expected will be announced at an early date.”

## SLAUGHTERING OF T.B. CATTLE.

**Mr. MARRIOTT** (Bulimba) asked the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock—

“1. Where are T.B. reactor cattle slaughtered?”

“2. Where are the carcasses of such cattle disposed of?”

“3. What is the method of disposal?”

“4. What is the average number of such cattle treated each week?”

**Hon. H. H. COLLINS** (Cook) replied—

“1. At premises used solely for this purpose situated at Possum Creek Road, Goodna, which are under the close supervision of officers of the Department.

“2. At a treatment works at Cannon Hill.

“3. Treatment in a digester by subjection to heat under pressure, which destroys all types of living organisms, for conversion into fertilizer.

“4. Eighteen head.”

## COST OF JAPANESE GALVANISED IRON.

**Mr. CHALK** (East Toowoomba) asked the Secretary for Public Works, Housing and Local Government—

“1. Do the contracts as entered into between the State Government and the Australian suppliers of Japanese galvanised iron provide any clause to meet the increased cost of such iron due to the devaluation of the English £1?”

“2. Is it a fact that the Japanese iron will now cost over £100 per ton landed Brisbane?”

“3. If such is the case does the State Housing Commission intend to continue with the purchase of the Japanese iron now on order, when iron from other countries is available at a cheaper figure?”

**Hon. W. POWER** (Baroona) replied—

“1. No.

“2. No.

“3. Iron could be purchased cheaper from America if dollars were available, but as they are not, the iron purchased from Japan is the cheapest available. The Commission is continually calling tenders for building materials and will buy from the cheapest market.”

RAIL TRANSPORT OF GALVANISED IRON TO NORTH.

**Mr. THEODORE** (Herbert) asked the Attorney-General—

“In view of the extreme difficulty experienced by builders and contractors in northern towns of obtaining galvanised iron and galvanised piping by means of transport other than rail, will he give permission to merchants to add extra costs incurred if these materials are forwarded by rail, in order to relieve the position existing in the North?”

**Hon. G. H. DEVRIES** (Gregory) replied—

“This matter has been under investigation, and I anticipate that a decision will be given at a very early date.”

IDLE ROAD ROLLER AT EUMUNDI.

**Mr. LOW** (Cooroola) asked the Treasurer—

“In view of the acute shortage of road-making machinery in Queensland—

“1. Will he ascertain the reason why a large Imperial super-diesel road roller, numbered M.R.C. 104, parked on the side of the Bruce Highway about one mile on the range side of Eumundi, has been allowed to remain idle for approximately twelve months, and during that time through lack of attention and exposure has deteriorated considerably?

“2. If this roller is not required by the Main Roads Commission, will he give favourable consideration to hiring it to a local authority in that locality?

“3. If the roller is required by the Main Roads Commission, when is it expected that it will be put into use again?”

**Hon. J. LARCOMBE** (Rockhampton) replied—

“1. The diesel road roller broke down completely in January, 1949. Repairs can be effected on the spot which is preferable with heavy unwieldy plant of this nature. Since the breakdown, efforts have been made to obtain the necessary spare parts from the manufacturers without success. Some of the parts are now being made available and the Main Roads Commission has almost completed the fitting of the remainder. The roller is 25 years' old and this model is no longer in production.

“2. When repaired, the roller will be required by the Main Roads Commission.

“3. Repairs will be completed in approximately five weeks.”

JUDGMENT AND COSTS IN RYLANCE CASE.

**Mr. AIKENS** (Mundingburra) asked the Premier—

“What was the total amount of judgment and costs awarded to the Government against Rylance Collieries? What steps are being taken to collect the balance, if any?”

**Hon. E. M. HANLON** (Ithaca) replied—

“Judgment was given in favour of the Crown for £67,235 6s. 6d. and costs. Costs have not yet been finalised. Following the judgment in this case, the Cabinet appointed a special committee consisting of the Solicitor-General, the Auditor-General, and the Under Secretary the Treasury, to examine the whole matter and submit a report and recommendation to the Government. In this regard, the Committee considered alternative courses of action open to the Government, as follows:—(1) The execution of the judgment by sale of the company's assets; (2) the compulsory liquidation of the company; (3) the completion of a satisfactory agreement with the company for the payment of the debt by instalments; (4) allowing the company to continue its operations as at present. After full and careful consideration of all aspects of the matter, the Committee recommended—(1) That the company be allowed to carry on as at present; submitting monthly statements and making periodical payments; (2) that the accounts of the company be made available for review by the Auditor-General as and when required by the Government; (3) that the request of the company for a refund of £12,836 3s. 1d. on account of Queensland State Income Tax, Unemployment Relief Tax, and State Development Tax calculated on a sum of £53,907 10s. 10d., being that portion of the profits of the company which was subject to State taxation and which was included in the amount of judgment, be refused; (4) that the request of the company that an expenditure of £5,000 be allowed for capital improvements at the company's brickyards at Darra with a view to improving the earning capacity of this asset be refused on the grounds that the company should provide its own finance for capital development. The amount paid to date in satisfaction of the judgment debt is £26,143 3s. 8d. The hon. member can rest assured that everything possible has been and will continue to be done to obtain full payment of the balance due. The judgment debt in favour of the Crown remains in force and may be executed at any time if circumstances arise which make it desirable that this should be done.”

## INSPECTION OF MEAT, BRISBANE ABATTOIR.

**Mr. PIE** (Windsor) asked the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock—

“In regard to the inspection of meat at the Brisbane Abattoir—

“1. What are the differences in regard to inspection of meat for export and local consumption?

“2. Is it a fact that when meat is passed for export the kidneys are removed, while they are allowed to remain in the carcasses used for local consumption?

“3. In the case of meat for home consumption, are these organs inspected at the abattoir or is it left to the discretion of local butchers to decide whether they are diseased or healthy?

“4. Is he aware of any cases being reported by butchers to his or Health Department officers of kidneys affected by nephritis being contained in carcasses?

“5. What is the procedure adopted when a beast slaughtered for export is condemned by inspectors? Does any of it find its way on to the local market?

**Hon. H. H. COLLINS** (Cook) replied—

“1. Inspection of meat for export and local consumption is carried out by Commonwealth officers, the difference in inspection being that for export they work under the Commonwealth Meat Export Regulations, and for local consumption under the State Slaughtering Act.

“2. Yes, the kidneys are removed from export meat for two reasons—(i.) they are sold as fancy meats at a higher price; (ii.) some importers in the United Kingdom insist that the kidney fat be removed because of a difference in value between it and meat.

“3. All organs are examined at the abattoirs and condemned when necessary.

“4. No.

“5. The whole of the carcass and viscera are condemned, diverted to digesters, and converted into fertilizer by heating under pressure, which kills all living matter. No part of the beast finds its way on to the local market.”

## SALARY OF ACTING PREMIER.

**Mr. PIE** (Windsor) asked the Premier—

“As the Officials in Parliament Acts, 1896 to 1948, make provision for a Minister who acts as Premier and Chief Secretary for thirty consecutive days to receive the same salary as the Premier, will he state if the Deputy Premier received the additional salary under the amended Act for having so acted during his (the Premier's) absence abroad?

**Hon. E. M. HANLON** (Ithaca) replied—

“Yes.”

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## DISPLAY OF CALLIDE COAL.

**Mr. CHALK** (East Toowoomba), without notice, asked the Premier—

“Has the Premier had an opportunity to view the very excellent, illustrative and educational window display of Callide coal arranged for public view by the member for Port Curtis and Messrs. Australian General Electric Co. Ltd. in the window of Messrs. Australian General Electric Co. Ltd. in Adelaide Street?

“Will he consider recommending to the State Government Tourist Bureau that they issue a small multigraph sheet to be handed to all tourists visiting the Bureau for the next few days suggesting that they view this window so that they might become more conversant with facts associated with this valuable Queensland coal deposit?”

**Hon. E. M. HANLON** (Ithaca) replied—

“I have not yet had an opportunity of viewing the display. The hon. member for Port Curtis told me about it yesterday but as I was here all day I did not have the opportunity of seeing it. I would point out that when I do look at the display of coal in that window I shall probably have as little knowledge of its quality and what it can be used for as the average tourist will have. The users of coal will have the best knowledge of its qualities and what it can be used for.”

## PAPERS.

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

First report on the coal industry of Queensland by Powell Duffryn Technical Services Ltd., volumes I. and II., together with an explanatory note thereon.

Report of the Director of Secondary Industries and Chairman of Industries Assistance Board for the year 1948-1949.

The following paper was laid on the table—

Regulation under the Electrical Workers' Acts, 1927 to 1931 (September 15).

## DEATH OF MR. J. S. HANLON.

## MOTION OF CONDOLENCE.

**Hon. E. M. HANLON** (Ithaca—Premier) (11.19 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

“1. That this House desires to place on record its appreciation of the services rendered to this State by the late John Stanislaus Hanlon, Esquire, a former member of the Parliament of Queensland.

“2. That Mr. Speaker be requested to convey to the widow and family of the deceased gentleman the above Resolution, together with an expression of the sympathy and sorrow of the members of the Parliament of Queensland, in the loss they have sustained.”

The late Mr. Hanlon was appointed to the Legislative Council of Queensland in February, 1920, and he remained a member till the passing of the Constitution Act Amendment Act of 1922, when the Legislative Council was abolished. He died on 13 September, 1949.

The late Mr. Hanlon was a very valued member of the Legislative Council during the period he served there. He was a man of very wide experience and had outstanding journalistic qualities. He was born in Victoria and went to Ballarat, where he launched into journalism. After a few years in Ballarat he joined the literary staff of the "Daily News," Perth. In Western Australia Mr. Hanlon played a big part in Labour and union affairs. He was a foundation member of the Australian Journalists' Association, Western Australian Branch, and a former president of that organisation.

Mr. Hanlon was appointed editor of the "Queensland Worker" in 1915, and filled that position till 1943 when he left Queensland to take over the editorship of the "Australian Worker" in Sydney. Later he was appointed a member of the Australian Broadcasting Commission.

During his years in Queensland as a journalist Mr. Hanlon fought for the cause of the worker very forcefully. He was one of those who laid the foundations of the Labour Movement, which was started to improve the conditions of the working people. He fought very strongly to keep out of that organisation the destructive influences that have been causing so much trouble in recent years. As a journalist he wrote with a very clear mind and very fearlessly on matters of public importance but was never vindictive or unfair. He was one of those good, sound, solid men who had the real conception of democracy in its higher sense and his pen was always ready to attack the disruptive elements that have existed over many years in the union affairs of Australia, at one time parading under the name of the Industrial Workers of the World—the I.W.W.—and later becoming known as a Communist organisation. Mr. Hanlon fought against its penetration into the political, social and industrial life of the country. He gave very fine service to the public, both in this Parliament and in the sphere of journalism.

**Mr. NICKLIN** (Murrumba—Leader of the Opposition) (11.22 a.m.): In seconding the motion moved by the Premier I join with him in extending our condolences to the members of the late Mr. Hanlon's family.

The late Mr. Hanlon had only a short service in the Legislative Council of this State but during that period he demonstrated that he was a very valuable member of that now defunct institution. As the Premier has said, he was best known as a journalist. He was a particularly forceful writer and fought hard for the principles that he valued. In recent years he gave valuable service on the Australian Broadcasting Commission and with the wide knowledge he had of general

Australian conditions his contribution to the administration and decisions of that body were of great value.

During the period Mr. Hanlon was a citizen of this State he held the respect of everybody. We all join with the Premier in extending condolences to his relatives on their very sad loss.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Before putting the motion I should like to say a few words about the late Mr. Hanlon who when I first came into this Assembly assisted me very much.

I had the greatest admiration for Jack Hanlon and he and I became very firm friends. I join with the mover and seconder of the motion in their expressions of sympathy for his relatives.

I believe that no man did more for the unions and the workers of this country than the late Jack Hanlon. I might summarise my opinion of his work in two lines—

"No more Jack Hanlon's pen shall picture all the workers' wrongs

His mighty pen may rust away but all his words are here to stay."

Motion agreed to, hon. members standing in silence.

#### COMMUNISM.

**Mr. BARNES** (Bundaberg): I move—

"That in the opinion of this House it is desirable on account of current world events that this House conduct a continuous educational campaign directed to prove that Communism is the dirtiest trick ever played on the workers."

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** As there is no seconder to the motion, it lapses.

#### MONEY FOR WORKERS' HOMES.

**Mr. BARNES** (Bundaberg): I move—

"That this Assembly makes application to the Commonwealth Government for £20,000,000 of national credit (debt and interest-free money issued by the Commonwealth Bank) for a perpetual fund to finance interest-free workers' homes completely furnished with every modern labour-saving device, including a refrigerator."

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Is there any seconder to the motion? I repeat, is there any seconder to the motion? There being no seconder, the motion lapses.

**Mr. AIKENS** (Mundingburra): I will second this motion.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Order! The hon. member is too late. I have declared the motion lapsed.

**Mr. AIKENS:** Hard luck!

## WATER RESOURCES OF NORTH-WEST QUEENSLAND.

**Mr. SMITH** (Carpentaria) (11.28 a.m.):  
I move—

“That the Government invite the North Australian Development Committee to undertake a survey of the water resources of the north-west of Queensland with a view to establishing a water-conservation scheme in that area for the purposes of closer settlement.”

I feel honoured at having the opportunity of moving this motion because during the years I have been in this Assembly I have advocated such schemes for the development of Northern Australia. It is essential that we take urgent action along the lines suggested, not only for the defence of this country but in order to promote closer settlement for the production of food, not only cattle and beef products but also agricultural products for both Australia and the hungry peoples of the world.

As you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, many migrants are coming into this country, and if we do not take urgent action to develop the northern part of Australia we shall find chaotic conditions obtaining in the production of food-stuffs in the closely settled areas of the southern part of the State. I say that advisedly, because there is agitation afoot for the development of the channel country for the further production of fat cattle; there is agitation through the Press by graziers and landholders for the resumption of land for closer settlement and the establishment of returned soldiers on land in the southern part of the State and in the southern part of the Commonwealth.

I previously advocated a land policy for the Gulf Country for returned soldiers, but it was stated that those parts of the Commonwealth were so remote that the scheme did not merit consideration. I do not feel that that is so. We know of the settlement that took place in North Africa, where great arid lands of country were developed by Italy and other European countries, made into an oasis, something that not only the Italians but other people of the world could be proud of. I cannot see why a scheme similar to that undertaken in North Africa in the reclaiming of the desert country could not be put into operation in this country. It is said that there was an abundance of water in North Africa, but we have similar supplies in the Gulf Country and the other northern parts of Australia, if we have not a greater abundance of water than they had there.

**Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr. Hilton): Order! There is far too much murmuring in the House. I cannot even hear the speaker myself. I appeal to hon. members to tone down their conversations.

**Mr. SMITH:** Before I proceed along that line—and what I want to say is very important—I wish to refer to the contention that the population in the northern and north-western parts of the State is gradually diminishing. Let us take the town of Cloncurry. That area was discovered in 1864 by Henry and from that time until recently its

water resources were adequate for the people's requirements, that is, until a couple of years ago, but now the Cloncurry Shire Council is making representations to the Government for a more adequate supply. That must mean that there are more people to consume the available water.

**Mr. Maher:** You cannot get away from the census figures.

**Mr. SMITH:** Let us not bother about the census figures. Surely the people have not developed greater thirsts over a period of years. As I said, the water supply was adequate, but is not adequate at present. At Mt. Isa the position is somewhat similar.

I will develop my argument upon Cloncurry's representations to the Government and my address to its council in January last. Cloncurry and Mt. Isa are developing gradually, but require a better water supply for consumption by the people and the growing of crops in gardens. When a town makes representations for a more adequate water supply, it must mean that its population is growing.

I had something very important to say on this subject to the Cloncurry Shire Council in January last, just after the Prime Minister of Australia had made his pronouncement concerning the development of the Snowy River scheme in the South. While I have no objection whatever to any water scheme in any part of Australia, because any such scheme will always mean increased development, and while I am always ready to give such schemes my full and wholehearted support, at the same time I stress the fact that some consideration should be given to a water conservation scheme in the northern parts of Queensland and Australia, although perhaps not of the same magnitude as the Snowy River scheme.

I propose to read the remarks that I made to the members of the Cloncurry Shire Council and later to develop my argument in favour of water conservation schemes in the North to meet the growing demands of the increasing population and for the production of food generally. The following statement contains a report of what I said on that occasion—

“Water Conservation in the North-west.

“While Mr. Chifley proposes to utilise the Snowy River area in southern New South Wales for the purpose of decentralising munition factories and arsenals in future wars from coastal areas, and using Commonwealth funds to effect same, Mr. A. J. Norman Smith, State Member for Carpentaria says ‘Let's be more practical and believe that prevention is far better than cure.’

“Mr. Smith addressed the Councillors at the Shire chambers in Cloncurry yesterday when a deputation from the Council discussed water schemes for the future development of the areas around Mount Isa and Cloncurry.

“Mr. Smith strongly emphasised that by populating the Gulf of Carpentaria and Northern Australia areas, it would not only increase the potential wealth of the

country, but would form a basis of a closer settlement for the protection of the most vulnerable spot in Australia from the attacks of an Asiatic foe, for, it is the place that would most certainly appeal to the intelligence of an invader approaching Australia from the north, because it is the nearest as well as the most open and least protected gateway to the heart of Australia.

"Mr. Smith continued: 'If we do not occupy the country by filling up empty spaces with all reasonable speed and put a rampart around the northern as well as the eastern seaboard, we will soon find that from a geographical as well as an ethnical point of view, the Asiatic will consider he has as much, if not a better right than we have to share in this continent, for, after all, it is an outlying fragment of Asia.'

"Mr. Smith said: 'It has been suggested by the Council that dam sites should be selected for the purpose of augmenting water supplies at Mount Isa, where the present inadequate underground supply will be unable to cope with the heavy demand in the near future, as it has been estimated that very soon the population of Mount Isa will reach 10,000.'

"Mr. Smith claimed that the day of depending on rain to fill the dam sites in the meagre rainfall areas had passed and quoted the recent deplorable conditions experienced at Townsville, Mackay and other towns which depended on other than natural resources for their water supply. He further went on to say that the Cloncurry shire council should at the earliest possible date place a recommendation before the State and Federal Governments to harness the waters of the Gregory River as the scheme he had in mind brought the National Government into the picture mainly in the defence of the Country.

"This scheme involves the construction of a pipeline with pump booster stations along the line from certain points along the Gregory, and with reasonable distance from Mt. Isa and Cloncurry. The nearest point in the direct line is 130-140 miles from either of these centres as it is at this point statistics will show that 135 millions of gallons of water flows past in every twenty-four hours.

"From this ever-flowing stream, the future water supply of Mt. Isa and Cloncurry and surrounding districts would be assured.

"The cost of this scheme may be used as a basis of an argument against its possible construction, but it would compare favourably with the total cost of a series of dam sites in meagre rainfall areas to say nothing of the ever-present possibility of continued water restrictions during recurring drought seasons.

"This scheme as outlined by Mr. Smith would be similar to schemes operating in numerous places in Australia, notably Wyalla, where the water supply comes from

Morgan on the Murray River and is reticulated by pipe-line and auxiliary pumps slightly more than 200 miles. The pipe line supplying Kalgoorlie from Perth a distance of 400 miles is another striking example of how to reticulate water, while the B.H.P. at Broken Hill are at present investigating the possibility of supplementing their present supply from a dam site 40 miles away, by installing a large pipeline and drawing water from the Darling River, a distance of over 150 miles away.

"The Gregory River scheme if properly investigated and carried out to the best advantage would also offer immense possibilities for the farming and grazing industries."

I am very happy to relate that after those representations were made the matter was discussed at the annual conference of the Local Authorities Association, whose representatives in turn brought before the Secretary of Public Works, Housing and Local Government the possibilities surrounding a scheme for the conservation of water in that area, not only for pastoral and agricultural purposes but for domestic purposes also. I am led to believe from those representations that some action will be taken in the near future along the lines indicated.

After the representations were made to the Minister engineers were directed to investigate the area. I understand that the report of Mr. Sharp, of that department, has now been completed and is ready for examination by the Minister. I believe from what Mr. Sewell, the Director of Local Government, says that this scheme is going to cost in the vicinity of £600,000. It may be argued that this is a colossal amount of money, but that is not so when we visualise the development that will follow in industries and land settlement and the area of land that will be available for other purposes. The amount is infinitesimal as compared with the probable cost of other schemes that have been envisaged in the Commonwealth. My motion simply asks that the North Australia Development Committee investigate these matters, and I mention this proposal because I hope my statements here will be handed to that committee for investigation.

**Mr. Russell:** Who is the Committee?

**Mr. SMITH:** It comprises the Prime Minister, the Federal Minister controlling the Northern Territory, the Premier of Western Australia, the Premier of Queensland, Mr. Kemp (the Co-ordinator-General of Public Works in Queensland) and the Co-ordinator-Generals of Public Works for the Commonwealth and Western Australia. That committee, therefore, comprises men of ability whose ultimate desire is to see the northern part of Australia developed to its fullest capacity. The committee was established in April, 1946, at the suggestion of our own Premier, who at the time was attending a Premiers' Conference. Many investigations have been made by the committee and if I can give it any further information or assistance I shall be very happy to do so.

Figures can be quoted to show the improvement that will take place in our pastoral and agricultural industries as a result of water conservation. I have made many copious notes on this subject. I have studied reports made in the past very carefully and probed them thoroughly and I have made copious notes on the subject. The area is so vast and its potentialities so great that it is impossible to memorise all the relevant facts, and these copious notes therefore will form the basis of my argument.

It seems deplorable that with the development in this State and the representations that have been made as to the necessity of breaking up leases in the south-western districts for the settlement of soldiers, the vast Gulf district and other northern parts of Australia should remain idle.

I wish to quote from the report of the Royal Commission on Public Works, which in 1919 investigated proposals for a railway in the Gulf district. The main question before the Commission seemed to be the suitability of the land in the North for soldier settlement. During the hearing of evidence the same replies were given to the same question on several occasions. I will quote one—the reply by Mr. Robert Henry Shadforth, who had a vast experience of the Gulf country. At page 19 the following question and answer appear:

“Would it be suitable for soldier settlement and for the growth of agricultural products?—Yes. Hundreds of people could make their livelihood there with a railway.”

That goes to show that the country is definitely suitable for soldier settlement.

**Mr. H. B. Taylor:** What form of soldier settlement?

**Mr. SMITH:** Agriculture and mixed farming. We must first have transportation to this area, plus the conservation of water and the harnessing of its streams, which are ever-flowing there but not in any other part of the Commonwealth. The only perennial streams in Australia—streams flowing all the year round—are to be found in the northern part of the Commonwealth. Millions of gallons flow daily in these streams. This country is eminently suitable for agriculture for closer settlement and mixed farming. It is only waiting for some action by Governments, such as the spending of a few millions annually on a five- or ten-year plan to develop that part of Northern Australia.

The potentialities of this country are so great that it would be impossible to memorise them all, so I propose to read the notes I have made on the possibilities of developing the resources of Northern Australia. I take it North Australia is that part of the continent above a line taken from the sea coast of Queensland across the Northern Territory into Western Australia, say from Ingham to Wyndham, taking in the Cape York Peninsula, the Gulf of Carpentaria, the Northern Territory north from Tennant Creek, and all the northern part of Western Australia.

It will be appreciated that in comparison with lands available in other parts of Australia nearer the centres of civilisation—with transport, access to markets, and utilities making for ordinary comfort far in advance of those in North Australia—there is little inducement for people to invest money in North Australia, unless of course better transport and communication facilities are provided. The reason why North Australia is not more developed than it is today is certainly not attributable to the lack of natural resources. As a matter of fact, parts of the other States of the Commonwealth that are now thriving centres had not as a foundation land as good as that which exists in North Australia.

It is regrettable that people, many of whom are not competent to express an opinion and whose acquaintance with the country is, generally speaking, limited to a short visit, should decry the heritage possessed in North Australia. How often, for instance, do we read in the Press an article written by someone who has made a tourist trip to the Gulf or the Northern Territory by car or plane? After only a fleeting glimpse of the country he returns and reports that it is not a white man's country. Such people have not absorbed the potentialities and resources of its lands and waters but having found that the accommodation it offered did not suit them, they clamour about it. They do not make a comprehensive study of the potentialities of that part of Australia.

Naturally, some of those who make these statements are regarded as authorities, but the only authority that should be considered in these matters is somebody who has the necessary qualifications, such as members of the Royal Commissions that have spent many months in the area and then written favourable reports on it. As I have said on many occasions from the floor of this House, if the Government of the day would give consideration to only portions of these reports we should see the development of northern Australia going ahead in greater leaps and bounds than it is doing today. It needs to be stressed that even if North Australia was composed of inferior pastoral lands it would be incumbent to settle and develop them if we are not to give some other nation the opportunity to establish itself in Australia. That is No. 1 priority—the establishment of population and of industry in these northern parts of the continent—and it is on that point that I connect the contention in my motion for the conservation of the water from the perennial streams that exist in that area. It is essential that we use this natural heritage instead of allowing it to remain idle.

On the contrary, however, the lands as a whole in North Australia have every claim to being classed as good average country well endowed by nature and capable of producing a wide range of products. It is all the more essential therefore that we should not allow such a heritage to remain idle but put it to its greatest practical use.

The portion of North Australia that should be first developed is the belt extending from the east coast of Queensland, comprising the

Peninsula and the Gulf Country, across the Northern Territory to the Western Australia border—a distance of over approximately 900 miles. There are many thousands of square miles of country in this belt, splendidly grassed with Mitchell, Flinders and other fine grasses and edible shrubs. This belt of country, in common with the rest of North Australia, possesses a very important asset in the fact that although there is a regular dry season, the annual rainfall is assured and plentiful; prolonged and devastating droughts are unknown.

This area of many thousands of square miles of grass country could be more closely settled if transport and water-conservation facilities were provided. Some transport facilities are now being provided, which enables road trains to bring cattle from the Northern Territory to Mt. Isa for shipment to a meatworks owned by a particular company. With a long-range plan of development we should be able to increase the beef industry to a magnitude that was never before thought possible. I have traversed this country in company with cattle men and cattle-buyers and my remarks this morning are based on my personal knowledge of it and the information given to me by such practical men as these. If these lands had been accessible as relief country during the recent drought in Queensland, the loss in stock, earnings, and taxation and in other directions—certainly a national loss—could have been reduced, hence my argument that North Australia should be developed on a national basis by means of a five- or 10-year plan with a grant of at least £5,000,000 each year for the purpose, first, of providing transport facilities and, second, water conservation.

My argument is based on this fact: it will be necessary to have transport for the development of any water-conservation scheme and such a scheme should be developed on a national basis. This brings into line not only the Federal and Queensland Governments but the Administration of the Northern Territory and the Western Australian Government. The scheme should be based and developed not on a single-State basis but on a national basis comprising all these authorities.

These schemes need not be of the magnitude of the Snowy River scheme, but one can say with reason that at least they would be more important from a national viewpoint to the security of the Commonwealth. The Snowy River scheme is important from the point of view of establishment of factories and manufacture of munitions and the mechanised side of future wars, but we all know that wars are fought and won not only with mechanised armies and munitions but with food. Money spent on the northern part of Australia for closer settlement, money spent upon the conservation of water, the provision of transport and the building of harbours in the Gulf would do much to help feed the armies of this country and our allies in any future war. We all know how the German navy virtually blockaded Britain during the last war and how Germany almost won the war by a policy of starving Britain,

that she came nearer to winning the war by this means than she had any possible chance of doing with armies in Europe. I repeat that the scheme in the Gulf cannot be of the magnitude of the Snowy River proposal, which is more beneficial for the establishment of factories and the production of the weapons of war, but at least it is equally important from the aspect of food production.

While the development of northern Australia will in the initial stages require to be based mainly on pastoral settlement, it is only reasonable to expect that with the pastoral industry, agriculture, mining and mixed farming will develop, and therefore every encouragement should be accorded these industries.

We have a continual clamour in this House and in the Federal Parliament for financial assistance, by subsidy or otherwise, to certain industries. By the encouragement of industry in the northern part of Australia I do not mean the payment of direct subsidies by the Government, because probably the payment of subsidies is the least beneficial means of granting assistance, as it is always desirable that industries should learn to stand on their own feet. It seems to me that once subsidies or financial assistance from the Government is given to industries, that assistance becomes permanent.

**Mr. Russell:** That is quite right.

**Mr. SMITH:** It is quite right. How many industries that have been helped by this Government have continued to look for that help? I say advisedly and fearlessly that encouragement can best be given by the elimination of those Government charges which I really and sincerely believe no Government desire to exact from a pioneering community. The development of Northern Australia should be encouraged not on the basis of granting subsidies, because it is an established fact that once an industry obtains a subsidy from the Government these subsidies become permanent. The Government become the "sugar daddy" for such an industry and each year when the budget for that industry is being framed we have the eternal cry, "We want something more from the Government, such as railway concessions, reductions in the basic wage, and so on." If on the other hand we can eliminate certain government charges to encourage not only an industry that may be started but the whole of the people, workers and all, who go to make up the community, we shall be adopting the better course.

**Mr. Kerr:** What Government charges do you mean?

**Mr. SMITH:** The hon. member should have enough brains to know what the Government charges are.

My recommendation to the North Australian Development Committee is that in any plan for the development of this part of Australia these charges shall be eliminated over a period of, say, five or ten years.

It is advocated in this booklet that cheap fares and freights on air lines should be provided, that hostels should be established

at appropriate centres in their respective territories to enable families to send their children to school, that mails for the Territory should be carried without the air mail fee, reductions in freight and haulage for food, materials and equipment, and so on.

**Mr. Evans:** Is not transport the crux of the problem?

**Mr. SMITH:** It is the crux of the whole thing and the hon. member for Mirani knows that a water-conservation scheme could not be established unless we first had transport facilities. I advise hon. members to have a look at this little booklet, which was put out by the Premier for the 1947 election.

**Mr. Pie interjected.**

**Mr. SMITH:** It does not contain political propaganda and in reply to the remark made by the hon. member for Windsor I would tell him that the word "socialism" is not mentioned. That is the trouble we experience in Parliament today. We have remarks made by men big in their own industry and of physical make-up but who on political questions are as small as a microbe. They bring up all sorts of petty little things that detract from and do not assist in the development of the State. If the hon. member for Windsor had a broader outlook he would refrain from pettiness. This little manual sets out on page 14 the aims and objects of the North Australian Development Committee and does not deal with socialism at all. A copy of it can be had from the Library; a copy could be got from the Premier's secretary or from the secretary of the A.L.P. It deals with the future development of this country. This committee consists of a Labour Premier of Queensland, the Co-ordinator-General of Public Works, Mr. Kemp, an honourable and distinguished gentleman in his own profession, the Prime Minister of Australia, the Minister controlling Northern Territory affairs in the Federal Parliament, and the Premier of Western Australia, who cannot be regarded as a Labour man. There is no political make-up in the constitution of the North Australia Development Committee.

My argument is for the encouragement of industry not by Government subsidy but by the elimination of certain Government charges, so that the community can develop this area. We know that in the markets of the world there is a great shortage of all commodities. There seems to be every justification for the statement that with the continued increase in the population of the world, the development of Northern Australia by huge expenditure for closer settlement and water conservation will surely help overcome many shortages that now exist and will continue to exist for some time. How true is that statement! We know the shortages that exist not only in this country but in other countries of the world. Those shortages will continue with the increased population coming into this Commonwealth.

We know that during the recent war armies were moved from continents to isolated areas such as the jungles of New Guinea and

Malaya. They established something in the nature of townships and were able to support many more people than the North Australian area will support. Let me make a suggestion here based on the achievements of Great Britain in time of war. What is wrong with the Queen Mary or the Queen Elizabeth's taking on board thousand of settlers and being accompanied with a number of cargo boats carrying sufficient equipment and facilities for these migrants to settle in the northern part of Australia?

**Mr. Russell:** What have your Government done about it?

**Mr. SMITH:** Why should not the British Government lend a hand? After all, we are only a part of the British Empire. What is wrong with my suggestion? Nothing at all. Manus Island was developed to meet the exigencies of war but what a wreck it is now! We read in the "Courier-Mail" of yesterday of what has happened there. What a splendid thing it would have been had the Government been able to take all the equipment at Manus Island and transport it to the northern part of Australia to develop that part of the continent! Look at what could have been done with the equipment that was used in the development of Manus Island and other islands of the Pacific in order to bring the war to a successful conclusion. What is wrong with my suggestion? We were told by the "Courier-Mail" that the equipment on Manus Island was sold to the Chinese, that they took out what they required and the rest was destroyed. This equipment was worth many millions of pounds and it would have been very useful indeed in the development of the northern part of Australia.

This is a matter that we should bring before the North Australia Development Committee in order that some scheme might be devised for the development of Northern Australia, but of course it is not much use advocating extensive water conservation and modern means of transport unless we can induce people of the right type to go there. The only people that we consider suitable for this purpose are our own flesh and blood and people from the British Empire.

**Mr. Decker:** Why did not the Labour Government do that?

**Mr. SMITH:** Let me tell the hon. member for Sandgate that the equipment on Manus Island was sold by the American Government, not by the Australian Government, and that the American Government lent millions of dollars to the Chinese so that they might be able to buy this equipment. The Australian Government had nothing whatever to do with it. With the large rivers, creeks, and springs, and the heavy assured annual rainfall, especially in the northerly portion, water supplies throughout Northern Australia for irrigation and other purposes will become important factors as the country becomes settled and development advances. It is very important that we should give proper consideration to the conservation of water in these large rivers, creeks, and springs.

Time, on motion of Mr. Marsden, extended).

**Mr. SMITH:** I thank hon. members for the privilege and assure them that it will not be abused. These large rivers, creeks, and springs could be used for water conservation. Of course, the gauging of natural water supplies, to be reliable, must extend over a period and in settling of a new country it is imperative that the earliest possible steps be taken to collect reliable information on this point. I direct my remarks here to that part of North Australia in the Northern Territory because there in the Gulf area and in the Peninsula, we already have this reliable information, which I shall quote.

I have not been able to find any report or any evidence of the fact that a commission was set up to investigate the potentialities of three large rivers, the Roper, the Ord and the Katherine, in the Northern Territory. I can, however, quote with some force reports on the potentialities of the Gregory and Nicholson Rivers, which flow into the Gulf of Carpentaria, and Lawn Hill Creek. I do not think I should be doing my duty by this area if I did not stress the importance of these ever-flowing watercourses, particularly as much of my argument today is based upon that fact. The amount of water flowing daily in these watercourses into the Gulf of Carpentaria and going to waste when it could be put to great beneficial use by water conservation for irrigation and closer settlement purposes is really astounding. I will read the estimates of the normal daily yield of the Gregory River. The late Mr. George Phillips, in a report upon the advisability of constructing railways and ports in the Gulf of Carpentaria, stated—

“The following is a list of the places visited by me during my recent inspection, and the estimates I made of the normal daily water yield of the Gregory River:—

	Estimated Daily Flow in Millions of gallons.
1. At a point about 2½ miles west of the Brook Hotel, a short distance above the junction of the Gregory with the Nicholson River	64
2. At Punjaub head station, 24 miles above No. 1	85
3. At the twenty-mile crossing, 15 miles above No. 2	95
4. At a place four miles above the point at which Beames Brook leaves the Gregory River, 13 miles above No. 3	110
5. At the Gregory Downs Crossing, close to the Gregory Downs Hotel, nine miles above No. 4	110
6. At the old Lilydale Crossing, two miles above Falls, about 1½ miles from Riversleigh House, and 44 miles above No. 5	135

That quantity of water flows in to the Gulf daily. These streams should be harnessed and used to augment the water supplies of Mt. Isa, Cloncurry and the surrounding districts. It would be available for domestic

purposes and closer settlement all along the route of the pipe line. It could be boosted by pumps.

An examination of the whole area will disclose that at no point will the scheme I am championing be more than 200 miles from Mt. Isa or Cloncurry. Water to supply the township of Whyalla in South Australia is brought 200 miles. Water for Kalgoorlie is brought from Perth, 400 miles away. The Broken Hill Pty. Co. has under consideration a proposal to pump water for its purposes a distance of 150 miles. Yet within 140 miles of Cloncurry and Mt. Isa we have in the streams I have mentioned 135,000,000 gallons of water flowing every 24 hours down to the Gulf of Carpentaria. Is it any wonder therefore that I should argue that some consideration be given by the North Australia Development Committee to the facts I have placed before Parliament today in order that some development on a national basis shall be undertaken? The cost would be only a small fraction of the money that has been set aside for the Snowy River project on the borders of New South Wales and Victoria.

This part of North Australia is eminently suitable for irrigation and increased production by the application of water. The Royal Commission on Public Works, in its report in 1919, stated—

“The weight of evidence favours the successful carrying out of an irrigation scheme at the Gregory River, thus ensuring an increasing supply of dairy products and agricultural commodities. Most of the local witnesses gave evidence of the productivity of the soil and the possibilities for agriculture with the aid of an up-to-date irrigation scheme.”

This is very important—

“With primitive appliances, cabbages, pumpkins, maize, potatoes and other food commodities have been produced and supplied to the steamers at Burketown, but the demand from this source fell off with the reduced shipping service, and the absence of a market discouraged further effort in this direction.”

With the growing influx of population in Mt. Isa area and other parts of the North, the demand for these products will increase. The people there already send to the Granite Belt in the south for the vegetables that are needed in that part of the State and they come in refrigerated cars. They get their milk supply from Ingham. With the provision of transport facilities and services these commodities could be got at a reduced cost.

The report continues—

“When the irrigible lands are set aside, the best of the land can be cut up into farms and the surrounding country made available for grazing pursuits. Mr. Calvert finds that most varieties of vegetables can be grown, including cabbages, potatoes, carrots, turnips, cucumbers, marrows, tomatoes, radish, beet, etc., also such fruits as papaw, oranges, lemons, custard apples,

mangoes, grapes and pineapples. If cotton, castor oil, and similar drought-resisting plants are cultivated, then it is possible to serve a much greater area.

"It only needs the opening of new markets and making the old markets accessible to give the necessary incentive for agricultural production on a large scale. The adoption of the scheme of the Mt. Elliott Company—

and that could now be appropriately altered to read "the Mt. Isa Company"—

"to concentrate all their smelting operations at one centre, such as Cloncurry, will mean the settlement of a large population and this will provide a ready market for the fruit and agricultural products raised on the irrigation area."

I sincerely hope investigations that are being carried out will bring about a greater influx of population to the copper industry.

Let me now refer to the Gregory River and its potentialities for hydro-electric power. If we develop mining we must bring in population and agriculture for the provision of food. For the refining of zinc concentrates cheap power must be available and the only such power is hydro-electric power. The only zinc refinery in Australia is in Tasmania, where they have hydro-electric power, and in Norway and other places where water is available similar power is used.

I wish to quote the remarks of Mr. Leslie Urquhart, chairman of directors of Mount Isa Mines and the Mining Trust, and well known in connection with New Guinea, etc., with Mr. D. P. Mitchell, a London director of Mining Trust and Mt. Isa, who went to the Gregory River falls in 1929. This is what they said:—

"The Gregory River at the falls is a perennial stream of 141,000,000 gallons daily flow, and keeps the Albert and Nicholson Rivers running permanently to the sea."

That is a very important statement. With mining, pastoral and agricultural pursuits and mixed farming there will be an addition to the population and further development of the North.

I believe that my remarks will be placed before the North Australia Development Committee and I have endeavoured to include all the facts that are relevant. I feel that we must in the very near future have a co-ordinated scheme on a national basis to develop the northern part of Australia.

Arguments have been based on Dr. Bradfield's scheme of diverting the flow of the rivers of the eastern coast of Queensland to the interior of this State and the Northern Territory, but why bring all that water that long distance over the arid interior, the Downs country, the Barkly Tableland, across the desert to the northern parts of Australia, when there are in the Gulf country these perennially running streams carrying millions of gallons of water daily into the Gulf?

The development could be a five- or ten-year plan. It may be suggested that this is a new policy, but we must revolutionise

governmental policy. Over the past decade such policies seem to have been failures, therefore why not recommend a new policy for adoption for the future development of this part of the Commonwealth?

It can be suggested that a new policy of this development is necessary because, if Australia is to accomplish anything worthwhile in the northern part of the Commonwealth, which includes the North and North-West, and the Northern Territory and, if such resources as the country possesses are to be developed, it will be necessary to change our outlook in Northern matters and proceed with the development of plans different from those hitherto adopted. Sweeping changes in policy will be needed. The conservation of water on a scale never before anticipated or visualised, which means the expenditure of millions of pounds, will be needed. Let me outline a plan that I feel will accomplish better results than the old system, and I suggest that it be undertaken under a 5 or 10-year plan—

1. That the investment of capital in the area, whether pastoral, mining, agricultural, or marine pursuits, be encouraged to an extent greater than any encouragement given elsewhere in Australia. This will be necessary as the difficulty will be greater.

2. That revenue considerations be entirely subordinated to production and development.

3. That settlers be given reasonable facilities to market their products at reasonable costs.

4. That the development of all holdings and improvement of the quality of stock in both sheep and cattle be encouraged by a suspension of Crown resumptions of those holdings in areas remote from closer settlement, with a provision that lessees undertake an extensive programme of expenditure to develop their properties for this purpose.

5. That both the Government and the administration work in close co-operation with settlers to achieve better results.

I say that because I feel that with a change of policy we can develop this part of Australia.

I would conclude my remarks this morning on this note: It has become the custom to depreciate the efforts of those who have been responsible for handling Northern affairs. All Governments and officials and workers in this area have, however, not been so short-sighted and inept as the uninformed might suppose, many were capable, courageous, energetic, and high-minded men, but the difficulties facing them were enormous. Originally made by nature, they were added to artificially by man, and often capped by instability of Government policy. Nevertheless, some of the achievements against tremendous odds were remarkable. The conquering of countless hazards and difficulties in the inhospitable interior must always rank as an epic pioneering achievement, but now, after years of administration, we find that there is still a clamour for the development of the North, and more particularly Northern Australia,

that enigmatic entity that has baffled Australian statesmanship for so long. We now find a widespread public recognition of our obligations, or, could I say, national obligations for development of the North and Northern Australia. All these have rekindled optimism and hope. What is the outcome to be? Can we enlist the help of our Federal or National Parliament in this development on a scale previously unknown? I think so because I feel that the development of North and North-West Queensland can be linked with the development of Northern Australia.

What is the outcome to be? I say it rests with both the State and Federal Governments. Perhaps I can say this will be the final testing of our practical statesmanship in the development of Northern Australia, because, as I have said, the development of North and North-West Queensland must go hand in hand with the development of Northern Australia.

I feel that we should face the facts. Amazing as it may seem, this northern part of the State—the Gulf, and Peninsula in particular—remains to most Australians and Queenslanders a nebulous kind of place, a veritably unknown land. This is due, I believe, to the many conflicting reports that have been circulated from time to time, and to our amazement continue to circulate, crediting this part of the State with wonderful possibilities of settlement on the one hand, and with being mostly barren on the other. It is true that it comprises all types of country, and it was, I understand, the purpose of many Royal Commissions to lay the position bare so that development where possible may proceed where possible in a practical and certain manner, and so that the confusion which has hitherto existed might be ended.

Our knowledge that Queensland, in many natural features, excels most other States, and our intense love of the State, which is an inherent characteristic of Queenslanders, make it difficult for us to accept the fact that many parts of it have great and serious limitations. In an area with the dimensions of Queensland, possessing a variety of climates and with annual rainfalls ranging from the heaviest to amongst the poorest in the world, it would be indeed amazing if large tracts were not inferior and even worthless, yet it has been difficult for us as a people to accept this fact. The wilderness has so often been successfully subdued, and natural difficulties have so frequently been overcome, that many Queenslanders still hug the delusion that great prospects comparable to those of the already populous parts of the State, and of this Commonwealth lie hidden in the North. So I say that it has at length become necessary as a precedent to sane efforts of development to reassess our administration, and to recognise the natural limitations of this region as a condition.

If true progress is to be made we must courageously face the facts. This is essential. Facts, pleasant or unpleasant, must not be distorted or concealed. The resources of the North and North-West must be

developed. But we must have sufficient vision to determine the limitations that can be overcome, and the resources that can be bent to the will of man in augmenting the population and furthering prosperity of this State and the Commonwealth.

I can safely say that the surface wealth of Queensland has not yet been fully exploited. Everywhere land is capable of being put to more intensive use if markets can be found for its products. "Development and still more development" is the crux of the matter, and I feel that the problem of the future may be to get additional people, for if a comprehensive survey is made of this State's resources there should be little difficulty in supporting them when they are obtained.

I have not gone into details as to how many more cattle, sheep, bananas or cabbages will result from closer settlement there but I have outlined the potentialities and given actual facts relating to the development of northern Australia. I have mentioned the perennial rivers. I have stated that both the water and land are available and that the area is capable of producing everything required for closer settlement. I sincerely hope that in the very near future some recognition is given to the position in northern Australia, that a comprehensive plan of development as suggested by the North Australia Development Committee is embarked upon and that funds will be made available by the Commonwealth and those States represented on that committee.

In conclusion, I thank hon. members for the attentive hearing they have given this matter.

I feel that this is important not only to the people in these areas but to the Commonwealth and the British Empire. It is very important that we should have development take place in this country on a magnitude never before known or visualised by man.

**Mr. THEODORE** (Herbert) (12.31 p.m.) : I second this motion, so ably moved by the hon. member for Carpentaria, with a full realisation of its importance to this nation, in view of happenings that occurred only recently. We have had brought home to us a realisation of the great dangers that face us. The threat to this country made only a short time ago was a very real one indeed. It must bring home to us the need to pay attention to the things the motion implies and make a determined effort to combat such threats should they recur in the future. With the vast empty spaces that exist in this country there is an obligation upon the Government to do something to correct the position that exists.

The motion this morning was moved for the purpose of bringing before the powers that be the need to take action and not to delay too long. Notwithstanding the threat recently made, it appears to me that our memories are short and we are prone to forget. When the danger threatened Australia and when the Japanese were off our coast I am sure many hon. members heard it said that we could never afford to allow

ourselves to be so endangered again. Something must be done to populate and develop our vast territories where that is possible. If ever there was a time when attention should be paid to this matter, it is now; it can be left until it is too late. We should take advantage of our opportunities to develop our country and introduce into it the necessary people to enable us to put up some sort of reasonable defence in the face of future threats.

I think that the Premier made a very sound statement—and his remarks appear in "Truth" of 20 March this year—when he spoke of the problems that confronted a Labour Government. He was speaking of the Burdekin Dam. He said that the million-pound Queensland Burdekin scheme was as worthy as the Snowy River scheme. I refer to the matter because his statement is a very sound one and because I believe that the authorities in the South are prone to disregard the importance of the North and indeed to disregard Queensland generally. Queensland is an important bastion of defence and the State most likely to be attacked in time of war. Furthermore, Queensland is a State that could be properly developed to resist any such attack on this continent.

This is the report of the Premier's remarks on the Burdekin River scheme—

"Recalling the much-discussed and vehemently-condemned original 'Brisbane Line' strategy of the Pacific War, by which the military authorities were prepared to blatantly abandon North Queensland in the event of a serious Japanese invasion, the Premier, Mr. E. M. Hanlon, emphasised to 'Truth' yesterday that Queenslanders should dynamically insist that the weak, pre-war idea of defence can never again be tolerated. There must be no repetition.

"We must never again allow a 'defence' system by which anybody is prepared to abandon even a square inch of Queensland," said the Premier. The last war taught grim lessons—and we must learn them.

"Mr. Hanlon's warning was uttered while he was commenting to 'Truth' on the proposal to spend at least £17,000,000 on the Snowy River irrigation scheme 'as a defence measure'.

"The Queensland Premier reiterated that the place for defence expenditure was in North Queensland."

I heartily agree with that statement, as I agree with the rest of the remarks in the report.

**Mr. Evans:** The Premier wanted to give New Guinea away.

**Mr. THEODORE:** The report concluded—

"That was one of the most obvious teachings of the Pacific War. Now that particular invasion was gone, however, there was, he said, a tendency 'to go South and forget all about it.'"

That is exactly what I said.

A moment ago someone interjected that the Premier wanted to give New Guinea away. That is not correct.

**Mr. Evans:** I repeat that the Premier did.

**Mr. THEODORE:** He did not. He wanted to retain New Guinea. He wanted to defend North Queensland. I speak now of the former Premier, the Hon. Forgan Smith. He fought strenuously against the proposed abandonment of North Queensland. I know the fight he put up because he reiterated his ideas on several occasions. He repeated them shortly after his return from the South, when he knew that it was in the minds of the authorities in the South to abandon North Queensland and establish a Brisbane Line.

Despite what may be said to the contrary, I make the statement again that it was only because of his determination, courage, and resistance that the then Premier and the Labour Party were able to do what they did, with the result that we know today. The Indonesians and the coloured races of the world have their eyes on North Queensland and on North Australia and unless we do something to develop that part of the continent we shall inevitably lose it. Once the coloured races get a foothold in this country all will be lost so far as our small population of 7,500,000 are concerned—we should be powerless to resist their attempt to run over the whole of Australia.

There is no question at all about that. Therefore, we should at least make some attempt to preserve our position and that can be done only by utilising our natural resources and encouraging people to settle in that area. I am not going to say that we should dump people from other countries into the vast open spaces of North Queensland and North Australia. That is absurd. It cannot be done. People will not be thrown out into the wilderness to starve. I saw an example of that in Western Australia when the Government of that State, in a moment of enthusiasm and determination to try to encourage more population to come into that State, brought a lot of Britishers from overseas and put them on land in non-irrigated areas that had a low rainfall. Under such circumstances they had no possible hope of succeeding. They had to be prepared to withstand drought years. Droughts occurred about one year in four, and their effects made the position of these men untenable.

**Mr. Aikens:** How do you expect people to live in the North when Labour politicians of the North run away and live in Brisbane?

**Mr. THEODORE:** My answer to that question is that I do not run away from the North. My home is in the North and has been there for 26 years. I have of necessity to attend the sittings of Parliament, but my home is in the North.

**Mr. Aikens:** You do not live in it.

**Mr. THEODORE:** I do live in it. It is not practical for a man to live in his own home when Parliament is in session, but I live in it when the House is not in session. That is more than the hon. member can say.

**Mr. Aikens:** Like hell!

**Mr. THEODORE:** I do not want to be diverted from the purpose of my speech. We can do something to encourage settlement in North Queensland and North Australia but until that something is done it is not fair or reasonable to expect people to settle there. It is with a view to having investigations made as quickly as possible to discover to what extent the waters in our northern rivers can be used and the uses they can be put to with a view to encouraging that settlement that this motion has been moved. I believe that the time is ripe for closer settlement, but irrigation must precede it. We cannot have contented settlers unless they have some surety of regular returns, and that is only possible under irrigation. It is all very well to say that our western districts must depend on rainfall and must be prepared to put up with droughts. I know we must be prepared to put up with droughts in those areas, but we must do everything possible to mitigate their effects.

I have had a good deal of experience in the northern part of Australia. In 1904 I was in the north-west of Western Australia. That area comes within the ambit of the committee we are concerned with. I travelled through the areas of Marble Bar, Pilbara, and Nullagine goldfields, where the land was settled with scattered graziers and sheep-raisers. There were only a few people there, and shortly after 1904 when I left that part one of my mates became a member of the Western Australian Parliament, and although his electorate was a vast one, he represented only a few people over 400. At periods they get heavy downpours of rain. They have great rivers, such as the Shaw, the Gascoyne, and the Onslow, whose waters could be conserved to some extent.

The same thing would apply to the northern part of Australia and Queensland. We have in the North, between Normanton and Cairns, one of the greatest run-offs of water that there are in any part of Australia. It may not be practical to do anything very extensive in a short space of time, but I think some attempt should be made to conserve and utilise some of that water, which could be applied to useful purposes all the year round. I think it was the existence of this watershed that inspired Dr. Bradfield to make his report on that very ambitious scheme which, after examination by some of our engineers, was found to be unsound.

The fact remains there does exist a tremendous natural watercourse that is capable of being utilised to a tremendous extent. Do not forget that if these hordes of coloured people got into this country—Chinese, Hindu, or Indonesian—it would not be long before we saw the whole of that country populated. They would do the things that would be necessary to enable them to make a living in that part of the country, which we regard today as only cattle or sheep country. It is up to us to use our intelligence to the greatest possible extent.

I was impressed by a statement that came from the Commissioner of Post-War Reconstruction. In referring to the empty North it says—

“Following the 15-year Meat Agreement between the Commonwealth and British Governments, signed last April, plans are now being made to develop Australia’s total production value.”

“What are the Territory’s prospects? To what extent can it be developed?”

“These are among the vital questions raised in ‘The Empty North,’ latest Current Affairs Bulletin published by the Commonwealth Office of Education.

“The Northern Territory, with an area of 523,000 square miles, is nearly two and a half times the size of France; yet, at the 1947 census, its population was only a little more than 11,000—excluding full-blooded aborigines.

“To put it another way, after more than 80 years of settlement, the Territory, which extends over 17 per cent of the Continent, held less than one-fifth of one per cent. of the Australian population.

“The value of production in the Territory is not easy to estimate as separate figures are not kept by the Commonwealth Statistician; but a generous figure is £1½ million, or about 0.2 per cent. of Australia’s total production value.”

“The Bulletin lists some of the more important reasons why the Northern Territory has lagged behind the rest of the Commonwealth in population and production—and explodes a number of popular fallacies in the process. It points out that the Territory is not an undeveloped Garden of Eden, as many people suppose—and that its prospects are limited.

“Nevertheless, it adds, that much can be done to develop the country and to expand existing industries. It then proceeds to outline future prospects in the cattle and sheep industries, in agriculture and mining.”

That statement is sound. This territory is not a Garden of Eden as many suppose, needing only to be tilled and worked to come into production. There is much more in it than that. Railways have to be built, water supplied and in general the requirements of people have to be supplied in order that they can be settled and established. This can be done only more or less gradually; not by dumping thousands of people in the area and expecting them to exist. Such a policy is doomed to failure. We should aim at making some provision to enable people to establish themselves there. Having done this, we should find that expansion will take place quickly. There is much that can be done and I have never known a time more opportune than the present, particularly in Queensland, for expansion of industries. The world is crying aloud for food. Why, as recently as in this morning’s Press we read this statement by Mr. Colin Clark,—Economic Adviser to the Queensland Government, on his return

to Brisbane last night from Washington, where he had attended the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation talks—

“In nearly every country there is still a rapid loss of labour from agriculture.

“In general, high prices for the next 20 years or so will be necessary to keep supply and demand in line with each other.”

He stated also “Population is increasing at the rate of 1 per cent. per annum or nearly 25 million people every year.” He disagrees with the statement that the people of the world cannot be fed and contends that the people will get food but at a price. We can infer from that statement that with increasing expansion of our production we can look forward to an assured and guaranteed price for some years ahead: meaning that we can maintain our standards of living and wages structures as they stand today. It is up to our people to make some contribution towards rebuilding and reorganising our country for its future prosperity.

I have gone to the trouble of getting figures on the importation and manufacture of tobacco in Australia and I find that for the year 1946-47, the imports of tobacco, manufactured and unmanufactured, amounted to 19,894,975 lb. In 1947-48 we produced 1,541,000 lb. and in 1948-49 2,500,000 lb. No agricultural undertaking offers greater opportunity for the successful settlement of those of our people who desire to go on the land than the tobacco industry; but it must be done under irrigation. As in other farming projects in more or less dry areas, the position of the tobacco farmer becomes too precarious unless he has some guarantee that at least he can produce his crop. Having produced his crop, he may have to take some risk as to price, but at least he has had the security of an assured crop because of freedom from failure due to lack of rain. Every attention should be given to this very important industry, which will mean so much to this State and the nation.

Many other things are being examined at the moment. For instance, the water resources of the Burdekin River area are being investigated by the Department of Irrigation and Water Supply, the Stanley River Works Board, the Main Roads Commission and the Department of Agriculture and Stock. Many other projects are under close examination and will be under way within the near future. With all these works, it is essential that we give immediate attention to those agricultural products that will mean so much to this country and promote development as well as encouraging the introduction of new settlers to the northern part of Australia.

**Mr. EVANS (Mirani)** (12.59 p.m.): After comparing what the hon. member for Carpentaria has had to say about the need for the development of North Queensland with what the Premier said recently to the effect that everything in the garden was lovely in the North, I find myself having to decide whether this motion is a voice of censure on the Premier or the Government. The whole thing is ridiculous. We are told by the

Premier that these various projects are in hand, that the Government are going to do many things for North Queensland. Do not let us now mislead the pioneers of North Queensland.

**Mr. Power:** Don't you try it, either.

**Mr. EVANS:** I never mislead; I always tell the truth. Let us tell these people that this Government are only a Government of promises.

**Mr. Aikens:** And empty promises at that.

**Mr. EVANS:** They have always been empty promises. They have no intention of providing the facilities that are necessary for the people of North Queensland.

At 2.15 p.m.

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

#### TUBERCULOSIS AGREEMENT BILL.

#### SECOND READING—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

Debate resumed from 21 September (see p. 542) on Mr. Jones's motion:—

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

**Hon. A. JONES** (Charters Towers—Secretary for Health and Home Affairs): When I spoke last on this stage of the Bill, I referred to the criticism levelled at it by the Leader of the Opposition. I stated yesterday that I believed that he either deliberately misled the House or had not read the Bill when he said that the schedule to the measure, which is the agreement between the Commonwealth and State Governments, could be changed by the Executive Council from time to time without reference to Parliament. That is a pretty serious statement to make because, after all, the schedule is the kernel of the Bill. If that could be done, I say that the hon. member had every right to make the criticism he did. I do not think he read the Bill or he would not have made the remarks he did. The Bill is definite. The Leader of the Opposition said that it was a draft agreement and that the Government were asking the House to agree to a draft agreement. That is true, but he failed to realise that once the draft is approved by the House it becomes an agreement.

**Mr. Nicklin:** It is a funny interpretation.

**Mr. JONES:** The Leader of the Opposition must know that once the agreement is signed by the Premier of this State and the Prime Minister of Australia the only way by which it can be varied is by legislation in both the Commonwealth and State Parliaments. That is obvious. The Premier has not yet signed it and that is why the Bill is before the House. The authority of each Parliament is necessary before the Prime Minister or the Premier can sign the agreement, but once they sign, the draft becomes the agreement and that agreement must be honoured.

**Mr. Nicklin:** In the Bill it is only a draft.

**Mr. JONES:** As I said before, if you go to a solicitor to get an agreement drawn up, it is a draft agreement until it is signed. Once it is signed it becomes an agreement.

**Mr. Nicklin:** This is the first time it has been done.

**Mr. JONES:** That is the position in regard to this Bill. We are authorising the Premier to sign an agreement.

**Mr. Nicklin:** To sign a draft!

**Mr. JONES:** It is a draft now but once it is signed it is an agreement.

**Mr. Nicklin:** We shall have no say after it leaves this House.

**Mr. JONES:** The hon. gentleman saw the agreement and read it and it is up to him to say whether he approves of it or not.

In some States this matter has not yet come before Parliament. I went to the trouble of finding out the position in the various States and can say that we are one of the first to bring the matter before Parliament. The Leader of the Opposition complained about the delay he said had occurred in Queensland and I am satisfied that when he made that statement he was referring to certain legislation passed by the Commonwealth Government in 1946 which was subsequently proved to be ultra vires of the Constitution. And so it was necessary to bring down further legislation. This legislation was introduced into the Commonwealth Parliament in September of last year and I think it was finally agreed to towards the end of the year. The first opportunity we had of bringing the matter before Parliament would have been at the March session and even then we should have been the first State to ratify this agreement.

I made it quite clear on the initiatory stage of the Bill that we did not want any duplication in this agreement of the State Health Act. That is why I said that I believed that the best way to give effect to this legislation was to issue regulations from time to time, as we had done in the case of other infectious diseases. Tuberculosis is already a notifiable disease, but we propose to declare it an infectious disease as well, and it will be dealt with on the same basis as diphtheria and scarlet fever.

Yesterday the hon. member for Windsor made great play of the allowances paid to T.B. patients in this State. I went to some trouble to ascertain the allowances that were paid in the other States of the Commonwealth and I am pleased to be able to say today that the allowances paid to T.B. patients in Queensland by the Queensland Government and the Commonwealth Government combined are the highest of any paid in any of the States. I was very pleased to get that information especially in view of the statements made by the hon. member for Windsor yesterday. If ever class advocacy was put forward in this Chamber it was put forward by the hon. member yesterday when he turned to me and said, "Take the position of a Cabinet Minister on £2,250 a year.

Let us suppose that he gets T.B. How could he live on £7 or £8 a week if he had two children?"

**Mr. Morris:** Be fair—he was referring to the standard of living.

**Mr. JONES:** He referred to the standard of living. According to the argument of the hon. member for Windsor, some persons who contracted T.B. would have to be paid £50 to £60 a week because that was the income they previously earned. We are making a practical approach to the question. What is the basic wage in Queensland today? It is £6 6s a week, based on the formula of the amount required by a man, wife and two children. What is paid to a T.B. sufferer who has a wife and two children? £7 7s. 6d. a week. If he has a wife and three children he gets £7 16s. 6d. a week, and if he has four children, £8 7s. a week, whereas the maximum he would get as the basic wage would be £6 6s. a week.

What was the position of these T.B. sufferers while the party opposite were in power? What did these poor devils get when they were suffering from tuberculosis, cancer, or some other disease? A man with a wife and one child got 18s. a week—a ration ticket. A man with a wife and two children got 21s. a week—again a ration ticket. Yet hon. members opposite tell us that we are not doing all that we should do for the T.B. sufferers in this State. That is why I am particularly pleased that I was able to get the figures today to prove that we in Queensland at least are leading Australia in the matter of T.B. allowances. That is very important.

Then there is a special allowance where both the husband and wife are suffering from tuberculosis. If the husband and wife both have the disease the allowance is £6 15s. 6d. a week if they have one child, £8 2s. a week if they have two children, and £8 15s. a week if they have three children. In addition to that they get free treatment in the hospital, which they do not get in all other States.

Bear in mind this also, that if the doctor says it is necessary that they should have streptomycin that is supplied to them free. This is a very expensive drug, costing between £50 and £150 for each course of treatment. I know of one case in which it cost £180. In Queensland that is given free in public hospitals. I do not know of any other State in the Commonwealth that does that.

We have the best hospitalisation, too, the best of any country in the world, I should say. While on the question of hospitalisation, let me mention that the suggestion was made yesterday—I think by the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for Windsor—that we had not built the sanatoriums that we should have built. I do not care a damn whether you call them sanatoriums or anything else so long as the patients get hospitalisation—that is all they want. This has been the position in Queensland—that right from the end of hostilities

the hospitals in this State have been able to provide treatment for sufferers from tuberculosis.

Go to the Southern States and find out what the position is. Go to your big hospitals such as the Royal Melbourne. They have a definite principle there. It does not matter what disease or complaint you are suffering from or how urgent the case may be, that hospital will not take you in once it has its quota of patients. Take our position here at our Women's Hospital, or the position at our maternity hospitals right throughout the State. We have doctors to determine the period the mother is retained in them, whether it be 10 or 12 days. What is the position in Sydney? I discussed it in this Chamber quite recently with Mr. Kelly, the Minister for Health in New South Wales. He informed me that many of the hospitals in Sydney, including the Crown Street Women's Hospital, are sending their maternity patients out in five or six days in order to make room for other patients. We have not had to adopt those tactics. What I am trying to prove is that the hospitalisation in Queensland is something that the Government have a right to be proud of, the criticism of the hon. members opposite notwithstanding.

**Government Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. JONES:** If I had the time I could read the report of a conference held in Melbourne of Ministers of Health in the various States of the Commonwealth, but, it may be that in that conference statements were made that were not for publication. Sir Albert Dunstan, who was then Minister of Health in Victoria, was present. It may not make very good reading for me to refer to some of the things that were said and to the difficulties they are up against. I do not want to criticise them, because they have difficulties. They have a different system from the one we have here. In Victoria and New South Wales, in virtually all the other States of the Commonwealth in fact, they have the voluntary hospital system. In order to finance their hospitals they have to run dances, fetes, and all that sort of thing.

**Mr. Aikens:** And send the nurses out on to the streets to collect.

**Mr. JONES:** That is so. That is happening in all those States. I want to be fair, but hon. members before getting up to criticise should know what they are talking about. In other States they are having very grave difficulties so far as hospitalisation is concerned as well as in staffing their hospitals.

Let me come to the subject of sanatoriums. Take New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. I can quote from the report I mentioned to show that the Ministers of those States admitted they could not staff their sanatoriums although there is no great desire on the part of the people to go there. We find the same problem in Queensland. Only last night, after the discussion yesterday, I looked up the proceedings of a health conference in England, at which this problem of T.B. was discussed. Eminent doctors said that they believed it would be better if T.B.

patients could be accommodated in main hospitals, although it would be preferable for them to be isolated, instead of mixed with other patients. Once you establish sanatoriums and segregate T.B. patients, patients do not want to go to those places. That desire exists right here in Queensland. The Leader of the Opposition yesterday criticised the fact that we had closed down the sanatorium at Dalby. It might interest the hon. gentleman to know that at Westwood, out from Rockhampton, we have a sanatorium that will accommodate 90 patients, but at present the number of patients is less than 40.

**Mr. Gair:** At one time the number of staff at Dalby exceeded the number of patients.

**Mr. JONES:** That is so. People do not want to go there. The average T.B. patient in Brisbane is prepared to go to the Brisbane Hospital or the Auxiliary Hospital at South Brisbane, in preference to Westwood. The fact that we have 50 vacant beds at Westwood shows that we must have a different approach to the treatment of T.B. patients. It is no good talking about sanatoriums. It is easy to say you should have a sanatorium at Chermiside or that one should be built at some other place, but the only thing that concerns me is whether we have hospitalisation for those patients. Many of the States cannot do that and I think that is a very important matter.

I want to make reference again to a matter that I mentioned on the initiation of the Bill. I say that the fortunate position we find ourselves in in Queensland is mainly due to Labour legislation over many years, dating right back to 1915. It is all very well for hon. members opposite to attempt to wipe it off by saying that we have a good climate, as they did when I said that the incidence of T.B. in Queensland was less than anywhere else in the world—and anybody who reads at all can check the figures. That is mainly as a result of the legislation passed over the years—our health laws, our improved housing conditions, and the attention we are giving to baby clinics and maternal and child-welfare centres and a hundred and one other things that are being done by the Department of Health. We have had doctors here from other States and from overseas and we have had Ministers of Health from other States. I do not want to mention his name, but a Minister of Health was here from one of the other States—and he was not a member of the party to which I belong—and he said to me, "The set-up here is a credit to you." He saw our Brisbane General Hospital and he said that it was a credit to us. I am pleased to be associated with a Government who have done what this Government have done for the health of the people. I do not take credit for that; I believe the Premier, while Secretary for Health and Home Affairs for a number of years, did a wonderful job—the greatest job any Minister has done in any State in the interests of the health of the people.

**Mr. Power interjected.**

**Mr. JONES:** Between 1929 and 1932 it did not matter very much whether a man had T.B. or cancer, he still had to walk 20-odd miles to get his 6s. worth of rations.

I think that these things should be brought before the House. There was a desire on the part of some members at least to get a certain amount of cheap publicity in connection with this legislation. On the initiation of the Bill I attempted to keep the debate strictly non-political and non-party—I thought that would have been the approach to the subject of most hon. members in this Chamber—but there has been a tendency to make it political and to attack us in connection with our health laws. I certainly cannot stand for that because I have some knowledge of what we are doing; and I am satisfied there is no State in the Commonwealth that is doing as much as we are doing in the interests of the health of the people. Hon. members opposite know very well that until a few years ago, the local authorities had some responsibility for hospitalisation, and in those days hon. members opposite, backed by the local authorities, attempted to prevent any expansion of hospitalisation in this State, but today, when the Government are responsible for 100 per cent. of the finance—when they are carrying the whole of the burden—they come along and kick up a row and say that they cannot get a hospital erected here or a child-welfare centre somewhere else. That was not their outlook when they knew they had to carry some of the burden.

**Mr. Nicklin:** Just kicking up a row does not provide hospitals.

**Mr. JONES:** You have to have a fair approach to the question.

**Mr. Nicklin:** You said that we asked for hospitals.

**Mr. JONES:** More hospitals have been built in Queensland in electorates represented by the hon. gentleman's own members than in any other part of Queensland. Take the Miles hospital, the Milmerran hospital and the Murgon hospital; there is only one hospital that I know of that is being built in an electorate represented by a Labour man, and that is Townsville, and it was started in 1945.

**Mr. Power:** And Southport.

**Mr. JONES:** Southport is another represented by an Opposition member. As far as I am concerned there has never been any attempt to make health a political matter; I believe it is above politics.

I mentioned the appointment of a Director of Tuberculosis for Queensland and I am pleased to say that today the Executive Council appointed Dr. E. W. Abrahams to that position. Dr. Abrahams is highly qualified, holding the M.D. degree of the Melbourne University and the M.R.C.P. London. After graduation he was attached to the medical staff of the Melbourne Hospital and rose to the position of assistant medical superintendent. For part of his time there he was in charge of the Tuberculosis Board and was responsible for anti-tuberculosis measures

among the hospital staff. When in England he entered the tuberculosis services of the London County Council and gained experience as a house physician at the London Chest Hospital. On his return to Australia he was attached to the Commonwealth Tuberculosis Service as assistant to Dr. Wunderley, the Commonwealth Director of Tuberculosis.

Dr. Abraham's duties will be to organise the Division of Tuberculosis within the Health and Medical Branch of the Department of Health and Home Affairs, to co-operate with the University of Queensland at the teaching hospital, and with all hospitals boards operating under the State Hospitals Act, and to develop and supervise schemes for the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and control of tuberculosis. His services will be available as a consultant to members of the medical profession. Dr. Abrahams has been highly recommended. He is a young man, being in his early thirties.

As I mentioned previously, there was no delay in endeavouring to appoint a Director of Tuberculosis in this State. We advertised the vacancy early this year. We were rather unlucky inasmuch as one man whose appointment was gazetted refused to take up the job. Some of the other States have not taken advantage of this opportunity. Yesterday the Leader of the Opposition stated that certain States had already appointed Directors of Tuberculosis but I find that as far as Victoria is concerned applications for the position close only on the 30th of this month. At present there is a man holding the position there and if one likes he can be termed the Director but he has the right of consultative practice. He is a part-time man only. After all, it would appear that in Victoria they have not taken the position very seriously.

The Leader of the Opposition said that a Director of Tuberculosis had been appointed in New South Wales last year—I think it was—but that is not so. The Director took up duty on 13 July, 1949. Previous to that one of the officers of the Health Department carried out administration and control of tuberculosis in much the same way as the Director-General of Health and Medical Services carries out these functions in Queensland. The statement that we were lagging far behind the other States is not correct. I think my information now speaks for itself.

There is not much more to be said. I have endeavoured to traverse the points made by hon. members in their criticism of the Bill and their statements that we had not taken the steps we should have taken. This is a move in the right direction. We have moved immediately to do something in the matter and the very fact that this legislation is before the House indicates that we are desirous of doing something about the matter.

This should be a matter above party politics. On reading Federal "Hansard" I was pleased to see the way it was received in the Commonwealth Parliament. There was no attempt to bring in propaganda in any way. It was debated by members on both

sides but there was no attempt to make political capital out of it. After all, if the Opposition want to make political capital out of it I could ask: what did Menzies and Fadden do about it when they were in charge of the Government?

**Mr. Nicklin:** One of your members did say it.

**Mr. JONES:** I am saying it now: what did Menzies and Fadden do? They stabbed each other in the back. (Opposition interjection.)

**Mr. Nicklin:** You said yesterday the Commonwealth had no powers.

**Mr. JONES:** In those years the Commonwealth Government did not care a hang whether a person had T.B. or any other complaint. All that was done in those years in most instances and in most States was to give the sufferers from this complaint a ration ticket each week. Long before these allowances in the schedule were laid down we in Queensland were paying generous allowances to T.B. sufferers.

Motion (Mr. Jones) agreed to.

#### TIMBER USERS' PROTECTION BILL.

##### SECOND READING.

**Hon. T. A. FOLEY** (Normanby—Secretary for Public Lands and Irrigation) (2.42 p.m.): I move—

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

For the benefit of those hon. members who may not have been present when I introduced this measure, I again emphasise that the Bill serves two purposes. The first is to prevent the use of timber that is likely to be destroyed by borers where such use would be detrimental to the use or service expected of such timber. The second is to prevent the use of unseasoned timber in the manufacture of furniture, and in joinery, mouldings, and floorings for buildings.

I pointed out when I introduced the Bill that there are a number of borers that attack timber. There are certain species that attack only certain timbers. This Bill deals with the very common species known as the lyctus or powder borer, which attacks the sap of many of our commercial timbers even after they have been sawn. The main cause of attack is that the starch content in the sapwood of most of our commercial timbers attracts the borer. This can cause considerable damage if battens containing a big percentage of sapwood are used to support ceilings, roofs or fibro-cement or plaster partitions.

Earlier I quoted a number of cases that had been brought to our notice in which ceilings had almost fallen in and tiled roofs almost collapsed through the excessive amount of sapwood in the battens used as supporting timbers. In rare instances the lyctus borer will attack the heartwood.

**Mr. Macdonald:** Every miller docks 4 inches for the heart, except in ironbark and pine.

**Mr. FOLEY:** Yes, that is true in the measuring up. I am not talking so much about the heart wood as the true wood. I understand certain species are attacked in the heart wood because the starch is sufficient to attract this type of borer. Generally speaking, the heart wood of the great bulk of our commercial timbers is free of starch and so immune to attack. Many woods are subject to assault by this borer, including some of the well-known and highly-regarded species, such as spotted gum, tallowwood and crow's ash. When introducing this measure the other day I said that there were approximately 77 species, but I have found since that the number is considerably higher.

**Mr. Nicklin:** About 110.

**Mr. FOLEY:** There are 110 or 112, and they include such timbers as white siris, or white bean, red siris or acacia cedar and Mackay cedar, yellow siris or yellow bean; candelnut, white cheesewood or milky pine or milkwood; yellow walnut, brush walnut, rose butternut, flame kurrajong, white kurrajong, red Touriga, northern silky oak, Caledonian oak, black bean, red cedar, silky celtis, satin sycamore, pepperwood, camphorwood, rose maple, bolly silkwood, white walnut, red heart, rose mahogany, miva mahogany, spur mahogany, silver quandong, hard quandong, satin oak, Queensland walnut, pink walnut, spotted gum, ash gum, white ash, red bloodwood, spotted gum, tallowwood, red mahogany, carabeen.

**Mr. Macdonald:** Moreton Bay ash?

**Mr. FOLEY:** Yes, sometimes known as bloodwood because of the blood vein in it. We also have—brown bloodwood, red apple, sour cherry, rose satin ash, grey satin ash, white Eungella gum, cherry alder, pink poplar, figwood, silver silkwood, crow's ash, Bennett's ash, Queensland silver ash, leopard ash, hickory ash, yellowwood, northern silver ash, southern silver ash, magnolia, brush mahogany, white beech, southern silky oak, bollywood, bollygum, brown beech, brown bollywood, bolly beech, brown bollybeech, red silkwood, white cedar, southern silky oak, yellow boxwood, cheesewood, blush alder, yellow carabeen, blush tulip oak, brown tulip oak, and red tulip oak.

There are a few other species, such as mararie or marara, rose mararie, and yellow penda, also known as sour hardwood.

That is quite an extensive list of timbers that may be affected and quite a large number of them have come to be known as commercial woods and are in extensive use for building and joinery, and in the furniture trade.

**Mr. Macdonald:** Is that blackwood, No. 2 on the list, what is known as blackbutt?

**Mr. FOLEY:** No. I have not got the other names here—some of them are known only by the names used in the district where they occur. It is a rather extensive list and I emphasise that many of them are now commercial woods and are being used extensively.

Therefore the aggregate quantity of this sapwood liable to attack represents a considerable amount of timber, and by the preservative method of treating these susceptible timbers we bring into use a vast number of timbers, which can therefore be classed as commercial timbers. In view of the development that is going on in the State today in building and housing generally, we are urgently in need of them, and to a great extent they help in meeting the tremendous demand that exists.

Some hon. members seem to fear that there will not be enough treatment plants to deal with them, but that fear is groundless.

**Mr. Nicklin:** I think you said that there were only nine such treatment plants.

**Mr. FOLEY:** I made an error when I said nine, because I know now that there are more. I went through a rather extensive list of plants in existence in the southern, central and northern parts of Queensland.

**Mr. Chalk:** I understand that there is only one west of Brisbane.

**Mr. FOLEY:** That may be so.

**Mr. Kerr:** Would there be 50 throughout the State?

**Mr. FOLEY:** That is very close to it.

A number of preservation plants for treatment of sawn timber have already been established in Queensland. These are:—

Firm.	Article.	Weekly Capacity.
T. W. Brandon, Brisbane	Flooring ..	18,000
Hull Timber Syndicate, N.Q.	Furniture, flooring, &c.	8,000
Rosenfeld, Ravenshoe ..	General ..	10,000
A. C. Cunningham, Mackay	General ..	8,000
Rocklea Manufacturing Co., Brisbane	Furniture ..	10,000
Lawson & Sons, Tully ..	Furniture, flooring	7,200
Northern Panels, White Rock, N.Q.	Joinery ..	4,000
Brooks Joinery, Brisbane	Joinery ..	2,000
Baker & Co., Brisbane ..	Furniture ..	800
Rosentengels, Toowoomba	Furniture ..	1,000
Brisbane Sawmills ..	Joinery ..	4,000
Winterburn, Coorparoo ..	Furniture ..	500
Keir Bros., Tully ..	Furniture, flooring, &c.	8,000
Romano, Wangan ..	Furniture, flooring, &c.	8,000
Wangan Sawmill, Wangan	Furniture, flooring, &c.	12,000
Cairns Timber Ltd., Cairns	Furniture, flooring, &c.	16,000
J. M. Johnston, Stratford	Furniture, flooring, &c.	20,000
T. J. Winkworth, Cairns	Joinery and furniture	16,000
Tropical Timbers, Cairns	Furniture, flooring, &c.	16,000
E. N. Woodman, Mackay	Flooring and general	12,000
Hyne & Sons, Maryborough	Flooring and general	8,000
Beam Manufacturing Co., Rocklea	Furniture ..	2,000
Hancock & Gore, Brisbane	Flooring and general	18,000
C. Jensen, Brisbane ..	General ..	20,000
H. Meyers, Emu Vale ..	Flooring and general	8,000

Those treatment plants have a total capacity of 237,500 superficial feet. On a basis of a

40-hour week they would treat roughly 10,000,000 superficial feet of timber per annum.

**Mr. Chalk:** You did state that 12 of those plants were only being installed.

**Mr. FOLEY:** The list of plants I have read with the exception of the last twelve are already established and others are in the process of being established.

The need for the treatment of these timbers is growing. The point I want to emphasise is that of the total amount of timber that is sawn each year in our mills only a percentage will have sap susceptible to the borer. The true wood on each log is greater than the sapwood. Naturally only a minor portion has to be treated and cared for. It is only the sappy timber that is cut into battens and used in such places as in ceilings or behind tiles on walls or even in roofs of some of our buildings. If the battens on the roof of a house are peppered the whole structure is consequently weakened. The adoption of these preventive measures will result in the using of many hundreds of thousands of superficial feet of timber for all purposes.

One of the main purposes of this Bill is to protect the individual against unscrupulous traders and builders who through wilfulness or in ignorance supply susceptible timbers for buildings, furniture, and other purposes. I quoted earlier several instances in which people had lost practically the whole of their life's savings because their building was perforated and eaten to powder by this insect. If we can save our people from that kind of imposition the Bill will be worth while, quite apart from other aspects of it.

It is proposed in the Bill that, subject to the Minister, its administration shall be in the hands of the Sub-Department of Forestry.

The timbers concerned are set out in the schedule. It will be an offence to use any such timber except by the name ascribed to it in the schedule, with the exception that timber may be sold as mixed or unclassified. If it is accepted by the buyer as such, its further use becomes his responsibility; he must see that it is used only where it is suitable or that it receives treatment before it is used. That then becomes the duty of the builder himself. If he buys big quantities of mixed or unclassified goods the responsibility is on him, not upon the seller, to see that the timber is used where it will not be detrimental to the building or article or see that it goes through some form of treatment.

It will also be an offence to use lyctus-susceptible timber in the manufacture of any article or the construction of any building for sale or under contract, or similar arrangement for use by another person where the use of such timber would be detrimental to the use, purpose or service required in such article. If a timber has been given a preservative treatment approved by the Forestry Board, it will not be regarded as being lyctus-susceptible. This provision of the Bill will not apply to the construction of temporary buildings designed for a life

of not more than two years. The same thing applies to where it is used for case-making; a forestry inspector will not interfere in such circumstances.

Another important principle laid down is that the description of timber as being preservative-treated is forbidden unless it has received that approved treatment. It is likewise forbidden when selling timber to represent that it is free from lyctus-susceptible timber when that is not so.

The offering for sale of an article or building containing lyctus-susceptible woods is prohibited unless the prospective purchaser has been warned in writing that lyctus-susceptible woods have been so used. This provision does not apply to articles or buildings manufactured or constructed before the commencement of the Act, if the person selling did not know and was not in a position to know that lyctus-susceptible timber had been used, nor does it apply to such articles or buildings after the period of two years have elapsed from the date of manufacture or construction.

Several references have been made to the fact that it will not be an offence to use lyctus-susceptible timber if that is not detrimental to the use or service expected in the building. This permits the long-standing practice of using for some building purposes, such as ground plates, pieces of wood that may have a percentage of borer-susceptible sapwood attached. In the cutting of a log, according to its shape, you will get timber with a portion of sapwood attached to it; if it is not too great and it is not detrimental to the building itself, the using of the timber in such circumstances will be quite legitimate. This practice has been followed for years and it does not affect the value or the strength of the house.

The Bill also provides that if one-quarter or more of the perimeter of any piece of timber in a building shows lyctus-susceptible wood, this will be deemed to be detrimental to the use or service expected of the building.

**Mr. Macdonald:** Where does it say that?

**Mr. FOLEY:** The hon. member will find that in the section dealing with penalties and the action that may be taken.

The use of lyctus-susceptible timber for wall battens to support or help in supporting any plaster, fibro-cement or other sheeting is totally prohibited, as is also its use in ceiling battens.

In the administration of this measure our inspectors may be called upon to make inspections and in doing so may cause damage to a ceiling or some other part of a building: if it is found that the complaint is groundless, action may be taken against the complainant to recover the cost of any damage that is caused.

The board will have power to approve or disapprove of a proposed treatment and it will be an offence for any person to use any brand indicating that timber has been given

preservative treatment unless that brand is registered with the Board. Likewise, it will be an offence for any person to brand as preservative any timber that has not had approved preservative treatment.

The approved treatment will not cover a very wide range. It is laid down mostly by the C.S.I.R.O. as the result of the research carried out over a number of years. I understand the most common method will be that which is known as the boric acid bath, which is a process of boiling the timber in this bath for a certain period and then allowing the hot water to cool down gradually to a certain temperature. I also understand that it is in the period between the boiling and the cooling off that the preservative process takes place—when the boric acid enters the timber and preserves or immunises it from the attack of the insect.

**Mr. Muller:** How long will the timber require to be in the bath?

**Mr. FOLEY:** I cannot give the period of time off-hand but it is not long; in fact, it is not a very long process and it is not what might be termed an expensive process. I mentioned at an earlier stage that the extra cost in a building would range from £30 to £50 but my officers have since consulted builders and timber associations and now I understand the cost involved to the average home-builder will be considerably less than that.

It is proposed to prohibit the use of unseasoned timber. This is the second part of the Bill. I think most hon. members have some idea of what it means to the average person to have unseasoned timber used in a floor and afterwards to find that the timber has shrunk badly. Naturally such a floor is spoilt and expense is involved in replacing and recramping the boards. For this purpose the timber must be dried to the specifications as regards moisture laid down by the Standards Association of Australia and when no standard has been laid down the maximum is 15 per cent. moisture content and the minimum 10 per cent., unless the conditions under which the timber is to be used require some other moisture content. This would, I think, meet most circumstances to be found in the administration of the measure. This provision is considered desirable for the protection of the buyer since the terms "seasoned," "kiln-dried," and other terms, unless specifically defined, may be quite misleading. It is essential in sound building practice that timber should be dried to a certain moisture content dependent on the locality and use to which the timber is to be applied.

For instance, to give satisfactory results in Brisbane flooring boards should be dried until they have a moisture content of no less than 10 per cent. or more than 15 per cent. In the past some merchants have represented timber to be seasoned when its moisture content was 20 per cent. and higher. I think hon. members will appreciate what it will mean to the home-builder in subsequent repairs if timber with a high moisture content

is used. As an example, in the Brisbane area if such boards are used in flooring they will shrink by as much as one-eighth of an inch in width and it would be very costly to repair it. Actually, the damage could be remedied only by pulling up and re-laying the floor.

The Act provides that no board to be used for the purposes mentioned shall have a moisture content of less than a certain specified minimum. This provision is considered necessary because if timber has been dried in a kiln to, say, 8 per cent., subsequent swelling of the boards could be a source of trouble in the finished structure.

**Mr. Macdonald:** Particularly pine.

**Mr. FOLEY:** Yes. If there is too much moisture you can meet with a good deal of trouble, and if you have too little you get trouble the other way.

To give satisfaction in furniture, the wood should be of such a moisture content as balances with the prevailing humidity in the room in which it is used. If the moisture content is too high the wood will shrink and serious warping or splitting will result. I have a few examples of what has happened in these instances. For example, the joints of table-tops will gape; mitres will open, panels will shrink and split; while on the other hand, over-dry timber causes doors and drawers to jam, table-tops to arch upwards and boards and joints to crack glass covers when the timber has absorbed moisture and swollen. The Bill provides that a person shall not represent timber to be dry or seasoned unless in fact it does comply with the moisture standards laid down.

**Mr. Macdonald:** How will you determine that?

**Mr. FOLEY:** Where certain defects become apparent from the use of timbers either overcharged or undercharged with moisture some test will have to be applied if prosecutions are to take place.

**Mr. Macdonald:** You will never be able to police that. Too much young timber is cut nowadays.

**Mr. FOLEY:** I realise that a good deal of young timber is cut from private land and as a result a fair amount of sappy timber is placed on the market. The old method of seasoning timber was for the miller to strip it and allow it to dry in the air for a time. If that method is not adopted, then the timber will have to be kiln dried.

I feel that as time goes on we shall find that the community will comply with the conditions laid down. It may be argued that certain anomalies will arise and that the measure contains certain conditions that cannot be fulfilled by traders or builders at present, but as time goes on the people and the trade will gradually conform to our requirements. We shall be able, as a result, to give a greater measure of protection to our citizens than they have had in the past.

I gave some instances earlier of people who had suffered damage through the ravages of this borer. I gave the example of a man

who let a separate contract for his tiled roof. The contractor supplied the battens and within two years the owner found the ceiling covered with piles of dust made by thousands of lyctus borers. These borers came from the battens, which were found to be untreated tulip oak, a timber well-known for its susceptibility to borer-infestation. It would be useless arguing that the man who took that contract did not know that tulip oak would be attacked. He knew quite well; tradesmen naturally, as a result of working in the trade, get to know the types of timber that are susceptible to borers.

There is another instance of a returned soldier who bought a new home for his wife and young family. After a few months his wife complained of powder falling to the floor of the rooms. An inspection revealed that the timber used in the roof contained a large proportion of sapwood that was being freely attacked by borers. The owner had put his life's savings into this home and it was found to be nothing more than a second-class building. When we find examples of that state of affairs, naturally somebody has to take steps to try to protect the people concerned.

Another instance comes to mind. The owner of a home in a western suburb found borer dust in increasing piles on his new polished floor within a few months of taking up residence. Inspection showed the timber to be untreated tulip oak, a timber that is excluded by the Australian Standards Association from the list of floor timber. A Brisbane furniture manufacturer found powder falling from an expensive dining-room suite at his works. It was made of silver ash, with sapwood highly susceptible to borer. Since this measure was first introduced I have met quite a number of people who have come to me recording their experiences of furniture and timbers used in building. Consequently I feel that as time goes on the trade will conform to the conditions laid down in the Bill and as a result a greater measure of protection will be afforded to our citizens than exists today.

**Mr. NICKLIN** (Murrumba—Leader of the Opposition) (3.19 p.m.): As usual the Minister in introducing this measure has given a very full review of it and I think all hon. members will agree that the purpose of the hon. gentleman, namely, to ensure that lyctus-susceptible timbers are treated when used in places where they are likely to cause damage and that only properly seasoned timbers are used, is a worthy one. But there may be some differences of opinion as to whether the method the Minister adopts is the correct one. In looking over the Bill and noticing some of the contradictory provisions in it, I am afraid that he has tackled the problem more from a theoretical angle than from a practical angle. If he is going to impose these conditions on the building and saw-milling industries it may not be possible for them to carry on.

**Mr. Clark:** It is better to impose some conditions than to allow houses to fall down on people.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** We are just as anxious as the hon. member is that that does not happen but we desire to see the problem tackled in a practical way and in a way that will protect the people. The Bill contains very contradictory provisions. One part of a clause says that no lyctus-susceptible timber shall be used in housing in any way whatsoever. Later on in the same clause the Bill says that timber used for battening and dunnage behind plaster and fibro-cement shall be used only if it is treated, and further on again it says that only timbers showing a certain percentage of lyctus-susceptible sapwood can be used in building operations. We want to know exactly where we stand in these things and, specifically, whether it is necessary for all timber used in building operations to be treated or only certain specified timbers, such as battening and dunnage behind plaster and fibro-cement, where it would be hard to make an inspection or have replacements after a building is put up.

**Mr. Foley:** It will be possible to use any timber at all, provided it has been treated.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** Another part of the Bill says that. One part of the Bill says that all lyctus-susceptible timber used in building operations shall be treated. We want to know where we stand in the matter. We want to know whether all lyctus-susceptible timber has to be treated. It would be impossible to build a house in this State under those circumstances, because the schedule to the Bill contains virtually all the timber used in building operations in this State. These things have to be straightened out so that the trade will know and indeed everyone will know where he stands. The Minister has given instances in which roofs have fallen in and ceilings have fallen in because of the attack of the lyctus borer.

Although the Minister may, according to his explanation of the Bill, be protecting timber-users from the depredations of the lyctus borer he certainly will not be protecting their pockets. The Minister endeavoured to give some figures to show what the extra cost of the treatment would mean to the house-builder. He went on to say that it would probably mean an additional 12s. or 15s. a hundred superficial feet and later estimated that the additional cost of building a house might be £20 or £50. The house-builder will be particularly interested to know how much it is going to cost him for the treatment of lyctus-susceptible timber that may be used and the Minister does not seem to be quite clear about this himself. He gave a number of figures, all of which were highly problematical.

**Mr. Farrell:** You know that the saw-milling industry is getting the price for first-class timber that is applicable to third-class timber.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** I know that and I know that it is because of the abnormal demand for timber today. Many types of timber are being milled today that would not have been looked at years ago. Those conditions will continue

while the demands exist and while there is a timber shortage, as there is in many parts of the State at the present time.

We must look at this measure from a practical angle. It is not a bit of use introducing theoretical legislation that will not work out in practice. We must also see that this measure will not make it too costly for anyone to build a house at all. At present, goodness knows, it costs enough to build a house. The addition of 12s. to 15s. a hundred superficial feet will mean quite a deal in the erection of a house. No-one disputes the seriousness of the damage that can be inflicted by the lyctus borer, no-one disputes the need for some control measure, but I again emphasise that any control measure will have to be practical and that it must be possible to put it into effect. For one thing, it is questionable whether there are at present sufficient treatment plants and whether they are strategically placed throughout the State to handle the timber required for the erection of homes.

We have to examine very closely the extent to which the compulsory treatment of susceptible timber is justifiable. Hon. members will agree that that is the proper angle from which to look at this legislation—the extent to which compulsory treatment is justifiable. The Minister very wisely stated—and I agree with him—that all timbers, particularly roof battens and battens behind tiles and wall boards, that is cut out of sapwoods and used in inaccessible parts of a house should be treated for lyctus borer. But we do not agree that all timber that is lyctus-susceptible should be treated before it goes into a building. That is something that must be straightened out. If it is to be read into the Bill that all lyctus-susceptible timber to be used in the construction of a house has to be treated, the cost will be such that nobody will be able to build a house at all.

**Mr. Foley:** I do not think you have read the definition of "building."

**Mr. NICKLIN:** The definition of "building" includes practically everything, including a fowlhouse.

**Mr. Foley:** It clears up exactly the point you are dealing with.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** I doubt whether it does. The definition of "building" is a building that has a life of more than two years. A fowlhouse is required to last over two years, so it will come into the category of any other class of building in which timber susceptible to the lyctus borer shall not be used. In looking at this problem we have to look firstly at the aspect that only the sappy portions of susceptible timbers are liable to be attacked, except in remote instances. One of the answers to the problem, therefore, seems to be the elimination of the use of sapwoods. At present, with the shortage of timber, that is difficult. Even when the best of our timber was used 20 years ago, our second-class timbers contained a portion of sapwood. We must take that very seriously into consideration.

**Mr. Foley** interjected.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** You would not expect 3 x 2 plates to be dipped before they were used. They would not have a great deal of lyctus-susceptible wood on them. They would not be a menace to the stability of the house. The Bill uses the term "timbers." That is the point that has to be taken into consideration.

**Mr. Foley:** It says "provided not more than a quarter of the perimeter in any place."

**Mr. NICKLIN:** What is a quarter? If we find a portion where more than a quarter of the perimeter shows a lyctus-susceptible variety of sapwood, that portion can be condemned and the timber from which that portion is taken can also be condemned. Whether the "lot" means the parcel of timber or the piece of timber is something that we can examine in the Committee stages. For instance, take a 10-foot stud; the top portion may have a piece of sapwood greater than one-quarter of the perimeter and the whole of the stud could be condemned even though it would not be a great risk to leave the small portion of sapwood there.

**Mr. Foley:** You are not putting up a case for the chap who wants to put in this susceptible timber?

**Mr. NICKLIN:** I am not putting up a case for the man who wants to put in susceptible timber at all; what I want to do is to protect the trade from possible victimisation under the conditions laid down in this Bill, and to protect the housebuilder from exorbitant costs that might be caused if many of the conditions of this Bill have to be carried out. All sections of the community have to be considered in this matter; and the Minister in trying to achieve his very desirable object of protecting home-builders from having lyctus-susceptible timber put into their homes, may be doing them a disservice in the long run, through not tackling the problem in a practical way. In this connection, I would like to ask the Minister whether he has consulted the trade in connection with the provisions of this Bill.

**Mr. Foley:** As a matter of fact, the Timber Stabilisation Board, which is a branch of the trade, called on me after the introduction of the Bill, and gave it their blessing.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** After the introduction?

**Mr. Foley:** Yes.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** The Minister did not think of them before he introduced the Bill. They came along to see him afterwards to find out what he had done to them.

**Mr. Foley:** They made one slight suggestion.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** It is essential that the practical aspect should be taken into account in a very important matter like this. I should like to know whether the Forest Products Research Branch of the Minister's department has inquired into the possibility of treating timber against other borers at the same time as it is being treated for the lyctus borer.

I suggest that perhaps the addition of D.D.T. or some of the more modern insecticides to the boric-acid bath will protect the timber not only against lyctus borer but all other borers likely to attack the timber, and at very low cost, considering that the timber has to be treated in any event. It would then be treated against attacks from all types of borers and completely immune. That is an angle well worth taking into consideration.

There must be a grave doubt as to whether there are sufficient treatment plants available in the State to handle the treatment that will be necessary when this Bill is put into operation. We must not forget that in the main such treatment plants are situated in city areas. What is to happen to the unfortunate person who wants to build a house in a country area in which no treatment facilities are available? Is he to be compelled to send the timber to the city to be treated and have it returned to the site of the building? That would add to the cost of house construction. In view of these many angles of the Bill it would be wise for the Minister to hasten slowly in proclaiming it.

**Mr. Roberts:** And in the meanwhile house-builders will be getting "crook" timber.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** Nothing of the sort. The hon. member for Nundah must not imagine that the only people who build houses in Queensland are those who live in Brisbane, where treatment facilities are available. There are many other parts of the State where there are not such treatment facilities. This Act will apply not to Brisbane only but to every part of the State and in view of the many involved aspects it presents it would be wise to hasten very slowly in putting these very contradictory provisions of the Bill into operation and in the interim examine the suggestion I put forward as to the possibility of adding other constituents to the treatment bath to make the timber completely immune from borers.

Now let me touch on the clause of the Bill that imposes a total restriction upon the use of lyctus-susceptible timber in buildings intended to last over two years—which virtually means every building erected in the State, as even a shed, a fowlhouse or any other outhouse. Most people, after erecting a building, hope that it will last longer than two years. But the same clause of the Bill that imposes this condition also specifies the timbers that shall be treated for lyctus borer and proceeds to specify such things as wall battens to support or assist in supporting any plaster, fibro-cement or building sheeting; and any battens to support or assist in supporting any ceiling or tile or fibro-cement roof, and then there is the overall provision, "or any other prescribed purpose." We find in one clause in the Bill two directly opposite provisions and I should like the Minister to tell us just what is meant by the overall provision. Is it all timbers, or only the specified sizes of timbers? That clause of the Bill could well be looked into to the advantage of the people so that they will know exactly where they stand.

I think the Minister will admit that the second part of that provision, which specifies wall battens, roof battens, and ceiling battens, deals with the most important classes of timber because they are usually the types that are cut from sapwood and that are hard to get at and keep under observation when incorporated in a house. If he confined his attention for the moment to those timbers he would be doing a great service to the people and something within the capabilities of the trade and the treatment facilities available. If he extends his activities to other types of timber he will find that the treatment facilities available will not be able to meet the position. That is why I say we have to have a practical not a theoretical approach to this problem. In view of the possible heavy cost of compulsory treatment and the grave doubts that exist at present as to exactly what that cost will be to the home-builder, we have to be very careful.

**Mr. Power:** It is a very good insurance, no matter what it costs.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** I do not know that it is such a wonderful insurance whatever the cost may be. I believe that at a reasonable cost it would be good insurance, but unlike the Minister, I do not say it would be good insurance to the home-builder at any cost. After all, there are certain insurance policies for which the premiums are too great for the risk involved, and that applies to the Minister's interjections. We have to give very serious consideration to the cost of this treatment.

**Mr. Power:** It looks as if you were putting up a case for the jerry-builder.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** The only jerry-builder at present is the Minister himself. When we are in Committee we shall have to clean up some of the things I have mentioned, especially the provision relating to what is meant by timbers that have to be compulsorily treated.

I come now to that part of the Bill dealing with the seasoning of timber. I am of the opinion that the provisions to protect home-builders against the sale of unseasoned timber are long overdue. Far too much unseasoned timber has been sold as seasoned, and far too much damage has ensued as a result. I know the Secretary for Public Works will agree with me because the State Housing Commission, which he controls, has suffered through having been sold unseasoned timber. Some of the houses it has built have caused a considerable amount of trouble because of it. I am sure he will welcome a provision that will assure the home-builders of the State that unseasoned timber will not be sold to them.

Another question that has to be considered is whether we have sufficient kilns available in Queensland to handle the timber that is being used now.

Experiments have shown that air-seasoning is a satisfactory and reasonable method of seasoning but, unfortunately, you will get the miller who will put away racks of timber to season and somebody will come

along and want timber and he will be persuaded to give the buyer some of it before it is properly seasoned. We are short of kiln-dried timber and we have to depend on air-seasoned timber. In our climate, particularly in the summer-time, timber seasons fairly rapidly. In many instances considerable loss is involved in the seasoning of timber, particularly if the wrong type of log happens to be cut up and put on the racks to season. It will twist and turn and there is heavy waste when it is dressed and before it is used.

**Mr. Power:** Scribbly gum.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** You do not use scribbly gum for flooring.

With the problem of using unseasoned timbers we have that of insufficient facilities to treat the timber coming forward at the present time. I hope facilities will be available in the near future and that sufficient encouragement will be given to mills to install them and thus give a service to the community.

I want to raise the question what effect the borax-bath treatment will have on cabinet timbers. Most of our cabinet timbers, or at least a good few of them, such as walnut, red cedar and others, are included amongst the susceptible timbers and liable to be treated by the borax treatment. I should like the Minister to tell us whether this treatment has any detrimental effect on the cabinet timbers when it comes to polishing and preparing them for fine furniture.

**Mr. Roberts:** Veneers and plys have been treated for years.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** I know that plywood has but I am not sure about veneers. However, the Minister might be able to inform us on that point later.

Penalties are to be imposed on any person selling timber not true to name or under different names from those set out in the schedule. I do not know who will determine the true names of many of our timbers. In this connection I will tell a story that will probably interest the Secretary for Public Works, Housing and Local Government, because it concerns his department. This did not occur, I should mention, since he has been Minister. A Public Works buyer was sold a first-class line of bloodwood as iron-bark and he remarked what wonderful timber it was. After timber is sawn many of our varieties are hard to distinguish and experts could be tricked in regard to the true names of the timber, particularly when they have not got pieces of bark on them to help them.

**Mr. Brown:** There is a similarity about a lot of them.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** Quite a number of timbers are hard to pick. One of the conditions of contracts for the supply of electric-light poles is that a portion of the bark must be left on the poles so that the type of timber may be determined without difficulty.

**Mr. Aikens:** Some of the smarties can put the wrong piece of bark on the poles.

**Mr. NICKLIN:** That sort of thing is not done in Southern Queensland.

The object of the Bill is one that I think hon. members will commend—an endeavour to protect the house-buying and -building public against the use of susceptible timbers that are not treated before they go into a building.

There is one thing in the Minister's approach to this problem about which I have grave doubt. We want to see a more practical approach to the problem than this. I think the Minister has attacked it from the theoretical angle and not sufficiently from the practical angle. There will be a few headaches when the time comes to put it into operation. However, I hope the Minister will go warily and cannily in the implementation of the Bill until he finds out all the pitfalls that are involved. I hope he will be sympathetic in his administration in an endeavour to iron out many of the problems associated with the effort that will be involved in tackling the job that the Bill sets out to solve.

**Mr. BURROWS** (Port Curtis) (3.52 p.m.): The Leader of the Opposition began his speech by condemning the Bill but I was very pleased that he concluded by praising it. He wanted to know early in the piece why it should be necessary to use sapwood at all. I think everybody regrets the necessity for having to use sapwood, but we have to realise that we are short of timber in Queensland and it is necessary today to use timber that would have been despised a few years ago. If it is possible by means of treatment to make sap timber usable why should we be so extravagant as to throw it away or ignore the possibility of treating it?

Then there was the question how much the treatment would cost. How it will interfere with the profits of the sawmiller seems to be uppermost in the minds of hon. members opposite. It is remarkable that every time a Bill is introduced into this House the first reaction of hon. members opposite is: what effect will it have on the profit angle? I say that emphatically. I cannot help noticing the consistency with which that factor is watched by hon. members opposite. I remember the occasion on which the Minister introduced a very humane Bill to provide for better conditions in the coal-mining industry. The then deputy Leader of the Opposition asked that consideration of the Bill be deferred until he had time to consult some of his chaps. (Opposition dissent.) He did. I will hand it to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, that he was honest enough to admit that his duty to the coal-owners was more important to him in his position as Deputy Leader of the Opposition than his duty to the health of the coal-miners.

The same applies today. The first consideration of hon. members opposite in their approach to this Bill is how it will affect profits. It does not matter whether a house tumbles down on some poor unfortunate man. The average man is lucky to buy one house in his lifetime, but Opposition members are not concerned whether it falls down on him like a pack of cards. (Opposition interjections.) That is their only concern. The

Leader of the Opposition always gives me the impression that he is talking with his tongue in his cheek when he opposes this humane and just legislation. He realises that he is being prodded all the time by the financial interests that support him and keep his party going.

The Leader of the Opposition pleaded for a practical approach to this Bill and immediately outlined the most negative approach it was possible for anyone to make. He wanted the Bill deferred. In other words, he wanted the rights of those people to sell borer-infested timber preserved. He was afraid that they might have to outlay or disgorge some of their profits in providing a plant that at the very most would not cost more than £600 or £700. He was prepared, in order to protect some unscrupulous sawmiller from putting in a plant that would cost £600, to take the risk that every home being built in Brisbane today would be infested with borers.

**Mr. Foley:** It costs much less than that to install a plant. The price is according to capacity. (Opposition interjections.)

**Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr. Keyatta): Order! I ask hon. members to give due consideration to the hon. member who is making his speech. He is entitled to make his speech to an orderly House. I therefore ask hon. members to be tolerant.

**Mr. BURROWS:** The Leader of the Opposition raised the point that this Bill would make it more expensive to erect a house—he pleaded for a practical approach to the subject. The average house would contain 6,000 super feet of timber. Approximately 85 per cent. of that timber would be true wood and would not require treatment. Quite a lot of the timber used in the erection of houses does not require to be treated. Many timbers, such as ironbark, blackbutt, turpentine, sassafras and redgum, are immune to borer attack. It is no good the Opposition's trying to raise the bogey about the added cost of the building. I will not dispute, of course, that owing to the excessive profits made by builders today houses are costing more than they should.

**An Opposition Member:** The Housing Commission houses are dearer.

**Mr. BURROWS:** There is supervision of the houses built by the Housing Commission. I will tell the House of an incident that happened only recently. My brother, who was a builder, was appointed to the position of inspector for the Commonwealth Bank, and he had to report on the condition of houses. One of my electors came to me and said, "I should have had a home only for your brother." I said, "How did that come about?" He explained to me that he was to get an advance from the Commonwealth Bank but my brother recommended the bank not to advance the money. When I saw my brother I asked him about the case and he said, "It is just murder with these speculator builders. The joists in that house were 3 by 2 spotted gum." That poor unfortunate beggar, if he had the money and had not the protection of an inspection, would have

innocently bought that house and, as my brother said, it would have fallen over long before he had it paid off.

Members opposite complained about the cost of Housing Commission houses. I would remind them that at least they get quality in Housing Commission houses; and that cannot be said of the average house. I am not suggesting that every builder is dishonest; but the tendency and the inducement to do these things are there.

In conclusion I should like to congratulate the Leader of the Opposition in this respect—that he started off to bury the Bill and ended up by commending it. I was very pleased to notice his change of mind and if he keeps on I should not be surprised to hear him one of these days denouncing the party to which he belongs and applying for membership of this party. (Laughter.)

**Mr. MACDONALD** (Stanley) (4.3 p.m.): After the burlesque given to us by the hon. member for Port Curtis, I should like to say a few words. I should like to congratulate the Minister upon the very laudable case he made in his endeavour to protect the buyer and builder of a house and to check unscrupulous sawmillers. But I think he is going the wrong way about it. As my Leader said, the approach to this matter is purely theoretical and is not made from a practical point of view at all.

On reading the Bill the first thought that came to me was that hardwood is fast vanishing from the State, and the Bill is of no use, because one clause contradicts the other. The Minister sets out to protect the home-builder from inferior timber, yet the miller can sell that timber to the builder or the carpenter if he specifies it as "unclassified timber." All he has to say is, "This timber is unclassified." There are millers in this city who stamp their invoices to the effect that the timber is unclassified and susceptible to borers. Under this Bill, if the timber is sent out as unclassified it can be used. provided the buyer and vendor agree on that point.

**Mr. Foley:** No.

**Mr. MACDONALD:** The hon. gentleman does not know his Bill. It is most iniquitous in one respect. In my building operations I always send my own timber to the mill to be cut to the specifications I want, but under this Bill any officer of the Sub-Department of Forestry or any other person authorised by the board can seize that timber and detain it for six months, even in the log. It introduces the most vicious principle I know of, that is, free entry into a man's home or onto a man's property by any person authorised by the board. That timber is the man's own property, whether it is unclassified, classified, certified as preserved or not, but under this Bill authority is given to an officer to enter on these premises and seize the timber. That is a dreadful state of affairs. The trend of modern legislation is to extremes. I realise that it is necessary to have fairly wide powers to police a statute, but we are going over the fence altogether.

In the first place, power is given to enter a man's property, seize his timbers and hang on to it for six months. Will that expedite building? That timber may be perfectly good. That is one great fault of the Bill.

**Mr. Foley:** We are not likely to do a thing like that.

**Mr. MACDONALD:** But power is given to do that, and I do not trust such power or powers of entry.

**Mr. Foley:** We are concerned only with lyctus-susceptible timber.

**Mr. MACDONALD:** Unclassified timber, but he can come in and seize it.

**Mr. Foley:** No.

**Mr. MACDONALD:** Yes, he can. Moreover, log timber can be seized as well. When timber is being sent to the mill or being returned to the station it can be seized, either in the log or as sawn timber.

**Mr. Power:** It would not be taken unless it was infected.

**Mr. MACDONALD:** He can take it all right; the Bill says so. Wait until we reach the Committee stage on Clause 10.

**Mr. Power:** To be used if necessary.

**Mr. MACDONALD:** These are points I wish clarified by the Minister. At the present moment it is a most iniquitous Bill. The Minister sets out with the laudable object of protecting the home-builders, but he will hamper house-building by this Bill. I realise that on account of the scarcity of hardwoods it is necessary to make the best use of all our available timber. Our young hardwoods are so full of moisture that it is necessary to have some protection. One sees timber coming off the bench at country sawmills dripping wet and bending at the ends. I hope the Minister will clarify that matter, particularly Clause 10 of the Bill.

Another matter is this: when I send my own timber to the mill to be cut up—

**Mr. Jesson:** You will have to pay a few more bob. That is what is worrying you.

**Mr. MACDONALD:** That cost the hon. member a lot of thought, did it not? But I will confound him by quoting from Shakespeare—

"Falstaff sweats to death,  
And lards the lean earth as he walks  
along,"

and you, Mr. Acting Speaker, know from which animal we get lard.

**Mr. KERR** (Oxley) (4.9 p.m.): I will not traverse the ground covered so exhaustively by the Leader of the Opposition, but the hon. gentleman raised a few points of considerable importance. He pointed out that he was thoroughly in accord with the Bill, and on behalf of my party I say that we are too, but do not think it is letter-perfect. It is highly theoretical and many provisions will be highly impracticable. Although there can be a statute dealing with borer-susceptible timbers, it will be found very difficult to police. The principle involved is a very high

ideal. I appreciate the Minister's efforts to endeavour to bring about a better class of timber for the use of our home-builders, but I have yet to learn that any house in the State has fallen down on the head of the owner.

**Mr. Jesson:** Because they repair them.

**Mr. KERR:** No, they do not. The position has been highly exaggerated by the Minister, but we all agree with the introduction of the Bill.

**Mr. Foley:** I only quoted definite cases.

**Mr. KERR:** That may be so, but the clauses of the Bill are often at cross-purposes, especially where it provides that timber may be sold as unclassified.

**Mr. Foley:** But still, we are preventing it from being used.

**Mr. KERR:** The department will find it extremely difficult to police.

The main purpose of my rising was to point out what I think is an oversight, in that plywood is included in the definitions, and there is no provision for veneer. I know that plywood is made out of veneer and nearly all plywood in this State is treated, but there are a certain number of veneers that are not put into plywood and are not covered by this Bill.

A few days ago I asked a question how many sawmills were operating in Queensland. I find that in 1938 there were 640 licensed sawmills and that by 1949 the number had jumped to approximately 979. The Minister today directed attention to the fact that there were nine immunisation plants operating in Queensland. He has since stated that there might be 50, but that is only a very small percentage when we take the total number of sawmills operating.

**Mr. Foley:** They could treat 10,000,000 superficial feet a year.

**Mr. KERR:** But the output of sawmills for 1949 was 400,000,000 superficial feet.

**Mr. Foley:** But it is not all sapwood and we are dealing with sapwood.

**Mr. KERR:** The Minister has not indicated what percentage of that 400,000,000 superficial feet is susceptible to the lyctus borer or contains a percentage of sapwood. I am not saying that every mill in the State will require a plant to immunise the timbers going through it but there are certain mills in the North and round Brisbane that are cutting scrub timbers. Under this measure those mills will have no opportunity to treat timber. When he was introducing the Bill, I asked the Minister the date of proclamation and he said, "As soon as Royal assent is given." I do not know enough about the matter to go into technicalities but I do know that a grave injustice will be done to many small sawmills who have done a great job in Queensland. In 1938 we had only 640 mills and when the Government decided to increase the number of licenses the number increased by 50 per cent.

**Mr. Foley:** We are not stopping them from cutting.

**Mr. KERR:** I know that, but they are not being given opportunities. How could a mill out behind Kilecoy, for instance, send its timber to Woolloongabba to be immunised?

**Mr. Foley:** They can sell the timber just as they did before.

**Mr. KERR:** But who is going to buy it? Why should they be allowed to sell it direct to the user instead of being required to send it to a central immunisation plant to make it suitable for building purposes?

**Mr. Foley:** We are only insisting that it be immunised where it is going into a building, and where it will be detrimental to that building.

**Mr. KERR:** The majority of this timber goes into buildings. Surely the Minister realises that a grave injustice will be done if the Bill is proclaimed forthwith. They will have no alternative but to send their sapwood or scrubwoods, which carry a lot of sapwood, direct to an immunisation plant. I say that that is unfair and a great injustice is being done to them. Virtually every mill sends a certain proportion of sapwood direct to its customers. On the North Coast line a lot of immature and scrub timbers are being used and if there is no plant available, what will the people do? Will they sell the timber to a builder here in Brisbane who wants to buy it and will the builder have to take it to Woolloongabba or some immunisation plant before he can put it into a house? That is what the Bill says and I say that it is wrong.

**Mr. Foley:** Are you suggesting that we allow them to sell it and allow it to be put into houses without immunisation?

**Mr. KERR:** No. Do not put a wrong construction on what I am saying. In the plainest language I am saying that you are doing a grave injustice, not only to the people who want to build homes but to every small sawmiller when you insist upon the implementation of the Bill immediately Royal assent has been given. I say that with all the sincerity at my command and I say emphatically that you must give these sawmills a period of time in which to set up immunisation plants. I do not say that the time should be indefinite, but it should be at least four months. That time will enable them to put in plants and if they do not avail themselves of the opportunity, the onus will be upon them.

I want to mention the question of the moisture content of timber. A friend of mine said, "You might put your Blinker or testing apparatus onto the timber to discover its moisture content—whether it is kiln-dried or air-dried timber—and you might find that the moisture content was about 15 per cent., the permissible amount under the provisions of the Bill. Put that timber out into a suburban yard and subject it to three days' westerlies and you can imagine how the moisture content will go out of it. That timber

might then register only 6 or 7 per cent. moisture and the builder is made liable for using timber that has not the required moisture content." As the Leader of the Opposition said, in many respects it will be found impracticable to carry out the intention of the measure.

The Minister has not supplied any information as to the length of potency of the boric-acid bath. We do not know how long the immunity will last. No provision is made for supervision in that regard and I should appreciate it if the Minister would give us some light on that point in his reply.

As I have said, the Leader of the Opposition dealt fully with most of the major aspects of the Bill. In conclusion I again impress upon the Minister the grave injustice and dislocation that will follow by its immediate proclamation. I agree with the Minister that we should do something; I am in accord with the methods laid down in the Bill but I want to see justice done to those small sawmillers who came to the rescue over the last five or six years.

Do not forget that we have been using this timber for five or six years but there are still thousands of houses to be built in this State. If you stop the flow of this timber by immediately proclaiming the Bill an injustice will be done to everybody—to every citizen, every small sawmiller, and every big sawmiller too. You must give them some time in which to install a plant to meet the requirements of the Bill.

**Mr. AIKENS** (Mundingburra) (4.21 p.m.): Hon. members opposite have been putting up an amazing story in debating the Bill. They have admitted that the sawmillers have over recent years been producing timber peculiarly susceptible to this type of borer, that they have put the timber into the trade, and that it has been responsible for quite a lot of the deficiencies in the homes that have been built. Now they ask that the sawmiller be given another four, five, or six months to install the necessary plant and equipment to immunise this timber.

I do not know very much about the practical side of timber. The only timber that I have had any experience with has been the timber on the woodheap and although I am not a very good axeman either I have been able to bruise it into some semblance of stove wood from time to time. I support the Bill despite the fact that I realise how particularly difficult it would be to implement and police it.

Since the beginning of time there have been various historical ages. For instance, we know of the Ice Age, the Paleolithic Age, the Bronze Age, and the Stone Age, and I think that the present age can be rightly classed as the Racketeering Age. At no time in the history of Australia since Captain Phillip landed at Sydney Cove in 1788 have there been more rackets in Australia than operate at the present time; and one of the greatest rackets in operation in Australia and in this State is the timber racket and building racket.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr. AIKENS:** I am dealing with the vital principles of the Bill.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** The hon. member must deal with the principles contained in the Bill; he cannot generalise in that way.

**Mr. AIKENS:** I am going to deal with the vital principles contained in the Bill—if you will only contain yourself, Mr. Acting Speaker, as you often asked me to do. These people are taking advantage of the fact that so many people need homes and so many people have the money to buy homes as a result of the flush wartime period that there have sprung up in this country quite a number of sawmillers who are prepared to go to any lengths to reap a profit rapidly. To indicate the extent to which the racketeering is going on in the sawmilling industry, we have only to look at a recent inquiry or royal commission in the South, at which it was disclosed that a prominent Brisbane firm, Messrs. Hancock and Gore, paid no less a sum than £50,000, merely for the title to a timber concession that was supposed to exist in New Guinea. That will give some idea of the very big timber racketeering that is going on. Not only have sawmillers turned out immature timber and timber susceptible to the borer but they have put the timber into the trade and quite a number of building contractors have used it in building homes.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** There is no provision in the Bill dealing with building contractors.

**Mr. AIKENS:** They have put this timber into the homes of the people and the Bill deals with that. The sawmillers have engaged in the racket of deliberately selling this timber and some contractors have deliberately bought the timber for house-construction, both knowing that it was unsuitable for that purpose. These building contractors have used the timber knowing they were using it and the sawmillers have sold the timber fully aware of the fact that it was unsuitable for the purpose and the unfortunate home-builders have paid for it not knowing it was unsuitable for home-construction.

Not so long ago I went from my own home in Townsville to see a new house that had been recently constructed there and it had borers right through it. Hundreds of superficial feet of timber had to be used in replacements. This racketeering has been going on for some time. It is being practised by sawmillers and building contractors to the detriment of the people of the State and to the detriment of many who have put the whole of their life's savings into the building of a home.

I have read the Bill through. I do not know very much about its technical aspect. I should not know one of these lyctus borers if I met it in George Street. I have never been introduced to a lyctus borer or any other kind of borer, but I do know that quite a lot of workers have been flagrantly robbed of their life's savings by unscrupulous

millers and builders by the use of timber subject to lyctus borers in the construction of their homes.

**Mr. KEYATTA** (Townsville) (4.25 p.m.): I strongly support the introduction of this Bill. I also thank the Minister for its prompt introduction and his clear explanation of its provisions.

Let us go back to what prompted the Government to consider this legislation. Long before the Timber Commission's inquiry was started, many workers had great financial burdens imposed on them because builders used borer-infested timber. Because of the war there is at present an acute shortage of homes and this has caused a great demand for timber. Much of our best timber was used for war purposes, with the result that many classes of timber that were previously not regarded as suitable for building are now being marketed. As this timber was not used prior to the war, we had very little reaction because green or sappy timber was attacked by borers. We have an example of that in Townsville in Old Tattersall's Hotel Building. That building is over 60 years old. Its timbers are in excellent condition, and have been thoroughly seasoned through the years. The president of the A.L.P. Branch at Townsville is a builder. Some years ago that branch collected certain material concerning the use of unsuitable timbers in home-building and passed a resolution that I should produce that evidence in this House in order to show the great damage being suffered by workers who were building homes. The replacement cost of many workers' homes this builder was employed on has been enormous and the owners can ill afford this expense. The cost per square for constructing houses has doubled from what it was in 1939 and on to this cost the breadwinner must find the wherewithal to replace borer-infested timbers now being used in home-building. It is these facts that prompted the Government to introduce this legislation.

The technical officers of the Sub-department of Forestry have closely studied the whole position and evolved methods to combat damage by borers. The Government are not placing any hardship on home-builders—they cannot afford to place any additional burdens on them—but they are endeavouring to counter the use of immature timbers in the construction of their homes.

The use of immature timbers subject to borer infection affects home-building in another way, for in addition to the high cost of building the replacement of borer-infected timber has an important bearing on the labour question.

Another aspect of home-building I wish to refer to is the method now being adopted in building contracts, that is, the cost-plus principle. It is so unsatisfactory that it warrants a very close investigation.

**Mr. Wanstall:** Is that in the Bill?

**Mr. KEYATTA:** It should be.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr. KEYATTA:** I compliment the Minister on the introduction of the Bill, which sets out that 110 species of timber are subject to this infestation. The technical staff responsible for the scientific investigations are to be commended. It has been pointed out that the presence of borers has caused walls to collapse. I have seen an entire building pierced by borers. The shrinkage of the immature timber allows these insects to penetrate. There is also dry rot, especially in the areas where there is a heavy rainfall. Not only are houses affected but furniture also is affected.

With regard to the implementation of the Bill, it is a very poor concern indeed that cannot face the outlay of £600 or £700 that is necessary to put in the required plant. We have had cases where people have started an industry with the minimum capital and they have made good. I refer to the hon. member for Windsor who established his industry in a small way and has developed it till it is one of the biggest of our industries, for which he is to be complimented.

Every assistance will be rendered to the people concerned by the department. I again compliment the Minister. I know the people will feel that they are safeguarded because the builder will have to be careful when he selects his timber.

**Mr. CHALK** (East Toowoomba) (4.33 p.m.): I heard the Minister mention this afternoon that this Bill had the blessing of the Timber Stabilisation Board. I do not doubt that at all, but I wish to point out that I took this Bill to Toowoomba at the week-end and referred it to a number of sawmillers in my electorate; and the impression I gathered from them was that while they are in agreement with the action of the Government in bringing the Bill forward they were very concerned about the period that would elapse before it was proclaimed, because they contended that the necessary machinery for the installation of the treatment plant could not be procured promptly.

One matter I mention to the Minister—and he may be able to say something about this later on—is that copper baths have to be provided for the treatment of this timber, and as far as I know and from inquiries I have been able to make the copper necessary for the lining of these baths is unprocureable in Australia at the present time. If that is so, and if this Bill is to be proclaimed immediately, it raises the question whether we shall not have a complete bottleneck.

In country areas particularly there are a large number of sawmills, and their operations are to the advantage of home-building. These millers are working on a very small capital but play their part in solving our housing problem and if this Bill is proclaimed immediately it will prevent such millers from supplying even the small percentage of scrub timbers they cut, which timbers are susceptible to borers. If their production is to be bottle-necked because of this Bill there will be a delay in housing. I am quite certain that every member on both sides is wholeheartedly in favour of legislation that will

speed up house-building and at the same time protect the home-builder against what might be termed jerry-builders or opportunists. Consequently I find myself quite in accord with the Bill, but I am particularly concerned about the time factor.

**Mr. Burrows:** Could there not be wooden baths?

**Mr. CHALK:** I do not know whether the hon. member is accustomed to bathing in a wooden bath but the baths to be used for this timber have to be lined with copper, and heavy copper at that.

**Mr. Burrows:** Who is your authority for that?

**Mr. CHALK:** My authority is the men in the sawmilling business in Toowoomba, who are in a much better position to give an opinion than the hon. member.

**Mr. Burrows** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Order! I would ask hon. members on my right to allow the hon. member to make his speech without interruption, and I ask the hon. member for East Toowoomba to connect his remarks with the question before the House.

**Mr. CHALK:** We are introducing a control very promptly. It is something that I think we agree in the long run will be to the advantage of the home-builder. The man who puts his life savings into buying a home has to be protected but at the same time I feel that a certain time must be allowed before we bring this Bill into operation. If timbers cut in the country have to be sent to the city for treatment it will cause considerable loss of time and in addition add considerably to the cost in the treatment and haulage, both to the city for treatment and later to the building site. As the Minister has mentioned, although there is some doubt as to the actual cost of the treatment of timber, which may be in the vicinity of £40 or £50 for an average home, the costs of bringing timber from the point of production to the place for treatment and to the site will probably be greater than the cost of the treatment. If the timber was treated where it is produced only one handling would be necessary and I believe that it can be so treated, so long as ample opportunity is given to the small sawmillers to procure the equipment needed to comply with the Bill.

We know that there is now a definite lull in the supply of timber because of the second part of the Bill, which provides for seasoning. I agree that we must do everything possible to ensure that only well-seasoned timber is used in the building of homes but here again we shall have to be very careful to see that the kiln process of drying is expanded so that timber may be treated quickly and supplies are not held up.

I believe that this legislation should be introduced but I suggest that the Minister make some inquiries into the availability of materials necessary to provide these treatment

plants. If he finds that the equipment is readily available I certainly believe the Bill should be proclaimed promptly, but if materials are not easily obtainable serious consideration should be given to the date of proclamation.

**Mr. MULLER (Fassifern) (4.42 p.m.):** I advise the Minister to proceed very cautiously in this matter because there is a danger of its becoming contentious and causing a good deal of confusion. I suggest that before the Bill is considered in Committee practical men who know something about the milling and treatment of timber be consulted, because their advice will be valuable.

When we are asked to consider legislation such as this the first thing we ask is what its effect will be and in this instance I am afraid the effect will not be all that the Minister hopes. There is a danger that it will accentuate the present shortage of timber. It can also increase the general overall price of timber. If it has the effect of preventing some of the small millers from handling scrub timbers it must be obvious that less timber will be available. From inquiries I have made of some of the small millers operating in the mountainous country on scrub timbers, who have not been able to get supplies of the hardwoods we have been using over the years, I find that they are not prepared to mill the timber and have it treated. The Bill sets out clearly that it will apply to all timbers to be used in buildings that are expected to last for more than two years.

**Mr. Roberts:** They did this in New South Wales and it worked out all right.

**Mr. MULLER:** If the hon. member will contain himself and apply common sense to the subject he will realise that there is a good deal in what I am about to say.

The Government are going to ask the small sawmillers to put in these plants but many of them will not be prepared to do so. If they were allowed to sell timber as untreated and somebody else had to treat it they could still mill the timber. The Bill, however, puts the whole responsibility on the miller and I say that there is consequently a danger of accentuating the present shortage of timber. There is the danger also that the Bill will increase the general all-round price of hardwood timber. You know it to be a fact, Mr. Acting Speaker, that the better hardwood timbers are those that will be untreated, such as ironbark.

**Mr. Burrows:** It will not increase the price of ironbark.

**Mr. MULLER:** It will, unless you fix lower prices because everybody will specify ironbark. In that way you will have such a demand for ironbark that you will create something in the nature of a racket or black-market.

The hon. member for Port Curtis said that it would not increase the price of ironbark. I am told that royalties on some of these susceptible timbers are reasonably low and that a miller might pay a royalty in the vicinity of 2s. or 2s. 6d. on the stump. The

better timber, such as ironbark, is bringing 5s. or 6s. There is a difference of about 3s. or 4s. in the royalty to start off with. We have been told that the cost of treating scrub timber will be approximately 12s. a hundred. Milling costs of both classes of timber will be the same and, with the difference in royalties, you will be placing the treated timber at a cost of 6s. more than ironbark and the better class timbers. What will happen? Every sensible person must appreciate that people will be tumbling over themselves to get the untreated timbers in preference to the treated ones. Therefore you will be creating an anomaly that it will be difficult to overcome.

Some of the price adjustments are very difficult too. It is an easy matter to say, "We will fix price and this sort of thing will not happen," but when the quality of the article enters into the picture and you will get something better for less money, there will be a rush for the better article.

Let me give an illustration of what is happening at present in regard to price adjustment, taking hardwood timber in my own district. There are two mills at Boonah and mills at Peak Crossing, the distance between the two places being 18 miles. The prices fixed allow the Boonah mills to sell sawn hardwood at 9s. less than mills at Peak Crossing.

**Mr. Bruce:** You mentioned the Boonah mill. I did not catch the sale price.

**Mr. MULLER:** I will repeat what I said for the Minister's benefit. The present price for hardwood at Peak Crossing, which is 18 miles from Boonah, is 9s. a hundred more than at Boonah. Much of the timber is drawn from similar country and as a matter of fact it is closer to Peak Crossing than to Boonah.

**Mr. Farrell:** How does that operate when the key market rate must be the same?

**Mr. MULLER:** This information was given to me by people in the industry and they assure me that the demand for hardwood is so keen that they are unable to supply because they are obliged to sell it at a lesser rate than a mill 18 miles away. The mill 18 miles away, selling at the higher price, is closer to Brisbane than the first one. The moment you have these price anomalies—and this is going to create one, because the treated timber will be dearer than the untreated—you have a problem it will be very difficult to solve.

In a matter like this the Minister would have been well advised to consult with people engaged in the business, who would have been quite prepared to advise him on the matter. I have not come into the House openly to criticise the Bill. I realise that if timber is to become riddled with borers it is necessary that something should be done to give protection to the public but in drafting legislation of this kind we must be careful to see that the position is not made still worse than it is.

I see another weakness in the Bill. According to the Minister, about 110 different types of wood will require to be sprayed, but there are timbers in the list that should not be included, and one of them is spotted gum. Spotted gum has been recognised for years as one of our best hardwoods, and it is susceptible only when it is very young or when the timber is sappy. There have been cases in which spotted gum has been affected by borers but the ravage has not been sufficient to warrant the Minister in including it in the Bill.

Another timber that should not be included is crow's ash, one of our best hardwood timbers, a beautiful flooring timber. I know of no better flooring timber. I know of cases where crow's ash has been badly affected by this borer and on close examination it was found that the timber was attacked through the sap. When the timber was sold it was difficult for the builder to distinguish the sap from the real wood. I have been informed by people who are competent to say that if crow's ash is sufficiently dry you can detect the sap from the real wood.

That is why I say that it would have been better for the Minister to consult with people in the trade concerning the timber that should be included in the list. Timbers like spotted gum and crow's ash could be excluded from the list of timbers required to be sprayed but it could be laid down that before they were sold they would have to be reasonably dry or have little sap.

I notice that red cedar is included in the list but today red cedar is so costly that it can be used only for furniture. How many furniture manufacturers today are prepared to install a plant of their own to treat the timber before it is used in furniture manufacture? Furniture manufacturers should be required to spray all timber before it is used in the making of furniture. I have no time for the furniture manufacturer who would use timber that was likely to become riddled with borers.

Would it not have been better to approach the problem in the way I suggest? While we appreciate the need for the Bill to stop people from selling inferior timber, I think a practical approach should have been made to the problem. I cannot help feeling that the Minister has been largely advised by officers of the Forestry Department, whereas it would have been much better had he gone a little further with the proposal and consulted people who have a knowledge and experience of the timber trade over very many years.

I am informed also that these people are prepared to give advice. They are not seeking to dictate to the Minister. Is it not wise that such people as the Queensland Sawmillers' Association should be consulted? I do not suggest that they should be allowed to dictate what it should contain or influence the Minister—just simply advise him. Then we have the Timber Stabilisation Board, which has been set up by the Government, the Box Manufacturers' Association, the

Joinery Association, the Ply and Veneer Marketing Board, and the furniture manufacturers, all of which are competent to judge and give useful advice. I had a valuable experience in the last six months in consulting these men in connection with the manufacture of butter and cheese containers. The advice gained by them over the years was useful and helpful. They never attempted to dictate to us and tell us what to do, but they informed us of the many pitfalls surrounding us.

Another weakness in the Bill, as I mentioned on the first reading, lies in the identification of the many hardwoods. I defy any hon. member to go into a miller's yard and name the different types of timber. I have been reliably informed that millers themselves cannot go into a timber yard and tell you what a stick of timber really is. There is such a general resemblance that you are beaten. I was of the opinion that millers could pick out the different classes among the logs, but they cannot. This is not the simple matter that the Minister imagines. It is full of tricks and loopholes.

If this Bill has the effect of reducing our supply of timber it is dangerous. In a matter of this kind we should crawl before we walk and look before we jump. We are jumping into this thing with our eyes shut, and it will have the effect of increasing the price of timber all round and accentuating the shortage of timber. We have many good hardwood timbers today that for a number of years have been wasted. It is quite common to see ironbark timber ringbarked. Why? Because the owners of the country conclude that they cannot grow grass and timber too. Would it not be very much better for us to preserve our good timbers and encourage owners of land growing this timber to preserve it? In 99 per cent. of the cases this timber has been planted by nature. We should also encourage owners of land to plant timber. The little money the Government gets from royalty dues does not warrant us in encouraging the destruction of timber and not replacing it at the same time. It would be better if we evolved ways and means for that to be done. In the interests of the nation we should pay a reasonable royalty on the better-class timbers.

We are starting at the wrong end. We are endeavouring to treat timbers that are generally regarded as being of not high quality, and the better class of timbers we are wasting. I think we should consult the practical people, who are in a position to advise us; if we did, we should not be doing what we are. We ought to consult practical people before we pass legislation of this kind.

**Hon. T. A. FOLEY** (Normanby—Secretary for Public Lands) (5.1 p.m.), in reply: I will deal with the matters raised by hon. members in the Committee stage of the Bill.

Motion (Mr. Foley) agreed to.

The House adjourned at 5.3 p.m.