

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 16 AUGUST 1950

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

BIRTH OF PRINCESS.

ADDRESS TO HIS MAJESTY THE KING.

Hon. E. M. HANLON (Ithaca—Premier), by leave: I wish to move a motion, without notice and without debate. I wish also to inform the House that the following message has this morning been transmitted to His Majesty the King through His Excellency the Governor:—

“On behalf of the Government, the Legislature and the people of Queensland, I desire to convey to Your Majesties and to Her Royal Highness the Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh sincere congratulations on the birth of a daughter to Her Royal Highness.”

I now move—

“(1) That the following Address be presented to His Majesty the King:—

‘To the King’s most Excellent Majesty—
Most Gracious Sovereign—

‘We, the Members of the Legislative Assembly, in Parliament assembled, tender to Your Majesty and to Her Majesty the Queen, sincere congratulations on the birth of a daughter to Her Royal Highness the Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh.

‘We desire to express the happiness felt by the Parliament and people of Queensland at this happy event, and ask Your Majesty to convey their felicitations to Her Royal Highness and the Duke of Edinburgh.’

“(2) That His Excellency the Governor be requested to forward the above Address to His Majesty the King.”

Mr. NICKLIN (Landsborough—Leader of the Opposition): I have much pleasure in seconding the motion.

Motion agreed to.

QUESTIONS.

COMPULSORY VOTING, BRISBANE CITY COUNCIL ELECTION.

Mr. MANN (Brisbane) asked the Attorney-General—

“1. With reference to the recent Brisbane City Council by-election, was voting compulsory?”

“2. If voting was compulsory, whose responsibility is it to take action to deal with those persons who neglected to vote?”

Hon. J. LARCOMBE (Rockhampton) replied—

“1. Yes.

“2. The responsibility in the first instance rests upon the Returning Officer of the Brisbane City Council. Should the Returning Officer require action to be taken with regard to non-voters, he should supply

to the Principal Electoral Officer a marked roll showing non-voters. The Principal Electoral Officer would then automatically proceed to give effect to the compulsory voting provisions of the law. Unless the Returning Officer of the Brisbane City Council takes this action, the Principal Electoral Officer cannot take any action, as he is not in the position to know who did or did not vote. To date the Principal Electoral Officer has not received any instruction from the Returning Officer that he wishes any action to be taken."

FEDERAL SUBSIDY FOR CALLIDE COAL.

Mr. BURROWS (Port Curtis) asked the Secretary for Mines and Immigration—

"In view of the statements made by Senator McLeay and other members of the Federal Parliament that they would much prefer that a subsidy be paid on Callide coal in preference to paying a subsidy on coal imported from South Africa and India, will he advise me whether any action has been taken by the Federal Government to provide a subsidy for Callide coal?"

Hon. W. POWER (Baroona) replied—

"The importation of coal from South Africa and India by the Commonwealth Government for supply to the Southern States of Victoria and South Australia is designed to make available to those States quantities of coal which they are unable to receive from their normal source of supply—New South Wales—and it is understood that it is the intention of the Commonwealth Government to have these coals supplied to the purchasing States at a price equivalent to the landed cost of New South Wales produced coal. In order to land these coals, which are considerably higher in cost than Australian produced coals, at a competitive price, the Commonwealth Government is subsidising importations to the extent of approximately £2 5s. per ton, and according to a recently published statement of the Minister for Fuel and Shipping (Senator the Hon. G. McLeay) it is understood that by the end of the present year it is intended to import from these overseas countries 1,000,000 tons of coal which will cost the Australian taxpayers approximately £2,250,000. Prices of New South Wales, South African, and Indian coals landed at Victoria and South Australia have not been published, but it is believed that the former averages approximately £4 per ton while the overseas coals average approximately £6 10s. per ton. Callide coal can be landed in those States at £5 5s. 6d. per ton. Substantial quantities of coal could be made available to South Australia and Victoria from the Callide coalfield, and the extension to this coal of a subsidy similar to that paid on overseas coal would enable Queensland coal to be supplied to Southern consumers at a price at least £1 per ton below that of the type of New South Wales coal which was evidently considered in arriving at the determined rate of subsidy, and up to £1 5s. per ton below the cost of imported

coal after payment of the subsidy of £2 5s. per ton. The attention of the Commonwealth Government has been directed by this Government to the fact that as Queensland taxpayers are contributing to the large amounts necessary to subsidise these imported coals, this State is entitled to subsidy considerations and that the granting of a subsidy of £1 5s. per ton on Callide coal as against £2 5s. per ton on South African and Indian coal would enable Queensland coal to be purchased in the South at a price competitive with those of New South Wales or imported coals, and in addition would enable the efficient development and exploitation of the Callide coalfield. Such consideration of Queensland's coal would not only save the Australian taxpayers nothing less than £1,000,000 on every million tons of coal purchased, but would retain this money in Australia and would return to Queensland taxpayers a proportion of the moneys they are now paying to the Commonwealth by way of taxation. Despite these representations, however, the Commonwealth Government as yet has shown no willingness to recognise Queensland's just claims, and is continuing its policy of expending Australian moneys on high subsidies on imported coals which are enabling the development of overseas coal mines and are affording a measure of financial relief to only a section of Australian taxpayers. However, it is the intention of this Government to continue to press strongly for a recognition of Queensland's claims and for the purchase to the fullest extent of coals produced in the State of Queensland before orders are placed with overseas countries. The matter has been discussed with the Right Hon. R. G. Casey, Minister for National Development, and the Hon. the Premier has listed it for further discussion at the forthcoming Premiers' Conference."

ACCOUNTS OF QUEENSLAND-BRITISH FOOD CORPORATION.

Mr. NICKLIN (Landsborough—Leader of the Opposition) asked the Premier—

"As the yearly accounts of the Queensland-British Food Corporation are closed at 31 March, before the main crops are harvested and sold, will he kindly arrange, in order that this House may have up-to-date and complete information, that the Auditor-General's report contain a profit and loss account and other essential facts regarding the results of this venture to the date at which such crops have been sold? If that is not practicable, will he arrange for the issue of a supplementary report containing such complete information as soon as it is possible to make it available?"

Hon. E. M. HANLON (Ithaca) replied—

"The year ending 31 March was adopted at the request of the Overseas Food Corporation to conform with British practice. The Queensland-British Food Corporation recently strongly suggested to the Overseas Food Corporation that the year ending 30 September be adopted in

lieu as such would mean that the accounts each year would cover the full normal cycle of agricultural operations. This suggestion has now been agreed to. Accounts to 31 March, 1950, have already been prepared and will be published shortly. It is proposed to prepare figures for the six months from 1 April, 1950, to 30 September, 1950. Thereafter future accounts will be on the basis of a full year ending 30 September. For the information of the hon. the Leader of the Opposition, I might add that the accounts of the Queensland-British Food Corporation are not audited by the Auditor-General and such accounts therefore could not be included in his Annual Report to Parliament. Clause 16 of 'The Queensland British Food Production Act of 1948' provides that the accounts of the Corporation shall be audited by auditors appointed annually by the Corporation with the approval of the Auditor-General. Auditors have been so appointed by the Corporation, and, in accordance with the provisions of the Act, their report is transmitted by the Corporation direct to myself as Minister."

RECONDITIONING OF ETHERIDGE RAILWAY.

Mr. NICKLIN (Landsborough—Leader of the Opposition) asked the Minister for Transport—

"1. What is the expenditure to date on the reconditioning of the Etheridge railway from Almaden to Mount Surprise?"

"2. When is it anticipated that this job will be completed so as to allow transport of cattle?"

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

"1. The cost to date of the reconditioning, regrading work, &c., between Almaden and Mount Surprise is £43,212.

"2. The section is now open for steam traffic at reduced speed, and with restricted loads. The old cattle yards at Mount Surprise are beyond further use, and new yards at a new location will be provided. This work, together with the regrading necessary for the increased load, will not be completed until about May, 1951. The only cattle yards on the line at present are private yards at Frewhurst, and the manager of the Mount Surprise Station was informed the department would take stock from Frewhurst in the near future."

CLEANING, ENOGGERA STATE SCHOOL.

Mr. MORRIS (Mt. Coot-tha) asked the Secretary for Public Instruction—

"1. What were the actual payments made for cleaning services for the Enoggera State School for each year from 1944 to 1949, inclusive?"

"2. How much has been paid up to 30 June 1950?"

"3. Was this based on area of floor space or number of children in attendance?"

Hon. G. H. DEVRIES (Gregory) replied—

"1.

" Financial Year Ended—	Wages.	Materials Allowance.	Gross.
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
30th June, 1944..	163 19 3	11 11 10	175 11 1
30th June, 1945..	161 1 10	11 7 6	172 9 4
30th June, 1946..	179 11 0	11 7 6	190 18 6
30th June, 1947..	182 17 8	11 13 9	194 11 5
30th June, 1948..	209 4 1	12 11 4	221 15 5
30th June, 1949..	230 14 10	13 0 10	243 15 8"

"2.

" Financial Year Ended—	Wages.	Materials Allowance.	Gross.
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
30th June, 1950..	240 17 9	13 0 10	253 18 7"

"3. Cleaning allowance is paid on an area basis, in terms of the Miscellaneous Workers' Award (State Government) gazetted 19 September, 1945."

DUPLICATION, YEERONGPILLY-KURABY RAILWAY.

Mr. KERR (Sherwood) asked the Minister for Transport—

"What has been the cost to date of the duplication of the line from Yeerongpilly to Kuraby and when is it expected that this work will be completed?"

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

"The cost to date of the above work which is in progress is £113,347. It is proposed to complete the work in three sections, viz.:—(1) Kuraby-Sunnybank, (2) Sunnybank-Rocklea, (3) Rocklea-Yeerongpilly. It is expected the first section will be ready for traffic by the end of October, 1950, the second about June, 1951, and the third about December, 1951."

PRICES OF ONIONS.

Mr. KERR (Sherwood) asked the Attorney-General—

"In view of the fact that the price of onions to the grower is fixed at £26 per ton by the Prices Commissioner and the retail price in some city shops is 8d. per lb., or approximately £75 per ton, will he investigate the position and explain the great disparity between the grower's price and the price being charged to the consumer by the aforesaid city shops?"

Hon. J. LARCOMBE (Rockhampton) replied—

"Yes. The Prices Commissioner has promised to investigate the matter."

ELECTORAL RETURNING OFFICERS—PLACE OF RESIDENCE.

Mr. KERR (Sherwood) asked the Attorney-General—

“Will he consider making it a rule when appointing returning officers for both State and municipal elections that it be a condition of appointment that such officers should reside in the electorate, particularly in the case of the outer metropolitan electorates?”

Hon. J. LARCOMBE (Rockhampton) replied—

“Returning Officers are appointed by the Governor in Council. However, I do not think it is necessary or advisable to lay down a rule which would require a Returning Officer to reside in the Electorate to which he may be appointed.”

COMMONWEALTH AID TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES.

Mr. WATSON (Mulgrave) asked the Treasurer—

“1. What are the total receipts to 30 June, 1950, from the Commonwealth for the purposes of the Commonwealth Aid Local Authority Trust Fund?

“2. What amount had been paid to each local authority recipient to same date?

“3. In addition to (2), what amount had been allocated to each local authority but not actually paid at same date?

“4. What was the credit balance of the fund at 30 June, 1950?”

Hon. V. C. GAIR (South Brisbane) replied—

“1. £416,750.

“2. and 3. I lay on the Table a statement giving the information required.

“4. £239,177.”

PAPER.—Whereupon Mr. Gair laid upon the Table of the House the statement referred to.

STOCK DISEASES COMPENSATION FUND.

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN (Barambah) asked the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock—

“1. In reference to the Stock Diseases Compensation Fund, what were the details for 1949-50 under the following headings, viz.:—(a) Total levies, (b) endowment, (c) total receipts, (d) compensation payments, (e) payments for veterinary services, and (f) total payments?

“2. What was the credit balance of the fund at 30 June, 1950?”

Hon. A. JONES (Charters Towers—Secretary for Labour and Industry), for **Hon. H. H. COLLINS** (Tablelands) replied—

“1. (a) £16,364 7s. 3d.; (b) £8,182 3s. 7d.; (c) £24,546 10s. 10d.; (d) £5,482 13s.; (e) £9,621 12s. 6d.; (f) £15,104 5s. 6d.

“2. £45,441 9s. 5d.”

SCOPE OF QUESTIONS.

Mr. COBURN (Burdekin), having given notice of a question,

Mr. SPEAKER: I should like to say to the hon. member for Burdekin that there are certain rules governing questions, one of which is that questions once asked and answered cannot be asked again. I will examine the hon. member's question closely. I suggest to hon. members, too, that the expense and time involved in the compilation of answers to questions should be borne in mind when they are submitting them. Long questions entailing long answers put departments to much expense and inconvenience.

Mr. Aikens: That applies, Mr. Speaker, to sarcastic and facetious replies of Ministers, too.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I have that in mind also.

PAPERS.

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

Report of the Auditor-General under The Supreme Court Funds Act of 1895 for the year 1949-50.

The following papers were laid on the table:—

Orders in Council (9 March, 20 April (2), 27 July) and Regulation (20 April) under the Water Acts, 1926 to 1942.

Audit Inspector's Report on the Books and Accounts of the Queensland Coal Board.

DEATH OF MR. P. AIREY.

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE.

Hon. E. M. HANLON (Ithaca—Premier) (11.26 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 Peter Airey, Esquire, a former Member of the Parliament of Queensland.

“2. That Mr. Speaker be requested to convey to the relatives 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. Airey became a member of the 13th Parliament of Queensland as member for Flinders at a by-election which was held consequent on the vacation of the seat by Charles McDonald, who had resigned to enter the first Commonwealth Parliament. Elected on 13 July, 1901, he represented Flinders until the end of the 15th Parliament in April, 1907. He was called to the Legislative Council on 3 July, 1907, but resigned on 13 January, 1908. He came back into the Legislative Assembly in the 17th Parliament as member for Brisbane South and continued as member until that Parliament was dissolved on 31 August, 1909.

During his membership he filled various ministerial offices. In the Morgan Ministry he was Secretary for Mines and Secretary for Public Works from 9 April, 1904 to 27 April, 1904, and Home Secretary from 27 April, 1904, to 19 January, 1906.

In the Kidston Ministry he was Home Secretary from 19 July, 1906 to 3 July, 1907, and Minister without Portfolio, whilst in the Legislative Council, from 3 July, 1907, to 19 November, 1907.

In the second Kidston Ministry he was Treasurer from 18 February, 1908, to 29 October, 1908. After the first session of 1908, Kidston went to England and on his return coalesced with the Opposition led by Philp, and this led to defections from the joint party, the most prominent being Blair, Airey and Kerr. Mr. Airey died 10 August, 1950, aged 85.

Mr. Airey was a very brilliant parliamentarian, Mr. Speaker; and he entered a Parliament that I think is historic in the records of this State. In that Parliament the Labour Party, which was then struggling to achieve standing in the community, took the first opportunity of exercising some power in the government of the State. At the time of the coalition of the Morgan Party and the Labour Party—the only coalition the Labour Party has ever entered—Mr. Airey was one of the leading figures. He was then a member of the Labour Party and one of the leading figures in bringing about that coalition. During that Parliament the coalition Government led by Morgan instituted very many great reforms. It was the Parliament in which the adult franchise was introduced; it was also during that Parliament that workers' compensation was first introduced; it was also during that Parliament that the Workers' Dwellings Act was passed; and the Shearers and Sugar Workers' Accommodation Act and measures for the protection of women and children were prominent in its legislation.

That was the beginning of the power of the Labour Party in this Chamber. Its legislation and its debates brought home to the people the fact that the ordinary working men elected to Parliament were equal to any member of it, in either debate or administration. Mr. Airey's part in this achievement was very great indeed. He played a big part in the passing of the adult franchise, first rejected by the Upper House but later sent back to it and finally carried. The names of Peter Airey and several other members of the Labour Party who were very prominent in Queensland's affairs at that time will not be forgotten in the history of this State. Some of these men left the Labour Party to join the Kidston Ministry and later they were very savagely attacked for having seceded from the Labour Party. However, their careers in this House were very great indeed.

There was a constitutional crisis at a subsequent period of that Ministry and Parliament was prematurely dissolved but that doughty old Scotchman William Kidston finally was returned and succeeded in having the Governor withdrawn from this State.

The first decade in this century was a very tense period in the Queensland Parliament and Peter Airey, as he was known to everybody, took a very great interest in politics and played a very great part in those years of our parliamentary life. I can assure hon. members I appreciate the work that Peter Airey did while he was a member of this Parliament.

Mr. NICKLIN (Landsborough—Leader of the Opposition) (11.34 a.m.): We join with the Premier in expressing regret at the passing of a great Queenslander in Peter Airey. We join with him also in expressing our sympathy to his relatives. As the Premier has said, the late Peter Airey played a prominent part in the affairs of this State during the time he was a member of this Chamber, in which it may be said the Assembly saw very many changes. Peter Airey took a prominent part in all the activities of that period. He was a good and keen administrator. He had a keen brain and was a man who was appreciated by all his colleagues and all who had the privilege of knowing him. I came in contact with him first some 20-odd years ago in the early organisation of the fruit industry in the Redlands district, in which he took a prominent part. One had only to meet him in conference, to come in contact with him, to appreciate his many qualities and the keen perception he had of any problem that had to be tackled. Peter Airey was an unassuming gentleman. He lived to the ripe old age of 85, and right to the time of his death he was a constant visitor to the library of this House. He kept in constant touch with the affairs of the State and the lives of the workers and this State is unquestionably the poorer by the passing of one who made a great contribution towards its progress and development.

Motion agreed to, hon. members standing in silence.

ADDRESS IN REPLY.

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

Debate resumed from 15 August (see page 78) on Mr. McCathie's motion for the adoption of the Address in Reply.

Hon. J. LARCOMBE (Rockhampton—Attorney-General) (11.35 a.m.): In the first place, Mr. Speaker, I wish to tender my congratulations to the mover of the motion, the hon. member for Haughton, and to the seconder, the hon. member for Windsor, both of whom delivered speeches of good quality and high standing, thoughtfully conceived, well reasoned, and excellently delivered. Their speeches demonstrated tolerance and broad-mindedness and showed that both hon. members have a knowledge of the resources of this State and a keen appreciation of what is necessary to be done in the interests of the people of Queensland.

By way of contrast I refer to the speech delivered by the Leader of the Opposition and to the regrettable and disappointing nature of his speech, particularly in view

of the world situation. His speech was characterised by its narrowness and its rancour and was steeped in party politics, bearing no indication of constructiveness or co-operation. It was just a petty attack upon Government administration and policy. Apparently the Leader of the Opposition misconceived the purpose and function of the Opposition. The function of an Opposition is not only to oppose but to co-operate with the Government, particularly in a period when the shadow of war is unfortunately so prominent in the sky as it is today.

As Minister in charge of the administration of the Elections Act the immediate purpose for which I rose was to reply to the complaint voiced by the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament on the Appropriation Bill and elsewhere concerning the elections and their results. His complaint was that the Electoral Districts Act of 1949 handicapped his party and that the party who became the Government did so on a minority vote. But before dealing with those aspects of his speech I should like to refer to the speech delivered by him yesterday.

The hon. gentleman started out with a very broad-minded sweep of the present world situation and the need for Australian defence and Queensland defence in particular, but he quickly nose-dived into party politics and dragged in the name of General MacArthur in his attempt to discredit Labour defence policy. Those who were privileged to be in the know are aware that the late John Curtin and General MacArthur were close friends and were closely associated officially and that General MacArthur had the highest admiration for the Labour Prime Minister of that day and for his policy. He approved of that policy. The highest authority we had then in Australia was satisfied with Labour's defence policy of that period.

Labour's policy and energy at that time helped greatly to enable the service men of this and other countries not only to protect Australia but to vindicate the ideals of freedom and of justice.

But what of the Menzies-Fadden party, the party with which the Leader of the Opposition was, and still is, associated? It blundered and fumbled pathetically in relation to Australia's defence. It so disgusted its own supporters that a section of them joined with the Labour Party, with the result that the Menzies-Fadden Government were defeated. That will go down as one of the most remarkable incidents in Australian politics, and it happened at probably the most critical period in the history of this nation—a section of the Menzies-Fadden party joined with the Labour Party and as the result, the anti-Labour Party was defeated and Labour was put into power and kept there for the duration of the war. Labour thus had the opportunity of defending this country and helping to carry on its great fight for freedom and justice, and it was not found wanting. I submit that the Leader of the Opposition would have been well advised to steer clear of that question in the opening phase of his address.

Mr. Sparkes: You know as well as I do that Labour is opposed to that sort of thing altogether.

Mr. LARCOMBE: The Labour Party, as the result of its policy, spent as much in defence in Queensland in one year as did the anti-Labour Party in a decade. Those are the facts. We cannot escape the logic of facts. We can pick out an isolated statement by one hon. member and criticise it, but the fact remains that the Labour Party did a magnificent job in defending Australia and in helping our allies during the war period.

Mr. Sparkes: Are you in favour of universal training?

Mr. LARCOMBE: I will not be deflected and diverted from my argument by interjections of that kind. I refer the hon. member for Aubigny to the Queensland daily Press during the period to which I have referred. From 1939 onwards, during the years of anti-Labour administration, the Brisbane "Courier-Mail" featured headings such as, "Queensland on the Dole!" and "Queensland Neglected!" The anti-Labour Press and critics of Labour severely criticised and condemned the anti-Labour Party during that period for its dismal failure to live up to its responsibilities and obligations; to use a colloquialism, it was dumped by its own supporters. The Menzies-Fadden Government could not be trusted to carry out the duties and obligations cast upon them.

A Government Member: They will dump them again, too.

Mr. LARCOMBE: There is no doubt about that.

What was the object of the attack by the Leader of the Opposition? It was designed, first of all, to obscure the magnificent record of the Labour Party during the war period and, secondly, to divert attention from the utter failure of the present Menzies-Fadden Government. The Leader of the Opposition dealt very little with State politics, but referred mainly to Federal administration. He tried to conceal the fact, for instance, that the Menzies-Fadden Party promised to revitalise the cotton industry if re-elected. The truth is that that party has done nothing. It has ignored demands to re-establish the cotton industry, notwithstanding its promise on the eve of the election that it would take immediate steps to reinvigorate the cotton industry if elected.

Again, the Leader of the Opposition probably wished to conceal the fact that the Menzies-Fadden Administration are importing enormous quantities of coal from overseas and subsidising it, while at the same time refusing to help the coal industry in this State. That is a very serious omission on the part of the Menzies-Fadden Administration. We hear a lot about the necessity for national development and for building up this country in a time of peace so that it will be strong in a time of war.

If that is what the anti-Labour members believe in, let them act accordingly. We are not going to build Australia into a

great nation if we import enormous quantities of coal from overseas and at the same time allow our own coal-mining industry here to languish for want of orders.

The Leader of the Opposition probably wishes to conceal also the fact that the Menzies-Fadden Party on the eve of the election condemned the Chifley Administration for the enormous number of Commonwealth public servants and said that if they were elected they would cut down the number by at least 25 per cent. They said that the Labour Party was building up a bureaucracy, carrying out socialistic schemes, but what has been the result of the seven months of administration by the Menzies-Fadden Government? No reduction in the number of Commonwealth public servants but rather an increase by thousands.

The Menzies-Fadden Party promised to reduce the cost of living and the cost of production but contrary to their promise very soon after their election the anti-Labour Government reduced the subsidies that were paid by the Chifley Administration on food-stuffs. They also promised to put value back into the pound and increase the standard of living but they have no intention of putting value back into the pound or of raising the standard of living as they promised. Therefore I submit that the Leader of the Opposition, having these things in mind, adopted the cuttlefish tactics of colouring the water so as to escape from attack.

The hon. gentleman complained also about the results of the elections, saying that his party had been robbed of the Treasury benches. I suppose he will be complaining tomorrow that his party was robbed of the Kelvin Grove municipal seat, where the Labour Party won the election in the same way as the Labour Party has won all its elections. The result of the municipal contest at Kelvin Grove has the greatest possible political significance because on a previous occasion the anti-Labour candidate won that election by 1,700 votes but last Saturday the Labour candidate turned that big anti-Labour majority into an absolute Labour majority—not winning by the mere presence of a third candidate, but by an absolute majority.

Almost continuously since 1915 the hon. gentleman and his colleagues—I know that the Leader of the Opposition was not in Parliament himself in 1915, but his political party and colleagues were—have been complaining about the results of elections. They have protested against the allegedly unfair methods of Labour administration—they have blamed everybody but themselves. They refuse to acknowledge the wisdom and advice contained in these words by Shakespeare—

“The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars but in ourselves that we are underlings.”

The Leader of the Opposition should bear in mind that wisdom, which is lacking in his own party and his own methods and that is responsible for the defeat of his

own party, rather than constantly be blaming the Government for the defeat of the Opposition. The anti-Labour Party was defeated in 1915, 1918, 1920, 1923, 1926, 1932, 1935, 1938, 1941, 1944, 1947, and in 1950, yet the Leader of the Opposition quite quixotically claims that his party has not been beaten by fair methods. We have beaten the anti-Labour Party not only on redistributions that have taken place under Labour Governments, but on redistributions under anti-Labour Governments too. There was a redistribution of electoral seats by an anti-Labour Government right back in 1910 and under it the Labour Party was defeated in 1912, but in 1915 the anti-Labour forces were defeated and the Labour Party was returned with an overwhelming majority. The Labour Party was able to do that under an anti-Labour redistribution of seats, under an Act providing for the redistribution of electoral boundaries passed by an anti-Labour Government.

We got the same result in 1932 when we know that the Labour Party won the election under the redistribution legislation passed by the Moore Government, that is, notwithstanding the fact that the redistribution was effected by the anti-Labour party. The Leader of the Opposition reminds me of a disgruntled team in sport. In football, cricket and in some other kinds of sport we find the same kind of complaint. We hear the cry, “We have been beaten by unfair tactics.” We find a disgruntled football team complaining that the field was not properly measured, or that the ball was too small, or that the referee was unfair—with their own referee and ball measurements they might have won the match.

Mr. Sparkes: You did not win by a great margin even under those conditions.

Mr. LARCOMBE: I had twice the majority of the hon. member for Cook. (Laughter.)

We now come to the cry of “minority rule.” That has been the cry of the Leader of the Opposition since the election. It is an erroneous and almost impudent assumption. In the first place that hon. gentleman overlooks the fact that the Labour Party quite obviously is easily the strongest individual party that contested and won the election. There were three major parties in the field, the Labour Party emerged the victor and is therefore entitled to govern.

Let us examine the aggregate votes polled for each party. The Labour Party polled 295,138 votes, the Liberal Party 188,331 and the Country Party 121,199. Therefore, Labour polled 106,807 votes more than the Liberal Party and 173,939 votes more than the Country Party. Can any sensible man argue that the Labour Government should give way to the Liberal Party, which polled approximately 107,000 votes less than the Labour Party, or hand over the reins of government to the Country Party, which polled approximately 174,000 votes less than the Labour Party? What kind of absurd

logic and ethics is contained in that proposition! That would be the worst kind of minority rule if the Labour Party were to surrender power in the way that is suggested.

"Ah," but the anti-Labour Party say, "the members of the Opposition"—the Liberal and Country Party candidates—received a greater aggregate vote than the Labour Party candidates, therefore they are entitled to govern." That argument is based on false premises and a fundamental fallacy. Let us examine the absurdity of the basis of such a statement. It assumes that had the Liberal Party been the only party at the polls all country voters would have voted for Liberals as against Labour, or if the Country Party had been the only party against Labour at the polls all Liberal voters would have voted for the Country Party in preference to the Labour Party. That is a fundamental fallacy. A large percentage of the votes cast for the Liberal Party were no more against the Labour Party than they were against the Country Party. A large percentage of the votes cast for the Country Party were no more against the Labour Party than they were against the Liberal Party. If there had been only two parties in the field thousands of voters would have voted for Labour candidates in preference to Liberal candidates, or alternatively, would have voted for the Labour Party in preference to the Country Party.

Mr. Sparkes: How do you work that out?

Mr. LARCOMBE: That is a pertinent question. Fortunately, I have overwhelming evidence in support of my contention. We have three distinct parties and we have to determine how a great majority would cast their votes if there were only two parties in the field. That is the test of the argument. The Country Party has refused to merge with the Liberal Party and in discussing the matter recently the president of the Country Party, Mr. A. J. Campbell, said rank-and-file members of his party would not stand for it.

He added, "Some of them would go over to the Labour Party." There is the evidence the hon. member for Aubigny requires, and it comes from the Leader of the Country Party in Queensland.

Mr. Sparkes: One man's opinion.

Mr. LARCOMBE: I will give the hon. member another man's opinion in a moment, and not a Labour man. There we have the remarkable admission of the leader of the Country Party in Queensland, that if there were only two parties, a big section of the country voters would vote for Labour in preference to the Country Party. We know that, but it is remarkable to obtain the admission of the leader of the Country Party to confirm and buttress the argument I am using.

Let me refer also to the statement of Mr. G. Hudson, president of the Northern Country Party, as reported in the "Courier-Mail" of July, 1950.

Mr. Sparkes: What date was the other one?

Mr. LARCOMBE: The "Courier-Mail" of 8 July last.

Mr. Sparkes: No.

Mr. LARCOMBE: That is absolutely correct. I anticipated the interjection of the hon. member and I had the dates checked (Government laughter.) Mr. Hudson criticised the Liberal Party, and he said, "We are expected to grow the potatoes and the Liberal Party eat them." In other words, he said that the Liberal Party were Queen Street farmers who would farm the farmers. We know that they do but it is remarkable to get the admission from the leader of the Country Party in North Queensland. He said that he had no time for the scheming of the parliamentary leaders, but he was concerned about the great Country Party in the country and that the Liberal Party was out to farm the farmers and that the Country Party were expected to grow the potatoes and the Queen Street farmers would eat them.

Mr. E. Evans, a prominent member of the Northern Country Party and a member of the Opposition, had something to say about the relationship between the Country Party and the Liberal Party, as reported in the "Courier-Mail" of 23 November, 1948. He said, "We will not be dictated to by vested interests and political job-hunters." There is further evidence in support of my contention—that if there were only two parties, Labour would have been assured of a large majority.

Let us proceed further. Let us look at the situation in Victoria. There we find that the Liberal Party and the Country Party are to use a colloquial phrase, at daggers drawn; they hate one another politically. We know that the Country Party, after the last election in Victoria, denounced the Liberal Party and said that the latter party had invoked the aid of the banks to bring about the partial destruction of the Country Party. That was a statement by the leader of the Country Party in Victoria, who is now the Premier of that State, with the assistance of the Labour Party and in face of the bitterest opposition of the Liberal Party.

An Opposition member interjected.

Mr. LARCOMBE: The Labour Party is supporting the party that will give the greatest measure of advantage and protection to the people of the State. It shows there is a closer relationship between the Country Party and the Labour Party than between the Liberal Party and the Country Party. We know that in Victoria there is no affinity between the Country Party and the Liberal Party at all; so we may logically assume that if there were only two parties at the poll at the last election, Labour would have been returned with a large majority, irrespective of whether the Opposition was the Liberal Party or the Country Party.

Mr. Nicklin: What majority of votes did the Labour Party have at the last election?

Mr. LARCOMBE: I have just elaborated my argument and it shows that leaders of the Country Party indicated that if only two

parties were going to the poll Labour would have received a substantial majority over the Country Party.

Mr. Nicklin: The numerical majority?

Mr. LARCOMBE: The numerical vote is substantially larger than that obtained by the Country Party. We know the Labour Party received approximately 174,000 votes more than the Country Party; does the Country Party contend that it should govern this State notwithstanding the fact its candidates received such a poor number of votes compared with the Labour Party?

I should like to emphasise the advice and warning given by the hon. member for Mirani concerning the relationship between the Liberal Party and the Country Party. He emphasised the fact that there was a cold war going on between the Country Party and the Liberal Party. Apparently the Liberals have laid it down that if the Country Party does not accept the terms dictated by the Liberal Party, funds and assistance will be withdrawn and they will run their own rural candidates at the next election. That is the threat of the Liberal Party—“If you do not coalesce or amalgamate we will run our own rural candidates when an election takes place.”

Speaking of contested seats, now let me take the Victorian election as another test of the argument adduced by the Leader of the Opposition, who is very silent on the fact that the anti-Labour Party in Victoria was elected on what may be termed a minority vote. Although the conditions in Victoria were similar to those in Queensland the Leader of the Opposition said nothing about the results of the elections in Victoria where the Liberal-Country Party, as distinct from the Country Party, obtained 495,594 votes, which gave them 25 seats, and the Labour Party with 544,924 votes obtained only 24 seats. It will be seen that the Labour Party, although it polled 49,330 votes more than the Liberal-Country Party obtained fewer seats than the Liberal-Country Party.

We find too that in South Australia the Liberal-Country League obtained 113,673 votes, giving 13 seats, whereas Labour with 134,946 votes won only 9 seats. In that State the Labour Party polled 21,273 votes more than the Liberal-Country League and won fewer seats. Let the Leader of the Opposition direct his advice and attention to the Victorian and South Australian anti-Labour Parties if he wishes to make some headway in the argument he has advanced against Labour in this State.

Mr. Speaker, going back to 1912 we find some very interesting information concerning election results in Queensland. At the State election in 1912 the anti-Labour Party obtained 118,817 votes, the Labour Party 100,738 votes, the Independent Party 4,493 votes. The anti-Labour Party won 46 seats, the Labour Party 25, and the Independent, one. The Labour Party won only 10,000 votes fewer than the anti-Labour Party but

won only 25 seats as against 46 seats of the anti-Labour Party, or, to put it the other way, the anti-Labour Party with only 10,000 more votes than the Labour Party got almost double its representation. The members of the anti-Labour Party in Queensland have charged this Government with being a minority Government but let them carefully read the electoral and political history of this State before they do so again.

There has been a wonderful change of tune by the anti-Labour Party on the question of election results. Just prior to the election the anti-Labour parties expressed strong confidence through their leaders as to the probable result of the election; they were certain that they would be elected by a substantial majority. Immediately after the election results were known, however, they changed their tune and said that they were defeated because of the Electoral Districts Act and Labour's electoral administration. In the “*Courier-Mail*” of 4 October, 1949, there is an article under the heading “Liberals not protesting.”

The Liberal Party was not protesting against the work of the commission. If there was anything unfair in the work of that commission one would have expected that the Liberals would have protested, but Dr. Winston Noble, the then president of the Liberal Party in this State, said that so far as he knew no protest would be lodged by his party.

In the “*Courier-Mail*” of 3 October, 1949, there was another comment to the effect that after a week's study of the new State electoral boundaries the Opposition considered that Labour's prospects in 1950 had been reduced—not increased—by the commission's report.

I now proceed to the election month. On 26 April, 1950, Mr. Hiley gave a confident blast. Here is the “*Courier-Mail*'s” reference—

“Mr. Hiley expects the Liberals to win at least three northern seats. This combined with three northern Country Party wins and one independent win, would put Labour out.”

The “*Courier-Mail*” gave further study to the question and came to this conclusion—“This would give a Parliament of 39 Country-Liberal Parties, two anti-Government Independents, and 34 Labour.” A few days before the election both Messrs. Hiley and Nicklin had the Labour Party defeated; we had no prospect of winning and they were certain of being the Government, but after the election, when they were defeated and we became the Government, they changed their tunes and said that their defeat was the result of the commission's work.

Mr. Sparkes interjected.

Mr. LARCOMBE: There could be no greater tribute to the commission's work than the result in Rockhampton, to which electorate the hon. member for Aubigny refers. In its fairness in allocating

the electors in the Rockhampton district it was responsible for the near-defeat of a Labour Minister. The commission in no way assisted the Labour Party.

This change of tune by the anti-Labour forces is significant and it indicates the inconsistent and contradictory nature of their claims because they said before the elections that there was no prospect of their being defeated, that they were certain of victory notwithstanding the work of the commission.

I now proceed to state what in my opinion were the reasons for Labour's victory. We had more competent leadership and without exaggeration or flattery we had in our leader a man of capacity and energy, with a statesmanlike outlook on Queensland affairs. I know that in the Rockhampton electorate scores of business men voted for the Labour Party largely because of the leadership of our present Premier. They were not Labour men but they voted for the Labour Party because of its sound, capable and experienced leadership, which is so important in the government of any country.

The Labour Party has an excellent record, politically, industrially and socially. It has developed this State, has promoted decentralisation, has improved the standard of living, and has done all those things that are of essential importance in the government of this country. I believe that was an important factor in our winning the election. In 1914, the year before Labour came into power in this State, Queensland was the slave State of the Commonwealth. Industries were backward, primary production was languishing, the standard of living was low, unemployment was high and wages were low, with the result that indirect taxation was comparatively very heavy. Labour changed all that. It has built Queensland up to the finest, foremost and most attractive State of the Commonwealth. The election results since 1915 confirm that statement. Many thousands of electors at every election since 1915 cannot be wrong. No redistribution of seats, no alteration of the Electoral Districts Act or any other act of ingenuity could have enabled the Labour Party to retain power if it had not had such a good record of sound policy and strong leadership. You can juggle with electoral boundaries as much as you like, but if the people are determined to change the Government they will do so.

Another reason for Labour's long term of office was advanced by an anti-Labour leader in the person of Mr. J. B. Chandler, who was leader of the Queensland People's Party in this Parliament for some years. When he was endeavouring to enter Parliament, he was doing it not only against the Labour Party but also against the Opposition party. This is what he had to say: "I have waited for years in vain for the State Opposition to put forward a useful and constructive policy designed to improve the social conditions of Queensland." That was the reason he gave for the defeat of the Opposition. He went on to say, "Because they have not

done that, the Opposition are in opposition." He came into this Parliament but he became so dissatisfied with the methods adopted by the Opposition Party that he retired from politics a heartbroken Parliamentarian. (Opposition laughter.) I repeat that politically hon. members opposite broke the heart of the Lord Mayor of Brisbane. He was disheartened and retired from leadership of his party in the circumstances I have indicated. He also said that he would retire from politics if it could be shown that the anti-Labour Party had been responsible for any useful piece of legislation. He came into this Parliament and said he was going to rejuvenate and revitalise the Opposition and make them the Government of the State, but he found the job too big; the handicap was too great.

In conclusion, I should like to say a few words about the 1929-32 period, a period of manipulation, of gerrymandering, of political jobbery and of trickery. Any other period pales into insignificance in regard to manipulation and gerrymandering when compared with the period from 1929 to 1932. At that time the anti-Labour Party employed various methods in an endeavour to keep the Labour Party in Opposition for all time. First of all, the Elections Act was tampered with. Thousands of voters in Queensland were deprived of their votes because it was made very difficult for them to get on the roll and become electors. At that time conditions were bad and workers had to move about the State in order to get work. There was unemployment everywhere and in moving from electorate to electorate in search of employment the workers were not able to qualify for enrolment and were thus deprived of the franchise. They were subject to the laws of the State, subject to taxation, but deprived of their electoral right by the shameful Act of 1931.

There was a redistribution scheme and the Labour Party was handicapped by it, and finally there was a reduction in the number of members of Parliament. That was the master stroke by which the anti-Labour Party thought they could deprive the Labour Party of any chance at the elections. They thought that the Labour Party could not defeat them when the Labour Party was subject to a reduction of so many members. There was to be a reduction of 10 members of Parliament, eight of them Labour members—eight Labour seats eliminated then held by the Labour Party. They were Balonne, Burke, Chillagoe, Leichhardt, Mitchell, Mt. Morgan, Paddington, and Queenton. All those seats were cut out; Labour was not to have any chance at all in the elections.

(Time expired.)

Mr. HILEY (Coorparoo) (12.17 p.m.): I do not think that a single honourable member will find any quarrel with the exact words of the Address in Reply, but when you come to study them—they are based on the Governor's Speech and some of its contents—and compare them with the performance of the

Government you will find that there is much cause for disturbance in the mind of any sensible person. Particularly do I refer to that paragraph in His Excellency's Speech setting out the proposals of the Government concerning the reintroduction of a shipping service on the Torres Strait route. That statement, which is very terse, says—

“My advisers plan to make it possible, by deepening and improving our main ports, to restore the Torres Strait route for inward and outward bound ships.”

If by some happy chance such development became possible, it would have the profoundest significance on the future development of this State, but I am going to say that unless the Government completely alter their approach to these port responsibilities not only shall we be completely barren of development in the Torres Strait service but our existing facilities will be in danger.

Any fair examination of the port position in Queensland today shows three obvious features. First of all, the plant maintaining our ports is over age and insufficient. I shall develop that part of my argument at some length. Secondly, the world tendency towards bigger vessels, both interstate and overseas, means that it is not sufficient to maintain our ports but we must also have better ports to handle these larger vessels. On the third point I shall produce evidence, evidence taken from publications by our own Harbours and Marine Department, evidence appearing in each case over the signature of the portmaster of Brisbane, showing that there has been a marked decline in port standards here.

I must confess that I should have liked time to cover successively the position at each of the ports up and down the coast of Queensland, because I have always believed in multi-port development. I still say, on the question of Queensland development, that the best way is not to expect Queensland trade to radiate through a central port, but on the contrary the more good ports we have in Queensland the greater will be the development and the advantage. I am compelled to use the Brisbane position because of limitation of time, but I hope that some of my colleagues will deal with the northern ports in a similar way. I remark in passing that the new Treasurer, who has just taken over the responsibility of handling the ports of the State, is forced to face the result of apathy than can be traced over a period of at least 30 years.

I want to draw attention to a question which was asked of the Treasurer on the first day of this Parliament by my colleague the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha. He asked the hon. gentleman—

“Is the navigable depth of the Brisbane River less today than it was in 1926, and is it silting up more quickly than it is being dredged?”

We then had the extraordinary position that the Minister gave an answer starting off with

the categorical denial “No,” and then proceeding to condemn his denial and give himself the lie because in his statement he went on to say—

“In 1926 the navigable depth from the bar to Bulimba was 24 feet and from Bulimba to Victoria Bridge 22 feet. In 1950 the respective depths are 24 feet and 18 feet.”

So that on his own answer he establishes beyond any possibility of doubt that the navigable depths of the river are less than they were in 1926, yet he categorically denies the suggestion.

That is not all. There are official documents issued under the hand of the portmaster which provide convincing evidence that the Brisbane River is silting up more quickly than it is being dredged. I will quote first of all from the report of the Department of Harbours and Marine for the year ended 30 June, 1949. It states that the Hamilton Reach cutting is being found difficult to maintain at 28 feet low water, spring tides. In a circular issued on 31 March this year under the hand of the portmaster to shipowners for guidance in their use of the port, that official tells us that in that reach of the river the available depth is now 25 feet 3 inches.

When you come to the bar cutting the official report of the department gives the depth at 30 feet and 29 feet, 30 feet for 200 feet, and 29 feet for the other 200 feet of the cutting. By 31 March this year another circular issued over the hand of the portmaster shows that these depths had declined to 28 feet and 26 feet respectively.

When you come to the Bulimba Reach the annual report of the Department of Harbours and Marine for the year ended 30 June, 1949, shows that the minimum depth there is 24 feet 6 inches, and by 31 March the portmaster informs shipowners for the guidance of shipping that the minimum depth is 23 feet.

In the South Brisbane reach the same report shows that at 30 June last year the depth was stable, mark you, at 22 feet. Yet the information given in a circular over the hand of the portmaster to shipowners shows the available depth from Victoria Bridge to Story Bridge to be 19 feet. Those are channel depths.

I want the House to observe that at some points of the river encroachments into the channels over the lines of the leads are serious indeed. For instance, at the Gardens bend at any low tide you can see a bank forming and growing. At Kangaroo Point, in spite of the building of the wall there to give a clean scour, there is evidence in the report of the department—which anyone can see for himself—that a big bank is growing. At Norrey's Point in Humbug Reach, opposite Mowbray Park, at any low tide you can see a substantial bank growing. At Hamilton Reach a similar trouble is encroaching on the swinging basin opposite the wharves. At Bulimba bend, despite constant attempts of

the Government to prevent it, a bank is forming and growing. Further, in evidence given in a recent collision case which occurred at the bar of the Brisbane River there was evidence of a bank toeing out into the cutting. The suggestion was made that those defects were affecting the safety of transport in that area.

The department's attitude to this growing difficulty is to do a little work in some places and ignore others. In its own report it says no work has been done at Garden Point, but a safety precaution has been devised in the hope that it will overcome the results of its own neglect in the past. Instruction has been given that when a vessel proposes to enter or leave the port there should be wireless contact so that an effort could be made to avoid the meeting of two vessels in close proximity in those narrow points. In the evidence that was given before the Marine Court of inquiry recently it was asked: "Had the ships concerned sent their usual information there so that the maritime traffic guide could do his work?" These things are happening because of neglect of these bars, which are encroaching, not only in the main river but in some cases creeping out into the channels.

Another bank, reference to which is contained in the report of the department, is at the entrance to Cairncross dock, where this State is charged with the control of a £1,000,000 investment, and where it desires to attract work and business, and there at the present time you have a 20-foot patch at the entrance to the dock.

So I say on that evidence—the whole of which is departmental—there is sufficient to convict the department out of its own mouth. The navigable depths of the Brisbane River have declined and they are not as good as the department showed they were in 1926. I do not blame the new Minister—he has just taken on the cares of this department and it will take him some time to overcome what I think is the result of the accumulated apathy of almost a generation—but it is obvious from the answer he gave to the House on 3 August that he was being advised by the officers along certain lines. If he is going to accept the categorical denial that the river is not silting up quickly and the navigable depth is not less today than 20 years ago, he is making a grave error. If he acts wisely he will have a careful inquiry to ascertain the real facts in order to consider whether the administration of the department and the dredging policy are adequate to meet the needs of the port.

Let us then take the state of the existing plant. In Brisbane four dredges are regularly available. The first is the *Methuselah* of the fleet—something that was built prior to the war, is still labouring along, the "Maryborough," a mere colt of 65 years. The second vessel in use is another aged craft, the "Remora," 38 years of age, in service before the outbreak of the first World War; and the two relative colts are the "Morwong" and the "Platypus," aged 25 and 23 years respectively.

The rest of the gear impresses me as a floating museum. Some of the mud barges and anchor tenders have been in service for over 60 years. I venture to suggest that they would fail lamentably in comparison with the performance and the cost of operation of modern equipment. The cost of operation of vessels designed and engine rooms equipped as long ago as that must be fantastically high. The only ray of sunlight is that one new suction dredge is on order but I would suggest that by the time I have finished developing my case on the needs of the port of Brisbane the arrival of that suction dredge will be only a drop in the bucket for the requirements of Brisbane alone and will not enable any effective contribution to be made to the needs of the northern portion of this State.

Mark you, this is brought up apropos to a hope expressed by the Government that the Torres Straits shipping service will be resumed. I would remind the Government that at the moment the channel depths in the port of Cairns are only 20 feet. How one will ever get a Torres Strait service with such channel depths is something that defies maritime judgment. Although at the present I am concentrating on the needs of Brisbane I make the observation that no provision is being made for the provision of additional dredging for the northern ports and unless something is done about them all the talk about a Torres Strait service is so much eyewash.

On the question of the changing need: shipping statistics show that over the last generation there has been a vast increase in the tonnage of the average vessel entering this port, whether in interstate or overseas trade. In the report tendered by the Department of Harbours and Marine is a schedule of arrivals and among other things I noticed the net tonnage of vessels arriving. Some hon. members may imagine that because the net tonnage of the arrivals is not as heavy today as it was 10 to 20 years ago there is actually a falling off in the port requirements of Brisbane, but that is not so. When the high figures, up to 4 million tons a year, were set out in the table of arrivals a number of vessels were lightly-loaded mail steamers—passenger steamers coming into port to discharge a few hundred tons of cargo in the limited time they permitted themselves while they carried out their principal purpose of picking up passengers. Everyone will observe that today the use of the port is changed from the field of passenger to that of cargo vessels and because of that heavily laden large-sized cargo ships are coming to the port. If the net tonnage using the port today is lower than it was, the actual tonnage of goods passing through the port today is at least 50 per cent. greater than the peak of 20 years ago.

To give hon. members an idea of the change that has taken place over the past 20 years: overseas vessels then were only about 450 feet in length, with a tonnage of about 6,000.

Today the average class of vessel coming from overseas is 550 feet in length and the tonnage 8,000 or 9,000. In the coastal field, 20 years ago, there were "E" class vessels designed just after the close of the first World War, such as the "Echuca" of about 4,800 tons. Today the traffic is being handled by "B" class vessels of 6,000 tons capacity and the port is being asked to accommodate oil tankers of 10,000 to 12,000 tons capacity, with a 29-ft. draft when fully laden.

To give the House some idea of the swing over from the smaller to the larger vessels I have obtained the figures of the vessels that have got assistance from tugs in the port of Brisbane and have divided them into tonnages and we find this result—

"Tonnage.	Number requiring tugs.
Under 1,000 tons ..	34
1,000 tons to 2,000 tons ..	24
2,000 tons to 2,500 tons ..	66
2,500 tons to 3,000 tons ..	22
3,000 tons to 4,000 tons ..	189
4,000 tons to 5,000 tons ..	93"

Now, Mr. Speaker, watch how the figures go up when we come to the larger vessels—

"Tonnage.	Number requiring tugs.
5,000 tons to 6,000 tons ..	223
6,000 tons to 7,000 tons ..	111
7,000 tons to 8,000 tons ..	231
8,000 tons to 9,000 tons ..	268
9,000 tons to 10,000 tons ..	137
10,000 tons to 11,000 tons ..	108
Over 11,000 tons ..	213"

The average boat needs a tug when it arrives in port and departs from port and when the vessel moves from one berth to another and so it can be seen that those figures could represent three to four handlings of a single vessel. My point is this: that the average size of vessels handled in the port of Brisbane is creeping up compared with what it was 20 years ago and unless we recognise the growth of the demand in the port of Brisbane and prepare for it by widening and deepening channels and by making better provision for berthing accommodation, we shall be failing to meet and keep pace with the present demand in the port of Brisbane, let alone cater for the increased demand that will flow from the Torres Strait service.

There has been a marked variation in the tonnages handled in the port because shipping economy has reached the stage at which owners are not willing to put shipping to a number of ports with little cargo for each port. The cost of tying up a ship in port has become so heavy that ship-owners today try to load and unload as much cargo as they can in a single port, the most economical way to handle a large ship. But going back 20 years ago, it was a rare occasion when a ship would come in loaded to full capacity. The tonnage of interstate cargoes in those days rarely exceeded 2,000 tons a vessel, whilst overseas cargoes commonly were under 1,000 tons. Today overseas vessels come into the port of Brisbane with 5,000 tons of cargo to be unloaded from

a single vessel. Even interstate vessels come in with 5,000 tons to unload. Previously those overseas vessels would come here with a little cargo for Brisbane at the end of the Australian journey. They would arrive in Brisbane so lightly loaded that they would be floating well clear of the loading marks. Today, because of the tendency to load big cargoes in a single vessel, vessels are arriving in Brisbane laden right down. It will be seen that the position has changed.

Mr. Aikens: In the past they went out heavily laden.

Mr. HILEY: Yes, but they are no better off today because the vessels are larger and need more draught and, furthermore, river depths in many cases are less today.

Mr. Foley: How many boats are unable to come into Brisbane?

Mr. HILEY: They come in under difficulties. That is the point I wish to develop. It has been the change of design in ship-building that has enabled the port of Brisbane to function with the larger vessels. If vessels of the old type with deep draughts were still being built, the larger tonnages at present being used would have faced Brisbane with a real difficulty before now.

Mr. Hanlon: If they were still building ships of the size of the "Endeavour," they could sail right up to the site of the Stanley River dam.

Mr. HILEY: We will leave the canoe logic of the Premier.

The adoption of the flat-bottom bilge-keel design has enabled ships of a larger tonnage to be used without a corresponding increase in draught requirements. That alone has been the factor that has enabled us to get away with the lack of attention that has been paid to the port of Brisbane.

Mr. Hanlon: Perhaps the port authorities heard of that.

Mr. HILEY: Are the Government to rely on that factor eternally? If they are relying on that factor to reintroduce the Torres Strait service, they will find they are grievously wrong.

Mr. Hanlon: The construction of larger ships is being abandoned. I was informed when I was in England that the most profitable ships are those of from 10,000 to 15,000 tons, and that concentration would be placed on the building of them in future.

Mr. HILEY: The port of Brisbane is not equipped to handle with full facility ships of from 10,000 to 15,000 tons. They can enter the port only on the top of the tide, and once they get into their berths they are neaped in there because each berth is scooped out lower than the channel, and they can only leave again at the top of the tide.

Mr. Hanlon: We have two tides a day.

Mr. HILEY: I suppose the Premier would suggest that if it was found desirable to shift a vessel because of a defence or a

fire emergency, the cause of the emergency would wait for the tide? That is the sort of reasoning that is holding back the port of Brisbane.

We have the extraordinary position at present that virtually every berth along the banks of the Brisbane River is dredged deeper than the channel depth; they are not dredged as deeply as some of the shipping companies would like to have them, but they are already dredged deeper than the channel depth. There are two results, which affect the cost of shipping, for which, of course, the public pays. First of all, whenever a large vessel proceeds along the channel the tendency is for it to scour the loose silt into the berths, which, as I have pointed out, are dredged more deeply than the channel itself. The second result is that the towing service, which should be available continuously throughout the day, is restricted to a very short period; the demand is for high-tide towing. That increases towing charges, and again it is the public who pay. With a proper port, the towing demand would be even throughout the day. Instead of that, however, shipowners require towing services only at high-tide periods.

In addition to the effects I have already mentioned, other difficulties emerge that affect the whole of our defence viewpoint and the whole of our maritime economy. Vessels in the port are continually neaped in their berths, and cannot be moved till high tide. What would be the result if a fire hazard arose on the river? I remind hon. members that all the oil installations in Brisbane are close to the river, and very real concern exists in our fire brigades as to what would happen if there was an oil fire on the Brisbane River. In such a case, a vessel that was caught neaped at its berth would be a sitting duck; it could not be moved simply because the channel is not deep enough, except at high tide. If it so happened that the tide was not in, God help that vessel.

Similarly, if defence requirements made it desirable to shift a vessel when a raid or something of the sort was imminent, its removal would be impeded, if not impossible, while the berthing depths were lower than the channel depth.

It is abundant time that these considerations received very careful attention from the Minister charged with the administration of the port of Brisbane. What is to be done to cure these things? Firstly, the channel must be brought to the target laid down, and I remind the House that the Department of Harbours and Marine in this State has target depths for various stretches of the river, but its own publication suggests that it is not nearly maintaining those depths and that on the contrary the depths are declining. So you have to bring the river channel back to the target that has been set. Moreover, these target depths must be revised to avoid berths below the river bed. So long as that happens you will have continual silting of the berths and so vessels will be held neaped in their berths until there is a suitable tide.

Narrow points in the river must be dealt with to avoid bottlenecks. It is not sufficient to console ourselves by saying that we have a wireless policeman trying to keep ships from meeting at narrow points. That is not good enough. If a single vessel sinks in the fairway, that is the end of the port of Brisbane. That is the plain position and these things must be realised and handled as a matter of urgency.

And now, how to do it: first of all, we have to recognise the fact that the existing plant can do no more than maintain; it cannot put the port of Brisbane where it should be. When the new dredge eventually arrives it will merely have the effect of keeping maintenance facilities at about par and will not provide anything extra for the port of Brisbane in keeping with modern requirements. And so the suggestion I make to the Government is that they should examine the position to see what plant is available elsewhere to be brought here to do this work for us. I learnt in the Press the other day that there is a contractor's plant in Melbourne and that it is to be used for the Melbourne port authority in bringing the Victorian docks and entrances back into modern condition. If that plant is available in Australia, here is an opportunity, perhaps, to bring it to the port of Brisbane and other ports along the coast so as to bring them to the condition in which they should be. That would be preferable to our ordering our own plant and incurring the delay that usually takes place. If we can get our ports into proper order we can do the things that I have visualised. Our existing equipment will not enable us to put the ports in proper order and at the same time keep pace with current maintenance.

While the Treasurer is on the job, I suggest that he should look into a practice that is growing in Brisbane in which some of the dredges are dropping their spoil in other parts of the river. We realise this is a technical problem and would require a civil engineering examination but I must confess that I have very grave disquiet when I learn that some dredges are dropping their spoil in pockets of the river within sight of the channel. Quite recently spoil was dropped in a basin near Breakfast Creek but in my opinion the only safe place is completely out of the river system. If we are to continue this practice of taking it out of the channel and dropping it in a basin of the river we shall continue to have embarrassment—the only safe way is to get it out of the river system.

While the Treasurer is on the job I suggest he also look into the question of the future development of the port of Brisbane. A steel wharf of two berths has just been opened, and there are other wharfing facilities listed for the port of Brisbane. That should look after the immediate need. But when you think of the future development of the port of Brisbane, to consider what we shall need 20 or 50 years hence, I believe that if there is not a thorough examination of our requirements, future generations may have cause for regret. I notice there is reference in the

Speech to examining that aspect of the problem. Will the committee that is mentioned look into the question of the establishment of wet docks? When you go to the port of London you see a host of docks inside the port proper. You see the London Dock, South Dock, the Millwall Dock, the East India Dock, the Victoria Dock, the Royal Albert Dock and the Tilbury Dock. The result is that you have no berthages along the side of the river. You have all docks freed from tidal influences and the silting of berthages is reduced to a minimum, while the port authorities are able to handle ships with facility and to cope with all requirements of transport. That all envisages future development.

A Government Member: It depends on the volume of traffic.

Mr. HILEY: It does depend on the volume of traffic in 10, 20 or 50 years hence, but if no provision is made for development future Governments will be faced with very expensive resumptions, which may be necessary for the establishment of wet docks.

On the south side of the river it will be necessary, when envisaging future requirements for the port of Brisbane, to see that provision is made for the linking of the wharves with both the 3 foot 6 inches and 4 foot 8½ inches gauge railways. That is particularly important in order to make provision for heavy imports of timber, which clearly will be required for the port of Brisbane and of which the Director of Forests emphasises there will be a very real need. When we look at the east coast of Australia we must realise that there is no true deep-sea port between Port Stephens and Brisbane. Grafton will never be a deep-sea port. When we go to the immediate north of Brisbane, the nearest approach to a deep-sea port is at Urangan. When we consider the great wealth of the Northern Rivers of New South Wales and the south-western portion of Queensland, then anyone who has the courage to look ahead and think of the extent to which the population of this country will grow, will see that the port of Brisbane must be enlarged to cater for the greater requirements of 10, 20 or 50 years ahead. The Government falls into the error of overlooking some of their immediate and ever-present responsibilities in their obsession with some scheme because they are carried away by its grandeur but which proves to be barren of realisation. If only one-half the thought given to the dismal failure of Blair Athol was given to the port of Brisbane a great need of the people would be provided for and what is now only the dream of a Torres Straits shipping service might be realised.

Debate, on motion of Mr. Ingram, adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT.

Hon. E. M. HANLON (Ithaca—Premier):
I move—

“That the House do now adjourn.”

Question:—“That the House do now adjourn—put; and the House divided—

AYES, 59.

Mr. Allpass	Mr. Low
.. Brown	.. Macdonald
.. Byrne	.. Madsen
.. Chalk	.. Mann
.. Clark	.. Marsden
.. Crowley	.. McCathie
.. Davis	.. McIntyre
.. Decker	.. Moores
.. Devries	.. Morris
.. Dewar	.. Munro
Dr. Dittmer	.. Nicholson
Mr. Donald	.. Nicklin
.. Duggan	Dr. Noble
.. Dunstan	Mr. Plunkett
.. Farrell	.. Power
.. Foley	.. Rasey
.. Gair	.. Roberts, F. E.
.. Gardner	.. Smith
.. Gaven	.. Sparkes
.. Graham	.. Taylor, J. R.
.. Hanlon	.. Turner
.. Heading	.. Walsh
.. Hiley	.. Watson
.. Hilton	.. Whyte
.. Ingram	.. Wood
.. Jesson	.. Wordsworth
.. Jones, A.	
.. Jones, V. E.	
.. Kerr	<i>Tellers:</i>
.. Keyatta	.. Burrows
.. Larcombe	.. Ewan

NOES, 2.

Tellers:

Mr. Aikens

Mr. Coburn

Resolved in the affirmative.

The House adjourned at 1.6 p.m.