

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 21 SEPTEMBER 1950

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be considered high-pressure steam. The fact that some of our locomotives are superheated has only limited relationship to the diameter of cylinders, length of stroke, and diameter of driving wheels. Superheating is for the purpose of obtaining greater economy in coal and water. The information listed in the Commissioner's Annual Report in regard to superheating is for the purpose of indicating that where such is economical superheating has been incorporated.

“2. See reply to 1.”

DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH QUEENSLAND.

Mr. WOOD (North Toowoomba) asked the Premier—

“1. Has his attention been drawn to a Press statement in which Mr. R. W. Swartz, Liberal member for the Darling Downs, is reported to have said, *inter alia*:—

‘For many years North Queensland has suffered from the indifference and neglect of the State Labour Government, and it is only now, when security demands development of this area that Mr. Hanlon has suddenly become the champion of northern development.

‘The fifteen Queensland Liberal-Country Party members in the House of Representatives and the Liberal-Country Senators have continually pressed the claims for Queensland's development, and it is due to their efforts, and not the belated rantings of the Premier that Queensland is now receiving such full consideration from the Minister for National Development?’

“2. What truth is there in these assertions of Mr. Swartz?”

Hon. E. M. HANLON (Ithaca) replied—

“Yes, I have seen the statement to which the honourable member refers, and it is obvious that Mr. Swartz knows little of the political history of Queensland in the last 35 years and is merely indulging in the favourite Liberal pastime of bespattering those who disagree with them. The whole of Queensland knows the fight the Queensland Labour Government put up in the late 1930's to get the anti-Labour Governments in Canberra to accept their responsibilities for the defence of North Queensland. At no time were our representations more strongly resisted than when Mr. Menzies was Prime Minister. When I drew the public attention to the lack of defence measures in Queensland, Mr. Menzies sneeringly suggested that as I knew so much about it, I should be appointed Chief of the General Staff. The Federal anti-Labour Government persisted in its attitude until 1941, when Messrs. Menzies and Fadden, with a majority in both Houses of the Federal Parliament, completely curled up. From then on it was Labour's task to gird the nation against the enemy which was threatening our shores. I recall that when General MacArthur came to make his headquarters in Brisbane it was discovered there was

THURSDAY, 21 SEPTEMBER, 1950.

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

QUESTIONS.

INFORMATION ON RAIL LOCOMOTIVES.

Mr. McINTYRE (Cunningham) asked the Minister for Transport—

“1. Will he kindly explain what is the value (if any) of the information given by the Commissioner in his reports regarding locomotives (diameter of cylinders, length of stroke, and diameter of driving wheels) now that most of our locomotives use high pressure steam and some are superheated?”

“2. If this information is of no value, or is misleading, will he arrange with the Commissioner to give information that would now be of value, namely—(i.) class of locomotive, (ii.) wheel description (i.e., 4, 8, 2, &c.), with driving wheels in heavier type, (iii.) weight of locomotive in tons, (iv.) maximum axle load, (v.) tractive effort calculated at 75 per cent. boiler pressure, (vi.) when each class or sub-class of locomotive was first put into service, (vii.) number of each class or sub-class in use at beginning and end of the financial year?”

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

“1. The information given is of value if read intelligently—that is to say, the diameter of the driving wheels together with the length of stroke is a very clear indication of the locomotives most suitable for passenger haulage. The maximum steam pressure for Queensland locomotives is 200 lb. per square inch, and this cannot

not a military map of Queensland for any area north of Elimbah. It was obvious that the Menzies-Fadden Government never at any time had any intention of providing for the defence of North Queensland. In the post-war years the memory of this was so strong that the Queensland Government decided that it would not allow this to happen again. A series of measures for the development and settlement of North Queensland was proposed. All of these measures have been the subject of obstruction by Opposition members in this House and their Federal contemporaries. Public opinion, however, has now forced the Federal Government into some activity in Queensland, and in order to be in on it, I notice in the Press this morning that honourable members opposite have decided to join a delegation representing Federal and State Liberal-Country Party members which is to proceed to Canberra to wait on the Prime Minister to represent the need for developmental works in Queensland. The situation would be amusing were it not for the real danger in which this country is today."

FLOOD CONTROLS, ROSS RIVER.

Mr. KEYATTA (Townsville) asked the Secretary for Public Lands and Irrigation—

"In view of the grave danger to the residents of Townsville due to the continuous flooding of the Ross River and its threat to public safety and public property, especially the added danger in the silting of the river, thereby reducing its margin of depth flow,—

"1. Will he look into the possibility of flood control and the safety measure of diversion of the excess flood-water, by a spillway and channel to the Bohle River at the nearest point of the rivers in the Upper Ross and Bohle Rivers area, where there is a natural fall of 16 feet from the Ross River to Bohle River?

"2. Would it be possible to co-ordinate the various Government authorities with the Townsville Harbour Board, Townsville City Council, and Thuringowa Shire Council, for the above-mentioned purpose?"

Hon. T. A. FOLEY (Belyando) replied—

"1. This matter has not previously been referred to me but I will have the possibility of flood control of the Ross River investigated as soon as practicable.

"2. This possibility will also be examined. An investigation was made recently of the heavy flooding by the Pioneer River of low-lying areas of the City of Mackay by a committee appointed by the Co-ordinator-General of Public Works, comprising representatives of the Government and the City of Mackay. The question of the setting up of a similar committee to investigate flooding of the Ross River will be submitted to the Co-ordinator-General of Public Works, and the inclusion of the Local Authorities mentioned in the question on such a committee will no doubt receive consideration by him."

RECLAMATION PROJECTS, BRISBANE.

Mr. BROWN (Buranda) asked the Premier—

"Has his attention been drawn to a statement in the 'Courier-Mail' of 20 September by Alderman Roberts to the effect that the Queensland Government had repudiated an agreement with the Brisbane City Council in regard to certain reclamation projects in the metropolitan area? If so, is the statement by Alderman Roberts based on correct premises?"

Hon. E. M. HANLON (Ithaca) replied—

"The charge of repudiation which has been made by Alderman Roberts is, of course, a baseless fabrication. In 1940, when I was Minister for Health and Home Affairs, the Government proposed that the cost of three schemes (Breakfast Creek, Norman Creek, and Burnett Swamp) for the provision of additional recreational facilities in the metropolitan area be met on the basis of the Government paying wages and the cost of resumptions and the Council providing materials and plant. The Lord Mayor never actually accepted that proposal. He said he was in general agreement, but requested that certain estimates of cost be first furnished to enable the Council to know its proportion. A committee to handle the scheme was constituted comprising the Co-ordinator-General, representatives of the City Council, the Health and Home Affairs Department, the Land Administration Board, and the Surveyor-General. When Japan entered the war late in 1941, the committee members were dispersed on urgent war work, constructional resources were diverted to defence projects, and further action with respect to the scheme was of necessity postponed. In 1948 a proposal was made by the City Council to the committee which was reconstituted after the war that the original scheme should be enlarged from 290 acres to 717 acres and that the allocation of cost of the works should be varied and apportioned 60 per cent. to the Government and 40 per cent. to the Council. Having examined that proposal, the Government considered it would be more equitable for the State to meet the cost of resumptions for the original scheme from the date of the original offer (11 November, 1940) to 30 June, 1948, and from that date onwards to subsidise the works in accordance with the then subsidy scheme for Local Authority works. Under this scheme the cost of approved reclamation works which could be classified as mosquito eradication measures would be subsidised to the extent of 50 per cent. Improvement work such as fencing, turfing, top-dressing, and provision of dressing sheds would be subsidised at the general works subsidy rates applicable to the Brisbane City Council (now 22½ per cent.) It is estimated that on this basis the proportion of the annual cost to be borne by the Government and the Council under the enlarged scheme would be approximately 45 per cent. and

55 per cent., respectively. The 1940 scheme was an employment-making project. It was offered before the Government's subsidy scheme for local authorities was established and was proposed at a time when conditions were entirely different from those prevailing today."

NEW LAIDLEY HOSPITAL.

Mr. CHALK (Lockyer) asked the Secretary for Health and Home Affairs—

"Has he made any decision regarding the proposal submitted to him on 14 June last by the Laidley Hospitals Board that the then existing plans for a two-storey 48-bed hospital originally estimated to cost £120,000 be scrapped and in place thereof he sanction the erection of a new 30-bed single-storey hospital?"

Hon. W. M. MOORE (Merthyr) replied—

"In consequence of the existing difficulties associated with the building industry appertaining to the availability of skilled tradesmen and the essential materials of varied type used in hospital buildings, and to eliminate the possibility of several buildings being left in an uncompleted condition, consideration of the proposal to construct a new hospital at Laidley on suggested modified plans to replace the existing hospital, has been deferred until substantial progress has been made on the hospital projects at present under construction at Ipswich and Toowoomba."

TRAIN-MILE COSTS.

Mr. CHALK (Lockyer) asked the Minister for Transport—

"What is the cost today of the operation of an average train per mile?"

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

"This information will appear in the Annual Report of the Commissioner for Railways for the year ended 30 June, 1950, to be tabled shortly."

ROLLING STOCK, RAILWAY DEPARTMENT.

Mr. CHALK (Lockyer) asked the Minister for Transport—

"In view of the statement published in the 'Courier-Mail' of 20 September, and attributed to the Railway Commissioner (Mr. Maloney) to the effect that Queensland Railway engine and rolling-stock problems should be solved by March, 1951, will he state on what delivery figures and repair rate this assumption is arrived at, also whether such is based on actual present-day handling capacity, or if due allowance has been made for likely increased carrying demand brought about by industrial development and increased primary production?"

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

"The statement was based upon the latest advice from overseas and Australian contractors as to when locomotives and wagons would be delivered. The Commissioner is a highly qualified railway man and enjoys the full confidence of the Government. The hon. member can be assured that Mr. Maloney's statements and decisions are made only after a full and proper appreciation of all the factors involved."

GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES.

RETURN TO ORDER.

The following paper was laid on the table—

Return to an Order made by the House on 3 August last, on the motion of Mr. McIntyre, in the usual form, showing the number of Government employees at 30 June, 1939, and at 30 June, 1950 (all departments), paid from Consolidated Revenue, Trust Fund, and Loan Fund, respectively.

PAPER.

The following paper was laid on the table—Regulations under the Explosives Act of 1906 (14 September).

DEVELOPMENT AND DEFENCE OF NORTHERN AUSTRALIA.

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

Debate resumed from 14 September (see p. 405) on Mr. Riordan's motion—

"1. That all projects relating to the development and settlement of tropical Australia, including road and rail communication between North-western Queensland and Darwin in the Northern Territory, be regarded by the Commonwealth Government as defence measures and be subsidised to the extent necessary to make them economic propositions.

"2. That provision be made in the defence programme of the Commonwealth for the maintenance, in first class condition, of the existing defence roads in Queensland.

"3. That the aforementioned matters be brought to the notice of the Commonwealth Government—

Mr. EWAN (Roma) (11.15 a.m.):

Although there is no doubt of the paramount importance of the development of North-west Queensland and the Northern Territory for defence and economic reasons, I must oppose the motion in its present form. Nevertheless, I subscribe wholeheartedly to many of the views expressed by its mover and seconder. It is indeed refreshing to hear such sentiments as were expressed by the hon. member for Flinders, and particularly by the hon. member for Carpentaria. I have before me some Press cuttings, the first attributed to the hon. member for Carpentaria. It reads—

"Labour Member's attack on 2 Labour Governments.

“State and Federal Labour Governments were attacked by Mr. Smith in Parliament yesterday for failing to rehabilitate the cattle industry. There has been too much delay by this Government and the Commonwealth in taking action to see that pastoral properties are producing stock at full capacity.”

Another newspaper report states—

“Mr. A. J. Smith, Labour Member for Carpentaria, severely criticised the Labour Government in Parliament today.” and he is credited with having said—

“We must revolutionise our Government policy. Past policy seems to have been a failure. It is necessary to change our outlook on northern matters. Sweeping changes will be necessary.”

Then we have a statement attributed to the hon. member for Barcoo—

“Land laws are antiquated.

“They spoke glibly of closer settlement of areas in the State that were due for resumption, but where it would be impossible to make closer settlement a success. In his opinion there were areas which if they became the property of the Crown would be a liability, as they were in the past.

“What is the use of talking of resuming areas where the carrying capacity is one sheep to 18 acres? You would need 1,000,000 acres for the settler who went on to it.

“Mr. Davis said he was concerned about a Press report that the Railway Commissioner had recommended an expenditure of from 12 million to 14 million which did not reach beyond the precincts of the city of Brisbane.”

I must congratulate those hon. members who sit on the Government benches on their fearless and very true statement of the position as it exists today. It may seem strange to hon. members on the Government benches that I should have intimated my intention of opposing the motion as it now stands. If hon. members will read the motion as it now stands I feel that they, particularly hon. members opposite, will agree with me that its wording is too ridiculous and fantastic to be even considered by any sensible body of men in its present form. Let us consider its implications. It envisages that every project relating to the development of tropical Australia, that is the whole of Australia north of the Tropic of Capricorn, should be regarded by the Commonwealth Government as a defence measure. I cannot believe for one moment that that is the intention of the hon. member for Flinders and his seconder, the hon. member for Carpentaria, because I cannot possibly reconcile myself with that view, after looking at these Press cuttings.

In effect the motion says that the Governments of Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia should be relieved of all responsibility with regard to the development or the settlement of their respective States north of the Tropic of Capricorn, unless projects relating to State development are subsidised by the Commonwealth Government.

Mr. Duggan: To make it an economic proposition.

Mr. EWAN: Whether it makes it an economic proposition or not, in effect the motion says to the Commonwealth Government, “We want Unification; we do not believe in Federation; we want to give you a weapon to use towards the abolition of the State Governments of Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia.” The referendums of 1944, 1946 and 1948 gave a perfectly clear indication of the desires of the people in this Commonwealth—that they do not desire any further encroachment on the rights of the States by the Commonwealth. To pass a motion such as this in its present form would make this Parliament the subject of derision and scorn throughout the Commonwealth of Australia. The motion seeks to throw the whole of the responsibility upon the Federal Government, even to the maintenance of defence roads.

Mr. Collins: You would suggest that the Commonwealth should not come into the Burdekin scheme then?

Mr. EWAN: Let the hon. member wait and hear what I have to say.

These defence roads gave a valuable asset to the State of Queensland—any reasonable-minded man must admit that—and the maintenance of these roads is clearly a State matter. They are just as important in the development of this State, apart from defence, as any road constructed by the Queensland Main Roads Commission or any Queensland local authority. Let us be fair in the discharge of our responsibility and remember that this State is more likely to obtain Commonwealth assistance if we put up proposals that are reasonable and capable of implementation. I therefore move the following amendment—

“In paragraph (1), after the word ‘that,’ omit the words—

‘all projects relating to the development and settlement of tropical Australia, including road and rail communication between’

and insert in lieu thereof the words—

‘certain projects relating to the development and settlement of tropical Australia, including road and rail communication with.’”

The remainder of the motion would remain as it is printed, so that the motion as amended would read—

“That certain projects relating to the development and settlement of tropical Australia, including road and rail communication with North-western Queensland and Darwin in the Northern Territory, be regarded by the Commonwealth Government as defence measures and be subsidised to the extent necessary to make them economic propositions.”

It is obvious that it is necessary for me to move the amendment. If it is adopted, it will, as I have said, preserve the principles of Federation and will not pave the way towards the abolition of State Parliaments,

which is a very serious danger. The change has been mooted many times, in some instances, with perhaps some degree of justice. I believe that only the matters that were envisaged by the founders of Federation and those written into the Constitution should be handled by the Commonwealth Government. There is some justification for Commonwealth participation in projects that have a definite defence value but, if you examine the motion carefully Mr. Acting Speaker, you will see that it embraces all projects and that in itself is really an absurdity.

Mr. Collins: Roads for defence are an absurdity?

Mr. EWAN: Distortion may be attempted to be practised by some hon. members opposite but it is not my intention to lower my dignity by attempting to reply.

Apart from the general principle of retaining separate powers and responsibilities of Commonwealth and State Governments the question that arises is: what projects really have a defence value and should have priority under present world conditions? I submit that only projects that have a defence value in the near or immediate future should even be considered and that these unquestionably are the ones to which priority should be given. It must be readily admitted that in world conditions today time is the essential factor. An all-embracing motion such as that moved by the hon. member for Flinders—and I say this sincerely—would be considered only as political propaganda. Specific proposals likely to have defence value within the next few years are much more likely to receive consideration from the Commonwealth Government and, therefore, benefit this State. In this connection projects such as the railway link between Blackall and Charleville, a line from Dajarra to Camooweal, which was mentioned by the hon. member for Flinders, and a line connecting Nebo with Mackay, and another from Wandoan to Springsure, would be worthy of consideration.

Mr. Walsh: There would be no political propaganda in that?

Mr. EWAN: No. Such specific ideas would not in any way detract from the value of any other proposals that my worthy friends opposite put forward as specific projects. If they are thought to be warranted by men capable of forming an unbiased opinion and worthy to be submitted to the Commonwealth Government by this State—and if none of the projects in my own electorate come within that class I hope I am big enough to rise above political partisanship, a factor that seems to dominate the thoughts of the hon. member who interjected—we should accept them. In view of the shortages of materials and labour, however, I submit that only projects requiring the minimum of such things as water piping, wire or wire netting, cement and building materials should be considered. It would do more harm than good, from a defence point of view, if we were to deprive our essential and basic industries of materials in short supply. The matter boils down to a question of time and materials available for defence projects and which of them are most desirable.

In dealing with one of these projects—I will not deal with the only project suggested in my own electorate, the merit of which however is apparent to any clear-thinking person and will in due course receive the consideration it deserves—I hope this House will remember that I am endeavouring to consider it from a national aspect. I refer to the construction of a railway from Dajarra right across to Darwin, which many legislators highly thought of in this State and in the Commonwealth have given consideration prior to my rising in this House today. It was pointed out clearly by the Royal Commission inquiring into abattoirs and meatworks in 1945 that the proper use of the channel country depended on railways from the North to get store cattle into it quickly in order that they might be fattened after the periodic floodings that take place in that country. I know the channel country; it is magnificent country after flooding but it has periodic droughts and can only be used really for fattening. The idea is to get the cattle there, fatten them, and get them away quickly. I have seen that country as bare as this floor. Apart from road construction I sincerely believe that the outstanding proposal to be placed before the Commonwealth Government as a development scheme is the construction of a railway line from the Northern Territory into Queensland.

I desire at this stage to refer to remarks made by Mr. C. L. A. Abbott, who was Administrator of the Northern Territory from 1937 to 1946, in his publication "Australia's Frontier Province." He stressed that the pastoral industry of the Northern Territory could be developed only by railways and that these should run east and west, not north and south, and that they should run across the Northern Territory into Western Australia and Queensland, particularly into Queensland. He went on to say—

"All my thoughts and recommendations in connection with the Northern Territory and its future have been to give the people of the Territory some definite say in its future. In 1924 the then Premier of Queensland, Mr. E. G. Theodore, urged that the portions of Queensland and of Western Australia north of the 20th Parallel should be, with the Northern Territory, formed into a seventh State of the Commonwealth."

"This followed the lines of Sir George Bowen's suggestions in 1860. Mr. Theodore has told me that one of the main reasons he had for making the suggestions was that he was convinced that a spirit of patriotism and local citizenship would never arise in residents of the Territory while it was an abject dependency of the Commonwealth and was controlled by a Commonwealth department."

He further states—

"When I returned to Canberra in 1929 from my visit to the Territory, I had several long talks with the Prime Minister, Mr. S. M. Bruce, who was interested in the possibility of getting the Territory on to a firm foundation. I told him that it would

be useless for the Commonwealth Government to construct a railway in the Northern Territory with both ends in the air; that the railway must branch off an existing railway system, and naturally and geographically this was the Queensland system. I told Mr. Bruce this was so important that I proposed to recommend the building of a railway line from Mount Isa, or rather Dajarra in Queensland to Camooweal, also in Queensland, but only 12 miles from the eastern boundary of the Northern Territory. I considered that this new railway was of such vital importance to the Territory that the Federal Government should approach the Queensland Government about it, and should offer to meet half the cost of construction. Mr. Bruce agreed, and asked me to take the matter up, in the first instance, with the Queensland Minister for Railways. Before I could do this there was a conference of State Premiers at Canberra, and with Mr. Bruce's approval I broached the subject to the Queensland Premier, Mr. McCormack. When I told the Premier, better known as 'Big Bill,' that the Federal Government would be prepared to meet half the cost, he clapped me on the shoulder saying, 'It's a cinch.' Mr. McCormack told me that as soon as his Minister for Railways brought the matter to the Queensland Cabinet he would support it and see that it was agreed to.

"Unfortunately, the times were not propitious. Two months later the Federal Government was in very troubled waters over arbitration and was defeated in Parliament. At the subsequent elections the Labour Party triumphed and Mr. Bruce's Government went out of office. The Federal Government would have been on very sound grounds in endorsing this railway proposal. In 1936 the Queensland Public Works Committee, which included members of the Government and of the Opposition, inquired into a proposal to extend the Queensland railway system in the north to Camooweal. Evidence was taken and in August, 1936, that Committee furnished its report, which recommended the railway extension from Dajarra to Camooweal, a distance of 158 miles, at an estimated cost of £1,500,000. A feature of the evidence given before the Committee was that repeated references were made to the fertile lands of the Northern Territory and particularly to the Barkly Tableland. This materially influenced the findings and recommendations of the Committee. The Queensland Government was unable to do anything about these recommendations at the time, though, as will be shown later, it was in favour of the construction of the railway."

He also says—

"Mr. Payne also sent me data that he had prepared on the railways recommended by him and he has agreed to my quoting some of the data here. He estimated that the first railway recommended by his Committee, from Dajarra in Queensland to the

Rankine River in the Northern Territory, a length of 240 miles, would cost about £2,000,000 to construct (£8,300 per mile) the annual working expenses would be £32,000, and the estimated freight revenue £100,000. The second railway recommended, from Wyndham in Western Australia to near Gordon Downs in the Territory, was estimated to cost £1,500,000 (£7,500 per mile), the working expenses would be £40,000 and the freight revenue £70,000. Mr. Payne prepared these figures in 1938, in support of the recommendation made in 1937 by the Committee of which he was Chairman. Though in 1938 costs of construction would be higher, the revenue from freight would also be greater. But even if the construction of an additional 500 miles of railways in the Northern Territory cost five or six million pounds, the benefits caused by increased production, development, settlement and population would far outweigh the capital cost, apart from the railway earnings. I cannot do better than continue to quote Mr. Payne, whose estimates and figures can be regarded as correct and authoritative."

The inland pastoral industries of Queensland at normal prices contribute about 30 per cent. towards the wealth production of this State. There are no projects that would give a greater return commensurate with cost than railways in the inland.

I now wish to quote what Mr. Hanlon, the State Premier, had to say, according to Mr. Abbott, about the matter—

"The story of the suggested railway connection with Queensland was related by the Premier of Queensland, Mr. Hanlon, in a statement published in 'The Times' on 15 February, 1947. Mr. Hanlon said that in 1936 the Queensland Government was prepared to continue the north-western railway system from Townsville as far as the border of the Northern Territory if the Federal Government, for its part, completed the line on to Darwin across the Barkly Tableland, but the Federal Government would not agree. Mr. Hanlon said that Queensland regarded this as an important defence project as well as a developmental factor, and when just before war broke out in Europe the Queensland Government repeated its offer, once again the Federal Government showed itself to be unwilling."

Mr. Hanlon: Quite true.

Mr. Ewan: I congratulate the Premier on his foresight in making these moves and I congratulate also the hon. member for Flinders and the hon. member for Carpentaria, the mover and seconder of this motion respectively. However, it is my desire to move this necessary amendment, which in my opinion would give a true and worthy expression of the intentions of the hon. member for Flinders, and the hon. member for Carpentaria, supported by the Premier of this State by virtue of what I have just quoted. I believe that this House will be

prepared to give my amendment every consideration, because in my humble opinion it gives effect to the express desires of both the Government and the Opposition.

Mr. Hanlon: Since when has the Opposition become conversant with Queensland development?

Mr. Ewan: It is part and parcel of the policy of the party to which I have the honour to belong, as the Premier well knows. I suggest that hon. members on both sides will rise above political partisanship in these matters of national importance and support the amendment, which goes far towards expressing the desires of hon. members on both sides of the House.

Mr. Wordsworth (Cook) (11.43 a.m.): I rise to second the amendment moved by the hon. member for Roma, and at the outset I should like to point out that defence is the business not only of every Queensland but of every Australian, and of every Australian authority that derives its authority from the people. The first of these is the local authority, then we have the State Government, and in the final analysis, the Commonwealth Government. We all know that in war-time Commonwealth powers in defence are paramount, but the Commonwealth does not have these powers in peace-time and then it has to rely on the use of powers made available to it first by the State Government and then, to a lesser degree, by the local authorities. Therefore I cannot see why anything can be gained by agreeing to this motion, which otherwise is quite a worthy one, for it simply passes the buck of the whole of the administration and cost to the Commonwealth Government, whereas it is everyone's business.

Today I want to deal particularly with railway development, not only from the viewpoint of defence but also from the viewpoint of development. If we honestly cast our eyes round Australia—and I have been round most of it—we shall find that where railways have been constructed development has followed. There is a lot of loose talk today about what road and air transport can do. Both are essential. Air transport moves people and mails quickly and road transport does likewise but at high freight rates. This is particularly true of motor transport, especially over long distances, but both forms of transport are too costly as a means of developing an area of any size, although they certainly give access and carry some high-priced goods. In this way both these forms of transport cater for the sparsely populated districts quite well but in everyday life air and road transport are a very poor substitute for railways. It is so, too, from a defence point of view. Troops can be moved by aeroplane and motor vehicles but that is a slow process when compared with their movement by rail, particularly when they are armed with heavy equipment. Therefore, an efficient railway service is absolutely essential to the defence of this country.

I am rather surprised that there is today very little appreciation of the world situation,

especially in relation to the danger of attack and the form such an attack will take, and how it will affect us in Australia particularly, and probable effects upon form of transport. To-day, as a result of Russia's having captured the first 50 Snorkel submarines built by Hitler towards the end of World War II, together with the technicians and the tradesmen who built them and the blue-prints, our danger in time of war has greatly increased. In past wars the submarine has been a colossal menace, but it promises in any future war to be an even greater menace. The weakness of the submarines in our two previous wars was that they had had to periodically surface for air, and it was then that our air fleets and surface ships could attack them. Another weakness was that their movements under water were slow and that a surface ship could travel faster than they could. Today Russia has, according to no less an authority than Mr. Winston Churchill, over 300 of these submarines and these submarines, as well as being able to remain under water for many days at a time, can also travel at a speed of 20 knots under the water.

Let us consider the position of Australia in the light of this fact. Supposing there is another world war and our enemy is equipped with this type of submarine, as no doubt he will be, what will be our position in view of the present state of our communications? In the event of another war we shall have to stand entirely on our own feet. We cannot expect convoys or even single ships to get through to the extent they did in past wars. Therefore, when considering what form of transport we need for developmental and defence purposes, the answer must be railways.

The reasons why I am forced to that conclusion are that we have more coal in Australia than we can possibly use, and we can manufacture in Australia everything required by railways from dog-spikes to the heaviest engines and the best carriages. That consideration should enable us to form a better appreciation of our logical transport system, if it is not too late. It is easy to visualise that during a future war, when we are entirely dependent on imports of fuel for motor vehicles, aeroplanes and associated forms of transport that do not use the natural fuel we have here, instead of petrol-rationing we shall have a complete banning of any use of petrol except for essential defence purposes. That is not an alarmist statement. The submarines I speak of will be capable of handling any convoys of tankers on which we may depend for fuel. While we are keen on getting road access to every part of this continent, especially to every part that needs development and the building of aerodromes, we should be building in the light of what might happen during the next war. We should be spending gigantic sums not only on improving our existing railways but on railway extensions to every part of this State; and the same should be done throughout Australia. These extensions can be made. They will cost a colossal amount of money, but what would

money be worth if Russia should take Australia in five years' time? At the present time we have £600,000,000 credit in London, some of which could be used to buy equipment that we require for our railways.

Besides new extensions we could be improving our permanent way. The North Coast Line is a case in point. That line has been relaid with heavy rails as far as Mackay and it should be relaid all the way with 80- to 85-lb. rails or whatever heavy rail is used. While rails are being pulled up from Mackay north we should be putting them down in other places, making a connection such as that from Mungana to Laura with the Peninsula and those areas to which the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock referred the other day, lying towards Normanton. We should be going flat-out, irrespective of the cost, putting down these railways. The building of railways into these areas would stimulate development and be of paramount importance in the transfer of troops and equipment in time of war. It might cost £100,000,000, but what does that matter? That would be a good insurance policy; and now is the time to go in for such an insurance policy. We should not talk too much about it, but to use a colloquialism, get stuck right into the job.

Although I am well aware that the Minister for Transport is getting on with the job, I think we need to get on with it more quickly in regard to the modernising of the equipment we have. I had a task during the war of moving 16 tanks and equipment from eastern to western Australia. I am not trying to "rub it in," but I say without fear of contradiction, that at that time the flat-top vehicles available for heavy equipment in Queensland were the worst in Australia. We were putting 28-ton vehicles on 26-ton carrying-capacity flat-tops and the maximum speed allowed was 20 miles an hour. In Western Australia they had vehicles fit to take these tanks and the speed was 30 miles an hour on the same gauge as in Queensland. I hope that condition has been improved because in defence railway facilities are of great importance to Australia.

Hon. members will have seen in the news from Korea that the 30-ton tank is no longer any good; it is not thick enough in the armour. The latest American tank, on which we shall have to depend for our defence in war, is 45 tons and it is our job to have the wherewithal to move this equipment from south to north quickly. They cannot move under their own power on the road because they would become worn-out too soon and require prohibitive maintenance. Moreover, if we were short of motor fuel they could not move by road under their own power.

Mr. Devries: If the submarine is going to cut off our incoming supplies it might be that aeroplanes will have to bring essential supplies in.

Mr. WORDSWORTH: It is quite a possibility that aeroplanes may have to fly in sufficient supplies of petrol to keep themselves

going in a future war. That would be uneconomic but may be the only way we shall be able to get the petrol in if we cannot find a counter to future submarine warfare. I have read much authoritative information on the submarine and I know that it is not only capable of a high speed and of remaining submerged for a long time, but it can also crash-dive below the surface to a depth at which it is beyond danger from either depth charges or aerial bombing. It is a real menace. In our preparation for the defence of the Commonwealth and this part of Australia we should take into consideration development as one of the major factors and my suggestion is that we endeavour to do everything possible to use our natural form of transport and the only one on which we can hope to keep going in time of war.

Furthermore, in this development it is the responsibility of everyone in Australia—local authorities, State and Commonwealth Governments—to prepare the country for defence; and hand in hand with defence is development. As a matter of fact, if it were not for the fear of a major war within the next five years and if it were not necessary to think in terms of defence, it would not be necessary to speed up development, but we are all, consciously or subconsciously, aware that we shall have to defend this country and in order to do this we must continue its development. I have mentioned the fear of a major war in the next five years but I am of the opinion that if we do not get a major conflict within that time we might have 25 years of peace.

As to development, we do not want all assistance to come from the Government. The people of Australia are a capable lot and if they get the sympathetic ears of their State and Federal Governments they will do a great deal towards helping themselves. I offer to the mover of this motion and to this Government this simple suggestion: that if we are really sincere about developing Australia and we are particularly concerned with Queensland, although no nation would attack Queensland only, we can help people to help themselves almost immediately by the Government's making decisions as to what areas are most in need of urgent development, with a view to the defence of this country. I do not suggest the appointment of a royal commission that would take evidence for eight or 10 months, but I do suggest that if this Government want to get a move on with the job of getting the people to help themselves, the Premier, perhaps a couple of his senior Cabinet Ministers and perhaps, as a gesture, the Leader of the Opposition, get together round a detailed map of Queensland. They should study that map for an hour or two and then make a decision as to what areas must be developed. Instead of developing from the inside outward we have, for the purposes of defence, to develop from the perimeter inwards. These gentlemen, studying a detailed map of Queensland, should decide on the areas in which they must get people to live and develop the country. When the decisions of this body were made—and I do not say that they would all be in connection with the

Far North or the Far West, because there are many gaps down the coast—they should be given No. 1 priority.

We want to help the people who cannot help themselves. They should have every encouragement. What is more, in the areas decided upon, we should wipe out all building-control restrictions except those requiring conformity to local-authority standards, and it would be found that there would be people with money and ideas to carry out their part of the job. Let us get all the roads built. There are a great many roads throughout Australia, particularly in North Queensland—the Mulligan Highway is an example—that have been gazetted but not built. For instance, a road to the Bloomfield River from Cooktown has been gazetted but not completed. Some of the job was done as far as Stuckley's Gate, and there it stopped. It is apparent that an aerial survey was made instead of a ground survey, and those in charge of the work got stuck at that point. At the same time, let us buy all the rails and railway equipment we can get from any part of the world to enable us to get on with the job of developing this country by means of rail transport for a start.

I think I have painted a full picture and I hope I have not been too pessimistic. I am interested in the defence of this country as much as anyone else, because my children are boys and if war comes they would be involved in it, and might not be so fortunate as I was.

The next stage is to do what we can about liquid fuel. Somewhere about 10,000,000 gallons of fuel is made in New South Wales, but that is only a drop in the bucket. We have to get a substitute for liquid fuel from our own resources. We could go into the question of getting petrol from coal. There is nothing new in the idea, as it was done in Germany before the last World War, and I understand that the Government have some information on the possibilities. I am not a coal expert—I used it in a locomotive once—but I do know that different coals will do different things. If it is possible for any of the vast coal deposits of Queensland to be used for the manufacture of liquid fuel in the near future, we should do our best to get a Commonwealth subsidy and Commonwealth aid for the erection of a plant. Whether such a plant will cost £40,000,000, £50,000,000, £60,000,000, or £100,000,000 does not matter. Money is nothing; you cannot eat it, and if Russia took this country a £100-note would not be worth 2½d. The initiative must come from the Government. The Government have the Powell-Duffryn report on our coal resources and it may be that Blair Athol coal would prove most suitable. If so, there would be no better place to erect a plant for the manufacture of liquid fuel than Blair Athol, because it is well away from the coast. It is 100 miles from the coast and it is a place that could be easily defended in war-time. I offer that as the second idea to help us through.

I trust that the Ministers in a position to carry out these suggestions will do all that is

possible. We realise that the need is urgent to develop this country and make it self-sufficient in war-time so that our essential services can carry on and at least we shall have a chance of holding the country. My particular interest is in the development of the Far North of Queensland, the North-West, and other places, too. We must not be misled by these know-alls who say, "There is no need to worry about North Queensland." In the early stages of World War II, senior army officers said, "Don't worry about the open spaces. They are not worth worrying about. If enemy forces come to Australia they will go to Sydney or Melbourne first and then to Brisbane and Adelaide, and they will then have virtually all Australia's population." Responsible people are saying the same thing today. It seems as if they had no memory of what occurred previously. It was obvious to anyone that if the Japanese fleet had not been stopped in the Coral Sea battle it would have landed not in Sydney or Melbourne, but somewhere between Cardwell and Bowen. That country must be developed and the people must have some incentive to stay there.

That is about all I have to say on the subject. I hope I have advanced some grounds for thought and some logical reasons why the Government should consider the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Roma. To sum up, defence and development go hand in hand. We must develop to defend, and development is the responsibility of every person in this Commonwealth and of every authority in this Commonwealth. It is not quite playing the game for us to pass the buck to the Commonwealth Government.

I have just returned from North Queensland, where I have been for a few days and where I read the motion of the hon. member for Flinders in the local Press. I have been racking my brains to discover and have asked other people if they can tell me, one thing that the previous Commonwealth Government have done for North Queensland in the way of financing any special project. I am referring, of course, to the Chifley Commonwealth Government. From the cessation of hostilities on 15 August, 1945, till 10 December of last year, I cannot think of one thing done by the Chifley Government in this connection.

Opposition Members: Hear, hear!

Amendment (Mr. Ewan) negatived.

Hon. H. H. COLLINS (Tablelands—Secretary for Agriculture and Stock) (12.9 p.m.): I rise to support the motion so ably moved by the hon. member for Flinders and so ably supported by the hon. member for Carpentaria. At the outset, I wish to say that to my mind this motion is indeed timely. We read in the Press this morning a call from the Prime Minister to the people of Australia to unite in the defence of this country, and this motion deals primarily with the defence of this country.

I am really amazed at the real motive of the hon. member for Roma in moving his amendment. He is obviously trying to save

the faces of his co-partners in the Federal Government, particularly that of the Federal Treasurer, who is the Leader of the Country Party in the Federal House. He puts forward the same idea—that the Commonwealth Government should play no essential part in the development of Northern Australia. That is exactly what he means. The motion moved by the hon. member for Flinders says that the State must play a particular part, develop the State economically, and the Commonwealth a part, not strictly economic at the moment but by undertaking defence measures that may lead to the development of the country eventually. That work must be carried out if you are ever going to defend the country at all. According to the amendment, the only projects that should be entertained are those of a defence value but if the development of this country has no defence value then I do not know what a defence value means.

The hon. member for Cook was very much more temperate in his approach to the subject, although he did second the amendment. He actually spoke in favour of the motion. He realises that unless you develop the country and put its economic possibilities to use you are just not going to have any defence at all. He is a man who has given considerable thought to the subject and I appreciate what he says to a degree, but I cannot agree with him when he says that it is only because of the threat of war that there is any immediate hurry to develop the northern part of Australia. That is just plain lazy thinking and fallacy. The development of any country is a slow process and we must of necessity use all the methods at the command of the powers that be for the time being, and that relates to both the State and Federal Governments. We are all concerned in the development of this country. We all have our parts to play.

The motion envisages what has been done by Federal Governments in times gone by and I am not saying for one moment that I agree with all that they have done, no matter whether they were Labour, Liberal, Country Party, or any other kind of Government. It is our duty to develop the northern part of Australia. I hope the day never comes when this country will be invaded, but I am sure that if an invasion takes place an enemy will not sneak round to the South Pole and invade this continent through Melbourne, Adelaide or some other point in Southern Australia. The enemy will obviously come from that part of the world to which it belongs at the moment and that is not very far away from our northern shores, which are without doubt the vulnerable part of this country.

The hon. member for Roma said that the motion in its present form suggested unification, but that is purely a simple-minded thought. He went on to suggest that it meant handing over the control of the assets of the State of Queensland. That is what his amendment means, by implication. That suggestion is in keeping with suggestions that have been made, particularly during the recent election campaign, when hon. members opposite were hesitant about doing anything at all to help in the great Burdekin irrigation scheme, the Walsh River irrigation scheme,

or the Tully Falls irrigation scheme, or anything at all that meant development in the State of Queensland. They merely suggested that these projects may or may not have some value. Apparently, the amendment is moved to save their faces. The motion moved by the hon. member for Flinders has given the Opposition very serious worry because it has awakened them to the necessity for their own friends in the Federal sphere to do a little bit more than sitting down talking about what they might do; and that is in effect what they have done since they have been in charge at Canberra. I am quite prepared to give them time to show that they are willing to do something but up to the present they have done nothing that can be classed as a statesmanlike effort or anything at all that is in the interests of either Queensland or Australia. The main plank in their election platform was to make the value of the pound greater than it was. Cannot hon. members see that they are not very happy about the cost of living? Cannot they see that there is a complete division between the two parties, which are supposed to represent a united Government?

Mr. Nicklin: They have slowed up the inflation since they have been there.

Mr. COLLINS: They have slowed up everything except inflation. They have accelerated inflation.

Mr. Nicklin: They have not.

Mr. COLLINS: You have only to look at the figures released by the Commonwealth Statistician to see how inflation has increased out of all proportion since the present Federal Government, who were going to slow up inflation, took office at Canberra. During the last Federal elections, the members of the present Federal Government attacked the Public Service, contending that it was greatly overstuffed, yet after they abolished rationing of certain commodities, which was responsible for the employment of a great number of people, the number of public servants, according to the Commonwealth Statistician in a statement published the other day, has increased by 45,000 in the last six months. That is a very good effort on the part of the Federal Government to reduce the Public Service! No doubt that is partly responsible for reducing the purchasing power of the pound.

If the amendment was accepted it would mean the turning down of projects that the Federal Government have tentatively agreed to subsidise, namely, the big works that the Queensland Government have on hand at the present time. Do the Opposition think that the Federal Government should not subsidise them? Apparently they do, for the amendment asks that consideration be given to projects that will be of military value. The whole thing is fallacious. Take, for example, the place in our developmental policy of the sugar industry. It has reached its present stage of development today through a help given by the Commonwealth Government. Had the Commonwealth Government not placed an embargo on sugar grown outside of Australia and had the State not given a guaranteed price, there would be no sugar industry today.

What was the Commonwealth Government's reason for imposing that embargo? It was a defence measure, to encourage population as a means of defence. The two go hand in hand. On the other hand, the motion in its present form is definitely sound. It is commendable that the mover of the motion wants to maintain what we have. He mentioned the main road to Darwin. Is it to be entirely, as suggested, a State responsibility to maintain that road in an area where the population is not one person in 10 square miles?

Mr. Nicklin: Who suggested that?

Mr. COLLINS: That is what is suggested by the amendment.

Mr. Nicklin: You read the amendment; it says nothing of the sort.

Mr. COLLINS: I have read it, and it proposes to deal only with those things that have immediate defence value, not a future defence value. If we are to deal with future defence value, how can you leave population development out of it?

Mr. Sparkes: Read paragraph (2).

Mr. COLLINS: I have read it all—more carefully than those who prepared the amendment. I would not say that the mover of the amendment was entirely responsible, but I do say that he was very badly advised. The maintenance of that road is certainly partly a Commonwealth responsibility—I am not going to say wholly because it is of some value to the people who live up there and pay rates and taxes, so that the Queensland Government get something from it. We are not asking the Federal Government to pay the whole cost of these other schemes, but we do say that until they are self-supporting economically it is the bounden duty of the Commonwealth Government to come in and pay some of the costs.

Mr. Sparkes: Who said it was not?

Mr. COLLINS: Hon. members opposite said it was not. It is a depressing spectacle today to see beautiful aerodromes that were built during the war—and which were essential to the defence of this country and were used as bases by the Air Force engaged in the Coral Sea Battle—deteriorating and going into disrepair. One of the best dromes in North Queensland is situated at Mareeba and the Commonwealth Government have given it away. That is a shameful thing, because it is one of the best dromes, with a big tarmac track, free from fog, and situated some distance inland; yet we see that and other dromes, such as the big drome out on Carpentaria Downs and the one up on Wrotham Park and others that were built during the war and played their part in the defence of this country, being abandoned. (Opposition interjections.) If this motion means anything it means that these instrumentalities should be maintained. On the other hand, did not the State pay its proportion of the cost of roads that the military authorities thought were immediately necessary during the war, because we knew they were desirable from our State point of view?

Right through the war it could not be said that the military authorities bore all the cost, because they did not; the State Government bore a big proportion of the cost, equal to the economic value of those roads to the State. We did not in any way abandon our responsibility in connection with the immediate value to the State of the roads built in the first place for military purposes.

The mover of the amendment said, "Why do we not build the Charleville to Blackall line? Why not import fencing wire and wire netting to give to the graziers?" His idea of defence value is, "What am I going to get out of it?" That is the outlook, unfortunately, of members who sit in opposition and preach about loyalty and love for Great Britain and the people of the Old Country. When those people over there are starving for meat they are talking about selling meat in New York or somewhere else.

Mr. EWAN: I rise to a point of order. What the Minister said is untrue. He said that I asked for the importation of wire for graziers in the northern country. I made no such statement. His statement is offensive to me and I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr. COLLINS: I will accept the statement of the hon. member. If he did not say that he did say that it should be supplied.

Mr. Ewan: I said no such thing.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr. Farrell): Order! It is very difficult for me, with the continual barrage of interjections, to know what is happening. I should be in a much better position to know what has been said if hon. members would refrain from continually interjecting. However, the Minister has stated that he has accepted the denial of the hon. member for Roma.

Mr. COLLINS: It is very difficult to concentrate, because of the bellowing of those people in this Chamber who come from the cattle-yards. It would be more to their liking to be in the cattle-yards rather than in this Chamber when matters of extreme importance to the nation are being considered. This should not be a matter for party politics at all. It should be above that. (Opposition laughter.) Unfortunately, hon. members opposite have brought party politics into the discussion and had they not been dragged in like a stinking cat it would not be necessary for me to answer the question, but since it has been raised, I must do so. If the hon. member denies that he said anything about fencing wire and wire netting at all, I think he will be surprised when he reads his "Hansard" proof—of course unless he deletes it. However, the hon. member did say that he regarded the Charleville-Blackall railway line as an immediate defence problem.

Mr. Ewan: Do not quibble.

Mr. COLLINS: Will the hon. member deny that he said that?

Mr. Ewan: No, I will not, because I said it.

Mr. COLLINS: If the hon. member contends that the construction of the Charleville-Blackall railway line is an immediate defence problem and that the development of the northern part of Australia, that is, the Northern Territory, the Gulf country and North Queensland generally, is not an immediate defence problem, he has a pretty "screwy" idea of what is and what is not an immediate defence problem.

The sugar industry is the best example I can quote of the value of an agricultural industry to the defence of the State particularly and the nation. As the result of our policy, considered nearly 50 years ago and regarded as essential to the defence of this country, the industry did come to the defence of Australia in the last war. Was it not from the sugar farms of North Queensland in the first place that thousands of men were recruited in order to fight for the defence of Australia? Was it not from these same farms that tractors and ploughs were taken in order to build aerodromes at Charters Towers, Mareeba, Iron Range, Horn Island, Carpentaria, Cloncurry, and other places in the Commonwealth? That machinery was a tremendous help in these works and the lack of it was a tremendous detriment to the cane farmers of the areas from which it was taken—and taken at a time when it could not be replaced. But these people were uncomplaining because they regarded it as part of their war effort. Had it not been for that self-same sugar industry, would there have been the great shipping facilities existing from Cairns, Bowen, Townsville and Mackay down the coast to Brisbane? It has been the sugar industry that has built them up. That being so, what is wrong with asking the Commonwealth Government to help in the development of Northern Australia in its various phases, in very much the same way as we have asked and as we have been successful in the sugar industry in that direction?

One of the great problems that come to our minds is just how soon we can do it and how we can do it. As is well known, this is a time when very essential materials are exceedingly scarce in relation to demand. For instance, take the housing position. Although 10,000 houses were built in Queensland last year—probably double the number built in a year in pre-war days—there are still thousands of people wanting homes. Travelling accommodation is screaming for improvement, but the undertaking is being held in abeyance because of the lack of materials. Factories would be established in this State immediately if the people concerned could find the ways and means of housing their employees and of building the necessary buildings and getting the machinery for them. Consequently I think we need to lift this matter onto an entirely higher plane altogether than hon. members opposite have put it on. There is the call for it, and I think the pressure on the nation demands that we should do it. During the war we saw how problems were tackled and successfully solved by making the best use we could of the manpower, including woman-power, available. The best of our men were selected for the active fighting forces, and were trained and equipped

and did the remarkable job the Australian people expected that they would do. Tradesmen were retained in essential services to equip our fighting forces with the necessities of war and to mould them into an active virile fighting force. And look at the mighty job they did; look at the mighty job done by the railway men of Queensland particularly, indeed all over Australia. The coal-miners too did a mighty job. And today we find that because of the demand on our labour resources for essential industries there is very little surplus of man-power to carry out these works that the motion visualises, works that are enormously expensive, although not so great as the need for them.

I submit for the consideration of this House the desirability, first of all, of the Commonwealth Government's coming out into the open and saying what they are or are not doing in the defence of this country. If they are not going to do anything so far as Queensland is concerned, the Queensland Government will have to tackle the problem on their own. That should not be necessary. The Queensland Government are prepared to play their part within the boundaries of the State of Queensland. Hundreds of thousands of people are degenerating in camps in Europe who could be used to do the very essential work we are speaking about this morning. It may be argued that if those men came here they would make our present problems more acute. We must see that that does not happen. If we are prepared to look at the matter on broad enough lines, I believe that not only can we get the men we need to carry out these projects but in their countries there are the materials they could use both for the construction of their own homes—as is being done by the Secretary for Public Works at the present time—and the other projects. Their houses could be brought out with them. I should prefer, of course, to see the manufacturing of these houses done in this country. We could import the men and the materials from overseas and our Australian economy would not be affected in the matter of robbing us of our supplies and this would have the ultimate effect of building up tremendous industries in this country. What is wrong with bringing out technicians? We have just as good steel as that produced anywhere else in the world, and what is wrong with starting a steel works, say at Bowen, or somewhere else?

Opposition Members: Why didn't you do it?

Mr. COLLINS: Hon. members opposite know very well why it was not done. They know that a delegation from Queensland went overseas purposely to prevent the late Mr. Theodore from raising the money that he required to start the Bowen steel works. They are doing the same thing today in attempting to divert their meat to America, where they could get 6s. or 7s. a pound for it, instead of sending it to Britain, who has always been our best friend and our best means of defence.

What is wrong with bringing from overseas all the material that is necessary to build steel works and cement works and to house

the people employed in them? The Army catered for its own requirements in that way. Did we say we could not defend New Guinea till we had accommodation there for the soldiers and the other people who went there? Did we say we could not build a road to Darwin till we had the necessary accommodation for the workers? No! The men who fought the enemy and built the roads helped to a great degree in providing their own accommodation.

Why cannot we work for the development of the country—and, after all, development is a necessary adjunct to defence—without haggling over a paltry few million pounds that this or that might cost? Why should we argue about whether it will be economic? Why do we not say, ‘No matter what it costs, it is essential in the development of this country’? When we do that, we shall be thinking along the right lines.

Mr. Sparkes: You are thinking more of the 40-hour week.

Mr. COLLINS: That is all the hon. member can think of. He thinks only in terms of the 40-hour week, £5 a hundred pounds for cattle and £1 a pound for wool.

In all seriousness, I say that the Federal Government should adopt the attitude I have just suggested. It is wrong thinking and lazy thinking to say, as the amendment suggested, that the Queensland Government should bear the responsibility for the defence of this country. That has never been done in the past, and apparently an effort is being made to serve the Government at Canberra rather than the State of Queensland. If we can buy such things as railway engines and railway trucks in Europe and at the same time obtain labour from among the thousands of unemployed there, what is wrong with the Federal Government's bringing out complete units, working in close co-operation with the State Government, which would naturally bear a fair share of the costs? If a determined effort was made in this direction and officials were sent to Europe to get the material and labour necessary to start some of these projects, we should be getting somewhere. If however, we are mean and paltry and parsimonious and think only in terms of the amount of money the Federal Government will allocate to North Queensland or Northern Australia, we shall continue to be in a state of unpreparedness and shall be deserving of the fate that must inevitably befall people who are politically narrow-minded, blind to the development of their country and unworthy to occupy one of the best countries in the world, which this country is. We have an obligation to the rest of the world not only to increase our food production but to use those unemployed people in Europe who have no outlook in life. We should transfer these people to this country where they would become splendid citizens, just as we have done in the case of immigrants from England, Scotland, Ireland and Europe. Let thousands or millions more come to this country so

long as they do not clutter up our own economy and so long as they can help to develop the country. They would in turn earn great dividends for this country. It is an opportunity that may never come again and we should seize upon it to do something worth while for the starving people of the world. Let us give them a place here in the sun now, let us populate this country, and in time we shall truly be able to defend it, as we must defend it if we are to continue to be the owners of it.

What did we find just prior to or at the beginning of the war—some 200,000 unemployed registered trade unionists in this country.

Mr. Wordsworth: Mostly in Queensland.

Mr. COLLINS: Queensland had the lowest number and we took whatever steps we could to care for them. The extent of our unemployment was brought about by the number of people who came here from the other States. And I still have in my mind's eye the picture of a Minister of the Crown belonging to the party opposite, Mr. Sizer, who had a notice erected on the border of this State and New South Wales indicating clearly to the people seeking to enter this State that there was no work offering for them here and no relief available.

Mr. Sparkes: A non-political speech.

Mr. COLLINS: The hon. member brought it on himself and he must now take it. That notice, erected at the direction of Mr. Sizer, said in effect to all who would come to this State from New South Wales that trespassers would be prosecuted, just as we see on many of the big pastoral properties in the West. We do not want to go back to those days.

We have great opportunities. Therefore, let us take time by the forelock, let us take advantage of these possibilities. Let us launch defence measures for the defence of this country. I was about to point out a moment ago before I was rudely interrupted by my friends in Opposition that during the days of the large numbers of unemployed Queensland could not get enough money to carry out work to absorb them. At that time, if all the States of the Commonwealth got £20,000,000 from the Loan Council, they thought they were doing magnificently but immediately war was declared money was found by a single Government, the Commonwealth Government, even to the extent of £600,000,000 and £1,000,000,000 a year for the prosecution of war. It was just as easy for the Commonwealth Government to raise those huge sums for war purposes as it was for all the States of the Commonwealth to raise £20,000,000 before the war period. What is wrong with our thinking? These are things that we must think about but if we are going to haggle one with the other, as one might be expected to do in the selling of a horse, trying to beat the other down to the lowest figure, we shall get nowhere. Let us be prepared to face the facts honestly. Let us bring millions of

people into this country, so long as we do not clutter up our own economy. At present we have the opportunity of doing something for the nation and for the rest of the world and there will be something wrong with us if we do not take advantage of it.

Mr. JESSON (Hinchinbrook) (12.45 p.m.): Firstly, I want to compliment the mover and seconder of the motion on their very fine contributions to this debate. Both had to receive extensions of time to enable them to develop their argument that we should enlist the support of the Commonwealth Government for the development of our northern and north-western portions of Queensland. Then, to my very great surprise, this morning an amendment was placed in my hands throwing the onus of that development on the State Government. If we had statistics before us of the expenditure of Commonwealth Governments in Victoria, New South Wales, and South Australia, particularly in Victoria, they would astound us. I believe that they would reveal that only about 5 per cent. of that expenditure took place in Queensland and 95 per cent. in the States I have mentioned. I am therefore surprised that the Opposition should move such an amendment, for it made the question purely a party-political one. It was admitted by the hon. member for Roma, who castigated both the mover and seconder of the motion because they had condemned this Government for things they had not done, that his argument was wrong. Both the mover and seconder of the motion condemned both State and Commonwealth Governments for not doing what they should have done, which proved that they approached the subject from a non-party point of view, but in consequence of the amendment politics have been introduced into a very important national question. Commonwealth Governments, irrespective of party, have neglected the northern part of Australia. I am not taking that part in which Queensland alone is interested. The Chifley Government can to a certain extent be excluded from the blame because they had a big war to prosecute. They only came into the breach when the Menzies-Fadden Government leadership failed. Then in 1945, when the atomic bomb was dropped on Japan and the war folded up overnight as it were, they were faced with the problem of rehabilitating thousands of men and women engaged not only in naval and military operations but in war work also. This meant that they had to restore the whole social structure of the nation. That was a mighty job—to bring a nation from a war-time to a peace-time footing. Then in a comparatively short space of time they were defeated at the polls by the Liberal Party. Therefore the blame for what we might term the neglect of the development of Northern Australia cannot be placed at the door of the Chifley Government. I venture to say that if the people of Australia had not been misled by the hundreds of thousands of pounds, I might say millions, that were spent on propaganda to defeat the Chifley Government, the development of Northern

Australia would today be a different story. It is the Chifley Government who created the Northern Australia Development Committee.

Mr. Evans: It never did anything.

Mr. JESSON: It did a mighty job. In addition, the Chifley Government made a survey of the mineral resources of the whole of Northern Australia. Where are those reports today? They are down in the dark archives of the Federal Government and no-one can get them. Mining engineers have been down and have tried to get these reports of investigations that were paid for out of public funds and they could not get them. I am referring to the authorities who have tried to get the geographical and geophysical reports that are held by the Commonwealth Government concerning the mines in the northern parts of Australia. The Opposition have no cause to cry out in criticism of the various Labour Governments.

Another important fact the Opposition have lost sight of is that we are no longer a taxing authority, consequently we could not finance a programme for the development of North Queensland. We have not the money available.

An Opposition Member: You killed Queensland.

Mr. JESSON: Listen to the hide merchant! I never heard such a ridiculous statement in all my life. Queensland is the best State in Australia and it has been governed by Labour Governments for 35 years, with the exception of three dark, dismal, dreadful years when the Moore Government were in power, and it has been developed to a greater extent than any other State during that time. I repeat that taxation is a problem; we should not be able to get sufficient money from our small population to carry out the huge projects that are necessary in this State from a defence point of view.

I wish to make a few suggestions about development. I suggest that the Commonwealth Government could easily investigate the building of a railway line from Blair Athol to Hughenden and connecting with Cloncurry and the far western parts of the State where huge iron-ore deposits are to be found. It is not a State matter; it is a Commonwealth matter to take the iron ore from where it is lying and make the steel we need. The Commonwealth Government should build a line from Blair Athol to Hughenden, with a double track back from Hughenden to Townsville so that the coal could be sent to the smelters and the smelted ore could be taken out and transported to the coast. That is not a State matter. It is too big a job for any one State.

As a matter of fact, I am longing for the day when the State does get back its right to be the taxing authority so that we can tax the new-rich who came into wealth over the last few years and are still making their huge profits from the sweat and blood of the soldiers who went to the war. Let there be no doubt about that; that is where they are

making their huge profits from. Before the war, what was the price of wool per lb? We know that today it is £1 per lb. What about the huge profits the wool-growers are making. That they are making such profits is demonstrated by the number of big Buick motor-cars one sees in Western towns today. A big meat magnate driving round the streets of Brisbane today in a big Buick car that cost him £4,000. Before the war probably he was driving a T-model Ford. Notwithstanding this, we have growlers like cats sitting on the Opposition benches.

I suggest that the building of the railways the motion visualises is a national matter. Why, the cost of building 200 miles of railway could be regarded almost as nothing from the national viewpoint. Only the other day I read in a book by an author with a Russian name that something similar is done in the Soviet Union. There they have built over 800 miles of railway line from huge coal deposits to the ore deposits. There the ore is smelted and sent to the various parts of Russia to be manufactured. The building of this 200 miles of railway line would be a fairly good proposition for the whole of the Commonwealth. After all, it is not, as I have said, a matter for one State to build railway lines to provide the nation with a plentiful supply of steel.

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock made the very good suggestion of bringing factories from overseas *holus bolus* and re-erecting them at various sites in North Queensland. In the electorate of the hon. member for Cook there are large rivers that would accommodate ships. This applies also to rivers in various parts of the Gulf Country. Nature has endowed such places with all the requirements for development by man; it all hinges on finance. It is remarkable that hundreds of millions of pounds can be found for war; why not for development? Hundreds of millions of pounds of equipment obtained from all over the world was lying out in the scrubs of North Queensland after this last war. The value of aeroplanes and aeroplane parts, for instance, must have run into millions of pounds. A concern was breaking up aeroplanes just outside Townsville, smelting the aluminium, putting it into old drums and sending it to Victoria. It broke one's heart to see this splendid equipment being taken out of the packing crates, smelted and sent south to be manufactured into saucepans and other domestic utensils, and other things.

Mr. Wordsworth: The Chifley Government allowed it.

Mr. JESSON: What rot! As a matter of fact, the stuff belonged to the Americans. The hon. member does not know what he is talking about. Brand new aeroplane struts were taken out of the packing crate, cut into small lengths, soldered, and made usable for irrigation. These were sold round about Townsville. A huge amount of money that could have been used in developing the country was wasted.

At 2.15 p.m.,

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

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION.

Hon. W. POWER (Baroona—Secretary for Mines and Immigration) for **Hon. P. J. R. HILTON** (Carnarvon—Secretary for Public Works, Housing, and Local Government): I move—

“That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirableness of introducing a Bill to amend the Local Government Acts, 1936 to 1949, in certain particulars.”

Motion agreed to.

CITY OF BRISBANE ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION.

Hon. W. POWER (Baroona—Secretary for Mines and Immigration) for **Hon. P. J. R. HILTON** (Carnarvon—Secretary for Public Works, Housing, and Local Government): I move—

“That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirableness of introducing a Bill to amend the City of Brisbane Acts 1924 to 1949, in certain particulars, and for other purposes.”

Motion agreed to.

WAR SERVICE LAND SETTLEMENT VALIDATION BILL.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

(The Acting Chairman of Committees, Mr. Farrell, Maryborough, in the chair.)

Debate resumed from 20 September (see p. 464) on Mr. Foley's motion—

“That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to validate certain resumptions for war service land settlement and certain other matters; to vest certain lands in His Majesty for the purposes of the closer settlement thereof; to amend the War Service Land Settlement Acts, 1946 to 1948, and the War Service Land Settlement Acquisition Acts, 1945 to 1949, each in certain particulars; to repeal the War Service Land Settlement Agreement Act of 1945; and for other purposes.”

Mr. EWAN (Roma) (2.18 p.m.): I want to make it clear at the outset of my remarks that I am in no way opposed to soldier settlement as such, but I am definitely opposed to the principle that some landholders shall be asked to accept less than their properties are worth in order to avoid over-capitalisation of soldier settlers. I contend that the cost of avoiding over-capitalisation, desirable as it is, should be spread over the whole community, and should not be borne solely by those people who will be dispossessed of land to make possible the settlement of soldiers. In other words, I believe that the whole of the cost should be borne by the community.

Mr. Collins: If it is over-capitalised it is more than the land is worth.

Mr. EWAN: Again the Minister is impatient; I shall deal with that later. I believe also that the cost should be borne by the Federal Government and not by one small section of the community. Would the Minister in charge of this Bill like to have his suburban home acquired at 1942 values? Of course he would not! Neither would any other hon. member.

Let me tell hon. members what the Deputy Premier had to say in a letter dated 26 January, 1949. He said—

“This matter has been very carefully examined by my Government and, after consultation with the Commonwealth authorities, it has been agreed that some easing of the present restriction is desirable to provide for the payment of fair compensation to owners of land acquired for war-service land settlement and to enable State Governments to negotiate for land with owners on terms equal to those available for private individuals.

“My Government is aware that the limitation of 1942 values has undoubtedly handicapped negotiations severely and led to long drawn-out delays in acquisitions. In certain cases, it has been a very difficult matter to arrive at a fair estimate of the value of the land in 1942.

“My Government feels that any variation in the present basis of compensation should be by legislation and considers the purpose in view might best be achieved by inserting in the relevant Acts a provision that, in determining the compensation to be paid, regard may be had to the price paid for comparable land upon transfer since 10 February, 1942, with the approval of the appropriate Commonwealth or State authority.

“It is of course desirable that there should be uniformity in the various States on this question and, if agreement can be obtained, the Queensland Government will be prepared to introduce suitable legislation during the next session.”

As I have already pointed out, that letter was dated 26 January, 1949, and although the Deputy Premier of this State then said it was desirable that amending legislation should be introduced and that suitable steps would be taken to introduce it, we find to our amazement that it is actually about 17 or 18 months after that letter was written that this Government have seen fit to do so. However, in the meantime, the High Court in New South Wales has ruled, in a case brought against the Commonwealth Government by P. J. Magennis and Company, that the method of acquisition was completely invalid. Without casting any aspersions on anyone, was that High Court judgment the cause of this Government's desire to introduce this legislation? We had the admission of the Minister yesterday in his introductory remarks when he was quite open about it. He said—

“We want to protect, and this amending legislation is necessary to protect the contracts that this Government have already entered into with people prior to the decision to amend the Act.”

In other words, it is a straightout attempt, worthy though it may be in some respects, by the Government to validate or legalise their illegal actions of the past. But is there any indication that the Government will acknowledge the illegality of their past acts by agreeing to compensate those people from whom they have acquired land in the past, whether by agreement or arrangement or as the result of a surrender to the Crown because of a fear that if it was not handed over the Government would take the matter to the court and have the court determine its value? I happen to belong to the section of people who derive a livelihood from primary production and I can tell you that recourse to law is abhorrent to the average primary producer. Those of us who have had any experience in this respect can definitely say that those who go in for it come out very much worse off financially than before.

Mr. Aikens: All people who go to law find that out.

Mr. EWAN: That is so; it is admitted by the hon. member for Mundingburra that it does not pay any section of the community to go to law. Therefore I suggest that, if this legislation is passed and if there is to be any sense of justice or equity in it, the Minister and his Cabinet will have to take cognisance of the invalid arrangements or agreements already entered into and which he seeks to validate by this amending legislation.

In spite of all that I have said and in spite of the support of the hon. member of Mundingburra, offered to me at this late juncture, yesterday I heard the hon. members for Mundingburra, North Toowoomba and Hinchinbrook, in their extravagant phraseology bolstered by their inaccuracies, conceived in a blessed spirit of abandon because of their landless state and without any cognisance of the principles of full justice, seek to degrade the primary producers and landholders generally on whom they depend.

Mr. Aikens: I was not flat out.

Mr. EWAN: I am not flat out yet but I hope one day to be. Without any regard to economics they sought to disparage this section of the community, these great landholders, these wealthy people. I see the Minister over here at the end of the seat nodding his head in agreement. He knows full well that there are no big landholders in this scheme. He also knows full well that this is an agricultural soldier-settlement scheme. He knows too that the Government have no pastoral soldier-settlement scheme. They do give soldier applicants preference at ballots but there is no individual pastoral soldier-settlement scheme, highly desirable though it would be. This is a purely agricultural soldier-settlement scheme. Hon. members opposite referred to the big landholders. They criticised them and asked what they had done to settle the returned soldiers. I am going to tell you what they have done. I will tell you what one of the largest landholders has done for the returned soldiers.

Mr. Gair interjected.

Mr. EWAN: The hon. member can deal with Sparkes in his own way.

The ACTING CHAIRMAN (Mr. Farrell): Order! The Speaker has already ruled that an hon. member must refer to another hon. member by his correct title.

Mr. EWAN: I will do that.

Let me reply to the criticism of hon. members opposite who love to disparage men, to drag them down to the lowest level, to bring them down to their own level. Let me tell you of what the big landholders have done for the returned soldiers. Let me tell you of what Messrs. Kent and Weinholt did at Jondaryan. They decided to cut up their magnificent property, of historical interest, and make it available to the returned soldiers.

What did they do? The last parcel of land at Jondaryan that they subdivided consisted of 30,000 acres. They cut it up into 30 farms of 1,000 acres each, yet one Minister had the temerity to state they were not giving them enough. This same Minister has since settled returned soldiers in the Taroom-Wandoan area on 1,300-acre scrub blocks. The hon. gentleman said in a Press statement that certain areas would be cleared and a 7,000-yard dam would be put down for these new settlers at the start, but my point is that the Minister had the temerity to state that Mr. Kent was not giving them enough when he settled them on 1,000 acres of magnificent land at Jondaryan. Not only did this Government set about settling returned soldiers on areas of 1,300 acres in the Taroom-Wandoan area, but they compelled them to dairy or farm on it, despite the fact that the greatest authority on land settlement this State has known for many years, Mr. Payne, had indicated that the minimum limited for one settler in that district was 7,000 acres.

Mr. Foley: For grazing, not agriculture.

Mr. EWAN: I put it to you, Mr. Farrell, without regard to the interruption from the Government benches, that our greatest expert on land matters, Mr. Payne, has determined the capabilities of the land in that district, and his opinion is a sorry reflection on any decisions arrived at in this respect in this Chamber. In spite of the fact that this scheme is presumed to be one to settle returned soldiers on agricultural land, this Government see fit to dispossess returned soldiers of World War I., who were settled on 7,000-acre blocks, in order to settle returned soldiers from World War II. on 1,300-acre blocks. I understand they did the same at Dalby, but I can speak only of things I know. These returned soldiers were dispossessed of 7,000-acre blocks, an area that Mr. Payne, our eminent land authority, stated was a suitable living area, and if they could make more money out of grazing than out of dairying and agriculture—I know a lot of these men personally and I know they have sufficient intelligence to embark on any thing that will give them the greatest remuneration for their efforts—they should not be prevented from doing so. They are men who have had

experience for many years in that area, yet the Government seek to dispossess them of their land and to settle other returned soldiers on 1,300-acre blocks, and in furtherance of their socialisation plank say to them, "You have to become dairymen or agriculturists; we are going to direct you as to what occupation you shall follow, and you must follow it."

If this scheme is going to be a success, the Government will have to reconsider their attitude towards the settlement at Taroom and Wandoan because I can assure them, from the experience of all such settlement schemes in the past where these small areas have been opened up in marginal areas, that they will find after a lapse of 15 or 20 years a number of these small men—mark you, men who have shed their blood on foreign soil to protect you and me—will, after bitter experience, sell out. The Government's intention will then be defeated because we shall see the land reverting again to large aggregations. The whole purpose of the scheme will simply be defeated.

I must recapitulate that the whole basis of my quarrel with the Government is that unless this amending legislation provides for complete and adequate compensation for the landholders dispossessed, now or in the past, there is no spirit or sense of justice in it.

Opposition Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. T. A. FOLEY (Belyando—Secretary for Public Lands and Irrigation) (2.35 p.m.): The hon. member for Roma has endeavoured to twist the issue in regard to the settlement of the men in the Wandoan-Taroom area. It is not marginal country, and he knows it; it is recognised as some of the best country in Queensland. The only thing about the country is that it is being used for grazing purposes.

Mr. Decker: It is a very dry area.

Mr. FOLEY: It is not a dry area; it has a 27-inch rainfall, equal to that of the Burnett or the Callide. Mr. Payne made his declaration in regard to grazing, and it is not intended to subdivide the land at Wandoan and Taroom into grazing areas, but to subdivide it into mixed farming areas. Nobody, moreover, will be forced onto this land; he will go on it with his eyes open. I represented the Taroom area from 1932 till the last redistribution of electorates, and I know men in and around Taroom who have reared their families on 1,000 acres. It is one of the best districts in Queensland.

Other areas closer to the railway have been subdivided for mixed farming. The same applies to the Darling Downs, which was originally a grazing district, but over the last decade or so has developed into a mixed-farming area. The same applies to the Dalby and Jondaryan districts. Originally they were grazing districts and the old graziers who desired to hold onto their land broadcast the idea that it was not suitable for agriculture; yet land in that district sold for £20 and more an acre. Since the lifting of controls you find exactly the same thing happening if you go to the Callide, and into the Burnett and Dawson Valley. The whole

of that country was originally grazing country; in the Dawson and Callide districts there were only 150 settlers, although the area ran into thousands of square miles. But today there are thriving farmers making a good living on 400, 600, and 800 acres, and the population is about from 4,000 to 6,000. That is what subdivision has done. You will see the same picture eventually in the brigalow and belah country of Wandoan and Taroom that has been referred to.

The main criticism of this Bill has been that land was resumed at 1942 values for war-service land settlement, and this has been described by the various speakers on the Opposition benches as obtaining land at fictitious values, robbery and thieving of land from the original lessees or owners. Apparently hon. members opposite have short memories. If they had studied the position they would know that during the period 1942-1946, and in some cases up to the present time, what is known as a stabilisation plan has been operating. In April 1943 prices were pegged and every business man throughout Australia had to contribute his share of the sacrifice as the result of the control of prices during that period. Many products had to be sold with such a small margin that they barely paid expenses.

The same applies to the average wage-earner in the State. In 1942 his wages were pegged at the 1942 rate. He was prepared to work for four years at that rate, co-operating with the Federal and State authorities in an endeavour to bring about some measure of stabilisation. The same applied to the house-owner and flat-owner. Rents were pegged at 1942 values and the landlord class in the community, from that time up to date, have been renting their properties at the fixed rate. The same applies to land values. Why should not the average landholder, whether he is the owner of a piece of freehold land or a lessee of Crown land, contribute his share to the sacrifice of that period?

This land of which we are alleged to be robbing the owner or lessee was pegged at 1942 values. In 1945 an agreement was made with the Commonwealth in regard to settlement on the land and the acquiring of land at 1942 values; every owner from whom we acquired land acquired it at 1942 values or better. How can it be said that we are robbing anyone when we take that land at 1942 values? The argument does not carry any weight at all.

We meet another stage in the scheme of things when land sales were decontrolled. What do we see? Land values are inflated, but we have hon. members opposite suggesting that we should make this legislation retrospective in regard to compensation in order to give to those from whom we have acquired land compensation at the inflated value that rules today. That is the demand of the Opposition. That would cost the Government in the vicinity of over one million pounds. There would be no provision for that. I have tried to make this point clear, if hon. members opposite will only understand it—that those from whom we

have resumed land under the 1945 agreement, at the 1942 values bought that land at 1942 values or better; therefore, how can we be robbing them? As time proceeds, if a man buys land at the present value we shall have to give him current value as compensation for any land we take from him.

I would point out that during this long period of stabilisation the average Australian contributed his quota of sacrifice to help to win the war. Many of the soldiers who went overseas made the supreme sacrifice, thousands of those who returned are maimed and are now existing on a pension, which is depreciating daily as the result of inflation. The house-owner and the flat-owner contributed his share of sacrifice and my argument is that we are not robbing anybody by taking land from them at the value they paid for it or by acquiring that land at even better than 1942 values.

It is all very well to have what is known as the landlord outlook, but when it comes to settling men on the land in Queensland at least we must give some consideration to the need for ensuring that they are placed on the land at a fair capital value to enable them to work their farm economically. This would be impossible if they were placed on land at an inflated value.

The dispossessed people are not paying for it. What I have conveyed to the Chamber today is that the dispossessed people referred to owned the land in 1945 when that agreement was entered into. They owned the land when we acquired it and so apparently they bought or acquired the land at 1942 values or better. We were not robbing anybody of his just rights when we acquired that land.

Let me say, in answer to the suggestion that we give higher compensation based on present-day values, that no provision has been made by any Government over the years to do so; it would run the Government into an expenditure of £1,000,000 or £1,500,000 to compensate the owners of the hundreds of thousands of acres acquired up to the present time. The suggestion is ridiculous and unfair, and does not take account of realities. On behalf of the Government I say that the provisions of the Bill as presented to the Committee must prevail and I suggest that hon. members opposite co-operate and show some little consideration for the sacrifices made by our soldiers who helped to hold this country for us as it is today, and some consideration for the sacrifices made by others.

Mr. MULLER (Fassifern) (2.47 p.m.): I for one am willing to co-operate with the Minister in any way I can if what the Government propose to do is done with justice.

On the question of retrospectivity there is the admission by the Minister himself that the Government did something wrong in acquiring land at the 1942 values. An effort is being made—this also is on the Minister's own admission—to legalise and condone some wrongdoing.

The Minister based his argument on the fact that there is a need to keep land values down to a reasonable level and on the fact

also that it was necessary to acquire land for the purpose of soldier settlement. I agree that it was necessary to acquire land for the settlement of soldiers, but the Bill raises this contentious issue, that if you acquire land or as a matter of fact if you acquire anything, the acquisition should be on just terms. I fail to see that justice is done simply because the Government have acquired land from people who held reasonably large areas of it. When one examines what has been done you see that it does not necessarily follow that the acquisition applied only to large land-holders or pastoral estate companies, because many of the people affected were ordinary small settlers. You have to take a close-up view of the proposal to realise how vicious it really is.

The hon. member for Aubigny used the words "stealing" and "thieving," but I do not want to go so far. If you take all a man's property without compensating him, you steal his property. If you take his property at half its value, you steal half his property.

Mr. Collins: Would you say that the present values of wool and cattle are—

Mr. MULLER: That is another matter.

The Government go into a certain territory and pick out certain pieces of land that they propose to resume. If they took it at its value at that time perhaps there would be no complaint, but they take Mr. Smith's property at the value they place on it and leave Mr. Jones and Mr. Johnson alone. There is no equity or fairness about it. The Government acquire the property at their own value, and the man who is dispossessed has to re-establish himself. In order to do that, he has to buy land at present-day values.

Mr. Collins: He is allowed to retain a living area.

Mr. MULLER: But part of his land is acquired at less than its fair value.

Mr. Aikens: What is your opinion of fair recompense?

Mr. MULLER: The hon. member would not understand. The Government seem to have the idea—and so does the hon. member for Mundingburra—that a person who has a freehold or a leasehold property has had it for nothing. Hon. members should get that idea out of their minds. Anyone who has settled on the land has spent a lot of time and lost a lot of sweat in improving it, and he is entitled to fair recompense for the improvements on the land.

Mr. Collins: He is paid for the improvements.

Mr. MULLER: He is not receiving fair payment for them. The hon. member has no means of proving that he is. The best evidence of what the improvements are worth at any particular time is what the property will realise in open competition.

The Minister made a mouthful of the resumptions that were made in his own district. It is true that much of that country is scrub country, but he omitted to mention that

the greater part of it was cleared and grassed. If he had had any experience of cutting scrub and grassing land, he would have some conception of what it was worth. Further, no provision is made when land is resumed for the cost of the labour in putting it into production. As I have said, the man who is dispossessed is obliged to buy land in another district in order to carry out his ordinary activities. To my mind, there is no reason at all why the High Court should not rule against legislation of this kind, and despite this legislation I still believe that if anyone challenged it before the Privy Council he would succeed. The Government have no right to acquire anyone's property at less than its fair value, which is what they are doing.

Mr. A. Jones: You might as well argue that the price of wool should be retrospective back to 1942.

Mr. MULLER: The value of a product is quite a different matter. This would be a true parallel: if it is right to take a man's grazing property, it is equally right to take a hotel property in Brisbane or a worker's home. No-one has ever suggested that it would be right to take a worker's home, and if it is wrong to do that it is equally wrong to take the home of a man in the bush.

Mr. F. E. Roberts: What about the housing resumptions in the metropolitan area?

Mr. MULLER: What about them?

Mr. F. E. Roberts: Land is being resumed in Brisbane for home-building.

Mr. MULLER: But it is not being taken at a particular value, as is being done here. The Valuer-General has revalued some of this land and in many instances increased the value by 200 per cent. on 1942 values. Just imagine the position of the poor unfortunate settler! I know that the Minister will argue that the settler was entitled to lodge an appeal to challenge the value and to have the matter determined. How many people can afford to go to law to have the value of their land determined?

Mr. Foley: No cost is involved in that.

Mr. MULLER: Have you had anything to do with litigation, Mr. Minister? I know what it costs to go to court. (Laughter.) These people were told that the legislation placed on the statute book gave adequate protection to the Government in the action they had taken and in ordinary circumstances that prevented a number of people from lodging appeals.

Let us take a close-up view of this legislation to see just how serious and how drastic it is. I have in mind the position of a lady who came to Brisbane from the Central District some years ago. She told me that she had come to Brisbane to get some of her worry off her mind. She had a property, she had reared a family, and she now had a resumption notice, saying that the property was likely to be resumed for closer settlement. She had lost her husband and the family had carved out a home there. There is more than £. s. d. in the matter when it comes to the selling of a home; sentiment is

involved. No-one likes to be pushed out of one district and forced to go to another. This woman was told that her property was about to be acquired and she did not want to leave her property. The price that was offered to her would not have enabled her and her sons to become established again elsewhere.

Not one hon. member on this side disputes the fact that land should be made available to soldier-settlers at a fair and reasonable price. In a few well-chosen words yesterday the hon. member for Toowong put the case in that respect very succinctly. I endorse what he said. He pointed out that there was no conflict between the dispossessed land-owner and the soldier-settler, but there was a conflict between the dispossessed land-owner and the Government—the land-owner was entitled to a fair rate of compensation for the land that he had handed over.

Mr. Aikens: And they are getting it too.

Mr. MULLER: How does the hon. member know that?

Mr. Aikens: I know that they are getting it.

Mr. MULLER: The hon. member is only imagining that they are getting it. No-one with any sense of responsibility or fair play would attempt to argue that a person who had been dispossessed of land during the past few years on the basis of 1942 values was getting fair value for the land. A great many of these people would have to pay up to 200 per cent. more if they desired to acquire land elsewhere now.

Mr. Aikens: No person had all his land taken from him.

Mr. MULLER: That does not alter the fact. Part of it was taken from him. If the hon. member for Mundingburra had £1,000 and £750 was taken away from him he could not argue that because he had £250 left he had not been done any injury. That sums up the position. There was never any need for the Government to take the action they did. The people were prepared to carry the additional cost. I feel sure that is the position throughout the State. I do not see any more justification for taking a man's land than in taking another man's hotel or factory or home. Why should one section of the community be picked out in order to mark the value down to what is termed a fair and reasonable price? It is unfair, unjust, and illegal.

This Bill, after all, is only an attempt on the part of the Government to legalise something that they have done illegally in the past. After all, it does not matter what legislation they place on the statute-book, it will not compensate these people who have been deprived or dispossessed of their properties. I repeat that if I were one of the persons concerned I should be prepared to fight the matter in all the courts and even take it to the Privy Council.

Mr. BURROWS (Port Curtis) (3.3 p.m.): The hon. member who has just resumed his seat has made a suggestion to some disgruntled persons whose land has

been resumed that they should take their case to a higher court, and even to the Privy Council. He reminds me of an old fable I read about a fox who had his tail cut off. I need not repeat it, as everyone knows it. He also knows that it is applicable to himself.

The Opposition during this debate have shown that they are particularly concerned to protect what they call the rights of the individual, in this case the individual landholder. I suppose to a certain extent the word "rights" is applicable if we agree that anyone has the right to exploit anybody. We notice, too, that they were more concerned about what some rich landholder would get for his land if he owned it today than he would have got for it if our soldiers had not been successful in keeping the Japs out of Australia. That is the point they completely lose sight of. Once the war appeared as if it were over, all the promises made to the returned soldier were very conveniently forgotten, or placed in the back-ground, and the so-called rights of the wealthy landholder had to be preserved.

The hon. member for Fassifern started off, with the characteristic dishonest logic in which he is a past-master, by making a sad plea for the widow. It must be a widow!

Mr. Muller: The case is in your district, too. (Laughter.)

Mr. BURROWS: The hon. member can attend to all the widows in my district, and I will attend to all those who do not want anything.

The ACTING CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. BURROWS: I am more concerned about looking after the soldiers who want to go on the land.

Let us look at the suggestion of the Opposition that these land values be made retrospective. Where are we going to start and where are we going to finish?

There is not one hon. member opposite—and I challenge any one of them—who can demonstrate the practicability of the suggestion. Take the land that was acquired in 1947. Where are the people from whom it was bought? Some of them have passed over and the estates of others have been sequestrated.

Mr. Muller: Most of them are still residing on a small portion of the land.

Mr. BURROWS: The hon. member always quotes the exception and makes it a rule. I ask the hon. member to approach this question intelligently. (Laughter.) I know I am asking a lot. (Laughter.)

Mr. Muller: You know the trouble you got into yesterday.

The ACTING CHAIRMAN (Mr. Farrell): Order! I hope members will take this debate more seriously, and allow the hon. member to proceed without interruption.

Mr. BURROWS: In looking over the matter I do not think anybody could take the Government to task for selecting the date

for fixing land values. What happened before land-sales control? What about the transactions between individuals? Were they not subject to it? Was not many transactions put through then at values much less than those prevailing today? Is there any suggestion from members opposite that those transactions should be put in the melting pot.

An Opposition Member: We will tell you later.

Mr. BURROWS: If the hon. member can produce the evidence to me I am open to reason.

This matter has caused the Minister, the Government and members of this party a good deal of thought. The selection of the date of demarcation was not an easy one, but I do not know of any date that would be more suitable. Members opposite can get up and generalise and suggest that we make the Bill retrospective to all of these transactions, but the impossibility of carrying out that suggestion makes it worthless. Take any line of demarcation. In the Railway Department they have a regulation that applicants must be a certain height and there are always some who are only half an inch short and people say, "Why don't they let him in? He is only half an inch short?" If you keep on reducing the height by half an inch you would find others only half an inch lower than that.

Mr. Aikens: And you would finish up with a dwarf.

Mr. BURROWS: You would finish up with no-one at all. (Laughter.)

The ACTING CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. BURROWS: Let us assume that the date was fixed as 12 months ago. Somebody would be suffering because his transaction occurred 12½ months ago and if you continued to go back you would finish up in 1942 and you would say, "That is where we were before." The whole thing becomes ridiculous.

I have no authority to speak for the Minister but I am sure he will be only too happy to listen to any practical suggestions. If a person puts forward a problem it is his duty also to suggest a solution.

Before concluding I take the point that I missed in connection with this widow that a member of the Opposition contended had bought the land, until he was corrected by way of interjection. He endeavoured to make out that all the land was taken from her. If I have any fault to find with the officials in charge of land resumption I contend that they definitely err on the side of consideration for the out-going tenant.

Mr. Evans: You have not had much to do with them.

Mr. BURROWS: I have had a good bit to do with them. I have been impatient with the consideration given to the out-going tenant. Any out-going tenant who did not retain a living in the block of land previously owned did so because he willingly forfeited that right and did not want to retain it. The hon. member for Roma can shake his

head; if he is not very careful it will fall off. I do not make that statement idly. I have had association with the department and have found what I have said to be the fact.

To attempt to adopt the suggestion put forward by the Opposition would bring about chaos. Instead of advancing constructive criticism they are endeavouring to stampede the Government into trying to do something it will be absolutely impossible to do. Only a couple of days ago we had the Opposition in the position in which we thought they had developed a conscience, but today we see them in their true colours. I am disappointed in them, inasmuch as I liked them better when they were endeavouring to put up an argument for the coal-miners than in their advocacy for the wealthy landowners.

Mr. WALSH (Bundaberg) (3.13 p.m.): In a measure like this one expects to hear the usual whinge from the members of the Opposition. It is obvious they are not concerned with the general principles involved in this measure but are more concerned with the particular section of the people they represent.

Much has been said about equitable values and I have listened very attentively to the speeches while I have been present. I am one of those who are in agreement with members of the Opposition so far as equitable values are concerned, but there would be a considerable conflict of opinion between us as to who was to determine the equitable value. That is the point. I am not so sure that members generally have not lost sight of the principle behind this measure. For myself I doubt whether if the Queensland law is invalid. Of course, that is only a layman's opinion. I am not so sure that the Queensland legislation comes into question at all. I have gathered from the Minister's remarks that he wants to remove any uncertainty that might exist in the minds of those who will be parties to these transactions as the result of the Magennis case, which arose out of the New South Wales law, not the Queensland law.

The position so far as the New South Wales law is concerned is governed by the State's relationship to the Commonwealth in the agreement covering soldier settlement in that State. In other words, it does not in any way interfere with the State's own land-resumption laws, the method of valuation, or the State's right to resume any land on any basis that may be determined under the Public Works Land Resumption Act. It does not interfere with the State's right in that connection at all. That right is not in question. The only thing that I can see the Minister has done is to remove any uncertainty that might exist in regard to future transactions arising from the High Court's decision in relation to the New South Wales legislation. The Minister might save a lot of fuss if he withdrew this measure altogether and allowed somebody in this State to challenge the validity of the Queensland law. Rather than put the parties to that expense, he has taken a course

that every fair-minded man will agree is a sensible one, in order to avoid litigation if there is any doubt in the minds of the legal fraternity as regards the Queensland law.

When we come to the question of equitable value and what the Government have done in regard to pegging values at the 1942 level, the Leader of the Opposition did not seem to be particularly perturbed about the fact that wages were pegged and prices of commodities were pegged. According to him, you could peg everything so long as you allowed the speculator and the exploiter to continue on his way in regard to land transactions. I am one of those who have very strong views on this question and I hope the Government will see their way clear to give effect to the implementation of the provisions of the Land and Water Resources Act of 1943, which would make it possible for any area in which considerable public funds are being expended to be declared a developmental area, so that in that way they might adequately control land values.

Mr. Foley: We are doing that, as a matter of fact, at Mareeba.

Mr. WALSH: I am glad to hear that. My four years' connection with the Department of Public Lands certainly informed me that there were more speculation and exploitation in regard to Crown tenures, transfers, sales, etc., than in the transfer of freehold properties.

Government Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. WALSH: It was very obvious. To show that the Government have not done anything inconsistent with general principles, let me remind hon. members opposite that in Great Britain it was found necessary to appoint the Uthwatt Royal Commission to ascertain the most effective means of dealing with land and the utilisation of land in the postwar period. In Canada, under the War Veterans' Land Settlement Act, similar precautions were taken to see that soldier settlers were not exploited. In New Zealand they did the same thing. It would appear, therefore, that in every country, irrespective of its political outlook, it was necessary that something should be done to prevent the exploitation of those who were prepared to offer their lives and were successful in saving the capital investment of people represented by the hon. members opposite. This was necessary so that they may be started off on a reasonable and economic basis. It is futile to suggest that we should go along in the way we have been doing in the past imposing a crushing burden on taxpayers to meet millions of pounds in excessive valuations.

Might I say whilst I am on my feet that despite any decision by the High Court, I have yet to learn that any tribunal of this State that has been charged with the duty of dealing with these resumption cases has lined up generally on the side of the Crown. Are we to believe that these men, who have spent the greater part of their lives in the Department of Public Lands studying land values

and all the complications surrounding land settlement, know nothing about land values, and that the individual settler is the only one who understands the complications and the implications surrounding land settlement and land values? The land ranger, who has served his time in the Department of Public Lands and who has gone out into the country and pitched his camp on the bank of the creek and boiled his billy over the logs, has learnt his job in the practical way, and it is no use hon. members opposite who are interested in these things endeavouring to get the utmost out of the intending settler. I dare hon. members opposite to challenge me to prove that statement, because I have too much knowledge of the transactions in land tenures by some members of the Opposition. They cry out now for justice for the returned-soldier settler, but it is a pity that they would not apply to their own transactions some of the principles that they are urging the Government to apply.

Mr. Munro interjected.

Mr. WALSH: I hope the hon. member for Toowong will not try to lead me along; I will not be diverted from the subject with which I am dealing. However, he can rest assured that if he refers to some of the speeches I made in this Assembly in 1943 he will see that I put on record a few of the cases that came under my notice whilst I was Secretary for Public Lands. He will then realise that I am not saying these things lightly. I am referring now to documents that are in this House containing cases that I then cited. I deliberately refrained at the time from using the name of any member of the Opposition, but if hon. members opposite want to discard ethics it might be necessary for me to discard them, too. When hon. members opposite asked me, whilst I was Secretary for Public Lands, to produce certain documents, I refrained from doing so.

Mr. Decker: Mr. Payne—

Mr. WALSH: There will be time enough to talk about Mr. Payne later on. The hon. member for Sandgate might be interested to know that Mr. Payne rang me after the election and congratulated me on my victory.

I read the speech of the hon. member for Toowong in this debate, and I will give him credit for the fact that it was not the usual whinge that comes from the people who wax fat on the land and get every possible concession from the Government in the way of low rents, low freights, roads, and so on, at the expense of the taxpayers of this State and not at the expense of the local authority. They receive all those benefits, yet they persist in desiring to deal with the land in the way that they think fit.

This is an important measure involving important principles. Do not let us treat the matter lightly. We cannot afford to convey to the public the idea that we are interested only in the section of the community that members of the Opposition represent. At some time or another in their careers, the soldier-settlers of this State will be expected to assume certain financial obligations and

there is no reason why they should be called upon to pay substantial interest payments as the result of settling on the land.

Do not let anyone in this Chamber delude himself into believing that individual effort ever created the real value of land. Where would the sugar mills be today if it were not for the railways, tramways, roadways and the like—the expenditure of public money? Where would any one of the graziers be, or the cattle men, or the dairymen, if you did not have people living in a state of security with spending power who made it profitable for them to produce their products from the land? I talk from some experience. I paid my 8 per cent. and worked from daylight to dark on wages. There is a great difference between the value placed on land by individual effort, and the value placed on it by the activity of the community as a whole. Therefore, in discussing a measure such as this, we should have some regard to the fact that the community have some interest in the matter, and that it is not only the interests of the graziers or the pastoralists that is concerned. Why all this flapdoodle talk, political bunk, and cheap politics that we have had from hon. members opposite? Let us be big enough to say that these things should be done in the interests of the nation.

The whole thing hinges upon the determination of equitable values. The Minister has already made it clear that it is not the Government who determine the values. All that has been done in the legislation that has been passed has been to lay down the period at which the values were to be pegged, that is 1942. From there on the determination of value is entrusted to an independent tribunal, and I emphasise again—the Minister no doubt will be able to produce the statistics—that on very few occasions are the values of the Crown upheld by the tribunal. We have these men, trained throughout their lives to go round to determine these values and on a number of occasions they have been lauded by hon. members opposite. I have heard the hon. member for Aubigny speak in glowing terms about the qualifications of Mr. Carmichael, but if that gentleman should submit a valuation to the court based on his honest judgment, the hon. member for Augibny would be prepared to come in here and condemn him if it did not fit in with the hon. member's own idea of valuations.

I suggest to the Minister, if the Opposition are not entirely in favour of the legislation, that he give serious consideration to leaving things to drift as they are going along. That might satisfy them.

Mr. DEWAR (Chermside) (3.28 p.m.): In reply to the hon. member for Bundaberg, let me tell him that I am not particularly interested in the affairs and problems of what he and other members of his Government would call the big graziers. I am just an ordinary citizen, and I am here to do what I conceive to be right, something that I believe will be of good for the community at large. I do not believe in supporting any big section in the community, whether they be shearers,

watersiders or big business people. That makes no difference to me—I look at the matter from the national aspect.

When it comes to the value of land for the settling of returned soldiers, we must view the matter as a national problem. The burden is one that should fall on the shoulders of the whole community, because not only pastoralists and graziers were saved from the threat of war; every person in the community was saved and given security. Therefore, every section of the community is under an obligation to foot the bill.

When one of the Opposition members was speaking a Government member interjected that land was resumed by the State Housing Commission on 1942 values. I do not think that is correct. A very big area of land was resumed in my electorate by the State Housing Commission in the last couple of years, and it will cost the new home-owner well over £100 a block.

The ACTING CHAIRMAN: Order! The question of taking over land for the State Housing Commission's projects has nothing to do with this Bill. I would therefore ask the hon. member to confine his remarks to the principles of this Bill.

Mr. DEWAR: I was merely drawing an analogy which I submit was pertinent to this Bill. Values being paid today are what obtained in every walk of life. Wages paid today are based on today's values. I would remind hon. members opposite that Parliamentary salaries today are being paid on today's values. Why then should not that principle apply to every walk of life?

The hon. member for North Toowoomba spoke yesterday in support of this Bill. I honour him for the badge he wears. He suggested that Opposition members should consider means of helping ex-Service men who are already settled. The hon. member should make his voice heard within the ranks of his own party on this point. It behoves not only the Opposition, but the Government in particular to take steps to provide ways and means to do something for ex-Service men. Yesterday I called for some figures showing just what has been done in this regard by the Government, who shed crocodile tears for ex-Service men. My figures were supplied to me by the Federal Government's Division of War Service Land Settlement; they are authentic and cannot be refuted. We find from them that in New South Wales 1,474 holdings were allocated to war-service personnel, 1,240 in Victoria, 341 in Western Australia, one of our most undeveloped States, and that Queensland is last as usual, only 293 holdings being allocated to ex-Service personnel. Yet the Government have the audacity to tell us what they are doing for the Service personnel.

Mr. Collins: That does not include all classes of land settlement.

Mr. DEWAR: I expected that interjection. It is popular for the Minister and members of his Government to quote figures that do not in any way tally with the authentic figures. These figures include

allocations of land taken through the Agricultural Bank and have nothing whatsoever to do with war-service land-settlement schemes. To quote those figures only would be completely inaccurate.

Mr. Collins: More soldiers have been settled in the sugar industry than you gave.

Mr. DEWAR: The hon. member for Roma mentioned that there have been 49 allocations of grazing properties to Service personnel. They are not included in the number I gave. That would make the number slightly greater, but the point is that the Queensland Government will not allow the Federal Government to include grazing properties within the scheme. Evidently they believe that when an ex-Service man has won a grazing property at ballot he has won a gold-mine and does not require any help. But he does require help, no matter what class of property is allocated to him.

I honour the people who gave me the information, and I believe it to be true, that in the Taroom and Wandoan areas men were placed on that land years ago to carve homes out of scrub. Those men were returned men of World War I. Today they face the definite possibility of the Government's acquiring their lands. How far do we go before we take away from the Diggers of this war and give it to others? Does it go on indefinitely or does it stop eventually? The Digger of World War I. is entitled to the same as the Digger of this war. Apparently, some people think not.

This Bill seems to be one to legalise illegality and validate invalidity. I do not believe too much can be done for the service men but what has been done by this Bill is rightly the responsibility of all sections of the community and cannot fairly be laid on the shoulders of any one section. As many people from Grazing Industry went to the war as from any other section of the community. How can you fairly divide the grazing section from any other section?

Mr. McINTYRE (Cunningham) (3.37 p.m.): I feel that I should like to make some contribution to this debate as I come from the centre where more land was resumed than in any other in the State, but before doing so I should like to make some reference to the unwarranted attack on the Opposition made by the hon. member for North Toowoomba and the hon. member for Hinchinbrook, who charged them with disregard of or disloyalty to returned men because of their attitude towards this very important question. Not only did they do that but they displayed a complete lack of knowledge of the principles of the matter before the Chamber. Surely a member who rises to speak on any matter should at least acquaint himself with the principles of the matter under debate? I think the attack on the Opposition was most unwarranted. When the original Bill was before the House—and I believe there were seven or eight Bills dealing with this question—the attitude of the Opposition was very fair and warranted by the facts. It is ridiculous to suggest that the members of the Opposition have no interest in the returned men because virtually every member of the Opposition has

had either sons or brothers in the forces and many members themselves have been in the forces in the last war. Why should they not be interested in the returned men and in this great question of settling them on the land?

I think the member for North Toowoomba clearly showed a lack of knowledge of the contents of this legislation when he suggested that the idea of the Opposition was to exploit the soldiers by charging them excessive prices for this resumed land. If the hon. member knew anything at all about the legislation he would know that in the War Service Land Settlement Agreement Act, which is being cancelled by this Bill, there was provision for a committee of review to consider the economics of any scheme after the land had been resumed and made ready for occupation by the soldiers, in order that an economic rent might be arrived at. So the suggestion that the acquisition of land on just terms of payment would react adversely on the returned soldier is foolish in the extreme. It is deplorable that members should take advantage of this opportunity to indulge in a lot of sloppy sentiment with the object of gaining political support as far as the returned soldiers are concerned.

Hon members opposite, particularly the hon. member for North Toowoomba, had much to say about the squatter and the big landholder. Had they acquainted themselves with the circumstances surrounding land resumption they would have found that the land has not been taken from the big man at all. Most of these are on leasehold tenure in the western areas and this Bill has to do with resumption of freehold land. In the main the resumptions have been made from small owners, many of whom are returned service men with sons whom they hoped to settle on the excess land they had and many of them working their holdings to full capacity. It is very important to remember that. Admittedly some of them had excess land but having sons coming on they had the foresight to make provision for their sons, many of them returned soldiers, and because their land has been taken it has been necessary for them to go elsewhere and buy land but the compensation they received was only a token amount. I am personally acquainted with many who had land resumed and their compensation provided no more than sufficient money to put a deposit on other land of comparable value, that they were compelled to buy to keep their sons on the land. Alternatively—and this has occurred in many instances where the Government have resumed land from men who had sons to whom they had taught the fundamentals of farming—they were obliged to drift to the city. That is the thing we are endeavouring to prevent.

Members of the Government who made attacks on the Opposition were indeed very unfair. Had they made inquiries and obtained some superficial knowledge of the scheme they would have known that right at the beginning confidential information was obtained by the department through the local authorities in the favoured areas and every man who had more than a thousand acres of land in his possession had his land blanketed. The land has been frozen for a number of

years. In the main, particularly in my area, this man has been the small land-holder who has been working his land to full capacity and the land has been held mostly on freehold tenure. Of course, all of us who have taken the trouble to acquaint ourselves with the details of resumption know that in no case has the returned soldier been asked to pay the price for the land that was the basis of compensation. As soon as the freehold land was resumed by the Government it reverted to the Crown and has been made available to returned service men on a leasehold tenure.

Those of the returned soldiers who are farming today find that the rent they have to pay is only a token amount compared with the other expenses they are up against, but neither this Government nor anybody else has thought to control the prices of those other things that the returned soldier requires to develop his property. I speak now of machinery, fencing and building material. In some instances the cost of such material has increased 200 per cent. but no-one appears to be very worried about that. Therefore the returned soldiers are finding that on the established basis of resumption the major problem they are up against is not the rental, not the original cost of the land, but the expenses of the other major items associated with farming. Admittedly, the rental charged is related to the resumption compensation.

The Bill under consideration has been based on the High Court decision in the case *Magennis Pty. Ltd. versus the Commonwealth and the State of New South Wales*, delivered on 21 December, 1949. The authority of the New South Wales Act to resume land at the 1942 value was challenged and the challenge was sustained. Because of that decision one of the things this amending legislation sets out to do is to cancel the War Service Land Settlement Agreement entered into between the State Government and the Commonwealth in relation to the resuming of land, the financing of the resumptions, and the settlement of soldiers on that land. The State Government, through the Department of Public Lands, decide upon a resumption, and upon the basis of value, and in the final analysis the Government are the agents for the Commonwealth Government. A submission must go to the Commonwealth Government for approval before the final resumption is completed. This amending legislation cancels the agreement between the State and the Commonwealth and the Minister suggested that another agreement might be entered into with the Commonwealth, but it must be on a more equitable basis. It, too, could be challenged in the courts of our land. It will be the responsibility of the State Government to finance the whole of the scheme unless another agreement is entered into with the Commonwealth.

The reason for the High Court's decision in the case I referred to is that there is written into the Federal Constitution a fair and right principle and one enunciated by the Opposition every time such legislation as this is under discussion. That principle is

that any resumption under Commonwealth law must be compensated for on just terms. The High Court decided that a resumption on the basis of 1942 values could not by any stretch of the imagination be regarded as just terms. It therefore upheld the appeal. It is logical to conclude that all the business transacted by the State Government over the years could be brought within the terms of that decision, although the Minister told us that it did not affect this State's law, because the phrase "just terms" has not been in the Queensland Constitution. But all through the piece the Queensland Government have been acting in this matter in the capacity of agent of the Commonwealth and therefore the Minister and the Government are afraid that an appeal might be made regarding some of the land resumed in Queensland on the basis of 1942 values. I am of the opinion that if an appeal was made it could be sustained so far as Queensland resumptions are concerned.

The amending legislation, in addition to cancelling the agreement between the State and the Commonwealth, aims at removing any mention of the Commonwealth or the relationship between the Commonwealth and the States. I believe the Minister himself knows that resumptions were effected on what could not be regarded as just terms and I believe that those resumptions could be effectively challenged. I come from a centre where resumptions have taken place and I say that the 1942 values have not been a fair basis. The Minister, with his knowledge of land matters and values, would have done something better for the landholders but he was tied by the law. He was definitely tied down under our law to the 1942 values. We can be sympathetic with the Minister because of that fact and I believe that in many instances, if the restriction had not obtained, the Minister in his generosity and because of his fairness would have given greater compensation to the landholders concerned. The Minister must admit, as must every fair-minded man, that the compensation granted as the result of these resumptions was never adequate. Many of these men are desirous of remaining on the land and of keeping their sons, many of whom are returned soldiers, on the land, and they have been obliged to buy land in other districts. The compensation they received did no more than provide a reasonable deposit on the land they had to purchase.

Taking all those factors into consideration, I suggest that the method of resumption has never been fair and that the whole of the resumptions made in Queensland should be reviewed with a view to doing the right thing by the land holders. It has been suggested that the landholders have not been fair and reasonable in their attitude towards the returned-men, but that is entirely wrong. The men who have had their lands resumed have suffered enormously as the result of disturbance and the altering of their whole farming activities, and have suffered doubly because of the inadequate compensation granted to them. If the Government were fair they

would review the whole of the resumptions that have been made and grant adequate compensation to those men who have been obliged to give up their lands. I believe that the cost of doing that should be spread over the whole of the people of this State, and should not be borne by the returned soldier. Nothing but the best should be given to our returned men and no man has a right to hold land that he is not using gainfully, but unfortunately many unfair things have taken place in these land resumptions. Of course, the Minister has been tied down by legislation and I pay him the compliment that in some instances where I have brought along interested parties who have been able to prove that a gross injustice would be done and that the land would be made available to returned-soldier sons, it has been released. In many cases, however, this was not so.

Because of prevailing conditions, the Government has now decided to abandon the idea of resumptions in the greater part of the Darling Downs and to go farther out into what might be regarded as second-quality country. I think that is clearly wrong. The returned soldiers are entitled to nothing but the best, but because of the lifting of controls and the values prevailing today, it is admitted that land on the Darling Downs has increased considerably in value. Despite the value of the land, however, the returned soldiers are entitled to it. If there is land in the better-class areas that is not being gainfully used, it should be resumed and the cost should be shared by the community as a whole. Many returned men who have been anxious to get onto the better land will, I suggest, no longer participate in the ballots for second-quality land. I am personally acquainted with many men who are anxious to get on the land but they are not attracted by the new localities and the living areas that it is suggested will be made available to them.

I should like to express my disappointment at the slow progress being made in settling returned soldiers under this scheme. I understand that the number of applicants reached 500, 600, 700, and even 800 and that they have never been placed on the land. The Government could have done better. I made representations to the Government and the department in quite a number of cases where men wanted to sell their land to the Government at a reasonable price but the Government were slow to avail themselves of these offers. The Government could have had land of good quality in the centre of the Darling Downs for the settlement of returned soldiers but it was not accepted. The Government themselves are to blame for their lack of action and slow progress.

When I spoke on the introduction of the original Act I referred to the Jondaryan settlement and I think it was mentioned again today. We know how Mr. Kent made available some 30,000 acres of the best land on the Jondaryan Estate in the Darling Downs. Knowing how slow and tedious it would be for soldiers to get suitable land through the medium of the Government he made the land available to the returned men and some of them are now harvesting their

third crop while their brother soldiers who are waiting for the Government scheme still have not been accommodated. Mr. Kent made the land available on an equitable basis on a freehold tenure and the men are doing particularly well. As I said, 30,000 acres of country was used in the settlement of about 30-odd men, the majority of whom are returned soldiers. He made it available quickly, he had to face all the shortages of surveyors and the like, but they were overcome. As I say, these farmers are now reaping their third harvest while there are many hundreds of returned men anxious to go on the land who have not yet been accommodated under the Government scheme. I hate to say it, but unfortunately I think eventually quite a number will be disappointed and will have to abandon any hope of any adequate and satisfactory land settlement under the Government scheme. They will have to go away and endeavour to do something else for themselves.

The motion refers to the amendment of a number of Acts and in the circumstances I shall reserve any further comment until I have seen the Bill.

Mr. DECKER (Sandgate) (3.58 p.m.): I feel that when we see the Bill it will have the support of hon. members on this side of the Chamber. In view of the insecurity disclosed in the existing legislation I agree with the Minister that if there is any doubt it should be validated.

There is only one fault I find in connection with soldier settlement in Queensland and that is that while we have plenty of Acts we have very little action. When the hon. member for Bundaberg was Secretary for Public Lands during the war he assured hon. members on this side of the Chamber that plans were already prepared so that upon the cessation of hostilities a soldier-settlement scheme would be implemented at once in this State. He gave us to understand that he had the land, the scheme was outlined and everything was ready to go ahead. He pointed out that leases were expiring, that subdivisions were being made, and plans were already in hand. We as an Opposition were led to believe that everything was ready to go off as soon as the war ended and that the returned soldiers would be placed on the land as soon as they came back.

Mr. Kerr: But you must remember that that member lost his seat.

Mr. DECKER: That does not come into the question at all. What matters is the assurance we had that the Government would come to the aid of the returned soldier and settle him on the land when the war ended. Five years have elapsed since the war ended and yet we have very little to show in the way of soldier settlement. Certainly, we have not enough soldier settlement to be proud of, and when I say "we" I include both the Government and Opposition. We are all in this. We have not done enough. Very soon there will be no need to establish returned soldiers on the land because the majority of them are becoming tired of being dependent on the

Government for blocks of land and are buying their own with the help of the Agricultural Bank and other financial institutions. They are settling themselves, independently of any soldier schemes. Therefore, as time goes on fewer and fewer men will require land, because they have not been settled in a comparatively short period. The procrastination has been so great that the urge to go on the land has left some of the men. I am still doubtful whether we are not going to perpetuate some of the mistakes made in soldier settlement after World War I, when land-settlement schemes for soldiers were promulgated in every State in Australia. The failure of many of those schemes was attributed to the poor-ness of soil in many of the areas resumed and the inadequacy of the areas from which they were expected to make a living.

Mr. Foley: Those schemes cost the tax-payers £40,000,000. That was the sum stated after investigation.

Mr. DECKER: It is scandalous and not pleasant to reflect on.

I would point out to the Minister that we can suffer from over-investigation. The Minister during the last Parliament represented part of the Wandoan area, where I have a friend, a returned soldier of World War II., with a grazing area. The Government have frozen portion of his land for the past five years with the result that he is not able to move in any way.

Mr. Aikens: Is he still able to run stock on it?

Mr. DECKER: He is. I know this case particularly well and I hope there are not many more like it.

Mr. Foley: His only disadvantage is that he cannot unload it on someone else.

Mr. DECKER: He cannot sell it. This man is not a wealthy squatter; he is paying his property off on terms. He put down a deposit before the war and on the outbreak of war was patriotic enough to enlist and left his sister to manage the property, which she did until he was discharged. Now he is trying to pay off his obligations and buy his home without Government help. I have been on that area and this is what I have to complain about: I am not an expert but I have enough common sense to know the position after seeing the seasons there over the past seven years, in which the immediate past season has been the only good one. This man's area is an amalgamation of three blocks. Part of it is mountainous and practically useless and his only salvation is a farm of 7,000 or 8,000 acres across the road. If he loses that block he will lose virtually the whole of his property as the rest of it will be practically useless to him. In other words, he will be ruined. Therefore, the Government, instead of settling men on the land under this scheme, will settle them altogether.

Mr. Foley: If it is not suitable for mixed farming we will not take it.

Mr. DECKER: This part is suitable for mixed farming and if it is resumed it will kill the remaining part as a grazing area.

When we do acquire land compulsorily for the purposes of soldier settlement the only redress in regard to price the owner has is to the court; he has no-one to whom he can object to the resumption in the first place. Where we have a sympathetic Minister—and I think we have one in the Minister occupying that position now—

Government Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. DECKER: — he could do much to satisfy the minds of these people. I urge upon the Minister that after a resumption notice has been served on a landholder, particularly a soldier of this war or the past war, he make himself available for interview by people who may wish to put their case to him against resumption. In many of these cases it would afford great satisfaction to those people to put their case and get a decision other than through the usual red-tape channel. It is unfair to have areas of land blanketed for years—nothing is worse. The owner has no way of terminating it and it can go on for an indefinite period. Where areas have been frozen over a long period, the time has now arrived when we should be able to give a decision to either free the areas or acquire them. We must get away from the uncertainty, which is very worrying for the people concerned and is a burden they should not have to bear indefinitely. I urge the Minister to give attention to that phase of the matter. I have brought up the question of frozen lands over a period of years and I think I have clearly demonstrated its unfairness. Surely, with the progress we must have made, we should be in a position to know whether we intend to acquire the areas that have been frozen or not. The decision should have been made years ago and further delay prolongs the injustice.

I think members on both sides—many of whom are returned men—wish to do the best they can for the returned soldier. As legislators we must remember that we have a duty, not only to ourselves but to the State, to be just in all our actions. The soldier does not want injustice to anybody. While everything was pegged on the 1942 values it was all right, but when it extends over the period of those pegged values it is all wrong. The Minister himself said that it would cost £1,000,000 to recoup the owners for the land acquired in the peak period. Obviously somebody has suffered a loss. The owners in those areas have carried the burden.

Mr. Foley: Many of those owners bought the land before 1942 which means that they got it at less than the 1942 values.

Mr. DECKER: If we buy an article today, such as a table, in five years the value has risen so much that to replace that table would cost three or four times the amount we paid for it. It is not that we are putting up a plea to give some money-bag a great profit on something he acquired in the early days. All I ask for is support of the principle of justice and equity. We must always do that. I say deliberately that there has been sectional legislation in other fields, for instance, building control at Redcliffe.

We find it also in the determination of rentals of State houses. There is sectional legislation that should not be operating at all today. The principle should be that what is good enough for one is good enough for all, without fear or favour. It is not fair to impose a burden on one section of the community. If we impose a burden it should be placed upon the whole community.

Mr. Riordan: What do you think about the proposal to tax wool?

Mr. DECKER: That is a different matter altogether. It will be dealt with by the Government in their own time and in their own way. We must be fair and give justice and equity to all. That principle must never be departed from, and if we have dealt unfairly with one section it is only right that we should make amends to them. The Minister should give a lead to the people. In regard to land there is a great tendency to follow State values.

Mr. Walsh: Would you agree that rents should be adjusted on the same basis today?

Mr. DECKER: Exactly; one must be fair to all. When dealing with leasehold lands the property of the Crown, the value should not be inflated even if the inflated value can be obtained. The principle should be to make only a fair valuation. We should have the power to do that. When valuing Crown land for returned soldiers or for any other purposes we must give a lead and the only way to do that is to pass suitable legislation and have the principles embodied carried out by every department. There is much we can do for the returned men if we are game enough to venture to do it. In the past we have been too hesitant in settling soldiers on the land, because we have been actuated by the feeling that we must be very careful. A big mistake has been made in that way. We have not been active enough in putting our intentions into effect and making holdings available quickly. If we do not take action Acts will make no difference, inasmuch as the action will be too late. I urge the Minister to put into effect action instead of Acts, and if he does this he will have the support of hon. members on this side of the Chamber.

Mr. DAVIS (Barcoo) (4.14 p.m.): I listened to the expression of the varied opinions of hon. members opposite with mixed feelings. I understand that they have advocated two principles, one being the principle that it is they who understand the proposed legislation and the other the plea for equity and justice.

I am in agreement with the hon. member for Bundaberg when he said in his speech this afternoon that the Bill presented by the Minister contained one important principle. After all, each and every one of us in this Committee is willing to recognise the services rendered to the State and the nation by those who made sacrifices on our behalf. To them, the principles I have mentioned should be extended. In the first place, should we differentiate between the returned service man who has acquired a 16-perch piece of land and is not prepared to enter into the agricultural or

pastoral field and the man who has gone on with an area of 16,000 acres? The same principle should govern our outlook on both. It should be possible to give security to that section of the people, whom I admire, but it has become apparent to me that many members of the Opposition are only concerned for a certain section of our people. In order to give security to those of our people who made our security possible, I am completely in accord with every clause of this Bill.

The hon. member for Roma—and he is unfortunately absent from the Chamber at the moment—marshalled great arguments against the provisions of the Bill, but he destroyed the whole of his arguments in the concluding part of his speech. He disclosed to this Committee that he was only concerned about the section of our community he represents in this Chamber. He was not concerned to any degree as to what might happen to the returned service men, or what security might accrue from this Bill to the returned service men. No, he was concerned wholly and solely with those from whom land would be taken under this Bill, and he was concerned to see that they should have a measure of recompense in accordance with the present inflated prices of land sales in the State today.

May I make myself absolutely clear on this issue? As a member of this party, I was completely and utterly opposed to the removal of land-sales controls. The fundamental cause of the present opposition of hon. members opposite to this Bill is the removal of those land-sales controls. It is regrettable that they were ever lifted, because I firmly believe that inflated values have never been in the best interests of any community, of any State, or of any nation.

I appreciate the fact that this measure has been brought forward in the interests of those who have given service to this nation, and I commend the Minister for his wisdom in bringing it forward. Irrespective of our political outlook, we should do all we can for our returned service men and no opposition should be advanced by hon. members opposite to any measure that will benefit those men. Surely we should give some recognition to those men who have offered their lives in the defence of our nation? Is there any reason why any hon. member on either side of the Committee should oppose the granting of any gift or any concession to those men who defended our country?

Mr. F. E. ROBERTS (Nundah) (4.24 p.m.): Earlier in this debate, hon. members opposite asked us to treat this measure seriously. However, it is rather illuminating, at this comparatively early hour, so far as working hours are concerned, to see those who asked us to deal with this Bill seriously so prominent by their absence from this Chamber. These are the gentlemen who, whenever they have the opportunity, deery the 40-hour week for the ordinary workers, yet they cannot treat a measure such as this sufficiently seriously to remain within the precincts of this House till the matter is disposed of.

The first thing we must recognise in settling our returned service personnel is the necessity to hasten carefully.

I say that because we should surely be able to profit by the experience of those who were in charge of similar land-settlement schemes after World War I. We all know—it is a matter of history now, although we find it still raising its ugly head—that those who were in the past able to acquire the ownership of land will never hesitate to decry the use of that land for some purpose other than that to which they are putting it. Today, we have heard frequent reference to the areas in the Taroom and Dalby districts that were to be placed at the disposal of the returned service personnel and it has been pointed out that the areas are too small, that 1,300 acres will not be enough because it is not agricultural country, it is only grazing country. I recall from reading what happened at times after World War I, and I had a personal knowledge in my younger years of soldier-settlement schemes in the State of Victoria. In that State, after World War I, those who owned properties that were likely to be seized for soldier settlement raised the same cry as has been raised here. They pointed out that good land in the Wimmera and Gippsland districts and other parts of the State were not suitable for closer-settlement schemes, and with what result? The Government of that State decided upon a scheme for closer settlement in the Mallee country. Some hon. members opposite know that country in the north-western corner of the State of Victoria—Mallee scrub growing over sandhills, on the very tip as it were of the Great Australian Desert. On blocks of 500 to 600 acres soldiers from World War I were settled—and in more respects than one. I have very grave reasons to suspect that people who own land suitable for closer settlement in Queensland today are adopting the same attitude and saying that it is not suitable for closer settlement and that we should push the young returned service men desirous of getting land into districts further away and into such districts as the Mallee country I mentioned a few moments ago. After the soldiers have been in those districts from 18 to 20 years they will walk off their properties and the properties will go back again into big areas under the control of one individual. The settlers will be settled again.

Mr. Aikens: They will want them to rear their kiddies on boiled beef and treacle.

Mr. F. E. ROBERTS: That is just what they would want. I suspect from the remarks of hon. members opposite that they would have our returned-soldiers settlers go to outer areas, to land not suitable for closer settlement and not suitable for agricultural purposes. I think it was two or perhaps three hon. members opposite made reference to what Mr. Kent had done in making land available for closer settlement. It was said that he had voluntarily made the land available, that he had voluntarily subdivided an area of 30,000 acres and, as mentioned by an hon. member opposite, he had made it available mostly to returned service men. As a matter of fact, we should look at that case a little closer. The property mentioned was in the Jondaryan

district, a district which everybody knew was about to be frozen for closer settlement with the object of putting returned service men on it. Mr. Kent undoubtedly was aware, as well as everyone else in Queensland was, of that fact. He beat the Government to it. I have no hesitation in saying that I should be very much surprised if in beating the Government to it Mr. Kent suffered any financial loss. Hon. members opposite have endeavoured, in relation to this man, to make of necessity a virtue. So far as I am concerned, and I think so far as other hon. members are concerned, I see no virtue in necessity at any time.

Certain hon. members opposite have declared that they do not say for one moment that soldiers should not be settled upon the land, that all they are concerned about is that those who are to be dispossessed of land should receive a fair and equitable compensation for it. It is surprising how glibly we can speak for hours on end of these time-worn terms of equity and fairness. We have heard them several times. Hon. members on this side of the Committee are concerned primarily with getting these returned soldiers onto some land or other. On the other hand, hon. members opposite say it is all right to put them on the land, provided those who are to be dispossessed receive fair and equitable compensation. Let me remind them that they have openly admitted that all they are interested in is profit. The ex-hon. member for West Moreton, now a senator of the Commonwealth of Australia, admitted on the front Opposition benches only a few months ago that business is business. That is their attitude. Their attitude today is just that, business is business. They are not interested in anything for the benefit of returned soldiers or any other section of the community; the only thing they are interested in is getting every possible profit out of the deal. There is nothing in their attitude upon which they can for one minute flatter themselves.

Another thing that hon. gentlemen opposite have conveniently overlooked is this: who is it in this State of ours that owns the land of which they say the owners are being dispossessed? It is all very well to have a deed or a certificate of title to the land, but fundamentally the land belongs to the people of Queensland, of this generation and of generations to come. I know that hon. members opposite will adopt the attitude that once land is alienated, as it was in days gone by, that was the end of it so far as the public were concerned, and that the owners were as kings in their own domain, but that attitude of mind does not exist with the intelligent and fair-minded people.

Mr. Aikens: The landed gentry.

Mr. F. E. ROBERTS: The landed gentry. They would build up other classes in our community, as we have read about in other parts of the world. The Australian, fortunately, is too wide-awake to allow that sort of thing to happen. The lands belonging to the people of this State, the fundamental principle to be applied in relation to their use is the same principle that we must apply in

relation to any other problem: what is the best to be done with them in the interests of the people in general? As far as we are concerned, we are satisfied that whatever land is suitable for the settling of returned soldiers should be taken over by the people—not by the Government—in order that that object may be achieved. During the war years, when these young men we are endeavouring to place on the land were fighting on the sea, in the air, and on the land, in the various spheres of war all over the world, what were these people doing who, through the Opposition, raise their voices? They were sitting on their land reaping the benefit of high prices. If the question had been put to them in 1942 or 1943, "If we win this war, are you prepared to allow a little of your land to be shared amongst the returned service personnel?" they would not have raised the question of profit and price and fair and equitable compensation, as hon. members opposite are doing; they would have been only too pleased to say, "Yes, if this country can be saved, if my life and the lives of my wife and family can be protected, they can have some of our land—they can have perhaps the whole of our land." How that attitude of mind has changed. Let me remind them here and now that had the Japanese aggressor been successful, those people who think their ownership of land is something sacred would have no right to that property whatsoever; that land would have been owned by the Japanese. That being so, if fair and equitable compensation is being paid to them—and after listening to the Minister and having digested his introductory remarks, nobody can reasonably suggest they are not getting a fair and reasonable price for their land—who can justly complain?

There is another matter. I have mentioned what the attitude of those people would be towards this question of making this land available to returned service personnel had that been put to them in 1942-43. I remind hon. members again, at the expense perhaps of reiteration—because it has been mentioned before—that during those war years and because of the war we had to fix compensation in relation to many things. We had price-control and wage-pegging, and there was no cry from hon. members opposite when the workers, whether on the farms or on the grazing properties or in the various industries, had to put up with the sacrifice of wage-pegging. There was no cry about that at all. What about the soldiers themselves? The majority of them were on 6s. 6d. a day.

That was their remuneration or their fair and equitable compensation, to use the term of hon. members opposite, for placing their bodies and lives at the disposal of this country and putting up with all the horrors, hardships, and sufferings of war. According to hon. members opposite, 6s. or 6s. 6d. a day was a fair and equitable compensation. Anything that we can do to make it easier to put these young men on the properties they desire is the obligation of this or any other Government.

Mr. Ewan: It should be on all the community and not just on the land people.

Mr. F. E. ROBERTS: That is in accord with the remarks made by the hon. member today. He says the obligation for compensation to those who are being dispossessed of the land in order that returned soldiers might be placed on it should fall upon the people as a whole. That is the basis of his argument. If there had been consistency in it, we should have heard the hon. member raising his voice during the war years and demanding that the community as a whole should pay a fair and equitable price for the services of our service men. But we did not hear his voice raised in that cry, nor did we hear that of the hon. member for Mirani or any other hon. member on the Opposition benches. If there is any foundation in that argument of hon. members opposite, particularly in view of the fact that they asked that we should make the compensation retrospective, let us go back to the beginning of the war and see to it that the community as a whole pays a fair and equitable price for the services of our service men during the war years. Let us pay them something commensurate with their services to the community. Of course, if that was done it would hurt the pockets of hon. members opposite and their friends, whom they want to get the best price they can possibly obtain from the community in order to place these returned service men on the land.

These remarks have been called for in view of the attitude adopted by hon. members opposite in the course of this debate, but I feel quite sure that the public at large are with the Labour Government in this measure. Hon. members opposite today have criticised this Bill, referring in some instances to poor widows coming to Brisbane from their properties because they are in fear of being dispossessed of them and of returned service men of the 1914-19 war being dispossessed so that returned service men of the 1939-45 war can be placed on their properties. They gave several isolated instances that did not amount to a flick of the fingers so far as the principle of this Bill is concerned. I repeat that I believe the public at large are wholeheartedly behind this measure. The Government and the Minister are to be commended for introducing it at this stage and, further, the returned service men's organisations, organisations that at all times protect the rights and privileges of returned service men, have not been heard criticising this measure in any way at all. There are some returned service men on the Opposition benches speaking in opposition to this Bill, but the R.S.S.A.I.L.A. and other returned service men's organisations are with the public one hundred per cent. behind this piece of legislation.

Motion (Mr. Foley) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING.

Bill presented and, on motion of Mr. Foley, read a first time.

The House adjourned at 4.48 p.m.