Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 7 NOVEMBER 1950

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Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. J. H. Mann, Brisbane) took the chair at 11 a.m.

DEVELOPMENT AND DEFENCE OF NORTHERN AUSTRALIA.

REPLY FROM PRIME MINISTER.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have to inform the House that I have received a letter from the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth acknowledging the resolutions passed by the House on 12 October.

QUESTIONS.

STATE HOUSE SOLD TO MR. PEEL.

Mr. HILEY (Coorparoo), for **Mr. MORRIS** (Mt. Coot-tha), asked the Secretary for Public Works, Housing, and Local Government—

"1. In respect of the building being sold to Mr. Peel, at Edith street, Enoggera, what was—(*a*) the final cost figure of the building, with extras such as bath, stove, sink, and washtubs, the E.C., and fencing, and (*b*) the cost of the land and drainage, which, combined, made up the total of £1,874 16s. 9d., as per the Commission's letter of 26 October, 1950?

"2. Will he further explain why a period of approximately 19 months elapsed between the completion of the building and the decision by the Housing Commission on costs?

"3. Was this house, No. Brisbane 1244, built by day labour by the Housing Commission?

"4. Was the original plaster work done by Housing Commission employees or by contract, and, if the latter, by whom?"

Hon. P. J. R. HILTON (Carnarvon) replied—

"1. (*a*) £1,680 18s. 2d. (*b*) Land, £160; drainage, £33 18s. 7d.; total £193 18s. 7d.

"2. Because of the time necessary for land development costs of the estate to be finalised and erection costs of over two hundred and fifty (250) houses to be allocated so that same could be apportioned to the individual properties.

"3. Yes.

"4. Original plaster was supplied by a private sub-contractor and fixed by Housing Commission employees, and faults (not of construction) having developed in the plaster, the sub-contractor was required to replace the faulty plaster with new sheets and fix same."

SUPERVISION OF HOUSE BUILT FOR MR. MCPHIE.

Mr. HILEY (Coorparoo), for **Mr. MORRIS** (Mt. Coot-tha), asked the Secretary for Public Works, Housing, and Local Government—

"Have Queensland Housing Commission inspectors passed as correct the concrete stumps of the dwelling being erected for Mr. McPhie, at Mitchelton, under supervision of the Queensland Housing Commission?"

Hon. P. J. R. HILTON (Carnarvon) replied—

"The stumps as erected were not in accord with the specifications. After a further inspection on August 10, they were considered to be satisfactory. On 3 July, Mr. McPhie stated that he would accept the stumps as erected provided the builder made a reduction of £50 in his contract price."

WITNESSES, ROYAL COMMISSION ON GOLDEN CASKET.

Mr. DONALD (Bremer) asked the Attorney-General—

"Has his attention been drawn to a statement made in Parliament by the hon. member for Kedron on Thursday, the 2nd instant, to the effect that certain persons had been prevented from giving evidence before the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into certain matters appertaining to the Golden Casket Art Union? If so, will he say whether this statement is in accordance with fact?"

Hon. W. POWER (Baroona—Secretary for Mines and Immigration), for **Hon. J. LARCOMBE** (Rockhampton), replied—

"I have read the newspaper report of the statement attributed to the hon. member for Kedron, to which the question refers. In view of the following facts, I cannot accept the statement attributed to the hon. member as a statement of fact. The report of the Royal Commission on the Golden Casket refers to this subject on page 7. At its first meeting the Commission decided—'. . . to insert a notice in newspapers in the State of Queensland inviting persons who desired to give evidence to inform the Secretary of the Commission to that effect if possible before 10 January . . .' Advertisements inviting all persons desirous of giving evidence before the Royal Commission were inserted in twelve leading newspapers circulating throughout Queensland. In addition to the publicity given to the publication of the above notice, further publicity was given in news items in the Queensland Press and in the Press of other States of the Commonwealth. During the Sittings the Chairman of the Commission made the following announcement on 3 February, 1950:—'The Commission, however, publicly requests any person who can give evidence of any facts at variance with those already before the Commission to come forward immediately and give evidence.' The hon. member for Kedron was closely associated with the proceedings before this Commission, and it would be difficult to accept his statement that any persons were prevented from giving evidence before the Commission. Any hon. member attaining the age of the hon. member for Kedron and who still believes in Santa Claus is deserving of a good deal of sympathy. He should, however, be carefully watched and humoured whenever possible."

Mr. PIE (Kedron), without notice, asked the Acting Attorney-General the following question:—

"In view of the reply to the hon. member for Bremer concerning the calling of witnesses before the Golden Casket Commission, will he make inquiries and inform the House as to why the following people, who had signified their willingness to give evidence, were not called—

"I have a list of witnesses here which I will not bore the House with, and which I will table."

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member must read his question.

Mr. PIE: The first name is—Mr. F. L. Gaunt, care of Eventide, Sandgate.

Mr. Hanlon: You were very sorry you were called.

Mr. PIE: You did everything to see you were not called. (Interjections.)

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. PIE: I appreciate your protection, Mr. Speaker. The other names are—

"Mr. F. L. Gaunt, care of Eventide, Sandgate; Mr. F. W. Griffin, care of Post Office, Allandale, New South Wales; Dick Hall, 33 Clan William Street, Eastwood, New South Wales; Reginald Steptoe, Sunnybank; Mr. M. F. Hamblett, Hamblett & Company, 30-32 Pitt Street, Sydney; D. Strong, 32 Hampton Road, Armadale, Victoria; V. H. McNamara, Charleville; Mr. A. Walker, Erobin, via Wellington Point, Queensland; Mrs. Robertson, care of Railway, Dolly Varden Estate, Paremata, Wellington, New Zealand; Miss G. Grahame, 22 London Road, Clayfield; W. H. Drew, Cole Street, Silkstone; A. Edwards, 3 Barrack Street, Sydney; Henry Turner, Wiseman's Creek, via O'Connell; Stephen Jones, 58 Fitzroy Street, Surry Hills, New South Wales; Edward Verner (whose address was care of Air Force).

"There is one other name, that of Mr. A. E. Schwartz, Cordelia, via Ingham."

Hon. W. POWER (Baroona—Acting Attorney-General): I ask the hon. member to give notice of the question for Tuesday next.

Mr. PIE: I will not give notice; I will table the papers.

COMPENSATION FOR SLAUGHTERING OF T.B. CATTLE.

Mr. PLUNKETT (Darlington) asked the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock—

"As the maximum compensation for cattle ordered to be destroyed on account of tuberculosis and other specified diseases under the Victorian Cattle Compensation Act is £25, and amending legislation has been introduced to increase that amount to £35, and as the Queensland Stock Diseases Compensation Fund has a credit balance of about £50,000, and as the price of dairy cattle has increased considerably since the present maximum compensation of £6 per head was fixed in this State, will he kindly give consideration to an appropriate increase in such maximum compensation here, in order to bring it more into line with present costs of replacement?"

Hon. H. H. COLLINS (Tablelands) replied—

"The credit to the Stock Diseases Compensation Fund as at 31 October, 1950, was £41,658, including a Crown subsidy on levies at the rate of 10s. in the £, which sum was subject to a contingent liability in respect of outstanding claims approximating 6,000. As the status of the fund earlier in the year warranted some relief to contributors, it was decided that a reduction in the rate of levy assessed would be more generally beneficial than an increase in the compensation rate, and action was taken accordingly. It should be appreciated that a diseased beast is of practically no commercial value and represents a potential menace to the remainder of the herd. It is considered that the prescribed amount of contribution from the fund to assist the owner to reinstate his herd with a disease-free animal is more than a reasonable assessment of the value of the destroyed beast."

EMPLOYEES OF RABBIT BOARDS.

Mr. SPARKES (Aubigny): I desire to ask the Secretary for Public Lands and Irrigation whether he has an answer to the following question, which I addressed to him on 1 November—

"In reference to his answer on October 27 to my question regarding employees of rabbit boards, what is the number of employees of each board under the following headings and what are the respective rates of remuneration of such employees, viz.:—(*a*) office staff, (*b*) inspectors, (*c*) boundary riders, and (*d*) trappers?"

Hon. T. A. FOLEY (Belyando) replied—

"Darling Downs Rabbit Board—(*a*) Office staff, one, £563 per annum; (*b*) Inspector, one, £718 per annum; (*c*) Boundary-riders, eight, seven at the award wage of £7 2s. per week, one at £8 7s. 7d. per week (there is no cottage on the section controlled by this boundary rider); (*d*) Trapper, one, award wage of £7 2s. per week, and when camping out an extra 1s. 8d. per night is paid. Leichhardt Rabbit Board—(*a*) Office staff, clerk, one, £620 per annum; (*b*) Inspectors, Superintendent, one, £775 per annum, Assistant Superintendent and Overseer, one, £580 per annum, Overseer, one, £550 per annum; (*c*) Boundary riders, fifteen at £7 9s. 4d. per week, fencer, one at £7 14s. 4d. per week; (*d*) Trappers, nine at £7 9s. 4d. per week (plus 1s. 8d. per night camp allowance), apprentice trapper, one at £3 10s. per week, trapper, one at £2 12s. 6d. per day (which includes payment for truck and camp gear), trapper mechanic, one at £9 9s. 4d. per week. Moreton Rabbit Board—(*a*) Office staff, one at £563 per annum; (*b*) Inspector, one at £643 per annum; (*c*) Boundary riders, thirteen, award wages of £7 2s. per week.

PAPERS.

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

Report of the Bureau of Investigation under the Land and Water Resources Development Acts, 1943 to 1946, for the year 1949.

The following papers were laid on the table—

Proclamation under the Diseases in Plants Acts, 1929 to 1948 (26 October).

Order in Council under the Primary Producers' Organisation and Marketing Acts, 1926 to 1946 (26 October).

Order in Council under the Professional Engineers Act of 1929 (2 November).

Proclamation under the Health Acts Amendment Act of 1946 (No. 2) (26 October).

Regulations under the Health Acts, 1937 to 1949 (Footwear Regulations of 1950) (26 October).

DEATH OF MR. H. O'SHEA.

MOTION OF CONDOLENCE.

Hon. E. M. HANLON (Ithaca—Premier) (11.12 a.m.), by leave, without notice: I move—

"1. That this House desires to place on record its sense of the loss this State has sustained by the death of Harry O'Shea, Esquire, Member for the Electoral District of Warrego.

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

Mr. O'Shea represented the electorate of Warrego from August, 1941, when the seat became vacant by the death of the late Randolph Bedford. He was a member of this Parliament for a little over nine years. He was first elected on 30 August, 1941, early in the 29th Parliament, and served through the 30th and 31st Parliaments. He was re-elected to the present Parliament but was prevented by illness from taking a part in its proceedings. He died last Saturday.

The late Mr. O'Shea was well known to all hon. members of the preceding Parliament. Unfortunately his serious illness after the last election prevented him from taking his seat in the House and possibly prevented new members of this Parliament becoming personally acquainted with him. He was typical of the race of western workers who created the Labour Party as we know it today. I refer to that great group of workmen who, in the early days, struggled to get a decent form of livelihood for the bush workers of this country. It will be remembered that it was their idea of taking political action rather than direct action after the great industrial upheaval of 1891 that led those western men to become the creators of the Australian Labour Party. He was also a foundation member of the Australian Workers' Union, which plays such an important part in the industrial movement of Australia and which has acted, I might say, as the sheet anchor to the industrial unionists of this country who believe in arbitration and the settlement of disputes by that means. Mr. O'Shea played a very important part in that union. He was an executive officer for many years and vice-president at the time of his death.

During his time in this House Mr. O'Shea contributed to its debates quite a number of speeches on the industry dearest to his heart, the wool industry. Hon. members will remember, for instance, the very fine case he made for the improvement of the type of sheep bred in this country. He pointed out that rather than concentrate on increasing the number of sheep we should endeavour to increase their wool-bearing qualities, because by doing so we should not place an undue burden upon our pastures but bring an increase in the wealth-production of the wool industry just as if we had increased the number. In the councils of the Government party he was very strong on that line, and no doubt because of his advocacy, much work has been done in that direction.

We extend our sympathy to his bereaved wife and young daughter; the other children are grown up, but we extend our sympathy to them also. His death has been a distinct loss to the Parliament of this country and to the wool industry, which has played such an important part in our economic life.

Mr. HILEY (Coorparoo) (11.18 a.m.): I rise to second the motion moved by the honourable the Premier. The late Mr. O'Shea had a very wide experience in the West, and he impressed me as being a consistent battler for better conditions for the people of that area, which, more than any other part of Queensland, contributes to the great wealth production of this State. He always impressed me as having a remarkable knowledge of the country, and to hear him speak on land and pastoral matters was to hear somebody in whom the very ring of authority was clearly apparent; he was accepted not only in this House but everywhere in the State as a real authority on the use of land and the conditions in the far West.

The late Mr. O'Shea had a very kindly disposition and an exceedingly ready humour; and if in that regard he was not quite the character of his predecessor, the late Randolph Bedford, at least he showed the same evidence of a similar strain and represented the same electorate. I can remember with pleasure some of the gems of humour that periodically would flow from the lips of the late kindly-disposed Harry O'Shea. His death occurred after a long illness that caused all his friends very real concern. I think everyone who knew him will join with the Legislature in expressing sympathy with his relatives and remembering with keen pleasure the privilege of associating with such a character as the late Harry O'Shea.

Motion agreed to, hon. members standing in silence.

DISEASES IN STOCK ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

THIRD READING.

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

MARGARINE ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

THIRD READING.

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

POULTRY INDUSTRY ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

THIRD READING.

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

COMMONWEALTH JUBILEE HOLIDAY BILL.

THIRD READING.

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

RABBIT ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

THIRD READING.

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

SUPPLY.

COMMITTEE—FINANCIAL STATEMENT—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

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

Debate resumed from 2 November (see page 1087) on Mr. Gair's motion—

"That there be granted to His Majesty for the service of the year 1950-51 a sum not exceeding £643 to defray the salary of the Aide-de-Camp to His Excellency the Governor."

Hon. V. C. GAIR (South Brisbane—Treasurer) (11.25 a.m.): The financial relationship existing between the Commonwealth Government of Australia and the various States is necessarily one of the most important features of any State Budget

today, for the reason that the States are dependent upon the Commonwealth Government for a great portion of the revenue required to maintain the services of the States. Amongst these services, of course, there are those that are intimately close to the lives of the people. For instance, there is law and order. It is therefore necessary to maintain the Police Force, an integral part in the preservation of law and order; there are the education of our children and the maintenance of social services such as hospitals, dental clinics, pre-natal and post-natal clinics and all those functions that State Governments are required to discharge, functions and services for which the State of Queensland has been notably outstanding. It can be said with truth that no State in the Commonwealth of Australia has done more in this direction than Queensland. Queensland Labour Governments over the years have led the way in the provision of services for the people and having regard to the vastness of the State a magnificent job has been done. I am not one who believes for one moment that all that is necessary has been achieved, for much remains to be done. And as our population grows—this is a point I made in opening my reply the other night—the greater becomes the need for the extension of these services and hence the greater the task, and the greater therefore the need for a more liberal reimbursement to the State of the taxation collected by the Commonwealth from the pockets of the people of the State, so that we, as a State Government charged with these responsibilities, will be enabled to discharge them with the utmost efficiency and the greatest measure of satisfaction to our people. It is all very well for the Commonwealth Government, irrespective of what political party they may represent, to take up the attitude, after having collected the money from the pockets of the people of this State—the taxpayers—that the bare minimum is all that the State should receive to carry out its services and that they, the Commonwealth Government, should have the lion's share of this revenue to carry out works, many of which normally should be met from loan money.

I made particular mention of that point in my Budget speech, but I do not know whether any member of the Opposition, in dealing with the Budget, paid any attention to the attitude of the present Commonwealth Government—and the previous Commonwealth Government too, for that matter—in expending unlimited moneys from revenue on capital works, works that should be financed from loan money. We are required to depend on loan moneys for such works, yet the Commonwealth, with pockets bulging with revenues derived from the people of the States, spends that money on works that normally should be debited to Loan accounts. I think that the attitude of the Opposition in dealing with this very important question of the Commonwealth-State financial relationships could be described as a desperate attempt to justify the actions of the present Federal Liberal-Country Party Government, irrespective of the rights or wrongs of their attitude and the detrimental effect their policy is inevitably having on the States.

I say very definitely and very sincerely that if Mr. Chifley was still Prime Minister of Australia, and if he had been responsible at the recent conference of Premiers for the distribution or the reimbursement of tax moneys to the States, I as Treasurer of this State should have been compelled to write what was contained in my Budget speech regarding the present Commonwealth Government. If Mr. Chifley, or any other Labour Prime Minister, had treated the States in as niggardly a manner as I contend they were treated at the last conference, I should have been failing in my duty to the people of this State had I not drawn attention, as I did in my Budget statement on this occasion, to what I believe to be the unfair financial treatment meted out to the States by the Commonwealth Government.

It is useless for hon. members opposite to endeavour to justify the attitude of the Commonwealth Government in this connection. Is it any wonder that this Government's developmental plans, including such projects as the Burdekin scheme, receive little support from the Opposition—in some cases, they have actually condemned them—when we find that they are prepared to forsake Queensland and Queensland's interests merely to be on the same line as, and in step with the Federal Government on political issues? Hon. members opposite will have to make up their minds and fix their position for all time; they must ask themselves are they prepared to support the Queensland Government in their request to the Commonwealth for adequate financial allotments, or will they submerge their duties and responsibilities as Queenslanders to the Queensland people beneath those that they owe to the Liberal and Country Parties as members of those organisations?

Mr. Sparkes: You did not talk that way when Mr. Chifley was Prime Minister.

Mr. GAIR: If the hon. member had been here he would have heard what I said about that. I repeat for his benefit—and I will prove it as I proceed with my speech—that notwithstanding the claims of hon. members opposite, the treatment received from the Chifley Government by this Government was very generous compared with that received in recent months from the Menzies-Fadden Government.

I now propose to deal with the speeches of hon. members opposite, those who actually took the trouble of dealing with the Budget statement. As I said at the outset of my speech the other night, unfortunately too many hon. members opposite devoted their time to parochial issues and paid little or no attention to its actual contents. They dealt with matters that could very well have been left for consideration on the Estimates or at some more appropriate time.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the hon. member for Coorparoo, said that the Budget was a mass of contradictions, but

such a statement could be well applied to his own speech. As I go along, I shall show that he actually contradicated himself in the course of his own speech in replying to the Financial Statement.

Early in his speech the hon. member complained that the essential services were starved and instanced particularly the lack of school teachers and schools. He also called for more development, more railways, and then straightaway charged the Government with having too many employees on their payroll and urged the Government to release some of them to be used on outside work at present starved of labour. I ask you to examine that statement. Here we have the Deputy Leader of the Opposition asking for the extension of our services, and at the same time complaining about additions to the staffs of the various Government departments. Take up the Estimates and you will see that provision has been made for an approximate increase of 300 school teachers in the next financial year. So much for the hon. member's first request, for more schools and more teachers, but having made it he cannot consistently and fairly complain about the necessary additions to the payroll of the State. I ask you: how can the Government extend social services, build up the educational system and do the necessary developmental work by dispensing with the services of teachers, technicians, cost clerks and administrative staff generally? I do not know how it can be done and I should be very interested to know from the hon. member for Coorparoo how he would propose to maintain these services with a depleted staff.

The hon. member proceeded to wax facetious about the Treasury and Treasury officials and later on in his speech gave some advice and instructions about Commonwealth finance and the Financial Agreement. He pretended to see some extraordinary change or alteration in my character since I assumed the role of Treasurer, or to use his own phrase, since I began to sit on the woolsack. I cannot feel that any transformation or alteration has taken place in my humble being, and I feel that I can say that as time goes on the hon. member will find that I shall carry out the admininstration of this very important department conscientiously and to the best of my ability and capacity, and in the best interests of Queensland and its people. I thought I heard the hon. member for Aubigny say that I might have become a little more stingy. Having had a Scotch father it can be expected that I should display some of the Scots' traits, particularly in handling other people's money. The hon. member and all representatives of local authorities and semi-government bodies can rest assured that while I hold the position all their requests to me for financial aid will receive fair consideration. That is because we believe that local authorities are a very important part of the government of this State and are endeavouring to do their best for the provision of amenities for the people in the outposts of Queensland.

The hon. member, in his reference to the woolsack, became a little bit confused in his chancellors. At the time he made his reference, I felt he was confusing the Chancellor of the Exchequer with the Lord Chancellor. I know a little about those positions, but I referred to Chambers' Encyclopaedia for their real designation. That publication described the Chancellor of the Exchequer as the first Finance Minister of the Crown. He traditionally sits in the Lower House, that is, in the House of Commons. The Lord Chancellor, on the other hand, is the Keeper of the King's Conscience, a Privy Councillor, a member of the Cabinet, and Speaker of the House of Lords. Amongst other functions, he was at one time guardian of all idiots and lunatics. The Lord Chancellor, not the Chancellor of the Exchequer, sits on the woolsack. The term "woolsack" itself has a very interesting history which I am sure will prove particularly informative to hon. members opposite, in view of the inability or lack of courage of the Liberal-Country Party to face up to the problems created by the present high prices of wool. The woolsack is the name given to the seat of the Lord Chancellor in the House of Lords and is composed of a large square sack of wool, without either back or arms and covered with red cloth. The woolsack was first introduced in the House of Lords as the Chancellor's seat in the time of Elizabeth as a memento of an Act that was passed against the export of wool, that commodity then being the main source of the national wealth of England.

Apparently the Conservatives of the sixteenth century, who are the fathers of the Liberals of the twentieth century, had much more courage than their descendants when it came to facing a problem associated with this valuable commodity. I suggest that hon. members opposite might take a leaf out of the book of their Elizabethan forefathers.

The hon. member for Coorparoo went on to say that the Treasury officials left their hearts in the strongroom and their brains in the vaults, nevertheless I can assure him that they are very realistic officers of the Crown, men who have a very keen sense of duty and a very fair understanding of the financial position of this State and of the Commonwealth. For that matter they are men who can be trusted to do the best possible for Queensland in their position as administrators in the very important department of the Treasury.

Mr. Walsh: That is where the hon. member got his early training.

Mr. GAIR: It has stood him in good stead and when he went out into the world private enterprise he had no reason to suffer from any inferiority complex because he had been well trained in the Public Service and was able to take his place in that competitive sphere with marked success. I congratulate my friend the hon. member for Coorparoo on that. A lot of bally-hoo is talked from time to time by people in outside businesses about the Public Service. Speaking generally, the public servant is a very well-trained efficient officer and those public servants who from time to time leave

the service to take positions with private companies have acquitted themselves with distinction. They have done well because they had the capacity in the first place to qualify by examination to enter the Public Service, whereas many persons occupying positions in private industry have not had to do so. However, the training and experience are of course great teachers, and with the good basis of a sound education they equip men to occupy positions and accept responsibilities. The Treasury officials who, as I said before, know a great deal about the financial relationships between the Commonwealth and the States, have examined every phase of this question from time to time.

We have heard in the course of this debate suggestions by the hon. member for Toowong as to what might receive consideration from these officials at conferences on this very important matter. The suggestions and proposals of the hon. member for Toowong were quite good, but I want to assure him that they were not new; all these questions have from time to time received the consideration of our officers and the officers of the other State Treasury departments. But it is not a very easy thing, again irrespective of the political colour of the Commonwealth Government, to sell the idea to the Commonwealth Government that we are entitled to greater consideration on this all-important question.

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition in the course of his remarks said that the Premier had refused to accept an offer for the reintroduction of taxation on income by the State. That was not true. The Press statement clearly was that the Premier said he would like to know the conditions on which we should resume the taxation of income. You will recollect, as I do, that on one occasion Mr. Chifley told the States, "You have the right at all times; if as sovereign States you want to do so, go ahead and do it." Of course we have the right to tax and we had the right to tax before the Commonwealth Government had the right to tax income; but what an unsatisfactory position it would be if any State endeavoured to tax income on top of the Commonwealth tax on income! The position would be untenable, and no sane Government would contemplate such an action. That is what the Premier intended when he said, "I want to know the conditions under which we resume taxation powers in this State."

The hon. member for Coorparoo, in dealing with the deficit, supplied the Committee with a figure that he assumed would be the deficit if the basic wage of the State was increased by an amount equivalent to what the Federal Court gave recently to the workers under Federal awards, and he argued that by having a deficit of approximately £2,000,000 I should be throwing into circulation that sum of money and be withdrawing that amount less from the spending power of the citizens.

Mr. Hiley: Withdraw that amount less?

Mr. GAIR: Yes, from the spending power of the citizens. The hon. member, I feel, deliberately ignored the important point that the State deficit would put additional cash into circulation and, despite the inflationary condition, a corresponding amount would be withdrawn from circulation by the Commonwealth Treasury, and if an equitable and fair share of the Commonwealth income-tax collections was returned to the State, there would be no State deficit. Therefore the blame for any inflationary effect of a State deficit must be carried by the Commonwealth Government, not the State Government.

There is no question that this spending, with all this increased pay and salary increase, as the Premier said in the course of his speech, returns a greater income to the Commonwealth by means of taxation than to the States. The Federal Treasurer did not make any provision in his recent Budget for an increase in the amount of exemption. This is still at £150, and with all the increases in salaries and wages that have taken place, naturally more people come into the field of taxation and those already in it go into higher grades of taxation. All of this means increased income to the Commonwealth. We find, therefore, that the Commonwealth can, with some measure of gain, increase the salaries of its officers and technicians; it can step up the salaries of these people and the States are compelled subsequently to follow suit. Because of the resultant increased taxation the Commonwealth is out of pocket little or nothing in the ultimate. It can go on and do these things but the States in consequence are required to carry a bigger financial responsibility than normally they would be required to carry.

The hon. member for Coorparoo spoke of the income-tax reimbursement grants. He made a comparison of the sums received by the State and the total State revenue but notwithstanding my interjection at the time he carefully avoided comparing the grants with the State expenditure and that is the crux of the matter. If hon. members refer to page 12 of the Financial Statement they will see very clearly that, notwithstanding increases in the Commonwealth grants on the formula and additions that have been given from time to time, the increase of grants as estimated for 1950-51 over the actual grants of 1945-46 was £6,456,500, whereas the increase in expenditure for the current year over 1945-46 is £9,338,000, which means that we are approximately £3,000,000 worse off, notwithstanding the increase in the grants under the taxation-reimbursement formula.

Mr. Hiley: It would be a greater percentage increase in the grant than in the expenditure.

Mr. GAIR: I do not think so.

Mr. Hiley: The Treasurer should have a look at it.

Mr. GAIR: The fact is that there is a £6,000,000 increase and we are £9,000,000 worse off in the expenditure; the difference between approximately £9,000,000 and £6,000,000 is £3,000,000 and that is the leeway that is to be made up.

Hon. members will ask: how can we arrest this? Can we have a reduction in the services to which I referred earlier in my speech? Are we to stand still and turn a deaf ear to the appeals of hon. members for better hospitalisation, better schools, the extension of schools, and all these other facilities and amenities that the people in the outposts of Queensland are calling out for and to which they are rightly entitled and which this Government aim at providing? Of course not; that would be retrogressive, and no progressive Government would subscribe to such a policy. We must go on and meet all these increases of costs which are represented chiefly by increases in salaries, wages, cost of equipment, materials and plant. And yet we have the Commonwealth Government, apparently unmindful of these things, saying "We will divide £5,000,000 in addition to the formula between the six States."

The Leader of the Opposition—and I think the hon. member for Toowong and others—had a good deal to say about the recent grant from taxation made to the State of Queensland by the Commonwealth Government and they contended with a good deal of enthusiasm that the grant made by the Menzies-Fadden Government was more liberal than the treatment meted out to this Government by the previous Commonwealth Government. I am going to supply the Committee with figures that will show clearly that this is not so. In 1946-47, under the Chifley Government, the grant due under the formula was £5,821,000, and the grant approved was £6,601,000, a sum additional to that of the formula of £780,000. In 1947-48 the amount due under the formula was £6,601,000 and the amount approved was £7,426,125, a sum additional to that of the formula of £825,125. In 1948-49 the grant due under the formula was £7,426,125 and the grant approved was £8,832,622, a sum of £1,406,497 additional to that of the formula. In 1949-50, the last year of the Chifley Government, the grant due under the formula was £10,230,827 and the grant approved was £11,539,592, or a sum of £1,308,765 additional to that of the formula. After the recent conference with the Menzies-Fadden Government, the grant due under the formula for 1950-51 is £11,463,500 and the grant approved was £12,277,500, or a sum additional to that of the formula of £814,000. Those figures indicate conclusively that for the years 1946-47 to 1949-50 the Chifley Government paid £4,320,387 more than was due under the formula, which works out at an average of £1,080,097 per annum and that sum, compared with the Menzies Government's sum of £814,000 for this year, shows that Mr. Menzies was, as I said in my Financial Statement, niggardly in his attitude towards the State.

Mr. Sparkes: You must accept the amount provided for defence.

Mr. Donald: There was a war when the Chifley Government were in power.

Mr. GAIR: When the Leader of the Opposition was dealing with this question he said that the Menzies Government gave Queensland £2,046,673 additional grant for 1950-51. That is not so, because the sum was £814,000.

Mr. Hiley: Over the formula?

Mr. GAIR: Yes. That is a point that the Leader of the Opposition overlooked. He was unsound in his arguments and calculations. The total grant we received this year included only the small amount of £814,000 over the amount of the formula, compared with £1,406,497 and £1,308,765 received in 1948-49 and 1949-50 from the Chifley Government.

Mr. Hiley: Is that including or excluding the special coal-strike grant?

Mr. GAIR: Including it. The extra grant of £1,308,765 in 1949-50 was made to offset the effect of a nation-wide coal strike in 1949, which lasted four months. It lasted only a few months, but that was quite long enough. The extra grant of £814,000 in 1950, however, was to offset the effects of a much greater menace to this country than the coal strike, that is, the present inflationary trend.

Mr. Dewar interjected.

Mr. GAIR: One was only a temporary inconvenience, but I am afraid that unfortunately inflation is more lasting and will test the capacity and ability of all the Governments of this country.

Mr. Pie: Of all Governments throughout the world.

Mr. GAIR: Of all Governments throughout the world, for that matter. It is something that this Government are trying to arrest to the best of their ability. However, I think it can be said with truth that nothing very effective has been done by the present Commonwealth Government to arrest this menace to the stability of the country.

We say very definitely that the extra grant was inadequate and niggardly, and that it was not sufficient to meet the requirements of this Government and the people of this State. If we are to get on with the job of work that everybody is calling out for us to do we must receive at least an adequate return from the Commonwealth Government, who are the income-tax collectors of this country. I ask hon. members to examine Commonwealth figures and see for themselves whether the Commonwealth Government are in a position to help the States to a greater extent than they are doing.

The hon. member for Coorparoo went to some pains to show that tax-reimbursement grants had increased at a greater rate than other Treasury revenue. That is quite true, but grants from taxation levied on incomes should bear some relationship to the national income. In 1945-46 this was £1,303,000,000, whereas in 1949-50 it was £2,265,000,000. Does the hon. member for Coorparoo think that income from such sources as probate and succession duties, land tax, totalisator tax

and betting tax should have increased during the same period in the same proportion as taxation on national income?

As I pointed out in my Budget speech, very little scope exists for the collection by the State of further revenue. We are limited in our fields of taxation and, indeed, the Commonwealth Government have invaded some of those limited fields of taxation that have been left to the State. The avenues and the fields for additional taxation by the State are, I repeat, negligible.

Mr. Pie: That is not only the Menzies-Fadden Government. All Commonwealth Governments have done that.

Mr. GAIR: I am speaking about the financial relationships between the Commonwealth and the States. For the moment, party politics are not in it. As I said before, had we received no better treatment from the Chifley Government than from the Menzies-Fadden Government, I should still have had the same complaint and should have felt compelled to report the position in my Financial Statement as I did on this occasion.

Mr. Hiley: Do you think that the basic principle is right and that it should be retained?

Mr. GAIR: I think the principle is right in normal times.

Mr. Hiley: That is, of tax reimbursement?

Mr. GAIR: Yes, I think it has a good deal of merit. At a time like this, when inflation is rampant and we find that the Commonwealth Government have almost unlimited revenue—certainly they have a big financial responsibility—instead of making more income available to the States they are spending it on capital works instead of allowing those works to be done out of loan funds, as we are required to do. What is good enough for Queensland should be good enough for the Commonwealth of Australia.

The hon. member for Coorparoo should have related the income-tax reimbursement grant to the actual expenditure, as shown by me on page 12 of the Budget. He would have seen that the expenditure, exclusive of railways, estimated for this year is £9,338,084 greater than it was in 1945-46. Does the hon. member really believe that the States are not entitled to a greater proportion of the increased tax, of the very largely increased income? I have already given the figures. In 1938-39 the Commonwealth Government collected about £12,000,000 by way of income tax and the States £30,000,000 but in 1949-50 the States tax-reimbursement grant amounted to £17,500,000 whereas the Commonwealth had for its purpose £209,000,000.

Mr. Hiley: The position has been reversed—formerly it was three to one in our favour and now it is three to one against.

Mr. GAIR: That is so; that is my point and we make our case on that. The Commonwealth cannot say that it is not in a position to help the States to a greater extent than it is doing. No-one for a moment would think that the Commonwealth Government should be embarrassed financially, particularly at a time when we are required to prepare for the defence of our Nation. The fact remains that no relief has been given to the taxpayers of the Commonwealth, as promised by the Liberal-Country Parties during their election campaign. What do we find in the Budget delivered by the Federal Treasurer. There has been a readjustment in the method of assessing the taxable income, a reversion to the old system of calculating rebates on net income instead of on the gross income. Then there has been an increase in the amount deductible for insurance premiums from £100 to £150, I think. How many people in the community can afford to pay £100 a year for insurance premiums? Then there was an increase in the amounts deductible in respect of dental charges from £10 to £20. How many people spend £10 a year on dentists? All these things were negligible and virtually worthless. If the Commonwealth Government continue to take taxation from the people of this State in the way they have been doing, the State Government will have the responsibility of seeing that we get a just and fair share of the reimbursements to the States so as to enable us to maintain the services of the State at a proper standard.

Mr. Kerr: How much more would you be satisfied with?

Mr. GAIR: I told the hon. member a while ago there would be no limit. (Laughter.) When you take into account—and these are very important figures as they relate to services hon. members are everlastingly talking about—that 38 per cent. of what we receive from the Commonwealth is expended on education, a figure which I thought worth mentioning in by Budget speech, hospitals take 18 per cent. medical hygiene, maternal and child welfare, State Children Department, &c., approximately 13 per cent., and police 16 per cent. That totals 85 per cent. of the tax reimbursement from the Commonwealth. These are services of which all hon. members want an extension, and for which there is a demand for expansion throughout Queensland. That is evidence that if we are going to do all those things hon. members ask for from time to time, almost everlastingly ask for, and if there is any merit in their case—and we know that there is—we shall require more money from the Commonwealth. Do members of the Opposition support or oppose the financial treatment of the State by the present Commonwealth Government. Are they going to let their party politics destroy their feelings for the State and the welfare of the people of Queensland? The time has arrived when they should make up their minds and fix their position.

Mr. Low: Do you favour a return of taxation rights?

Mr. GAIR: I should not be opposed to accepting taxation rights. I have no hesitation in saying that, for I feel that a Government without the right to tax and a right to

budget for their own expenditure ceases to be an entire Government. When a Government are required to go and ask for a hand-back—not a hand-out, because the money comes from the people of the State and we are only asking for something back that has been taken from the people of this State—it is not very satisfactory. As I said in reply to an interjection of the hon. member for Coorparoo, the principle of uniform tax can be made to work more satisfactorily than at present.

Mr. Kerr: In relation to the States.

Mr. GAIR: That is so. If the Commonwealth only recognised to a greater extent than it has done up to the present that the States have a very important function to perform, and that they have very important and urgent work to carry out, and that their functions of work are more intimately associated with the daily life of the people than any function of the Commonwealth, we might get somewhere, but any interference by the Commonwealth with the functions of a State has only led to confusion. That is evidenced by the hospital scheme. Although it has helped to some extent, what is the position today? The cost of maintaining hospitals has increased beyond all expectations, but we find that the grant from the Commonwealth is not increasing with the same rapidity. Who makes up the difference, and who is expected to make up the difference? It is the State Government. The hon. member for Cunningham the other day in this Chamber made an appeal to subsidise certain community hospitals. I can appreciate his point. I am not blind to the need for these things but he must recognise that we can only do this if we have the means of doing so, and we have really only one source from where we can obtain those means, namely, the Commonwealth Government. It is true—and the hon. member will appreciate it—that we relieved the people in the country when we abolished the hospital precept of something in the vicinity of £2,500,000. It could be argued that we were premature or unwise in giving that relief, although I am sure the hon. member for Cunningham would not advocate that.

Mr. McIntyre: I believe it is cheaper to help them do the job than do it yourself. It has to be done.

Mr. GAIR: I do not know that the hon. member would favour the restoration of the hospital precept, but if we are unable to get it from the Commonwealth and these services have to be provided, well, we shall be forced to find ways and means of obtaining income from our own people in our own way.

The hon. member for Toowong the other day confirmed a view I have had in this connection and when I bring legislation before Parliament that will provide for the lifting of the pegging of land values for taxation purposes and increasing the rates of taxation on land, and all those things that will help——

Mr. MUNRO: I rise to a point of order. I did not suggest increasing the rates of taxation on land. I suggested the removal of the pegging of land values and the adjustment of the rates, to readjust the position in conformity with the new values.

Mr. GAIR: Let us examine what the hon. member for Toowong did say. He said that we should lift the pegging of the land values for taxation purposes; and with that I agree. Prior to the presentation of the Financial Statement I had my officers looking at that matter. The hon. member says that we should lift the amount of exemption; with that I agree. If we are going to exclude a greater number of people by lifting the amount of exemption, well, we shall, of necessity, have to have regard to the rates of taxation on those that remain, if we hope to get more income by means of the land tax. That is an analysis of the hon. member's statement, and he must realise that if he did not do so directly, he did inferentially advocate an increase in the rate of land tax. I feel that when I bring down legislation that will provide for all that, one of the first to support me will be the hon. member for Toowong; and I shall be very appreciative and thankful for his support. If any members opposite who have any further suggestions as to where we can get some money I shall be pleased to hear them and I shall not be slow in giving effect to any practical and reasonable suggestions.

Mr. Dewar: Start a State brickworks.

Mr. GAIR: Somebody will have to start something for the manufacture of bricks. No-one can say the position of the brick industry today is satisfactory; no-one can argue that the people who want to carry out very important building for industry and homes and other buildings that are essential to the community are able to get bricks without inconvenience and delay. Of course not. So if private enterprise cannot measure up to the demand somebody will have to give consideration to it.

The hon. member for Coorparoo, and the hon. member for Toowong for that matter, dealt with the high cost of collecting land tax. I am not disputing what they said. It was quite true, but one must have regard to the pegging of land valuations in the first instance and the subdivision of property has had the effect of exempting a greater number of people from land tax. That has shown a big effect in the collection and in the cost of collecting. In addition there is the very valuable concession given to primary producers under this heading: in 1949-50 16,784 farmers obtained total or partial exemption from land tax, because of a special concession of exemption of £1,500. The ordinary statutory exemption is £300. The amount involved is £45,224 and that is quite an appreciable sum. I am sure hon. members will appreciate that if land tax was levied on present-day sale prices the high cost of collection referred to would be removed. When we consider all these points we have to be mindful of just what concessions have been granted. Although the hon. member for Toowong was critical of the Government for the

delay in unpegging land values for taxation purposes, he must be appreciative of the fact that the Government, by the retention of this pegging, gave a big concession to a large number of people in the community. For that, what do we get? We get criticism.

Mr. Muller: Do you think land tax should be levied by local governments?

Mr. GAIR: Of course not: that is not the argument advanced at all. Give that to local governments and the State Government would be left without a field of taxation altogether, if we were to adopt all the suggestions made here from time to time.

Mr. Muller: What do you suggest local governments are to survive on if they have no taxation field?

Mr. GAIR: Local Governments will have to face their responsibility, like all Governments, of taxing those best able to afford taxation.

The Leader of the Opposition made the point that the Government had not expended the loan allocations granted each year. He quoted the years 1946-47 to 1949-50. It is true the loan programme, even when based on reasonable possibilities cannot be always fully implemented, but the Government's position is not unique. They are no different from many business men, particularly builders and contractors. It is interesting to note that in the four years quoted by the Leader of the Opposition the Government placed £38,774,633 on the Loan Fund estimates and the expenditure was £26,507,666, or 68.3 per cent. of the total voted. The average annual expenditure for the four years was £6,626,916, and it is a matter of interest that the total loan expenditure for the three years, 1 July, 1929, to 30 June, 1932, amounted to only £5,827,797, just over £800,000 less in three years than this Government's annual average for the four years quoted by the Leader of the Opposition. I think that is an excellent position, having regard to all factors, and gives very litle cause for complaint.

Mr. Farrell, I think I have dealt with the major points raised by the Leader of the Opposition, his Deputy Leader, the hon. member for Coorparoo, and the hon. member for Toowong and other hon. members, on this very important submission. I have dealt with the financial features of the Budget and the important question of the financial relationship between the Commonwealth and the States. I have endeavoured to place the Government's point of view before the Committee, and I have replied to the points raised by those hon. members.

I feel, when the Committee goes into those figures, it will agree that the State's claim for greater consideration is not baseless, that we have a genuine and real cause for complaint because only an additional £5,000,000 was split up between the States by the Commonwealth Government, and it could not be argued that the Commonwealth Government were not in a financial position to be more generous than they were. What, for instance, are they contributing to the important function of education? What are they contributing to the many other features of the work of this Government? Little or nothing. If we are going to continue at the same rate of progress as has marked the history of successive Labour Governments in this State in important fields of public service, we shall have to find money within our own resources, unless the Federal Government recognise their responsibilities and obligations to the people of Queensland. I can assure you, Mr. Farrell, that there is not and will not be any waste of public money so far as this State is concerned; every possible economy will be effected, having regard to the necessity for a high standard of efficiency in the administration in the various departments of government.

My time is going on but there are a few other matters with which I should like to deal, although they are really beyond the Financial Statement. I only make reference to them because I feel that the criticism offered by a few hon. members opposite to some extent concerned me as Secretary for Labour and Industry in this State for several years. I particularly refer to the speech made by the hon. member for Southport on the question of building-control. It would appear that that subject is the only matter on which the hon. member can speak, a matter which, as I said before, concerns a handful of investors and people who want to exploit the South Coast for personal gain—Brisbane people who are already adequately housed but who have a selfish desire to obtain seaside homes when so many of our people have no home at all. I have said that before and I say it again. I endeavoured to administer the Act fairly, justly, and consistently, and if I have erred it was because in some cases I permitted my heart to rule my head. The cases the hon. member referred to are probably the one where my heart ruled my head.

The hon. member came here with a list of cases, but the present Secretary for Labour and Industry answered him on each of them and showed that the hon. member for Southport was ill-informed and that his facts were not correct. For instance, men who were not bookmakers were classified as such by him; Matron Sheehan was classified by him as a hotel-keeper, and he said that the wife of a bookmaker had received a permit, whereas it was the mother of the bookmaker who had received the permit. All those inaccuracies show that the hon. member was very badly briefed. He says he will continue to fight for the repeal of the Building Control Regulations; the only interpretation that can be placed on that is that the hon. member favours the granting of permits to people who are already adequately housed in Brisbane and in other parts of the State so that they can build seaside homes for recreation, or for letting at exorbitant rentals. I can understand the hon. member's enthusiasm for his own district, but let him be fair! He complains about the inability of people to get permits, but he complains also when other people get permits.

But what I want to deal with today mainly are his references to an investigation that was carried out on the South Coast by Inspector Copley, of the Department of Labour and Industry. The hon. member said that the report that was made as the result of this investigation was the basis of the 1948 amending Bill, but that is not altogether true; it may have been partly responsible for that Bill. However, I made a personal inspection of the South Coast with an inspector, and saw for myself confirmation of what the report contained; I saw just how lightly the then local authority at Southport accepted its responsibility in this very important matter, and how easy it was for people such as Mr. Gault, a bookmaker, Dr. Ellis Murphy and Mr. Chris. Sheehy, of the Queensland Butter Board, to obtain permits. Mr. Sheehy had sought my permission to build a home on the South Coast, and I had pointed out to him that I thought he was unfair in his request because he was already adequately housed here. During the course of my inspection I inquired who was building a certain house, and I was told that it was Mr. Sheehy. He had left me and had gone to the local authority and had obtained a permit to build. Mr. Serisier and other council officials told my inspectors that they were not concerned whether these people intended to live in these homes permanently or to let them; all they were concerned about was seeing that homes were built so that they could receive increased income in the form of rates.

Mr. Hiley: But do you think the amending Bill has stopped that sort of thing? That is what is worrying me.

Mr. GAIR: That is a very pertinent question. I think the amending Bill has relieved the position considerably. Of course, some people will get round any law. For instance, we have laws against committing murder, but they do not stop some people from murdering others.

In 1948 or thereabouts all this illegal building went on. I could give the names of many people who obtained permits from the local authority with ease. That is instanced by the case of Mr. Sheehy, who came to me and unrolled his plans. I had known him for many years and said to him, "You are already housed. What more do you want? This timber is required for other people." He said, "All right, I will not press it," and went away. However, he went to the council and got a permit. No questions were asked. That is what I attempted to stop.

In the same way as it fell down on the job of building-control, the council fell down on the job of issuing permits for work costing up to £50. Before I left the Department of Labour and Industry, the attention of the Southport Town Council was drawn to many cases in which it had given permits for what were alleged to be building projects costing, say, £49 or something under £50, and in which anyone, even my little boy, could see from the dimensions shown on the attached plans and the amount of work involved that no-one could carry them out today for anything like £50.

If the council was not willing to accept its responsibility and co-operate with the Government on this very important question, this national problem of housing, it was not entitled to be trusted with any of that administration. Therefore, is it any wonder that the Premier should have refused to restore this authority to the council? He promised to give the matter consideration but Cabinet decided against it because the council had fallen down on its job. Let me deal with this smear for which the hon. member for Southport has been responsible in connection with Inspector Copley. He said that Inspector Copley did not know whether he was in Southport or South Africa at the time of his investigations and by implication he intended to convey the meaning that the inspector was under the influence of liquor while he was down there.

Mr. GAVEN: I rise to a point of order. The Minister is misconstruing my remarks. I would not know whether the inspector was under the influence of liquor or not. The point I tried to make was that having regard to his report he did not know whether he was in Southport or South Africa.

Mr. GAIR: I am very glad to have that assurance, but let me tell the hon. member that most hon. members, when they heard him make the remark, concluded that the inference was that Mr. Copley was under the influence of liquor when he was carrying out that inspection. I have here a letter from Mr. Fox, of the Coolangatta council congratulating me and congratulating Inspector Copley on the splendid job he did while he was in Southport and Coolangatta. The letter says—

> "Every assistance to Mr. Copley was given by the Mayor and our Building Inspector, Mr. A. L. Richardson, concerning building activities, and I have pleasure in stating that a better understanding, particularly in Mr. Copley's manner of approach, has now been established between the council and the Bureau of Industry than has previously existed.
>
> "I may state that there will be no antagonism between the council and your department in future, and full co-operation in the administration of the Building Control Act will be given at all times.
>
> "I should be pleased if you will kindly convey to the Minister my council's appreciation in this matter."

I have a copy of Mr. Copley's report here and it discloses that he made a very close examination of the position. The hon. member's attempt to deny what the inspector found as a result of his investigation is of no avail. His report discloses that the councils fell down on the job.

The hon. member said also that large quantities of timber were leaving the State while people in Queensland could not get permits to build. He made reference to Mr. Pearce, of the Currumbin Hotel, who was fined £100 during the war for a breach

of the Building Control Regulations and attempted to commit a breach of the Act a second time. If Mr. Pearce cleared away over the border, that is his business and there is no reason why he or anybody else should get a permit if he is not entitled to it.

The hon. member for Southport complained also that we had not given effect to the recommendations of the committee of investigation into tourist traffic. In the same breath he said that we had given a permit for a building on Hayman Island. Hayman Island was one of the first recommendations of the committee. You see how the hon. member contradicted himself when he said that you could go to Byron Bay and see boats loading logs for South Australia and New Zealand week after week. He said they were being supplied from this State at £40 a 100 feet, whereas they never get more than £5 a hundred feet in Queensland.

Mr. Gaven: I said "fence posts."

Mr. GAIR: I took the trouble of referring that statement to the Director of Forestry for comment and I now give hon. members his comments:—

> "For many years, Northern New South Wales has exported hardwood, both sawn, squared and round timber, mainly to New Zealand. New Zealand, in return, supplies softwood to New South Wales.
>
> "Queensland has never exported structural hardwood, other than occasional small parcels.
>
> "I have no knowledge of any Queensland hardwood being exported out of Northern New South Wales ports; in fact, very little, if any, Queensland building hardwoods would be used in New South Wales.
>
> "On the other hand, very large quantities of New South Wales building hardwoods are used in South-East Queensland, the quantity used each year being estimated to be of the order of 10,000,000 super. feet."

That disposes of the hon. member's criticism and shows that he is not informed on this question but comes into this Chamber and screams and howls about discrimination he alleges is going on. And here I might say that I did not appreciate the hon. member's reading a copy of a private letter from an old lady who made reference to the fact that she had masses said so that she might get a permit. There was no occasion for that. All he was required to do was to state the particulars of the case without introducing a private matter like that. I do not think it does the hon. member credit. And the hon. member who was mean enough to introduce such a matter in support of his case would no doubt have been mean enough also to say, had I granted that old lady a permit, that she had got it because she was a co-religionist of mine.

Time compels me to leave the hon. member not because I am finished with him but because I have something to say about the slanderous statement made by the hon. member for Murrumba about inspectors attached to the Building Control Office. What did the hon. member say about these gentlemen, many of whom have been recruited from outside, ex-servicemen who have answered applications called for by the Public Service Commissioner for this job. He said:—

> "What do we find happens in all cases where controls are instituted? We have following in their wake the proverbial scroungers and men—if I can call them such—who would not hesitate to take a bribe or stoop to corruption to help a man who is desirous of getting something against the law if it can be got for him for a consideration. In many instances the control officers, wherever they are, are made up of political hangers-on, men who have fallen by the wayside in their own businesses, who could not make a success of their own businesses and are taken into Government departments. The main reason why I am against controls is that they breed corruption, they breed undesirable practices, and I go so far as to say that I do not think building controls are any exception to the rule."

Is not that a "nice" reference for any hon. member to make about inspectors employed by Building Control, or any other department for that matter? Will the hon. member have the guts to get up and say that in any public gathering in the presence of these men?

Included in the hon. member's category of grafters is the Liberal member for Bowman in the Federal House, Mr. McColm. Would Liberal members classify Mr. McColm, whom I know and respect and who carried out a good job as an inspector for the Building Control Division, as a scrounger and grafter? The hon. member is true in one respect—in speaking of political hangers-on—but Mr. McColm was not a political hanger-on of the Government party but that made no difference; Mr. McColm discharged his duties conscientiously and well.

I have examined the cases raised by the hon. member for Murrumba, but as time will not permit of my giving a detailed reply I must say briefly that in no case was the hon. member entitled to make the criticism that he made. In each and every case there were sound reasons and justification for the action and attitude of the department. The hon. member scarcely did himself justice in the very extravagant, unfair, and cowardly way he referred to decent men employed by the Government in the administration and the policing of a very difficult phase of Government work.

I hope that henceforth the hon. members for Southport and Murrumba will appreciate the feelings of other people and hesitate to smear the characters of others. After all, character is the greatest possession of any man and instead of making general sweeping statements when they have not the courage to make a charge against any particular man, they should keep silence.

I conclude my remarks in reply to the speeches made on the Budget and I hope that the financial position of the State will not

depreciate any more than we expect and that when the time arrives for the submission of another Budget we shall be able to say that the Commonwealth Government have realised to a great extent their financial obligations to the State.

Item (Aide-de-Camp to His Excellency the Governor) agreed to.

LUNCHEON ADJOURNMENT.

The CHAIRMAN: In view of the fact that the State is entertaining visiting Parliamentarians the Chair will be resumed at 3.15 p.m.

SUPPLY.

ESTIMATES—FIRST ALLOTTED DAY.

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

ESTIMATES-IN-CHIEF, 1950-51.

EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE—HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR (BALANCE OF VOTE).

Hon. E. M. HANLON (Ithaca—Premier) (3.15 p.m.): I move—

"That £10,880 be granted for 'His Excellency the Governor (balance of vote)'."

This is an increase of £3,209 over the previous year. Provision is made this year for the payment of basic-wage and award increases to the official staff totalling £759, and for the purchase of a new motor-car and a station wagon, the total value of those two vehicles being £2,536.

Items (His Excellency the Governor—Balance of Vote) agreed to.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL.

Hon. E. M. HANLON (Ithaca—Premier) (3.16 p.m.): I move—

"That £180 be granted for 'Executive Council.'"

This is an increase of £70. Provision has been made for the increased cost of printing and binding Executive Council minutes. £80 was provided last year, but the expenditure was £135.

Vote agreed to.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Hon. E. M. HANLON (Ithaca—Premier) (3.17 p.m.): I move—

"That £55,519 be granted for 'Legislative Assembly'."

This is an increase of £8,121. Salaries have been increased by £1,606 and Contingencies by £6,516. Provision is made for basic-wage and award increases. The increase in the Contingencies vote for this year is due mainly to the increase in the number of members of Parliament from 62 to 75. Other increases are as follows—

	£
Postages and incidentals	100
Allowances to Members for postages and telegrams	650
Travelling allowances to Members of the Legislative Assembly	738
Rail passes to Members of Parliament and ex-members and their relatives	1,750
"Hansard" and other printing	2,846

In addition, provision has been made for the purchase of a new car for Mr. Speaker, at a cost of £846, and the cost of books and periodicals and of binding has increased by £200. The contribution to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association has increased by £74. Provision for £150 is also made for the payment of allowances to the Acting Speaker and the Acting Chairman of Committees during the absence of the late Hon. S. J. Brassington.

Mr. HILEY (Coorparoo) (3.19 p.m.): I invite your attention, Mr. Farrell, to the customary ruling that it has been the practice for your predecessors in office to give concerning the scope of discussion that will be permitted on the several votes from the Consolidated Revenue Fund.

The CHAIRMAN: That will be done after the Chief Secretary's vote.

Mr. HILEY: As the vote before us is that for the Legislative Assembly, I should like to make a submission or two for you to consider when you are giving your ruling. The matter before us is a vote from the Consolidated Revenue Fund, and it includes all the principal administrative officers of the department. It has been found for some time past—and I know this has been the subject of some discussion by the Standing Orders Committee—that the effect of the ruling has been that at least half the total expenditure by this State, through its various public funds, misses all opportunity of public examination because of the ruling governing discussion on this matter.

It is because of the narrow rigidity of the ruling that we are unable to discuss most of the matters. If you on this occasion were to take the view that the examination of the Chief Office Vote entitles this Chamber to consider every matter that comes within the administrative jurisdiction of the officers of the department it would enable us on this occasion to do something that it has not been possible for some years past. I believe the practice adopted is one that has been looked upon by the Premier with some concern because to narrow the ambit of discussion does not enable us to serve the institution of Parliament, the Legislative Assembly, in the best manner. I hope you will favour the Committee, Mr. Farrell, with a very full and amplified ruling on what is our province in the discussion of matters concerning the Legislative Assembly and that the Premier will be kind enough to give the Committee an indication of his personal viewpoint on this matter.

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) (3.22 p.m.): The remarks I propose to make will be particularly pertinent to this vote because I intend to criticise the way in which the Legislative Assembly is conducted and particularly the way in which the meeting of the Legislative Assembly sessions are called. This year Parliament assembled on 1 August, that is, a week before the Brisbane Exhibition—and experience has taught me that Parliament is called together in the week before

the Brisbane Exhibition, simply in order that visitors, or the earlier visitors to the Brisbane Exhibition, may view Parliament House as another sideshow to the Brisbane Show. Extra staff are put on and consequently in the week during Exhibition those country visitors who come here and are fortunate enough to get an invitation to the opening of Parliament go to the opening of Parliament in much the same way and in much the same spirit as they would go to see Madam Zara or the bearded lady at the Show.

Mr. Sparkes: Do you object to that?

Mr. AIKENS: I do not wish to prevent country people from coming to the opening of Parliament because it is the country people who pay for the upkeep of Parliament.

We sit here and exhaust ourselves by sitting for 4½ hours for the first week. Then we adjourn for 11 days and reassemble later and we again exhaust ourselves by sitting about 9 or 10 hours a week. I have had some figures taken out in connection with the sitting of Parliament this year and I can tell you that in the first 12 weeks from the day that Parliament assembled this year we sat for the grand total of 115 hours or the magnificent average of about 9½ hours a week.

This is my seventh year in this Parliament and I have come to the very definite conclusion that Parliamentary sessions are arranged to suit the members of Parliament who live right here in Brisbane and are spread over as long a period as possible so that members who live in Brisbane can give a couple of hours each week to their Parliamentary duties and the rest of the time each week to their private duties, private business, and personal affairs. The whole of the business of Parliament and the calling of the session is stacked against the country member of Parliament who lives a long way from Brisbane, the hon. member for Burdekin and I, the hon. member for Cook, the hon. member for Mulgrave and other men who come from the Far North, who have to come from 800 to 1,000 miles to attend Parliament and have to come here from the beginning of Parliament and cool their heels from 14 to 18 weeks while every consideration is given to those members who live in Brisbane.

Mr. Ewan: You can include me in that.

Mr. AIKENS: I will include the hon. member for Roma and any other hon. member who lives a long way from Brisbane and has to come here in order to attend the session. They have to remain here while Parliament is in session, with the exception of a week-end or so that they are able to duck home while Parliament is going on.

I can say from experience that there is no need to call Parliament together until somewhere in the middle of September. If Parliament is called together in the middle of September and we started off to sit as we are sitting now, that is, until 10 o'clock at night on Tuesdays and Thursdays, even with the shirt-tail agreement between the Government and the Opposition to adjourn at 1 o'clock on Wednesday, we could, by sitting again on Friday, do on our heads all the business this Parliament is called on to do from that time until November. Again the whole business of Parliament is stacked against the northern members, and those who represent country electorates, and who have the political decency and honesty to live in their electorates. My time would be much better spent there in the first 12 weeks of Parliament instead of listening to hon. members ruminating over the conquest of Abyssinia in 1936 or the possibility of the melting of the ice-capped polar regions 12 million years hence. My time would be much better employed among the useful people of the State I represent in the North. I appeal to the Premier, although I know my appeal will fall on deaf ears, to conduct this Parliament as expeditiously as possible and do away with these long-drawn-out sessions of Parliament lasting 14 to 18 weeks and averaging 9½ hours a week for the first 12 weeks. Those figures are correct, as I took the opportunity of checking them with the Clerk of Parliament yesterday.

We find then that in order to get finished before Christmas there is a blackguard rush to get the legislation through. New members will see, as I have seen in the last two Parliaments, that we churn bills through like mincemeat through a sausage machine at the rate of five or six a day and after discussing two or three departmental Estimates involving £1,000,000 or £1,500,000 for 16 days and then on the final day of the time allotted for the discussion of Estimates we see the Chairman of Committees guillotine the rest of the Estimates, about seven departments, involving about £26,000,000, in about 15 minutes. Then some tiddly-winking measures will be carried forward and not disposed of until a short session that is held in March. Everyone seems to be imbued with a desire to get home to the kiddies in a hurry in order to fill their Christmas stockings. The Government, consequently, deliberately let two or three tiddly-winking measures stand over in order to justify their calling Parliament together the following March for about three weeks, when we shall again exhaust ourselves by sitting for about 9 or 10 hours a week! That is all very well for people who live in Brisbane, for it will enable them to get to their homes each evening, go to the races on Saturday and spend Sunday and Monday recovering from them and work in the congenial atmosphere of their homes and then drop in here for the jocular companionship of hon. members on both sides of the Chamber a couple of days a week. They are thus enabled to do their private business in their spare time and go home and mow their lawns in the afternoon, and be in the bosoms of their families every evening. But what about those members who live in the North, 800 or 900 miles from Brisbane? In order to keep faith with the people who send us to Parliament we have to live out of our electorates for 14 or 18 weeks while the Government drag these sessions on every year.

I ask the Premier to go into the matter with competent officers and I guarantee that

if he does it will be found that this Parliament can carry on its work efficiently and expeditiously by sitting, as we do now, on Tuesday and Thursday nights from the beginning and on Wednesday mornings and Fridays as at present. We could then start at the beginning of September and finish by the end of November. On behalf of those northern and country members who live in their electorates and are forced to live within a portmanteau for 14 and 18 weeks, I appeal to the Premier to give the idea a fair deal.

Hon. E. M. HANLON (Ithaca—Premier) (3.31 p.m.): I am not surprised at the show the hon. member has put on. He complained about having to come to Brisbane to work. Countless of thousands of workmen have to go wherever their work is and they are not paid as much as the hon. member to do it, either. Workmen from Brisbane and from Townsville have to go to whatever part of Queensland their work is in, and if they do not like going there and—as the hon. member said—leaving the bosoms of their families they lose their jobs.

Mr. Aikens: They work a 40-hour week.

Mr. HANLON: More than a 40-hour week is worked in Parliament. I never had a 40-hour week as a private member, and I do not think I can say that I worked less than an 80-hour week as a Minister during the last 18 years. I found that a 40-hour week would not cover the time I spent in this Chamber on public business and the time I spent in the library in research.

Honourable Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. HANLON: There is an immense amount of work to be done by a member if he has the courage and application to do it. I remind the hon. member who complained about 9½ hours that he put in in this Chamber that he can do something useful outside the Chamber. Government is not all a matter of making a noise. If the hon. member put another 29½ hours into study when he did put 9½ hours in this Chamber taking part in making a noise, perhaps he would contribute something worthwhile to the affairs of this State.

Mr. Aikens: I cannot do it at home, the same as you.

Mr. HANLON: Unfortunately, I do not get enough time at home to do it. I am not one of those fortunate fellows who can go away and leave the seat of Government and let the requirements of their people go hang. The hon. member seems to think he can come here for a couple of months and loaf round Townsville for 10 months——

Mr. AIKENS: I rise to a point of order.

Mr. HANLON: The hon. member——

Mr. AIKENS: Sit down and obey the chair.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member will sit down.

Mr. AIKENS: I rise to a point of order.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member must not think he is going to take charge of this Chamber. I am in charge and he must do as he is told. What is the point of order?

Mr. AIKENS: My point of order is that at no time did I say I wanted to go back to Townsville and loaf. I said I could do my work there among the useful people better than I could here.

Mr. HANLON: I still say that if a member wants to be engaged in doing useful work he has to put in an immense amount of time at the seat of government. That is obvious to anyone who understands government. The hon. member has made this a kind of show. He is an expert at self-advertisement. The hon. member has not contributed much to the useful debates since he has been here. He has not made the atmosphere congenial; he has made it often very uncongenial to decent people who want to do their work. I suggest that there is plenty of useful work to do in the interests of the people in the library of the House if he wishes to do it.

Mr. H. B. TAYLOR (Hamilton) (3.34 p.m.): I should like to speak on the library of this House. Before doing so, I want to say how appreciative I am of the help given to me in the past year and previous years by our Parliamentary Librarian. I should like to pay a tribute to that efficient officer who has done an immense amount for the library movement of Queensland and who is doing an excellent job in his capacity as Parliamentary Librarian.

I congratulate the other members of the library staff who recently were admitted as professional members of the Library Association of Australia. They have been brought in line with all other professional librarians of other States.

Last year I suggested the reconstruction of the library but the suggestion did not meet with approval. I suggested that the library should be arranged so that members could browse through it, seeing for themselves the books available. The Premier took me to task, suggesting that I wanted members to be able to go and pick books from the shelves and take them away without being registered. That was far from my intention.

Mr. Hanlon: The point I made was that members should not be taking books off the shelves and leaving them lying round the tables.

Mr. H. B. TAYLOR: If that was the Premier's intention the hon. gentleman is out of touch with library practice, even Parliamentary library practice. Parliamentary librarians throughout Australia have told me they are pleased that members should go to the shelves themselves, inspect the books, choose the books they like, and have the librarian or his assistant register those they wish to take out.

Mr. Hanlon: And put the other books back in their places.

Mr. H. B. TAYLOR: They put them back on the shelves. They do not leave them out on the table. However, the difficulty of our library is similar to that experienced in other libraries similar in construction to this, which was constructed probably 70 years ago, when the idea of the presentation of books was vastly different from what it is today. The books are now arranged in a classified system which makes it easy for a member to go and find what he really wants, but I was disturbed when I found that either the member or an assistant had to scale a long ladder to do so. That is very much out-of-date. The other day the hon. member for Mundingburra was claiming some George Cross. To put it in the hon. member's characteristic way, he had just come to the rescue of a young lady in the library who had been "donged on the scone" with a ladder. That is not what we want to see. With these long ladders it is quite easy to have an accident. I have looked round the Parliamentary libraries in New South Wales and in Victoria and the largest library in Australia, the Public Library of New South Wales. These have walls of a similar height to the walls in our library but in the New South Wales Parliamentary and Public Libraries the difficulties have been overcome by building a platform round the wall with steps leading from the floor to the platform so that hon. members can more or less walk round this mezzanine floor and make a selection of books. This avoids the necessity of having to scale a long ladder with all the dangers that might be attached to that course.

Although I am pleased to find from the cover of "Hansard" that I am a member of the Library Committee of the House I should welcome a meeting of the Library Committee so that I might be able to put forward this suggestion. However, that does not seem to be possible so I take the opportunity on this Estimate of putting forward the suggestion so that the Library Committee, when it does meet, should consider the construction of a platform similar to that built in the two libraries in New South Wales that I have mentioned. The Public Library there is a building as long as this building from Alice Street to the University but twice as wide. The books are ranged up to the ceiling but are easy of access because of the mezzanine floor or platform. I make that suggestion and I hope that some consideration will be given to it.

Mr. LUCKINS (Norman) (3.41 p.m.): I take the opportunity of paying my tribute to the members of the "Hansard" staff. It is not generally known that the publication of the Parliamentary Debates plays a very important part in our public life. Tracing the meaning of the word "Hansard," I understand that it came from a family in England who in the early days of last century took verbatim reports of parliamentary debates and published them in newspaper form. I think Queensland can take the credit of introducing the system of "Hansard" reporting in Australia; I believe that in Tasmania there is no such thing as "Hansard." We cannot therefore say that Tasmania is up to date in this respect. I do particularly want to express my sentiments as to the valuable work done by the "Hansard" reporters. During the years I have been associated with this Assembly I know that difficult conditions have prevailed at times and that it has been hard for the staff to get the trend of the argument or debate, particularly in troublous periods. I pay my tribute to the reporters and with them I associate the officials of this Assembly. This is a time when it is appropriate to express ourselves and I personally think there is a lot to be said for our system of reporting. I think it was the late Mr. Donald Gunn, a former hon. member for Carnarvon, who said that it was a pity all "Hansard" reports were not burnt so that reports of nasty debates could not be circulated. If we conduct ourselves in the manner the people who sent us here expect of us we can expect contributions to the debates that are in the interests of the State. I repeat that the members of the "Hansard" staff have carried out their work very satisfactorily, particularly in view of the difficulties that crop up from time to time. I think that we should pay our thanks to those gentlemen for their services and I feel sure that I speak for all members of this Committee.

Mr. KEYATTA (Townsville) (3.43 p.m.): I wish to touch on the suggestion made by the hon. member for Clayfield to the effect that a certain structural alteration be made to the library to facilitate the selection of books. As a member of the Library Committee I want to say that this matter has been discussed for some years past. It is appreciated that there is great difficulty in getting building material and there is a further difficulty because of the structure of Parliament House. Nothing much can be done until another wing is built; the present arrangements must continue in the meantime, probably for one or two years. The matter will be kept in mind.

I pay my tribute to the library staff because when a request is made for books members of that staff are only too pleased to select the necessary volumes, probably up to a dozen as the case may be, for the perusal of hon. members.

I desire to pay my respects and my compliments to the Parliamentary reporting staff. The "Hansard" staff certainly does an excellent job, and plays a very big part in reframing many of the speeches made in this Chamber. As the result of their efforts, logic and expression are put into our speeches. Members of the "Hansard" staff play a very important part in this Parliament. During my 11½ years here I have found their record to be excellent; in fact, I do not think I have had to alter my proofs on more than two occasions, and even those were only minor corrections. They are trained men, and above all are loyal to Parliament.

A matter that I desire particularly to raise deals with Parliamentary standing law, and it is one of vital importance. Every member of this Chamber is protected. He can rise and make any reference he cares to about

any other member or about any other citizen within this great State of Queensland. Whatever category we place it in, whether insult, abuse, or anything else, I think it is wrong that members should be allowed to cast aspersions on any other member of this Parliament or any other citizen of Queensland or Australia. No man should have the right to rise in this Chamber and to cast aspersions and make damaging insinuations. When such things are published in the Press a great deal of harm can be done to a person who is quite innocent. I think the time has come when serious consideration should be given to making members of Parliament liable for what they say, in the same way as any other citizen is liable. Hon. members come into this Chamber with good motives, and even before they can qualify for entry they must have a clear character. Why should a man be allowed to come here and attack somebody else without fear of reprisals? As I have said, I think the time has arrived when the Premier and his officers should give careful consideration to this matter.

I should like now to compliment the Premier and his staff on their excellent administration. Notwithstanding the difficulties they have had to surmount, they have done an excellent job. Queensland now has a population of over 1,000,000 people, and the Premier's department has played a big part in its economy and development, and particularly in the development of North Queensland.

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) (3.49 p.m.): I will not say anything about the remarks of the hon. member for Townsville about the rights of members in this Chamber, but I suggest to him that he read the law on libel and defamation before he again makes such a nonsensical suggestion as that a member should be made liable at law for any remarks he makes in this Chamber.

I desire to reply to the typical remarks made by the Premier in reply to my first remark on this vote, in which he disclosed himself as a Little Brisbaneite. In his reply to me he said, "You cannot learn or do anything unless you live in Brisbane."

He says that you must come to Brisbane, you must visit the Parliamentry Library, and from that fount gain all your wisdom. I just rushed into the Parliamentary Library, while, I think, the hon. member for Clayfield was speaking, and had a look at the list of books there that I have read. I am very catholic in my tastes. I found that my list contains everything from fiction to serious thought. I think the books I have taken from the library in number and quality will compare more than favourably with books that members of the Labour Party have drawn from the library, and it must be remembered that I am in Brisbane for only four months of the year.

I also want to point out to the Premier something he apparently has forgotten, or never did know, and that is that in the North we have libraries too. So you see we are not altogether semi-civilised blackfellows in the North. In Townsville—as I think the hon. member for Clayfield will concur—we have a particularly fine library and in some respects, so far as general reading and serious reading are concerned, it would be the equivalent of that section of our Parliamentary Library. Certainly we have not all the records, all the official documents, that there are here but in serious reading, it will compare with the Parliamentary Library. I should say that I am one of the most catholic and most voracious readers in this Chamber.

Mr. Dunstan: Omnivorous.

Mr. AIKENS: Omnivorous, that is the word, the perfect word, and I thank the hon. member for Nash. What else does an hon. member's work consist of? He must attend to his correspondence and he must try to fit himself and better himself for the job he has been elected to do.

The Premier must admit that an hon. member who can interview his constituents personally is at an advantage compared with the member who cannot interview them. Not only that, but the member who is dependent entirely on the correspondence he receives is not in touch with his constituents to the same degree as he would be if he were meeting them in the electorate. We all know that quite a number of our constituents come to us and place their problems before us orally, whereas they would not sit down and write a letter about them. Because of the volume of my correspondence from my constituents and the constituents of neighbouring electorates —in Townsville I am called the three T's, Tom the Trinity—my correspondence would compare more than favourably with any other hon. member in this Chamber, and I think I do as much work outside this Chamber as any other hon. member.

I just want to repeat that there is the typical Brisbaneite—the Premier—who says in effect to me, "You must live in Brisbane, you must visit only the Parliamentary Library, otherwise you will live and die a clod and a dolt.

Mr. HILEY (Coorparoo) (3.53 p.m.): Without endeavouring to deal with the matters verging on the paranoic released by the hon. member who has just sat down, let us carefully study his proposal. If I understand him correctly, it is that we should compress the sittings of Parliament into the fewest possible weeks, each with a maximum of sitting hours.

Mr. Aikens: That is so. There is no ambiguity about what I say.

Mr. HILEY: And there will be no ambiguity in what I say. The hon. member's proposal does not appeal, for this reason: it might work with the Government in office, assuming that the Minister who has the responsibility for bringing forward a series of Bills can crowd into the small number of sitting hours the hon. member proposes his own manifold responsibilities and has sufficient leisure to do what is required to present the legislation to the House seriously and adequately. Parliament does not consist only of Ministers who from the point of view of

their functions could stand up to the load suggested by the hon. member for Mundingburra.

Mr. Hanlon: We could not do any administration at all.

Mr. HILEY: You could not fit it in. Parliament, to succeed, must be scrupulous in making it possible for the Opposition to function as well. I do not think Ministers of the Crown could stand up to the burden of the task that the hon. member for Mundingburra would place on their shoulders. The Opposition do not receive in advance copies of a Bill that is coming forward, and very often it has to be read and studied during the week-end. I have devoted countless hours to research work in this direction, and this contribution to the work of Parliament is the most grievous burden I have ever undertaken.

Mr. Aikens: You have agreed to shoot Bills through this Chamber in one day.

Mr. HILEY: On some, and on appropriate occasions, but to suggest that is a habit, let me say again, is a grievous untruth. The average number of Bills passed in one day, apart from formal measures, would be about one-third of a Bill a session. I get myself physically and mentally out of breath trying to keep myself abreast of the Bills that come forward. If I was blest with the ability of getting onto my feet and without any research in the background discussing a Bill immediately it was brought down I should not suffer from a tired brain.

There is just one grain of truth that emerges from what has been said. The Address in Reply debate, is the least burden that is placed on us, because we have not then advanced our legislative programme. I think during that debate we might with advantage sit some time on Friday because it is when we get the full blast of the legislative programme that the going gets toughest. If we sat on Fridays we might spread the impact of the legislative programme with advantage. We might then discover it possible to put a little bit of real meaning into Private Members' Motions, which has disappeared under the present practice. I find some virtue in the proposal only to that extent, but I combat entirely the suggestion that we should compress the hours of sitting into the fewest possible. There is a widespread feeling among many of the public that members of Parliament do not sit long enough in the average year. The reaction is that the practice of having too long intervals between sittings of Parliament is not a good one. We should be doing this institution a disservice if we crowded out some of the weeks that we are now sitting and made greater use of a smaller number of weeks.

Mr. DUNSTAN (Nash) (3.59 p.m.): I want to refer to a section of the staff of this Parliament who do a great deal of work and do not get much advertisement for it. I refer to the ''Hansard'' staff, a job which is to take down meticulously and accurately, practically verbatim. the speeches that are made in this Parliament from the beginning of the session to the end of it. The work that they do should gain and obtain more appreciation than it does at present. Those gentlemen sit up aloft and take the words of wisdom that fall from members.

There is another section, the typing section attached to the ''Hansard'' staff, and there are those on the lower floor who are working for the benefit of members in connection with their correspondence to their constituents.

Referring to the ''Hansard'' staff leads me to remark that when I was a young man teaching myself shorthand and when I reached the standard of a reporter, I read in the preface of one of his books Sir Isaac Pitman's advice to a young reporter wherein he said that the problem of a good reporter was to make good speeches from bad speakers. Sometimes there has been occasion in this Chamber when the ''Hansard'' staff has had a good deal of trouble in connecting up sentences uttered by members.

That leads me also to the matter of the Standing Orders under which the Chairman of Committees or the Speaker, exercising the Standing Orders, can make members sit down or resume their seats. I have a complaint to make and I know it is not altogether viewed with approval by members of the Standing Orders Committee, but I think it is altogether wrong that where a member makes an offensive statement or interjection and he is called upon to withdraw and apologise he can obtain and secure all that he desires by having it fully reported in ''Hansard.'' I do not think that is right. I think if a member is called upon to withdraw offensive remarks and apologise they should be expunged wholly from ''Hansard''——

Mr. Hiley: There is a lot in that.

Mr. DUNSTAN: ——so that there would be no privilege to report it elsewhere.

I have spoken on the library many times during the period I have been here. I think that the great need is for the upper library to be located on the same floor as the bottom library because I notice that members of Parliament who patronise the library and make use of the lower library have to climb up the stairs to see what books and literature and documents there are assembled there. I remember in the old days, before we had the present facilities that are provided by the Librarian and his staff, I often had to climb up to the top library. I know there is a tendency on the part of politicians to slip but I have never had an accident, although I have climbed up there frequently, to the higher levels of literature.

I would also remark that in the olden days there were unauthorised perusers of our library books—mostly bookworms and cockroaches. They left the uniform bindings of our library books in an unpleasant state, but nowadays, through the aid of science, the use of lacquer, there are virtually no ravages by bookworms, moths or cockroaches or any other pests that infest libraries.

I also want to pay tribute to the excellent work done by the Parliamentary librarian, Mr. Ryan, and his staff of cataloguers. Given time in their very arduous job they will have the arrangement of the shelving of the books in the library adequate to meet all demands and all desires.

There is one other matter that may seem small but I should like to mention it: the library staff as well as patrons of the library should have some drinking facilities in the library itself.

Mr. Walsh: What do you mean—iced water?

Mr. DUNSTAN: Nothing else. To my amazement some little time ago I noticed that the refrigerator provided for out of the vote for the Library contingencies was removed.

Mr. Walsh: Where did it go?

Mr. DUNSTAN: It went to the billiard room, where nobody drinks water, and now it has gone somewhere else. (Laughter.)

Mr. Walsh: It is not in the billiard room. Where is it now?

Mr. DUNSTAN: We, the members of the Parliamentary Library Committee, think it should be restored to the library or another one provided in its stead.

Honourable Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. DUNSTAN: I should like to see as many hon. members as possible patronise the library. It is an excellent library with excellent works of reference and the Librarian is a great guide to hon. members who want to find a particular book, a reference or quotation.

It would be a good thing if there was within the Standing Orders of this Parliament a provision that every member in this House should read so many books a week. I remember that some years ago on the upper shelves I found a book that was not catalogued. It had been there for years and was covered in dust. It was pretty dilapidated, but it was a pretty good book. It was entitled "The Laws of King Hammurabi," which predated even the laws of Moses. If anyone likes to read it he will find that many of the laws of that time had a close affinity with and an analogy to the laws we are passing here today.

I hope the day will soon come when provision will be made for an alteration or extension of the architecture of this House so that there will be a larger lower library and it will be big enough to accommodate all the books that are in the upper library at the present time.

Some of the books are at present forgotten, unseen and unread, and I trust that it will not be long before those charged with the financial provisions made for this Assembly will provide for an extension in that respect.

Mr. SPARKES (Aubigny) (4.11 p.m.): The hon. member for Townsville said something to the effect that an hon. member who rose in his place in this Committee and made a statement about somebody outside the Chamber should have to stand up to it, but whilst I do not condone the action of an hon. member who says everything in the world about somebody, I am pleased to know that there is certain protection for members of Parliament, for to take away the privilege of hon. members would be a retrograde step.

The hon. member who has just resumed his seat mentioned the question of dealing with an hon. member who has been named by the Chairman of Committees or Mr. Speaker. I think the present procedure is sound. People in the heat of the moment often make statements or say something upon provocation and particularly is this so where these lines of seats are so close.

Mr. Hanlon: And carry on conversation.

Mr. SPARKES: That is so. Some things are said in a very nasty manner and unfortunately some of us are quick-tempered—we cannot control our natures—and we are dealt with whereas in point of fact the person who made the interjection or gave the provocatian should have been dealt with. I should hate to see our privileges taken away and I think an hon. member might be given the opportunity of withdrawing a remark when he has cooled down. By dealing with an hon. member on the spur of the moment and putting him out of the House I think we should be taking away something Parliament has enjoyed for many years and doing what is not in the best interests of Parliament. The hon. member dealt with might not be altogether to blame. When he casts a reflection upon the Chairman of Committees or Mr. Speaker an hon. member may have become hot under the collar because he was provoked; it is the innocent one who sometimes gets the stick.

I could say very much more on this subject but I have no intention or doing so. I am merely saying that I think the present system is satisfactory, because the Australian people as a whole are loth to change any Constitution. That is well known on both sides of the Chamber; no matter what one's politics may be, the people of this continent are loth to change their ideas on the Constitution and I hope that this Parliament will do likewise.

Mr. WORDSWORTH (Cook) (4.14 p.m.): I crave the attention of the Committee to speak about the conditions under which the staff of Parliament House work, particularly in one respect. It is agreed in the minds of us all that the Government should be a model employer; the Government insist that all employers throughout the State shall maintain certain conditions for the benefit of their employees. I do not know whether this matter has been mentioned before and there may be some architectural difficulty in the way, but it seems particularly hard that members of the staff have to work on three floors. I have in mind those who are over 40, and some who are over 50.

I refer to those who have to go to the top floor. The climb up and down the stairs is a terrific strain. As far as I can see, the only

lift in this building is the one that takes the food up to the refreshment room. I think that is something that might well be taken into consideration, particularly in the interests of the older members of the staff. We all know that stair-climbing is very severe on the heart.

Vote (Legislative Assembly) agreed to.

PREMIER AND CHIEF SECRETARY.
CHIEF OFFICE.

Hon. E. M. HANLON (Ithaca—Premier) (4.17 p.m.): I move—

"That £35,860 be granted for 'Chief Office.'"

This is an increase of £7,633 over the previous year, the increase in respect of salaries being £1,952, and that in respect of contingencies, £5,681. Provision has been made for the payment of basic-wage and award increases.

In contingencies, there has been an increase of £50 as the result of the increased rates for dispatching cables. There has been a decrease of £275 in fares, freights, stationery, etc. In incidental and miscellaneous expenses, there has been an increase of £5,906, as follows:—

	£
Purchase of new motor-car	2,030
Provision of special train to enable visiting delegates to Sugar Technologists' Conference to visit sugar-cane areas and reception to delegates	1,300
Printing, entertainment, &c., of delegates to 28th Conference of Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science ..	500
Celebration of the Jubilee of the Commonwealth	1,000
Grant to Australia Day Celebration Committee to enable grants to be made to country areas. Total grant now £500. Increase of	200
Increased cost of temporary assistance	350
Car Hire—Distinguished Visitors	100
Entertainment of Distinguished Visitors	150

Many services rendered year after year by the Chief Secretary's Department are increasing in cost.

The CHAIRMAN: I desire to inform hon. members that I propose to follow the practice of allowing full discussion on the Chief Office Vote of each department so far as Consolidated Revenue is concerned, and then to confine the discussion to each particular vote.

For the information of hon. members, I point out that the administrative acts of a department are open to debate, but the necessity for legislation and matters involving legislation cannot be discussed in Committee of Supply.

Mr. HILEY (Coorparoo) (4.19 p.m.): I should like an elaboration of your ruling, Mr. Farrell. You said that the administrative acts of a department are open for discussion, but I draw your attention to the fact that the vote for the Department of the Premier and Chief Secretary includes, for example, the vote for the Co-ordinator-General of Public Works. On page 95 of the Estimates is set out a series of works totalling about 10 in all, and setting out the individual who is responsible and who will come directly under the administration of the office of the Co-ordinator-General. The amplification of your ruling that I desire is whether, in discussing the administrative acts of the officers of the Co-ordinator-General of Public Works, there can be any examination of the particular jobs on which those people will be engaged.

The CHAIRMAN: Consolidated Revenue Estimates only can be discussed, not Trust or Loan Fund Estimates.

Vote (Premier and Chief Secretary—Chief Office) agreed to.

AGENT-GENERAL FOR THE STATE.

Hon. E. M. HANLON (Ithaca—Premier) (4.20 p.m.): I move—

"That £25,618 be granted for 'Agent-General for the State.'"

The Vote shows an increase of £4,611 over the appropriation for 1949-50. Salaries show an increase of £2,751 and Contingencies an increase of £1,860. Provision has been made for award and basic-wage increases. The staff has been increased by three clerks and one clerk-typist in order that the work of the office may be dealt with efficiently. Tenders are called overseas and an efficient staff is required to deal with them.

There is a special allowance of £900 for the Acting Agent-General, Mr. McAuley, who is acting during the absence of the Agent-General, Mr. Pike, on account of illness. I know that hon. members on both sides of the chamber were very sorry to hear that Mr. Pike had to give up his duties some months ago on account of illness, but it is hoped that he will return to duty at an early date. As a matter of fact, I had a communication the other day to say that he may be able to resume duty in January next. He has been a particularly hard worker for many years, and I hope he will be able to resume his position in January. He is a highly efficient officer.

Provision is also made for transfer expenses of Mr. and Mrs. Lee and family, £605, and the return to Australia of Mr. B. J. McLoughlin of the Public Curator's Office, £180. As Mr. Lee's services were urgently required in England, it was necessary to fly him there.

Mr. KERR (Sherwood) (4.21 p.m.): I notice that the salary of the Agent-General still remains at £2,000, presumably expressed in Australian currency, which means that his net salary would probably be £1,600 in London. The Agent-General is charged with a very important responsibility and his duties have been particularly strenuous in recent years. That is why I am surprised that no financial recognition has been made of these extra services. He is the chief oversea representative for the State of Queensland, dealing with thousands of migrants and attending to much detailed work. I suggest that he should be paid a salary commensurate with the high office that he holds, and I trust that the Government will consider the matter.

Mr. MULLER (Fassifern) (4.23 p.m.): I endorse the remarks of the hon. member for Sherwood. I am concerned about the small amount of money provided for this department, not that I want to suggest the spending of large sums unnecessarily. I appreciate the good work that the Agent-General, Mr. Pike, has done in London for us, and I was wondering whether we fully appreciated the importance of his job. We have to remember that Great Britain is our chief market for primary products, and we must not delude ourselves into believing that we may not lose these markets. Therefore, we should have an efficient man like Mr. Pike there to look after our interests lest someone else should "beat us to it."

What I have in mind is this: I hear arguments from time to time, and I have been asked: why do you send all your stuff to Great Britain? As far as I can see, it is the only potential market we have for our primary products, particularly foodstuffs. It is said again and again that countries like America are prepared to outbid Britain for foodstuffs, but past experience has taught us that that will not last for any considerable time. This applies particularly to dairy produce. We are asked again and again "Why tie yourselves up to Great Britain when other countries are prepared to buy more of your produce than Great Britain is prepared to buy?" That being so, this sub-department should be developed in order to keep Great Britain fully apprised of the importance of the goods we send. We have had the experience in the last few years, when supplies were short, of Great Britain being supplied with foodstuffs from other countries. The people of Great Britain are business people. The Premier made a remark the other day that business is business. He was reflecting on a statement made by me a few weeks ago when I said business is business. I say without any Jewish spirit that business is business, just as business is business with any other hon. member.

Mr. Hanlon: I was simply reminding you of your statement.

Mr. MULLER: Business is business with Great Britain. When Britain can be supplied from a foreign country at a lower price you cannot blame her for buying.

Mr. Hanlon: They give us a preference.

Mr. MULLER: Whilst we do enjoy a certain amount of preference there is need to place before Great Britain the quality of the article we sell. That is not exploited as fully as it might be. An illustration of this was brought to my knowledge only a fortnight ago. An exporter of dairy produce, in fact one of our biggest exporting organisations, reminded me that second-quality Australian butter was sold in London not as second-grade but as choice or first-class Australian butter. These details require to be watched very closely. The buyer or consumer is concerned with the quality and is disappointed if the article is not true to label. Therefore, that practice is likely to do Australia, particularly Queensland, a lot of harm. Would it not be possible for the Agent-General's Department to make close investigations into such matters?

We have a wonderful market in Great Britain for our dairy produce, and the people of Great Britain have every reason to be grateful to us for supplying them with dairy produce and foodstuffs, but at the same time we should be equally grateful that we have Great Britain to export that produce to. Few people realise that if the market in Great Britain was taken away from us we in Australia would be in an awkward position. You may possibly sell our foodstuffs in any part of the world but you cannot sell them to people whose living standards are lower than ours, because we cannot afford to sell them at less than it costs to produce them.

To my mind this department is the life-blood of Queensland and it supplies a close contact with Great Britain that should be maintained. I believe there is room for further development. I believe that the facilities of this department should be increased and this could be done with mutual benefit to Great Britain and the people of this State.

Vote (Agent-General for the State) agreed to.

CO-ORDINATOR-GENERAL OF PUBLIC WORKS.

Hon. E. M. HANLON (Ithaca—Premier) (4.31 p.m.):

I move—

"That £82,102 be granted for 'Co-Ordinator-General of Public Works.'"

This is an increase of £34,867, made up of a salaries increase of £1,330 and contingencies increase of £33,537, making a total of £34,867.

The staff has been increased by seven engineers, occasioned by departmental activities, particularly in connection with investigation and design of sectional works of the Tully Falls hydro-electric scheme and the Burdekin River project. The administrative staff has been reduced by one clerk. Provision is also made for the payment of basic-wage and award increases.

The contingencies increase is made up as follows—

(*a*) Special works investigations—Increase £2,000.

The greater part of this increase will be required to meet the cost of the investigations into ways and means of remedying the trouble causing the pollution of the Herbert River and to meet administrative expenses of the Burdekin River irrigation project.

(*b*) Printing, stationery, postage and incidentals—Increase £100.

These are to meet increased costs of printing, postages, etc.

(*c*) The University of Queensland, Maintenance—Increase £1,400.

This provision is to meet increased wages in necessary maintenance work at St. Lucia prior to the official transfer of the University to St. Lucia.

(*d*) Story Bridge, Interest and redemption—Increase £29,284.

The amount represents the net cost to the department for interest and redemption payments on A.M.P. Society loan after deducting recoveries of interest and redemption from the Brisbane City Council on its portion of the agreed value of assets transferred in terms of the agreement.

Last financial year part of the net interest and redemption costs, amounting to £29,642, was met from the cash balance of the Story Bridge Trust Fund, which derived its income from toll collections. The cash balance of this trust fund was exhausted last year, consequently the whole of the Government's liability in respect of this matter has now to be met from Consolidated Revenue.

(*e*) Exhibit, Central Queensland Industrial Fair—Increase £400.

This provision represents estimated cost of preparation and display of the department's exhibit at the Industrial Fair held at Rockhampton. The money spent was well spent. It was surprising to see the amount of industry going on there.

(*f*) Cash equivalent of extended leave, £353.

Provision is made for the payment of this sum on the probable retirement of Mr. P. H. Ainscow, who has reached the age of 65 years.

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) (4.33 p.m.): I want to take up a matter that is particularly important to the development of Northern Queensland and comes under the heading of the Co-Ordinator-General of Public Works, because the Co-Ordinator-General, through the Premier's department and the Premier himself as a matter of fact, I suppose in collaboration with the Co-Ordinator-General, has drawn up a priority list for the supply of steel to various local authorities throughout Queensland.

It is to the supply of steel for the urgently-needed Mount Spec water scheme that I wish to direct my remarks. After the question that I asked the Premier on the matter, to which the Premier replied that the Townsville City Council was getting something like 50 per cent. of the steel supplies coming to the State, the Townsville City Council, by letter of 30 October, asked me to again press for an adequate supply of steel to allow of the completion of this very important work.

I have not time, nor do I intend to weary the Chamber with a recital of all the facts in the letter—and they are very pertinent—but there are some parts of the clerk's letter which I will read to show the position in which the Townsville City Council and the people of Townsville find themselves. The letter states—

> "In the statement made by the Premier he said that 50 per cent. was allotted to Townsville and the balance was made available to other local bodies. The balance is in fact made to the Brisbane City Council."
>
> "As a matter of fact, representations were made to the Premier when he was in Townsville in July, 1949, and it was pointed out to him that—
>
> 'The allocation of steel to this job by the Co-ordinator-General of Public Works had been, in April last, reduced from 2,400 tons per annum (at which rate 3¼ years would be required to complete the deliveries of steel) to 1,200 tons per annum (requiring nearly 6½ years), and that the 1,200 tons lost to this city had been diverted to Brisbane for the purpose of duplicating water mains, although in Brisbane it was understood there were no water restrictions, and Brisbane had never been threatened with a complete lack of water, as was Townsville last year.'
>
> "This council considers that there is no doubt whatever that undue preference has been given to the Brisbane City Council in the allocation of 50 per cent. of the steel coming to Queensland because Brisbane requirements are purely and simply for the improvement of reticulation and not for the purpose of increasing the supply of water. Moreover, the Brisbane City Council has ordered from overseas 5,000 tons of steel for water purposes. This city, with less than one-tenth of the population of Brisbane, has ordered 1,500 tons of steel overseas. Brisbane, to compare with this city in the importation of steel for water purposes, should be importing more than 15,000 tons."

It will be seen that the Government are assisting the Brisbane City Council to dodge its responsibilities with regard to the importation of steel for its various water jobs.

The letter from the Townsville City Council proceeds to quote a leader in the Brisbane "Courier-Mail" of 4 October which I do not intend to read, but the leader sets out the position with regard to the water supply in Brisbane and sets it out very well indeed. It stresses that the problem in Brisbane is purely one of the reticulation and urges that the reticulation scheme be completed in order to allow Brisbane citizens to continue growing beautiful gardens.

Mr. F. E. Roberts: There is a lot of truth in what is said about the water supply.

Mr. AIKENS: I suggest that the hon. member stand up and refute what has been said here by the Townsville City Council. The Premier cannot say that the Townsville City Council is politically allied to the party I represent or that which he represents because the election of the present city council wiped both of us into oblivion.

Mr. Hanlon: The disability of the Townsville City Council is the fact that you were on the council for so long.

Mr. AIKENS: The disability of Townsville is the fact that the Labour Party opposed the Mt. Spec scheme for so long. However, we will not go into the past. As a matter of fact, the men who held up the Mt. Spec scheme on the Townsville City Council were Hamilton, Corcoran, and Illich, men who have since been taken back into the A.L.P.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. AIKENS: I did not want to digress but I had to reply to the Premier to put him right.

Let us bear in mind the problem that confronts us today, and I will continue to read from this very interesting letter from the Townsville City Council. After dealing with the leading article in the Brisbane "Courier-Mail," it states—

"Despite the fact that Townsville has, thanks to a long wet season, ample water in the weirs at present, it still has water restrictions more stringent than any city in Queensland. The citizens will find themselves back to the bucket brigade if Ross River does not run again next year.

"Even now the city can give no guarantee whatever to any manufacturing company to supply water today. As it has already been pointed out, the council has advised North Australian Cement Ltd. that it cannot supply the required 50,000 gallons a day until the Mt. Spec scheme is completed."

I will pause there to deal with a remark made so often by the Premier and members of his party, that his Government were responsible for the North Queensland Cement Company's starting operations at Stuart. We find the Townsville City Council, because of the non-completion of the Mt. Spec scheme, has notified the Northern Australian Cement Co. at Stuart it cannot supply it with a paltry 50,000 gallons of water a day to enable it to begin operations. How then can this Government say they are helping in the development of industry in North Queensland? The letter continues—

"The council consider that the allocation of steel by the State Government between Townsville and Brisbane is illegal under Section 92 of the Commonwealth, in view of the fact that the steel in question is produced outside Queensland.

"It is hoped that the State Government will assist the council in the supply of steel for the Mt. Spec scheme and insist on the Commonwealth Government granting a defence priority for the purpose of supplying steel to the scheme.

"It is noted, with interest, that the Commonwealth Government is now referring the matter to the Minister for Supply, Mr. Beale, but no satisfactory results have yet been obtained."

The Townsville City Council is losing faith in the Commonwealth and the State Governments. After the elections they have once again been left holding the bag. The letter goes on to say—

"The council respectfully requests that the Commonwealth Government also live up to the promises of the Prime Minister when he said, 'We shall pay much needed attention to more remote and undeveloped areas such as North Queensland and Northern Territory and North-West Australia.'"

At least the Townsville City Council, which is more or less liberal in its political set-up, has awakened to the political barnstorming of the Prime Minister ——

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member is not in order in discussing that question.

Mr. AIKENS: I know, and I thought I would say it before you pulled me up.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I do not propose to allow the hon. member to continue in that strain. I have already said that it does not come within the scope of the vote being dealt with by the Committee.

Mr. AIKENS: In view of the fact that you have allowed me to ——

The CHAIRMAN: I have given the hon. member more latitude than he was entitled to.

Mr. AIKENS: You are very lenient on most occasions. With all respect, I submit that this letter does come within the vote we are discussing, because the Co-ordinator-General of Public Works is the authority that allots steel to the various local authorities in Queensland.

The CHAIRMAN: If he keeps to that, the hon. member will be allowed to continue.

Mr. AIKENS: There is an interesting statement in this letter by Mr. Colin Clark, the economic adviser to the Queensland Government, which was made before the Royal Commission on the Pastoral Industry, but I will not read that. The letter then goes on to say—

"The people of North Queensland know exactly the truth of Mr. Clark's statement. Pastoral developments must go hand in hand with the development of the cities along the North Queensland coastline and no city can develop unless it has an ample water supply. Priority has been given to electrical undertakings in Queensland. It is useless to have electricity without water in a city such as Townsville. There is no other city of its size in the Commonwealth in which the water position is so precarious.

"This is a matter in which both the State and Commonwealth Governments should put all political views aside and realise the absolute necessity for the development of a strategic area."

The letter then goes on to say that the council is free from politics and so on and so forth. I want to say that there are very few who do not realise and recognise the precarious state of the Townsville water supply. Townsville is a city of nearly 40,000 ——

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member can discuss the Townsville water supply under another vote.

Mr. AIKENS: Very well. I conclude by making an appeal to the Premier on the floor of this Chamber and on this vote to bring his influence to bear with the Co-ordinator-General of Public Works to make a better and more adequate allocation of steel to Townsville for the purpose of completing the Mt. Spec pipeline. The council has said that under the allocation made by the Co-ordinator-General it will take 6½ years to complete it. I will not enter into an argument with the Premier as to who delayed the beginning of the Mt. Spec pipeline, because I

know the Premier would be in the wrong. I stress the urgency of completing the job. We have only the Ross River to draw from, and whoever named it a river paid it a compliment.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. AIKENS: The Premier must know the position as he has been up there fairly frequently——

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The question of the Ross River is not involved in this vote.

Mr. AIKENS: The Premier knows the position. I do not think he can accuse me of party-political bias in making the suggestion and I urge him to do his best to increase the supply of steel to Townsville to complete the Mt. Spec scheme as quickly as possible, to ensure an adequate water supply not only for the city of Townsville but also for the North Queensland Cement Coy. Ltd. and any other industries that might be established there.

The council has not that supply of water now. It has been compelled to inform the cement company that it cannot give it the water it needs. Till it can, Townsville's development and its progress from a population point of view must be delayed.

Hon. E. M. HANLON (Ithaca—Premier) (4.45 p.m.): In spite of what the hon. member for Mundingburra has said, I know the desperate shortage of water that exists in Townsville. The hon. member cannot take any credit for any amenities that Townsville has. He and his Communist associates, and a few other associates of his, were responsible for the fact that Townsville was without water when it should have——

Mr. AIKENS: I rise to a point of order. From the very beginning I advocated and fought for the early commencement and completion of the Mt. Spec scheme, and I ask the Premier to accept my statement.

Mr. HANLON: The hon. member is always telling us what he has done, but after he and his colleague, Paterson, were on the Townsville City Council for so long, Townsville is still short of water.

With regard to his statement that the Co-ordinator-General is distributing steel to the advantage of Brisbane and the disadvantage of Townsville, the reverse is the position. The hon. member is continuing the pose he has always adopted here of misrepresenting things that are happening in this State with a view to causing dissatisfaction in Townsville. If he would devote one-fifth of the time to serving the people of Townsville that he does to trying to annoy them and stir them up in a hatred of some other person, he would do a great deal more for Townsville. We do not produce steel, neither does the Co-ordinator-General of Public Works. The position at the end of the war was that the whole of Queensland's allocation of steel went to Townsville. Is that discrimination against Townsville? Every pound of steel that came to Queensland went to Townsville for its water supply scheme.

Mr. Hiley: Every pound?

Mr. HANLON: Every pound.

Mr. Hiley: None went anywhere else?

Mr. HANLON: None went to any other part of the State. It must be remembered, too, that there are many times more people without water in Brisbane than there are in Townsville, and that some consideration had to be given to other areas. I am referring now, of course, to steel plate——

Mr. Hiley: That would be certain gauges of steel, not all steel?

Mr. HANLON: All steel plate, not building steel. All steel plate used for making water pipes was sent to Townsville. However, we reached the stage where we had to give some assistance to Brisbane and the Co-ordinator-General recommended that the cities of Brisbane and Townsville be supplied equally. As the result, 50 per cent. of our supplies went to Brisbane, with over 400,000 people, and the other 50 per cent. went to Townsville, with 35,000 people. I do not think that is discrimination against Townsville. It was due mainly to the efforts of the hon. member for Townsville and the hon. member for Hinchinbrook that that allocation was made. They constantly urged the importance of a water supply for Townsville and pointed out that the disabilities under which Townsville was suffering because of the lack of interest in Townsville displayed by the Townsville City Council, of which the hon. member for Mundingburra was a member.

As I say, Brisbane and Townsville each received 50 per cent. of the steel supplies coming to this State, but then we found that Cairns, which is further north than Townsville, was having difficulty with its water supply.

Townsville continued to get the 50 per cent. while 25 per cent. went to the Cairns-Mulgrave water supply and 25 per cent. to Brisbane. My goodness, if the citizens of Brisbane took up the lousy attitude adopted by the hon. member for Mundingburra, there would be a riot here. The city of Brisbane is importing this steel and I told the Townsville City Council to import it too—that the price might be high but they could not afford to be without water, particularly in view of the international situation. I pointed out that the time might come when they would not be able to get any steel for water at all. Owing to the stupidity of the Townsville City Council they might find themselves in the same position as they were in on the outbreak of the last war—without sufficient water. That is the jam that they were in in the last war. I advised them to get as much as they possibly could and they were given 50 per cent. of the Australian quota while 25 per cent. went to the Cairns-Mulgrave scheme—and that area is overhauling Townsville in the matter of

population—and 25 per cent. went to the capital city. There was none for Rockhampton, none for Toowoomba.

I want to call attention to this continual misrepresentation by the hon. member for Mundingburra, this attempt to stir up hate and ill-feeling amongst the people by a man who came into this Parliament and took the oath to serve the people and maintain peace and happiness.

Mr. KEYATTA (Townsville) (4.52 p.m.): I heard what the hon. member for Mundingburra had to say about the Townsville water scheme and let me say that for years I marvelled to think that the people of Townsville would tolerate him and his party so long. For 12 years they did nothing to try to bring in a water scheme for Townsville. They were elected on a promise to install a water scheme but it took them many years to move. I know that on the outbreak of war the council administration was tied down to some extent, nevertheless the council had a golden opportunity that was not available in any other part of the Commonwealth. It was during the war years and there was plenty of material and labour available to install a water scheme there as a war project by the Department or Allied Works Council. Had the members of the then Townsville City Council shown any initiative and loyalty to the purpose on which they were elected, a water scheme would have been installed but they did not move until a former Premier, the late Frank Cooper, received a deputation in Townsville. The hon. member for Mundingburra was there and the then Premier said, "Go on with the business; stop your nonsense. There is too much talk and too much blaming of the Government." They did not move until they were compelled to do it and money was made available for them.

Mr. Aikens: Who stopped it? Your own Party.

Mr. KEYATTA: It was because the members of the hon. member's group would not go on with the work.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. KEYATTA: He got his point in and I must reply.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. member for Mundingburra to refrain from interjecting so that the hon. member for Townsville may be able to continue.

Mr. KEYATTA: I thank you, Mr. Farrell. It is the common courtesy that the hon. member should extend to me and every other hon. member. The hon. member will howl and rant and scream and abuse but he can't take it and never could take it. Now he must listen to the facts. I want to point out that the hon. member could have helped to carry out this work but he hides behind the fact that there were three other aldermen, Corcoran, Illich and Hamilton, members of his own party. He led the party and he was the deputy mayor of the council. He led the council for almost 12 years and never moved until he was forced to take the money from the Premier's department, a subsidy of £200,000.

Mr. AIKENS: I rise to a point of order. Even after we had been forced to take the Mount Spec scheme to a poll, and actually started the job, two members of the A.L.P., your people, in Alderman Butcher and Alderman Breen, tried to hold it up.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. member for Mundingburra to refrain from interjecting and I ask the hon. member for Townsville to connect his remarks with the Co-ordinator-General's sub-department.

Mr. Aikens: Let him tell the truth.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. KEYATTA: That is the plain fact of the matter. The hon. member for Mundingburra said that I should tell the truth, but no-one disregards the truth, or treats it so lightly as the hon. member.

Let me get back to the point that I was making, that the Government forced the hands of the Townsville City Council.

Mr. Aikens: They did not have to force my hand on the matter.

Mr. KEYATTA: Yes, they did.

Mr. AIKENS: I rise to a point of order. That statement is distinctly untrue. At no time had my hand to be forced. The only hands that were forced were those of the people who now support the hon. member for Townsville.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member for Mundingburra has stated his case and he must now allow the hon. member for Townsville to state his case.

Mr. AIKENS: I ask that the hon. member be compelled to accept my assurance.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Mr. Keyatta!

Mr. KEYATTA: We can thank this Government for forcing the hands of the Townsville City Council to carry out the water scheme. My point is that that council dilly-dallied about the work. It first played the Mount Spec scheme against the Keelbottom scheme. Its members said "We will go to the people" notwithstanding the fact that they were returned on the policy of providing a water supply. The people at the poll favoured the present Mount Spec scheme.

I would sound a note of warning to the Government that the Mount Spec scheme is incomplete and in its present state it will be a sheer waste of money. Certainly a pipeline is being built, but no provision is made for the storage of water. Mount Spec is a very high area and in its fall the water there does not last for a long period. The council is trying to feed the water from Mount Spec to the city with an intake. That is not sufficient and you must have a storage area to tide over a 6- or 12-month dry period. This was part of the scheme the hon. member supported. His council then failed to carry out the scheme in its entirety as in accordance with the Mulholland water report. It

did a cheap job in order to be able to say to the people, "We gave you a water supply; we cannot carry it out because of some fault of the Government."

I ask the Premier to check up on this water scheme because it is not satisfactory, because it is not complete. The Townsville City Council could have embarked on the work when all the resources and materials were on hand to give effect to it during the war period and immediately after, but it preferred to dilly-dally and it was only when the late Hon. Frank Cooper, as Premier, forced the hands of the council that it embarked on the present scheme. The big headlines in the Press were too much for the council and it applied for the loan. The council dilly-dallied——

Mr. AIKENS: I rise to a point of order. That is a deliberate mis-statement. The council decided to go on with the Mt. Spec scheme but the supporters of the hon. member took up a petition and got the requisite number of 20 per cent. of the electors and forced the council to a poll. . . .

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I have given the member for Townsville an opportunity of replying and I hope he will now go back to the Co-ordinator-General's Department.

Mr. KEYATTA: I must reply. If you cannot call him to order, I have to reply to him.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. KEYATTA: That is his form all through. You can thank this Government for helping the council to carry out the scheme. They forced it to do the work. I suggest that they check up on the scheme in its present form and they will find it is not a complete scheme.

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) (5.2 p.m.): I want to say this: the hon. member for Townsville made certain statements. The ex-Premier did go to Townsville—in 1943, I think—and he did tell the council to make up its mind and get on with the job. As a matter of fact, it was the Mt. Spec scheme that split the Hermit Park A.L.P. aldermen because the three members who opposed it, Hamilton, Illich, and Corcoran, have since been taken back to the Labour Party. The council by a bare majority did decide after Cooper spoke to go on with the scheme despite their opposition. Immediately we did this those who now support the hon. member for Townsville took up a petition and got the requisite number of names on the petition to force the council to a poll.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. Keyatta: That is not correct. I ask for a withdrawal.

Mr. AIKENS: It is correct. I will give a ham to the synagogue if it is wrong. (Laughter.) And I will resign if it is not correct if you will resign if it is correct. (Laughter.)

Mr. KEYATTA (Townsville) (5.3 p.m.): I will accept the hon. member's challenge. I will resign as member for Townsville if he will resign as member for Mundingburra, and we will both contest the Mundingburra by-election and let the people of Mundingburra judge. (Laughter.)

Mr. Aikens interjected.

Mr. KEYATTA: I will go down and write it out straight away, on condition that the hon. member puts his in too.

Mr. AIKENS: Mr. Chairman!

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Vote (Co-ordinator-General of Public Works) agreed to.

Mr. Aikens again interjecting—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I will not warn the hon. member any more. If he does not behave himself I will name him. I will not give him any more chances.

PARLIAMENTARY COUNSEL AND DRAFTSMAN.

Hon. E. M. HANLON (Ithaca—Premier) (5.4 p.m.): I move—

"That £3,069 be granted for 'Parliamentary Counsel and Draftsman.'"

This is an increase of £282. Provision is made for the payment of the basic wage and award increases.

Mr. MUNRO (Toowong) (5.5 p.m.): I would like to say a few words on this vote.

There is a matter I wish to deal with under this vote and it particularly relates to the form in which legislation is passed by this House and presented to the public. In bringing forward this matter I am impelled by one of the basic principles to which I think every hon. member will subscribe: we should feel that there is respect for the law. It necessarily follows from this that even though it means perhaps some trouble to ourselves we should seek, as far as possible, to ensure that all our laws are put in such a form that they will be readily accessible for reference purposes by the general public, more particularly by all those who are required to obey the law. It is a principle that all British subjects are deemed to have a knowledge of the law.

The first point I wish to refer to is one I brought forward, I think, on 19 September, in the form of a question directed to the Premier asking whether he would give consideration to departing from the practice that was adopted in some instances of having one Act of Parliament dealing with amendments to two or more separate Acts. The reply on that occasion was in substance that it was not desirable, mainly because it involved a waste of time of the House. I submit that request again, not on my experience of a few months in this Parliament, but on experience over 20 or 25 years outside Parliament. There are many members of the public, business men, who do not refer to the bound volumes of the statutes when they require to ascertain the law. It is more common practice for

them to refer to pamphlets that are printed by the Government Printing Office or other authorities. The work of such people in studying printed pamphlets of that kind is made very much more difficult than otherwise when a single Act of Parliament amends two or more other Acts dealing with separate subjects.

Another matter to a certain extent connected with that point is one on which I must confess I shall not be able to make specific suggestions. Nowadays so much of our law is contained in various proclamations, orders in council, regulations, and so on, that it is difficult for the average business man to have ready accessibility to the law. On that point I made the suggestion that the index to the Government Gazette should be issued more frequently. I take this opportunity of making acknowledgment of the very great improvement that has been made in that respect.

Mr. F. E. Roberts: What business man has time to look up the law for himself, no matter how accessible it is?

Mr. MUNRO: Business men are required to know the law and they usually obtain advice from their solicitors, but they also require to refer to the various printed pamphlets made available to give them the law, whether contained in Acts of Parliament, proclamations, orders in council, or regulations. That information should be made available to them in the most readily accessible form.

With due deference, I do not think a practice of passing a separate Bill to amend each Act would take up much greater time in the House. In my experience it has been a comparatively rare occurrence—I can recollect only one Bill that came down since the time I asked the question that dealt with two or more subject matters. Hon. members of the Committee will remember the War Service Land Settlement Validation Bill and it provided an example of how time was wasted. That Bill dealt with two subject matters and we had one hon. member on one side of the Chamber speaking about war service land settlement and another hon. member on the other side speaking about the terms of acquisition, and there was no joinder of issue. I submit that two Bills could have been put through in much less time than one dealing with two separate things.

I do not want to take up further time on this question and I want it understood that I am not criticising the Parliamentary Draftsman or Counsel, because I believe they are doing a good job, but I make this appeal through you, Mr. Farrell, to the Premier to give some further consideration to this question. It would be a relief to the business community generally and to all people who want to know the contents of a law if Parliament would adopt the principle that one Bill shall deal with one subject, instead of having one Bill dealing with amendments to two or more separate Acts.

Vote (Parliamentary Counsel and Draftsman) agreed to.

PUBLIC RELATIONS BUREAU.

Hon. E. M. HANLON (Ithaca—Premier) (5.12 p.m.): I move—

"That £4,696 be granted for 'Public Relations Bureau.'"

Provision has been made for the payment of award and basic-wage increases. There is the increase of one additional officer who is stationed at the Department of Agriculture and Stock. These information bureaus deal with inquiries made by the public each day, in regard to not only State departments but also Commonwealth departments and the Brisbane City Council and Brisbane business houses. The service the bureaus render to the public is great, on account of the similarity of terminology of State and Commonwealth departments. Similar terminology exists in regard to State, Commonwealth and municipal departments. There is, for instance, a State Transport Department and a Brisbane City Council Transport Department. One could go through all Government departments and find similarly titled departments in two or more of these fields of government. The information required is indexed and a person can be supplied with information as to where a State public servant, Federal public servant or a municipal officer is stationed. The bureau can give particulars as to where his office is, his room number, and his telephone number, and this enables people to do their business rapidly, which is important in these days of haste and congestion. A person getting any information on a State department would be told to go to room so-and-so in such-and-such a building and he would find the person he wanted, whether that person was a State officer, a Commonwealth officer, or an officer of the Brisbane City Council. The bureau has given a remarkably good service to the public, and I think the public is getting an excellent return for the amount of money that is spent.

Vote agreed to.

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSIONER.

Hon. E. M. HANLON (Ithaca—Premier) (5.14 p.m.): I move—

"That £36,836 be granted to for 'Public Service Commissioner.'"

This is an increase of £3,629. Salaries have increased by £3,929 but contingencies have decreased by £300. Provision is made for the payment of basic-wage and award increases. The publication of the Public Service List costs £1,050, £100 is for Public Service Commissioner's conference, and £500 for a motor-car. The contingencies include overtime and meal allowances, £100, travelling expenses £150, payroll tax £100, newspapers, publications, including transcripts of evidence in the Commonwealth courts, £100, civil-defence conferences, £200. They provide also for publication of the Public Service Acts and Regulations, £500; fares and freights, £100; repairs to cars, £50; and telephones, £75. In view of the fact that this department covers many activities, the increase is not very large.

Vote agreed to.

PUBLIC SERVICE SUPERANNUATION BOARD.

Hon. E. M. HANLON (Ithaca—Premier) (5.16 p.m.): I move—

"That £3,774 be granted for 'Public Service Superannuation Board.'"

This is an increase of £327, made up of £177 for salaries and £150 for contingencies.

Vote agreed to.

STATE REPORTING BUREAU.

Hon. E. M. HANLON (Ithaca—Premier) (5.16 p.m.): I move—

"That £30,883 be granted for 'State Reporting Bureau.'"

This is an increase of £4,124, made up of £2,084 for salaries and £2,040 for contingencies. Provision is made for the payment of basic-wage and award increases.

With regard to contingencies, provision is made for the following increases:—

	£
Basic-wage and award increases of temporary and casual typists	1,000
Travelling expenses	300
Payroll Tax	100
Repairs to typewriters	100
Printing and stationery	300

The increase is not large in view of the overall charge.

Vote agreed to.

STATE STORES BOARD.

Hon. E. M. HANLON (Ithaca—Premier) (5.18 p.m.): I move—

"That £51,983 be granted for 'State Stores Board.'"

This is an increase of £9,664, the increase in respect of salaries being £7,489 and that in respect of contingencies being £2,175. There is an additional clerk-typist, and provision has been made for the payment of basic-wage and award increases.

Contingencies increases are as follows:—

	£
Temporary assistance	200
Overtime and meal allowances ..	900
Payroll Tax	240
Telephones	250
Purchase of Truck .. .. (Total cost £900)	100
Office equipment	295
Purchase of typewriters	105

With regard to overtime and meal allowances, it is impossible to get the required staff, so that overtime has to be worked.

Vote agreed to.

MISCELLANEOUS SERVICES.

Hon. E. M. HANLON (Ithaca—Premier) (5.19 p.m.): I move—

"That £73,901 be granted for 'Miscellaneous Services.'"

This is an increase of £14,520, the increase in respect of salaries being £105 and that in respect of contingencies being £14,415. Provision has been made, of course, for the payment of basic-wage and award increases. The increase in expenditure for the benefit of discharged members of the defence forces is £600. There has also been an increase of £10,000 in the rebate of railway freight on machinery, etc. for Mt. Isa Mines Ltd. Whilst £8,000 was provided under this head last year, £16,725 was expended. It is estimated that £18,000 will be required this year. In respect of Queensland Government liaison officers attached to Commonwealth departments in southern States, there has been an increase of £150. There has also been an increase of £200 in the allowance to the Lieutenant-Governor.

Mr. WORDSWORTH (Cook) (5.20 p.m.): This vote provides for a subsidy of £20,000 for steamer services between Brisbane and Thursday Island and Gulf ports, the service being given under contract by John Burke and Co. Ltd. with its boat the "Elsanna." I want to tell hon. members that there is much dissatisfaction with the service. The agreement provides for a service from Brisbane to Cairns, Cooktown, Portland Roads, Coen and Thursday Island and a service from Thursday Island to the Gulf country. The "Elsanna" runs from Brisbane to Thursday Island and the service is continued from Thursday Island to the Gulf country in the "Cora." The agreement provides that the "Elsanna" shall make ten trips a year to Cooktown and Coen but she has not been to Cooktown since the cyclone of 1949. She unloads the Cooktown cargo at Cairns and it is taken from Cairns to Cooktown. Very often when the "Elsanna" returns on her run the following month there is still some Cooktown cargo on Cairns wharf from the previous voyage, awaiting transhipment. Coen is entitled to ten services a year and the cargo is transhipped to the "Yatala" and taken to the Annie River. The "Yatala" has not made any more than three trips in the past twelve months. The contract provides for ten trips to both of the ports.

There is much dissatisfaction at Cooktown because the "Elsanna" has not called there since the cyclone and the reason given is that the port is unsuitable because of the washing of silt into the area. I took the matter up with the Treasurer and he was very helpful in referring it to the Department of Harbours and Marine. The result was that the department was able to get two charts showing the soundings before the cyclone of 1949 and the soundings after the cyclone. They disclosed that at the port of Cooktown at the date of the second soundings there was more water than there was before the cyclone so the excuse that the port is not suitable is a very lame one. I ask the Government to insist that John Burke and Co., to which the subsidy of £20,000 is paid, should carry out its contract and give the people the service they are entitled to.

Mr. Kerr: Would there be any back-loading?

Mr. WORDSWORTH: There would not be any back-loading at Cooktown at present. Shortly there would be log timber That is another reason given for not calling, that they did not get any back-loading. The people

of Cooktown sometimes have to wait for a month to get their cargo from Cairns and I ask the Government to insist that John Burke and Co. Ltd. honour the contract by providing ten trips a year to Cooktown and Coen. The Government have honoured their part of the contract in paying the subsidy.

Furthermore, the trip of the "Elsanna" from Brisbane to Thursday Island has become a very popular tourist trip. The few business people of Cooktown feel they are entitled to participate in some of the advantages of that tourist trade. It is felt that the tourists who travel from Brisbane to Thursday Island would like to have a look at Cooktown, just as much as any other place en route. I ask the Premier to look into the matter, with a view to seeing to it that John Burke Ltd. honour its contract.

Mr. PIZZEY (Isis) (5.26 p.m.): In the Bundaberg and Maryborough districts there are 14 veterans of the South African War, which was fought over 50 years ago. All these veterans are at least over the age of 65 years. It is not too much to ask that these men be granted free railway passes to Bundaberg not only for Anzac Day but other important reunions. At present this concession is granted in Brisbane or the south-eastern area.

Mr. Hanlon: I think the concession applies for all services within a 30-mile radius.

Mr. PIZZEY: The 30-mile radius should be extended. The only reunion centre for these veterans is in my district and that is at Bundaberg. These veterans reside at Kingaroy, Memerambi, Gladstone, Howard, Childers, and Bingera. There should be no limit to the radius for the issue of free passes to these veterans. I should also like the Premier to give us some information on the item "Expenditure for the benefit of discharged members of the defence forces." As some of us are new members, we do not know how this vote is being expended.

Mr. HILEY (Coorparoo) (5.27 p.m.): There are two matters to which I should like to draw the attention of the Premier, one on the basis of seeking additional information, and the other for consideration and subsequent attention.

The first matter is the item "Allowance to the Lieutenant-Governor." The vote fixed last year was £850, but this was necessarily reduced because of the untimely death of Mr. Cooper, but I notice that the amount required this year has been increased to £1,050. It is clear that there was no Lieutenant-Governor when the Estimates were being prepared; therefore it might be open to inference that an appointment is to be made at a salary greater than £1,050 a year, that is, if the appointment is made to operate from the new year and £1,050 is provided for the last six months of this financial year the rate of the allowance would be £2,100 per annum. The Committee is entitled to some information as to the intentions of the Government.

The second item I should like to draw attention to is that of expenses associated with the official inquiry into sawmilling, plywood and joinery manufacturing industries in Queensland. On this point the commission was directed, amongst other things, to ascertain, firstly—

> "Whether the prices presently fixed or charged for sawn timber, plywood, joinery in the said State are fair and reasonable, and if not, what alterations of such prices are desirable,"

and, secondly—

> "Whether the prices charged or presently fixed for various grades quality and species of logs (and particularly Hoop and Bunya Pine) in the said State are reasonable, and whether any, and if so what, alterations of such price methods presently used in grading logs are desirable."

It seems to me that the Commission, after a very full inquiry into this matter, without expressly setting out the basis on which it approached it, did work on a basis of what might be described as standard costing of sawmilling. That is, you divide the component costs of your timber at its various stages—you have your log costs and your manufacturing margin, and then the distributing allowance.

Now, that manufacturing allowance was obviously followed by the Timber Commission. Anybody who studies the schedules of the proposed prices published by the commission will reach no other conclusion than that the commission formed that determination. It is clear that since this report was delivered by the commission some months ago, the Commissioner of Prices is refusing to follow the recommended practice laid down by the commission. The commission appointed by the Government made a full and exhaustive inquiry, travelled the whole State, and took evidence from everyone concerned in the industry, and delivered a report with all the authority of a Royal Commission behind it; and these seems to be something vastly wrong with either the work of the commission if the Commissioner of Prices is justified in refusing to accept its findings, or with the Commissioner of Prices if he will not follow them. I think the Committee is entitled to a statement from the Premier when he has had an opportunity to examine the findings of the commission and the different rulings and attitude of the Commissioner of Prices in relation to the prices of timber, letting the people know which of these two State authorities is right and which the Government propose to follow. It seems to me the Commissioner of Prices is refusing to accept what the commission, on the evidence before it, accepted as the proper approach to determining the various stages of the cost of sawn timber.

I am not going to submit to the Committee an abundance of detail in support of that case. I do not expect the Premier will be prepared to make a considered reply on an impromptu basis and I shall be content if he will look into this matter and see whether there is any good reason why the basis of computing the charges for timber laid down

by the commission cannot be adopted and followed in fact by the industry. As it is, the commission has recommended a basis to be followed, and the Commissioner of Prices, for reasons known to himself, does not or will not, follow it. The industry is in a maze and does not know the policy in relation to the computation of timber prices. I should be grateful if the Premier, when he has had a good look into it, would inform the Committee on the matter.

Mr. LUCKINS (Norman) (5.33 p.m.): I support the hon. member for Isis in his reference to consideration for the South African veterans. During the period prior to Federation, Queensland had the honour and distinction of calling upon its people to volunteer for service in South Africa. That was in 1899 and amongst the men who served was the late ex-Speaker, Hon. E. J. Hanson. I was associated with this association, having seen service in South Africa, and I know that the Government had extended consideration to this organisation, which is now housed in a building under Government control. I think it gets £100 a year in lieu of rent.

Mr. Hanlon: We do not charge them any rent at all.

Mr. LUCKINS: It is very satisfactory to hear that. During the period after the Boer War a fund was established and a sum amounting to thousands of pounds was collected, and I think the Government of the day handed the money over to the World War I. patriotic fund and the South African Veterans' Association was left without funds.

It would be a very fine gesture for the Commonwealth or State Government to ease a little the burden of life of the South African war veterans by granting them some small concessions in the form of free railway passes to attend their reunions on the South African national day in the various parts of the State. Unfortunately these men are forgotten by many of the present generation. In supporting the honourable member for Isis I ask the Premier to give that association as much help and support as possible, with a view to making conditions more comfortable and pleasant. I know what has been done by the late Hon. E. J. Hanson, who was president of that association. Any concessions granted would be gratefully acknowledged by the remaining few veterans.

Hon. E. M. HANLON (Ithaca—Premier) (5.36 p.m.): The Government have given the South African Veterans Association a nice comfortable room in the city. It was fitted up for them and we do not charge any rent for it. The Government also give £100 in subsidy to maintain it. This room serves a very useful purpose. It enables these men to gather there regularly, particularly on the day on which they collect their pensions. They have somewhere to come to when they go to town. The late E. J. Hanson took particular interest in the association after he retired from Parliament. He went to this room every day and took a great interest in running the show.

The hon. member for Coorparoo mentioned the Timber Commission, which carried out an investigation into the industry but as regards prices the powers of the Commissioner of Prices are paramount under the law. The commission made recommendation but had not the power to fix prices. One of the difficulties was that the commission continued for over a year and quite a few of the things recommended by it were out of date before the report was printed. The Commissioner of Prices found that if the commission's recommendation was given effect to it would create all kinds of anomalies in other directions. For instance, timber would be diverted from one mill to another and other places would be left without timber. The Commissioner of Prices had to correct that. Continual representations were being made, not so much as between the timber people and the commission as between people in the various parts of the State who thought they were not getting a fair deal in the amount of timber they got. However, the anomalies are being cleared up one by one but in all these complicated things, when you clear up one anomaly, you sometimes create two anomalies. The commission has had a rather bad time but we are endeavouring to handle the question.

There is an item for the salary of a Lieutenant-Governor. This was on the Estimates for last year and it has been left in this year but no appointment is being made, nor for that matter is one likely to be made.

These are the particulars of the help given to ex-Service men, incapacitated and blinded men get passes; T.B. sufferers and permanently disabled men also get rail concessions, the cost thereof being met by the Premier and Chief Secretary's department. V.C. winners, although there are only four or five of them, get passes over the railways. And then there are the passes granted to discharged service men. Hon. members will recall that when the war ended and men were being discharged from the Services they were given a station-to-station pass over the whole State for the period of their demobilisation leave. Quite a few are coming back from Japan and some are being discharged from the Navy and we are still granting these free rail passes. Over the first 12 months or two years the cost of the station-to-station pass was heavy because of the numbers taking advantage of it. There are still men who are claiming the privilege; if there is any doubt he gets the benefit of the doubt.

Vote (Miscellaneous Services) agreed to.

DEPARTMENT OF RAILWAYS.

GENERAL ESTABLISHMENT.

Hon. J. E. DUGGAN (Toowoomba—Minister for Transport) (5.43 p.m.): I move—

"That £537,800 be granted for 'Department of Railways—General Establishment'."

This amount is £72,520 greater than that appropriated for 1949-50 and £52,637 in excess of the actual expenditure in that year.

A summary of the increases and the decreases as compared with 1949-50 expenditure is as follows—

Increases.	£
Award and automatic increases including part paid in 1949-50	26,056
Full provision appointments during 1949-50	3,692
Extra staff	330
Extended leave and retiring allowances	615
Pay roll tax	25,341
	£56,034

From this is to be deducted the following decreases—

Decreases.	£
Travelling expenses	1,745
Staff variations and miscellaneous services	1,652

Or a net increase of £52,637.

Hon. members will observe that the amount required for General Establishment is not very much greater than for the previous year and it is almost exclusively due to the automatic wage increases granted by the court. It is interesting to observe that the payroll tax has increased by £25,341, which bears out the statement made by the Premier recently that in many of these wage increases made by the court the Commonwealth Government are the chief beneficiaries inasmuch as although they have the same increases extended through their own service, because so many employees are brought into the higher tax brackets the aggregate amount returned to the Federal Treasury as a result has been very beneficial to it. In previous years I have refrained at this stage from commenting very much on the general position of the Railway Department. I have preferred to let hon. members offer their contributions to the debate and in closing the debate on the vote I have given a general recapitulation of the work we are doing and have answered such criticism as is offered by hon. members. I suggest on this occasion, as I did on a previous occasion, that I welcome constructive criticism of the Railway Department.

Since I have been honoured with this portfolio I have had the opportunity of meeting hundreds of deputations, all of which have been motivated by the desire to correct some anomaly or obtain some improvement in conditions in particular localities. Where the representations have been well founded, we have taken steps to correct anomalies and effect improvements, within the limits of the finance and manpower available. Of course, at times suggestions are put to us that are impossible of implementation, because of material or manpower shortages, or because of an insufficient appropriation from the Treasury, or because of the priority of other works that have been authorised. Within general limits, however, we have endeavoured to meet constructive criticism and I have always asked our officers to examine submissions that are made from time to time carefully and fairly and dispassionately in the hope that we can effect improvements.

With a large instrumentality such as the Railway Department, with a staff of 26,000 people, there is room for individual criticism. No doubt among that vast number of employees, there are some men here and there who do not measure up to the high standard that we expect, but I think that all hon. members who wish to take part in this important debate will realise that an instrumentality such as the railways, which brings in revenue of between £15,000,000 and £16,000,000 a year, and which plays a predominant part in the development of the State, will judge the merits of the system on the general contribution that it is making to the economy of the country. In general terms, it can be said that no other factor plays a more important part in the development of a country than its transportation system. We have difficulties to overcome in this State in framing a policy that will be in the general interests of the people but at the same time have a minimum impact on the financial position of the Treasury.

Where we have an instrumentality on which more than £70,000,000 of public money has been expended, in which we have to meet recurring interest charges on operations, and where we have every activity of the department subject to annual scrutiny by members of Parliament, we must expect criticism from time to time. In most allocations made by the Crown, we do not have this continual surveillance by members of the Opposition. For instance, the Commissioner of Main Roads annually receives votes of large sums of money with which to develop our road systems, but once he spends money on a particular road he is not asked each year in Parliament for a detailed explanation about how much more money will be spent on it. On the other hand, hon. members know each year how much capital is invested in a particular branch line and have an opportunity of examining every aspect of that line.

Furthermore, the Railway Department has not the same opportunity as other instrumentalities, more or less, of writing off an expenditure that may not be profitable. Much of the expenditure of the Railway Department is motivated more by political considerations than by purely sound financial considerations, and I use the term "political considerations" in its widest sense. We use the Railway Department as an instrumentality to develop the State, and much of the expenditure that is authorised by the Crown represents an uneconomic proposition to that department. For instance, we recently authorised the expenditure of about £137,000 on the strengthening of the line in the Mount Surprise area, and this will result in an increased operating loss each year. That expenditure was approved on the ground that it would benefit the development of North Queensland and was some compensation to the people who have to contend with difficult circumstances in that area.

Mr. Hiley: You said, "an increased operating loss"?

Mr. DUGGAN: Yes.

Mr. Hiley: Not an increased overall loss?

Mr. DUGGAN: There will be an increased overall loss too, because we shall be obliged to pay interest on the amount of £137,000 in addition to the capital that has already been spent on that line. In addition, it will be carrying heavier loads and will have to be maintained in a better condition than was necessary for the lighter trains that were operating over it before it was reconditioned. Because we have to maintain the line at a higher standard than previously, obviously operating costs will increase tremendously.

Mr. Nicklin: Surely the additional revenue will be a set-off?

Mr. DUGGAN: It does not, but of course I speak from memory now and I will take the opportunity of checking the matter later in the debate. I think the loss will increase by about £14,000 a year. It is necessary to maintain the section at a higher standard than before because of the considerably increased loads that will be hauled over it. That position will obtain on many other lines too. At the present time we are maintaining many branch lines that are not profitable to the department because of our desire to serve the area and so we continue them at a loss and maintain them at a standard somewhat higher than the volume of traffic would justify.

I come now to an important consideration affecting the Railway Department and it relates to the conflicting claims of alternative forms of transport. We have lost to the airways services a considerable number of passengers who normally perhaps would have paid first-class railway fares and we have certainly lost a considerable percentage in inter-city traffic, to the licensed road services that have operated, and we have also lost a considerable quantity of bulk goods to road transport. I do not want at this stage to go very deeply into the general question of the benefits of each form of service, except to say that the Government believe that in Queensland there is room for various forms of transport and that each can perform its allotted task economically if it is prepared to make a reasonable and fair contribution towards the economy of the country and to set a certain limit on the increase of its service. We have many such cases in rural constituencies. They ask that permission be given to operate a road transport service in a particular commodity and invariably the commodity chosen is a high-freighted one and the operators wish to confine their activities to the transport of such goods. I see no great desire on the part of representatives of the road-transport system to carry such commodities as wheat, coal, fertiliser, and minerals, which are all low-freight traffic, but there is a great desire on their part to cart petrol, beer, drapery, groceries, and high-freight commodities like that. Representations have been made to me to permit the transport of beer by road to various parts of the State but I think the road-ransport people are motivated very largely by the higher charges that they can levy in respect of such commodities. I have no doubt that the subject of road transport will come up again later in the debate and I shall have more to say then.

Quite recently, because of the inability of the Railway Department to provide the necessary trucks, between 17,000 and 20,000 tons of wheat were brought from the Darling Downs by road to meet shipping commitments, and anybody who has travelled over the Darling Downs-Lockyer Highway in the past two or three weeks will have had visual evidence of the damage done to the road since the wheat deliveries began. We allowed these operators to do the work at a nominal rate of 2s. a ton but we have to admit that damage was done to the road running into some thousands of pounds. I am fair enough to say that perhaps the very heavy rain in the past few months led to the undermining of road foundations but the deterioration in the roads coincided with the movements of the vehicles carrying heavy loads of wheat to port.

Mr. Sparkes: Some of the loads were very heavy.

Mr. DUGGAN: The loads were heavy and may have had had some bearing on the deterioration of the road. The time may come when we may have to consider the imposition of a limit on the maximum load a vehicle can carry.

I was interested to read in an American magazine the other day that some hundreds of thousands of dollars had been applied to the construction of a cement road, the loan being payable over a term. The road, constructed on a 25-year instalment and interest basis, had deteriorated at the expiration of five years to such an extent that the asset had completely wasted away. We also noticed an occurrence in America, not uncommon in Australia also, where a road-transport vehicle was fined twenty-five dollars for going over a bridge with an axle load in excess of the permissible maximum. The damage done was 15,000 dollars and was not covered by the 25 dollars fine. These factors operate and face the Railway Department all the time.

Mr. Aikens: You will have to limit the width of the road vehicle?

Mr. DUGGAN: That is done now. There is a maximum limit of 8 ft. The only exemption is from the Blair Athol coal-mine to the railhead, where there is no other traffic to speak of; there some trucks are in excess of the permissible maximum of 8ft. I mention these things generally because the Railway Department is confronted with the task of providing trucks and rolling stock to an increasing extent for a traffic that is becoming unremunerative. Our profit is from first- and second-class passenger traffic and high freight traffic. Wool is one of the few primary products that gives a profitable return to the Railway Department. It is the type of traffic we are very anxious to retain. During the recent wet weather I made arrangements

with the Commissioner to make a considerable number of trucks available for movement south-west, for had we lost that traffic it would have gone to New South Wales via Boggabilla. The department is at times at its wits' end to provide trucks to retain its trade. At times we have to effect some compromise and even have to reject outright recommendations from railway officers, where that course is justified, in order to allow other forms of transport to operate.

The year under review has been a very difficult one. We have been confronted with problems arising with shortage of locomotives and trucks and of handling traffic that had built up because of the prolonged wet weather over a period of three or four months, when there was an almost complete cessation of the haulage of log timber, in some districts sugar and other traffic, and when the roads became trafficable again there was such a demand for rolling stock that the department was not able to meet it wholly.

When I became Minister for Transport we had just got over the war in which this and other nations were engaged, and we immediately tackled the task of the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the railways. As a result of that policy I, with the support and concurrence of my colleagues in Cabinet, have been able to make liberal provision for the modernisation of our system and rehabilitation of our rolling stock. Every railway system in the world, at the end of the war, found itself in the position that it was not able to operate at full efficiency except by the injection of large numbers of rolling stock. The result of the policy we have pursued is discernible to everybody, and there is evidence of the wisdom in the action we took. We have in operation now a number of Beyer-Garratt locomotives, which have a 50 per cent. greater tractive effort than that of our most powerful goods engine.

Because of material shortages and the tremendous numbers of orders on the books of manufacturers in Australia and abroad, none of the locomotive- or wagon-builders would quote any early time of delivery for our requirements, consequently we cannot at the moment see the fruits of the policy pursued in regard to modernisation of our services. However, I make this promise: before this Parliament has expired we shall see an injection of rolling stock into our railway system that will bring credit to the Government, the administration, and the State of Queensland as a whole.

Mr. Sparkes: I heard that promise before.

Mr. DUGGAN: In my introductory remarks I have tried to set a basis for the discussion to follow. It is difficult when you have one or two irresponsible members of the Opposition trying to seize these opportunities for a little bit of levity. Perhaps Melbourne Cup day is an appropriate time for investors who have invested wisely to engage in celebration, but the Railway Department is an undertaking that cannot be entrusted to gamblers or irresponsibles; consequently if we are to conduct this service in a way that gives service to the people and without paying an unduly heavy burden we have to see that the approach to the question is as dispassionate as possible. If that is the approach the Opposition will make I am sure it will be fruitful and the discussion will be interesting and informative and helpful to the administration.

I repeat that before this Parliament expires we shall see arriving in Queensland much of the rolling stock we have on order. As I mentioned before the adjournment—and I repeat it in answer to the interjection—we have received in Queensland the first 10 of the Beyer-Garratt locomotives. I received a cable from the Agent-General the other day regarding the shipment of 10 more in December. We received a quantity of 600 H wagons from Metropolitan Campbell, an English firm. We also received a number of the coal hoppers from the Commonwealth Engineering Company. I have received progress reports of the work on the trains we have on order, and if present production schedules are kept we shall have the first of the modern railmotor trains arriving in March next year. To say that these are merely airy promises is an unfair comment upon the administration that is confronted with very grave problems. We have material shortages and because of an unprecedently good season we have to provide transport for a tremendously large volume of sugar, timber, wheat and other primary products; and because of the developmental programme in operation in various parts of the State we have greatly increased demands for transport.

Mr. Morris: All of which brings you much more revenue.

Mr. DUGGAN: All of which increases the expenditure. That is one of the serious problems confronting railway administration and all countries of the world. In Great Britain they have a deficit of about £20,000,000 and the American railways have experienced tremendous deficits and the railway systems in the southern States too are confronted with deficits. In addition to that we have superimposed all the wage increases, so the expenditure of the Commissioner, the Minister and the Government is correspondingly greater.

In an undertaking like the Railway Department every 1s. increase in the basic wage represents a charge of about £75,000 per annum and hon. members can appreciate the magnitude of the problem when we are confronted with the possibility of an increase in wages varying between 16s. and £1 a week. The Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration recently awarded an increase of £1 a week and simultaneous action has been taken throughout the Commonwealth to embody this improvement in the relevant Federal and State awards. The case is being argued before our State Industrial Court at the present time and it can be expected, of course, that whatever order the court makes it will be substantial. When we multiply each

1s. increase by 75,000 or 80,000 we realise the problem confronting the railway administration. We can reach a point ultimately at which the cost of transportation becomes an intolerably heavy burden on our economy.

We have to face up to the position. We have to ensure that our operations are conducted as efficiently and as economically as possible without engaging upon any campaign of dismissals just for the sake of dismissals or neglecting essential maintenance work. The railways always provide a temptation to people who are obliged to effect economies because the penalties of neglecting maintenance are not discernible immediately. For example, it is accepted, I think by all railway authorities, that the economic life of a locomotive is about 30 years. We have in Queensland and indeed in every other State, a percentage of locomotives that have been 40 years or more in operation. We certainly engage in major rebuilding, which has the effect of prolonging the economic life of the unit but a stage is reached where it is not economic to continue such rolling stock in traffic.

We are confronted also at the present time with the impact of a rearmament programme in which the members of the British Commonwealth of Nations and indeed the whole world is engaged. I brought to the notice of my colleagues in the Cabinet some time ago the difficulties confronting the administration in providing long-term steel requirements. We found, after cabling the Agent-General, that the United States of America and Russia had grabbed every available ton of steel in Britain and on the Continent. The British Railways Association and British steel organisations refused to accept orders for certain types of steel plates because of the armament programme and because of this tremendous buying programme of the Americans. As to tin, we find that just prior to the current war tin was quoted on the world market at about £508 a ton but I noticed in the financial column of yesterday's "Sydney Morning Herald" that it was bringing £1,087 sterling in Malaya—again because of the tremendous buying programme of the United States and Russia. Of course no-one knows the extent of Russia's buying, which is concealed by the purchases of her satellite countries. All of these things will have an impact in higher costs in the railways because we cannot afford to curtail the programme of rolling stock rehabilitation we have authorised.

The denuding of our timber reserves compels the administrators to face a programme of building the rolling stock in steel. Of course that has certain long-term benefits. Maintenance is much less on steel works than on wood but the initial cost is ever so much heavier, and because of this world-wide competition for rolling stock we had to compete with other tenderers. But we have not lagged behind other systems in our modernisation programme and the Government have encouraged the adminstration to embark on any venture that will reflect greater operating efficiency. We did, last year, spend £100,000 on improving gradients on the Blair Athol line, which resulted in operation savings of £10,000 a year.

An Opposition Member: And loops?

Mr. DUGGAN: Loops will effect a saving in reducing the waiting time of trains, and on certain branch lines that policy has been energetically pursued. We are also pursuing a policy of laying heavier rails and putting in stronger bridges to carry bigger loads and we are at the present time endeavouring to obtain the services of surveyors to enable us to improve still further the line between Emerald and Rockhampton. The Cabinet approved of the expenditure of £330,000. This will enable us to save about £60,000 a year in train expenses on that line. The necessity for the undertaking became apparent because of the increased quantities of coal to be carried and the development of the Queensland-British Food Corporation project and because of other developments in Central Queensland. These are things that the administration must pursue energetically and, as I said, will be reflected ultimately in a saving to the Treasury and the Administration.

I mentioned that the department had favoured the introduction of new types of rolling stock. An analysis is being made of certain tenders for the purchase of ten diesel locomotives for use in Queensland. I hope within the next month to submit a recommendation to Cabinet and if Cabinet is satisfied with the technical recommendations there will be no withholding of consent on the ground of cost, because I have been encouraged to inquire into the possibility of using diesel locomotives in Queensland. I was favoured with an interview this morning by gentlemen from America interested in tendering for diesel locomotives. I mentioned in a previous debate that the reason why we could not introduce diesels into Queensland before was that diesel-locomotive construction had been confined to the 4ft. 8½in. gauge throughout the world and particularly in the United States of America, where the condition of the track and bridge strengths enable that country to use engines up to 6,000 horse-power on main lines. In England, because of the relatively short hauls and the fact that England is primarily a coal-producing country and the nature of operations there, England has not felt it desirable or economical to introduce diesel locomotives on main-line work. That country has, however, developed the light diesel shunting engines and they have proved useful. We examined these light diesel shunting engines to see whether they could be employed in Queensland and more will be heard of this matter in due course. Because of track and axle-load limitations the designers were confronted with real problems in regard to main line diesels. However, they have overcome the difficulties and we shall be able to select one from the 17 or 18 tenderers for operation in Queensland. Questions of price, efficiency and delivery will come into this question. I am convinced that the diesel electric has been proved effective in America where similar conditions exist.

That country is a large continent served with rail lines from coast to coast and it has found it economical and profitable to use diesel-electric locomotives. If we can use them to the extent of 75,000 or 80,000 miles annually they will pay, notwithstanding the high initial cost. The cost for an ordinary locomotive would be approximately £30,000 whereas the cost of a diesel-electric locomotive would vary between £60,000 and £85,000. Hon. members can see that the initial capital cost is greater but if they can be utilised on long hauls without being kept out of traffic for long periods they would quickly pay the cost of their initial purchase. They certainly have a shorter life than the steam locomotive, the economic life of which is computed to be 30 years whereas the experience in America indicates that the economic life of the diesel electric is about 22 years. Some of the railroad systems in America that have diesel electrics bought them for a small down payment and the balance of repayments were made possible by the operating savings. I am certain that before this Parliament ends we shall be able to have in Queensland a number of diesel-electric locomotives on our main lines.

I have in a general outline given to the Committee some indication of the financial problems confronting the administration. I have already referred to the material and the manpower difficulties confronting the department because of the concentration in the capital cities of Australia of many of the tradesmen, particularly electricians, fitters, boilermakers, engineers and surveyors. We find it difficult to get the requisite technical men to undertake the work required by the department, particularly in the outside areas.

However, we have faced up to our responsibility in the medium chosen by the Government to develop the State in a fashion that I think reflects general credit on those who are responsible for the administration of this instrumentality. I know of no other State system in the Commonwealth that provided a service during the post-war period comparable with that given by the Queensland railways. It is true that we still have difficulty in meeting transport requirements in livestock, log timber and sugar; as a matter of fact, a member of the Opposition saw me this afternoon about the shortage of motive power and wagons in the Isis district and other parts of Central Queensland. However, there has been no dislocation of the economy of this State as the result of our inability to discharge the general responsibilities of a transportation medium. The southern States have been convulsed by a series of industrial disputes; they have experienced a shortage of coal and, as the result, have converted many of their locomotives into oil-burners, which has resulted in the deterioration of boilers because they were not built to stand up to the fierce heat generation by oil fuel. New South Wales has been obliged to use heavier motor transport, which has been accomplished at a tremendous financial cost to her main and other arterial roads. The same thing has applied more or less in Victoria, too, where the Government have forbidden the transport of certain types of traffic by rail because of the inability of the administration to provide either trucks or locomotives, or the necessary coal. In Queensland the Government have given coal a very high priority, and our reserve stocks are being built up to healthy levels. As the result of the priority that the Government have given to coal, we are in a better position now with regard to our coal reserves than we have been for a considerable time. This will ensure that traffic requirements can be met according to the availability of locomotives and wagons.

At a later stage I shall outline in greater detail the specific steps we are taking in our rolling-stock programme. I shall endeavour, too, to answer any constructive criticism that may be offered by the Opposition. In conclusion, I should like to say that any constructive criticism that is offered will receive serious and sympathetic consideration by the Government. We believe that this important State instrumentality can function properly only if we have the desire to see that it operates at the optimum degree of efficiency. If things are happening of which those at the top are unaware, members have now the opportunity of bringing them forward. I repeat my earlier statement that I hope this will not be chosen as an occasion for irresponsible criticism——

Mr. Sparkes: Merely because someone criticises your railways, that does not mean that he is irresponsible.

Mr. DUGGAN: If you throw a stone into a pigsty, you can bet that the pig that squeals is the one that was hit. The hon. member for Aubigny has disclaimed very strongly indeed that he has been guilty of any irresponsible statements. I do not wish to prejudge the hon. member, but if I were a follower of racing I could judge the hon. member on form. If I judged the Opposition on form, I should have no hesitation in labelling the hon. member as irresponsible. Such classification does not of course apply to all hon. members opposite. I know that the hon. member would like to make me appear foolish if he could——

Mr. Sparkes: I should have no difficulty.

Mr. DUGGAN: I can almost say now the type of speech that the hon. member would make. He would start off by saying that he was engaging in this debate with the fixed determination of avoiding all personalities and that he had a very high regard personally for me. After having delivered himself of that type of platitude, he would then engage in a vitriolic attack on the administration. He would then conclude by saying, "I have made this contribution to the debate with the fixed idea of being impersonal and of trying not to belittle the administration."

That is the type of speech the hon. member would have made if I had not made those commitments. I do not presume to judge whether any hon. member is irresponsible or not. I welcome participation in the debate by hon. members from both the Government side and the Opposition. We believe that the railway system can stand on its own legs. Of

course, there are some shortcomings, we have some difficulties to face, but time, money and patience will correct those difficulties and solve those problems. I realise that the people of Queensland are not yet getting from the Railway Department the service they are entitled to get from a State monopoly system and we can only prove the success of various Government departments on the basis of their efficiency. I am prepared to accept any reasonable basis of criticism as a test of the efficiency of the railway system. We cannot for instance compare the workings of the Railway Department with a private firm outside, but if there is to be a test of efficiency it should be by way of comparison with other railway systems. Later on I will give some specific information to prove that in Queensland we have stood up to our problems from both the financial and the transport angle and have provided a standard equal to any other in the Commonwealth. I am prepared to stake my political reputation on that test and I am sure the Premier on behalf of the Government would do likewise. I have, to the best of my ability and within the limitations imposed, discharged my responsibilities to the people of Queensland.

Mr. Decker: Have you anything to say about the electrification of the railway system?

Mr. DUGGAN: Yes. There has been much misconception about the electrification proposal as contained in the Government policy announced in 1947. The Premier has asked me to do all that I possibly can to advance the scheme, but we are dependent entirely on the work of two gentlemen from New South Wales in regard to the technical work. We have nobody at the present time in our own Railway Department with a knowledge of an electrified system of working. Consequently we have to build up from the beginning. The New South Wales Railway Department has been gracious enough to make available to the Queensland Railway Department two of their most qualified men to advise us on the steps we should take in this regard. One is Mr. Moffatt, superintendent of electric rolling stock, New South Wales, and the other is Mr. Webster, civil engineer, with an extensive experience in electrical working. They have been in Brisbane for many weeks and they have come back on many occasions. I saw Mr. Moffatt only last Friday and he informed me that within a fortnight or three weeks we should be able to call tenders for our electric rolling stock so that in, say, a month from now, all things going well, we should be in a position to invite tenders for our electric rolling stock, and when we get some indication from the tenderers as to the availability of the rolling stock we should be able to proceed with the other work accordingly. I had to see me the other day a gentleman from England, from British Insulated Cables, whose firm will probably be entrusted with the work of the overhead wiring. Some people may think that is a simple matter, but it is a highly specialised job and this company is really the only one that can undertake the work. It has done similar work in England, Poland, India and other places. The managing director of the firm came to me the other day and said that subject to Government approval they would start work in about 12 months from now. There is not much good, however, in spending just on £1,000,000 in doing certain work only to allow it to remain idle for four years. We have to see that the work is done in such a way that the completion of the last mile of overhead wire synchronises with the arrival of our electric cars and the completion of the other part of the system. We have now placed orders for the 94-lb. rails that will be used. Our engineers are making surveys as to where improvement to the tracks is required. We have completed a scheme for the reorganisation of the Mayne yards for the stabling of the electric stock, and generally speaking the work is progressing quite favourably on the technical side. The services of the two experts made available by the New South Wales department have had to be withdrawn for their own particular work, from time to time, but we cannot complain about that as it was only a gracious gesture on their part to making them available in order to advise us. They are two officers for whom I have a very high regard professionally and I am sure that when we invite tenders for the rolling stock we shall start on the developmental programme of fitting together the sectional things and the reorganisation of station yards, the improvement of platforms, the erection of overhead wires and all such things. We have almost completed negotiations with the City Electric Light Co. Ltd. and the Brisbane City Council for a standardised electric installation from which we can draw for our supplies, and I hope within one month to have the specifications required for that work and the electrification programme generally. I should like, if we could afford it, to have completely new stock for our suburban system, but as we have 145 and possibly 170 sufficiently good carriages and we cannot afford to discard them we must use them until their normal replacement period becomes due, and consequently we must make the appearance of the train harmonise with existing carriages. I am informed by Mr. Moffatt that we shall have improved figures for running times over New South Wales and Victorian railways, which have the 4 feet 8½ and 5 feet 3 inch gauge systems, as we shall have faster acceleration and deceleration as a result of the more modern electrical equipment used in connection with these motorised coaches.

Mr. CHALK (Lockyer) (7.43 p.m.): In opening the debate on these Estimates for the Opposition there are a few observations I want to make. Perhaps later in the debate on the various divisions I shall make certain references to things that are happening and that I propose to criticise in some respects. On this particular vote I would say at the outset that I believe the Opposition as a whole appreciate the clarity with which the Minister has placed before the Chamber matters pertaining to his administration. We realise today that the department is faced with many difficulties. Its problems are not peculiar to Queensland, but are universal throughout the whole of Australia and most

parts of the world. We know that the Minister is endeavouring as far as he can to overcome many of these problems, but I feel that as an Opposition we are justified in offering some criticism of some of the administration and by offering it I and those members who will follow me will assist in some degree in the task the Minister has undertaken.

On introducing his Estimates the Minister made reference to the fact that the increase in the basic wage would be one of the problems his department would have to face. He also said that the Commonwealth Government would reap a considerable amount of revenue by way of increased taxation from the increase in the basic wage. He said that the Railway Department, on the other hand, would be faced with a considerably greater payroll and that would add to the problems of the department a problem that I—and I am sure every other hon. member—realises has to be faced. Admitting that that argument is valid, I think that the department must, in facing this problem of an increase in the payroll, endeavour if possible to bring about economies within its own administration. I know that the department has, over a period, endeavoured to reduce much of the expenditure, and gradually in many places eliminate expenditure that is regarded as unnecessary, but I think we have to go a little further and make certain that all expenditure is absolutely justified and that there is no overloading of any department or any expenditure that could be eliminated. I am certain that that is one of the things that the department must go into carefully.

We know, as reported by the Minister and the Auditor-General, and by the Budget, that during the past 12 months the Railway Department showed a loss of £1,466,000. We know that a considerable amount of that sum was made up of interest, nevertheless that is the figure the department lost during the last 12 months. We have been told by the Minister tonight that an increase of 1s. in the basic wage means approximately £75,000 per annum to his department; so if there is a substantial increase in the basic wage—and we all believe there will be—I think it would be a correct forecast to say that on the present basis the loss for the year we have entered can possibly be approximately £3,000,000. I believe that the railways of Queensland are playing a part in the development of this State. What I want to ask this Chamber is whether we believe that £3,000,000 is a fair figure to contribute towards this development.

Mr. Walsh: What do you suggest should be done to avert it?

Mr. CHALK: We must face this loss. The other day the hon. member for North Toowoomba advocated the pegging of wages immediately the increase in the basic wage comes into operation and likewise the pegging of prices. I do not know how his argument coincides with any argument put forward by the Minister for Transport because I fail to see, if this increase in the basic wage comes about—and we know it will—how the department can avoid an increase in rail fares and freights. If that does take place I believe it will have a considerable effect on certain traffic that at present is flowing to the railways; therefore in some directions it will cause a falling off of traffic. The department might say that that will suit it because on the Minister's own admission, it is not in a position to handle at the present time all the available traffic. I think we should be building up a railway system that is encouraging traffic rather than discouraging it. I think we should be doing all we possibly can to bring traffic to the department, and if we have to increase railway fares and freights it will have a detrimental effect in some directions.

At the present time air transport is taking vegetables from my electorate to the South.

Mr. Duggan: Do you say that is wrong?

Mr. CHALK: I do not say it is wrong but I am endeavouring to point out that many of these growers would be quite content to send a considerable amount of produce South by rail, if they could get rail facilities. The Minister no doubt, and quite correctly, will say that some of the difficulties arise at the Queensland-New South Wales border. I appreciate that that is so but the growers in that area have for a considerable time been advocating the sending of the greater part of their perishable produce through Clapham Junction. If that is possible the railways will get a considerable amount of produce to southern markets with consequent revenue to the department. But if it is intended to increase freights and air transport can compete, it will mean a loss of revenue. We must face this problem and look about to see how we can effect some economy.

For the last 12 months the earnings per train mile were 17s. 9d. and the cost of such train mile was 17s. 8d. so that we have been sailing very close to the wind. There has been a considerable increase in costs in the last 12 months. For the year ended June, 1949, the earnings were 17s. 3¾d. a train mile and the cost of the service only 15s. 11¼d. At that time there was a profit of 1s. 0¼d. a train mile as compared with the earnings of 17s. 9d. and a cost of 17s. 8d. for the past 12 months. In 12 months we have lost the difference between 1s. 0¼d. and 1d. a train mile as costs have risen by that sum. We must have a general overhaul of the system to ascertain if we cannot reduce some of these costs.

A few moments ago the hon. member for Bundaberg asked for a suggestion as to how to do this. On the Estimates on the Southern Division I may have something to say but I think that in many instances we run trains at the present time at a considerable loss and we could still give the same service to the people without even operating some of those trains in that division. I think the Minister knows well what I have in mind—a particular service where the train travels something like 30 miles with probably 10 passengers almost every night in the week. That is an instance in which some economy could be effected by using the existing co-ordinated train-motor

service. That train travels that distance and returns the following day with about the same number of passengers. The cost of operating that train up and down is approximately £60 the return journey. I am referring to a rail service between Helidon and Toowoomba. That is one service in which some economy could be effected and probably in other divisions there are similar cases. If such matters were looked into I believe the department could still give the equivalent service to the public at less cost. Here I wish to make myself perfectly clear: I believe the railway service should still be there but I believe that we could give better passenger service to the public and at the same time make a considerable saving.

We cannot as a Government shut our eyes to the possibility of a loss of £3,000,000 for this year. If we look into these things now we should be able to do something about them. I know that the Minister is keen and energetic and I am certain these are not matters that are new to him. I think some airing of them in this Chamber might spur some of his departmental officers into looking into these things a little more carefully and closely and possibly the Minister would receive reports from those officers that would enable him to see that a curtailment is made on the expenditure side.

Mr. Foley: How many services do you think you would have to cut out to save these £3,000,000?

Mr. CHALK: I know you would not be able to cut out services to save the £3,000,000 but I am pointing out one legitimate instance in which some saving could be made. If there was a committee to thoroughly investigate the complete administration of the railways you might find several other instances in which overlapping could be avoided.

Mr. Duggan: Do you know that the economics of the proposal have been carefully examined and they do not bear out your contention?

Mr. CHALK: I have heard it said but I should like the Minister to give me that information personally because the typical layman and the person who uses the train between Helidon and Toowoomba know that every night 10 or 12 people ride between Helidon and Toowoomba and vice versa next morning. I cannot see where economy comes into it at all—a train hauls seven carriages to Toowoomba for the purpose of sweeping out the carriages. I cannot see why Helidon could not be made the terminus, with a turntable and quarters. In 12 months a considerable sum would be saved.

There are other things that the Minister has mentioned. He has outlined the spending or the spectacular side of the programme of advancement for the railways and he has told us about the new Garratts and the trucks we are getting and the new diesel-electric railmotors and various other schemes that are at the present time known to most of the people encouraged but I feel at the present time of Queensland. These schemes are to be that too much talk is going on about these things and we are not paying the attention we should to our existing tracks and our existing bridges and much of the rolling stock in operation today.

The Minister told us something of the diesel-electric trains and their costs and how economically they will run. Many of the things he told us are quite correct but I ask: has any consideration been given to the question of servicing these diesel-electric locomotives? We are told that we shall have about 10 of them. I do not know whether they will be all operating in one particular area or whether they will be spread out throughout the State. I know something of diesel engineering and I know it is very intricate and if the department is to go in for this type of haulage it will be necessary to set up at certain points first-class servicing equipment. That equipment will have to be used after the motor has run so many miles and I fail to see, if the diesel trains are spread throughout Queensland, that there will be much economy in the system because the cost of setting up such a servicing system will be great.

Mr. Donald: They have been a success elsewhere.

Mr. CHALK: Yes, but not with the long mileage that will occur in Queensland.

Mr. Donald: The distance to Sydney is not a hop, step and a jump.

Mr. CHALK: The servicing of the diesel will require serious consideration.

There are a couple of other points that I should like to raise while my time lasts. One is in connection with the type of carriage that is used today on many of our trains. I know that again the question of shortages arises, but as one who uses the rail service between Toowoomba and Brisbane two or three times a week, I feel that I am voicing the opinion of the public of Queensland generally when I say that there is considerable feeling against the type of first-class carriage used on the railways. Possibly it is quite correct to say, "Why have first-class carriages?", but the point is that as long as the department lists a first-class carriage on its trains, a reasonable type of carriage should be used. However, most of the first-class carriages are somewhat similar to the second-class carriages. Only the other morning, coming down in the train I met a lady whom I did not know, but as soon as I sat down she started to criticise the Railway Department for the type of carriage in which she was travelling.

Mr. Donald: I will bet she had never been out of Queensland.

Mr. CHALK: I do not know whether she had been out of Queensland or not, but I have been out of Queensland and have travelled on most of the railway systems in the Commonwealth, and whilst I am prepared to admit that on many of the country lines in the other States the type of carriage used is not even up to the standard of that used on most Queensland lines, where we have a

main line used by people coming from Sydney to Brisbane, I believe we should try to provide a reasonable type of coach. The hon. member for Bremer knows, I am sure, that at least on the main lines in the southern States a reasonable type of coach is used.

A Government Member: Why should there be preference for people travelling long distances over anybody else?

Mr. CHALK: I am not advocating that they should receive any preference over others. If we set up that we have first-class accommodation on these lines, we should provide reasonable first-class accommodation.

Those are one or two points that I offer to this Committee for consideration. As I said earlier, I believe the Minister is endeavouring to do what he can to administer his department to the best of his ability and in accordance with the policy of this Government. However, I suggest that it would be worth while to have a complete investigation into the general administration of the operations of the railways of Queensland. I believe that if two or three competent men had the job of going through the various sections of the department and the workshops, they would find many cases in which much economy could be brought about. If that was done in conjunction with the policy that the Minister has advocated, I believe that our railways would very quickly become payable and give to this State the service it deserves.

Mr. KEYATTA (Townsville) (8.4 p.m.): I desire to compliment the Minister on his administration of his department. He is young in years but old in experience, and has shown excellent administrative ability. His capacity has been amazing, and he has been backed up by an efficient staff.

We have heard a great deal of criticism of the service given by the Railway Department, but I cannot see where the department has failed. The department has its difficulties but they are common to all railway systems throughout the world but having regard to the service that it gives and the vast area it covers the Queensland system has done excellent work. We have 6000 miles of line and a population of a little over 1,000,000 spread over a huge area. In many respects our production is determined by world markets, by the law of supply and demand, and on many occasions the department has carried primary produce for sale overseas at an unpayable rate. It has also given a service in drought time—it has enabled the graziers to maintain their stock and so help build up the country again. The department is to be commended for that. It is also training its own technical and administrative officers and no better staff could be found anywhere. I can give proof of that assertion. Our own officers trained within the department have made inquiries and investigations and submitted recommendations that have been capitalised and now form the blueprints of the future of the service. They are deserving of the highest commendation. The railways are spread far and wide and the department gives many concessions to the people, concessions that are frequently unseen. That is the purpose of the department and any other public utility to help develop the State and that is what the Railway Department and its officers has done.

Some time ago a comparison was made between the Queensland railway system and the Commonwealth railway system and the arguments advanced were so convincing that I cut them out and I propose to refer to them now. The Minister said that the efficiency of a railway service could be tested in part on financial grounds. The Commonwealth railway system, involving a capital expenditure of £18,500,000, shows an excess of £103,111 in working expenses over revenue, while on the same basis the Queensland system, with a capital value of £44,500,000, shows £157,000 in revenue in excess of working expenses. I know that it is human nature to criticise, in fact human nature to grumble, that it is an integral part of the human make-up. If we had always been satisfied, perhaps we should still be content to walk rather than use fast-moving trains or aeroplanes and so by our constructive criticism we have brought about improvements.

For the financial year 1950-51 the estimated expenditure by the department is £17,250,000. This will be required for new rolling stock, station buidings, workshops, housing and camping accommodation for employees, the strengthening of bridges on the North Coast line particularly, improvements to station yards, regrading and duplication work. That work covers a very wide field of activity. The Government have laid down a policy of defining the roles that road transport, air transport and rail transport shall play in developing this State, but whatever roles road and air transport assume, the major role of this State must still remain the railways.

The South African railways have a gauge the same as Queensland. They hold the world's record for the transport of passengers and freight. Those railways have proved conclusively that other forms of transport cannot compete with them in the carriage of passengers and goods. Although shipping plays a large part in transporting freight along the South African coast the railways serve a vast interior.

Since May 1947, 31 new locomotives costing approximately £600,000 have been placed in the service in Queensland. Six of these were the tank-engine type for suburban railways. These were designed and constructed at the Ipswich railway workshops. The total number of locomotives on order is 156, and their estimated cost is £5,250,000. This is an ambitious programme designed to meet the requirements of the agricultural, pastoral, coal and mineral industries. This is a very interesting aspect of the administration of the Minister. The intensity of the programme is due to an endeavour to overtake the lag in construction that occurred during the war. Towards the end of last year an order for an additional 10 Beyer-Garratt locomotives was placed with Messrs Beyer, Peacock and Co. Ltd., England, and 15 additional B18¼ locomotives were ordered from the Vulcan Foundry Ltd., England. These are being

constructed to meet Queensland conditions and should be available by 5 February. The Beyer-Garratt locomotives have a tractive power 50 per cent. greater than our most powerful engine. Mr. Hall, the superintendent of the Ipswich workshops, was sent by the Government to England to arrange the incorporation of certain modifications in these engines suitable for Queensland conditions. There we have the fact that this world-wide constructing engineering firm has accepted suggestions from one of our qualified officers to modify these engines. That speaks volumes for our engineers. It is well to record the fact that we have officers in the service of that calibre.

An improved C17 type of engine has been designed at the Ipswich workshops and will be designated the CC17. The first of these engines will be delivered at the end of the year. It will be seen, therefore, that every type of locomotive necessary for the vast traffic of our railways is being constructed to meet the demands of our ever-expanding and growing traffic.

Tenders have been called for the supply of ten diesel-electric locomotives, which it is proposed to use for hauling long-distance mail trains. They will have a tractive power of slightly more than 50 per cent. greater than the B18¼ engines. They will have a higher train mileage than the steam engines and there will be an absence of smoke and coal dust. That is another important point that will add to the comfort of passengers because coal dust, besides being a great source of nuisance, is very destructive of clothes.

A new steel air-conditioned train is being designed in the Ipswich workshops for use on the Sunshine route. These details are important because the average citizen is not aware of what is being done. By setting them out here I ensure that they appear in "Hansard," copies of which I shall distribute throughout my electorate. The preliminary work of construction of this train should begin in April, 1951. A dining car and a buffet car will be attached for use throughout the whole of the journey. Other special features of the train will be child-welfare compartments, three-berth cabins convertible into a two-berth roomette, shower compartments, and a lounge car. The whole train is being designed to provide a standard of comfort and service equal to the best. It is estimated that the total cost will exceed £200,000. I do not know that there is in the whole of the Commonwealth any train that will have the conveniences that this air-conditioned train will have. At the Brisbane Exhibition and at the Rockhampton Industries Fair one of the new engines and a carriage were exhibited. I was surprised to hear a condemnation of our Railway service by members opposite. There is nothing wrong with the Queensland railways.

A contract has been placed with the Commonwealth Engineering Coy. for the design and construction of eight complete air-conditioned trains, five of which will operate between Brisbane and Cairns, one between Townsville and Mt. Isa, one between Rockhampton and Longreach, and one between Brisbane and Cunnamulla.

Other carriages placed in service since 1 May, 1947, include 12 suburban sitting cars, one Sunshine dining-car and three composite sleeping cars constructed at the Ipswich workshops at a cost of about £122,000, and 12 suburban cars built by the Commonwealth Engineering Co., Granville, costing £100,000. This company has a further order for 18 suburban cars to cost approximately £144,450. Orders have been placed with the Ipswich Railway Workshops for 40 brake vans with passenger accommodation and 12 long-distance Sunshine sitting cars, at a total estimated cost of £418,000.

Since 1 May, 1947, 581 new wagons have been received by the Railway Department, representing an expenditure of £353,000. Notwithstanding the supply of new wagons, many additional vehicles are required to link existing traffic and the future needs of the State.

What follows is very interesting and very important. The expansion of production by Mt. Isa mines, the increased winning of coal at Blair Athol and Callide, the rapidly expanding activities of the Queensland-British Food Corporation, and the expansion of sugar production will create additional rail traffic. The Government, therefore, have authorised the construction of many hundreds of wagons and the orders now current are for 3,157 wagons representing an expenditure of £4,280,393. To keep pace with the industrial and productive development we are building the essential engine-power and rolling stock.

The locomotive, carriage and wagon programme will mean the expenditure of more than £12,000,000. The Government have not confined the placing of orders to Queensland or Australian manufacturers but have already ordered rolling stock from England to the extent of £4,696,000 to take advantage of the much earlier deliveries available from that source.

The construction of two rail-motor goods and cream trailers in the Ipswich workshops was completed during the past three years at a cost of £3,200. Work is now proceeding at Ipswich on two 102 h.p. rail motor trains, each consisting of a power car and two trailers, at an estimated cost of £40,000. An order has been placed with the Commonwealth Engineering Co. for six new rail motor trains each comprising two power cars and two composite cars. Because of the greater weight, the new motor trains will provide a standard of comfort far beyond that available in the existing type and will compare more than favourably with similar units operating in other States. The total estimated cost is £468,000.

New stations and additional workshops are to be erected and modern machinery installed. At a later stage I will give the Committee details of this work, information

which is essential to hon. members, in order that they may know the work the Government are doing.

The Minister, his Commissioner, administrative staff and employees did a very fine job during the war years and prior to that in the development of Queensland and at the present time are carrying out their services in an excellent way and I compliment them on it. We should not "knock" our railways but give them every possible encouragement. We should put forward constructive criticism and suggestions. No-one can cavil at that. Criticism is essential but it is the duty of all of us to make constructive suggestions.

Mr. LOW (Cooroora) (8.25 p.m.): At the outset I should like to say that the Railway Department is one of the most important in the State and is responsible for possibly the greatest proportion of Government expenditure in any year.

I have listened with great interest to the Minister's remarks and to the speeches of other hon. members and I think that the department and the Minister have been doing all that is possible to rehabilitate the railways after the war but I would not go so far as to say that everything is all right and the railways are up to date. On the contrary, I say that the railways have been sadly neglected in the past and are 20 years behind the times. I have been keenly interested in the general welfare of the railways because I know the important part they play in the development of the State. I should like to see a further extension of railway lines throughout the State. During the time the Minister has been holding his portfolio he has carried out his job ably and I am sure members of the Opposition appreciate his courtesy and tact in the execution of his duties and in considering the requests made to him from time to time. There is one matter, however, that requires rectification and it is an anomaly I cannot understand. The Minister for Transport is on a salary of £2,250 a year and there are two commissioners under his direct control.

Mr. Walsh: Two commissioners?

Mr. LOW: The Commissioner for Railways receives a salary of £2,500 and the Commissioner for Transport a salary of £1,850. It is an anomaly to have a Minister responsible for and directing such a large staff and who is the supreme head of the department receiving a salary lower than a commissioner under his control.

Mr. Aikens: If you gave him more you would have to give the other Ministers more too.

Mr. LOW: This is a matter I have looked into at some length and I think it wrong that the Minister should receive less than a commissioner under his control. It does not matter to me who the Minister is, but I say the whole set-up is wrong and should be looked into, particularly as the Minister is responsible to the people and this Parliament for the development of the railways and expenditure.

I say again that I am pleased the Minister is doing all he can to rehabilitate the railways. In the recent war the railways played a vital part and I hope there will be no hitch in the delivery to this State of the engines and the rolling stock, the rails and the sleepers, and the carriages and the wagons and rail-motors on order, and that we shall see them in operation on the railways of this State at an early date.

It will be necessary for the Minister for Transport, as the supreme head of his department, in addition to providing improved rolling stock and good carriages and other comforts wherever possible, to brighten up the whole appearance of the various railway buildings throughout the State. Railway buildings generally are deteriorating seriously, and many of our stations are in urgent need of painting.

A good deal has been said of the electrification of Brisbane's railways and the progress that has been made, but again I say that unless we have an all-round overhaul of the system and a general brightening-up, progress in one section will be set off by deterioration in another.

Because of the shortage of steel rails, for some time the Minister has been pursuing the course of lifting many sidings in Queensland that eventually will have to be replaced. In a State such as this, with a bright future, the lifting of sidings is a step in the wrong direction. Even though we may be short of rails, many useful sidings throughout the State are being lifted and inconvenience is being caused to producers and other people.

The Minister has said that delivery of certain large engines for use on our railways has already been made, and that they will be able to haul larger loads than were previously hauled. However, the Minister is now faced with the very important task of providing larger loops. If the size of our trains is to be increased continually, longer loops must be provided so that the free flow of traffic will not be interrupted. There is plenty of room for the speeding-up of passenger and goods services, and that is something that the department should be examining continually. Trains are not moving as fast today as they should be.

Mr. Aikens: You get on a loco. and try to drive it a bit faster.

Mr. LOW: Faster passenger and goods trains must be the ambition of every railway administration, because speed is the essence of any contract.

Mr. Aikens: You get 650 tons on your tail and see how fast you can go.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. LOW: In his annual report about two years ago the Commissioner for Railways recommended the duplication of the railway line between Caboolture and Theebine. I

thought that was a splendid idea, and one that should have been pursued at the same time as the electrification of Brisbane's railways. It would be a very important contribution towards a quicker flow of traffic from country centres——

Mr. Duggan: If we had had more surveyors, we probably would have done it.

Mr. LOW: I am keenly interested in the duplication of the line between Caboolture and Gympie, at least. I have frequently seen trains standing at sidings for up to 20 minutes waiting for other trains to come along. When we consider the long delays taking place at each siding or station and the expense incurred in coal, wages, &c., we see that they must cost an enormous amount each year. If the Minister gave favourable consideration to the duplication of the line between Caboolture and Gympie, not only passenger traffic but livestock and other perishables could be transported much more quickly.

Not only on the North Coast but on many other lines the railway platforms are not sufficiently long to accommodate the trains with safety. Where the platforms are short and the leading carriages and the rear carriages extend beyond the raised platform and it is necessary for people to get in and out of them they can do so only with great difficulty. It is pathetic to see elderly people, particularly women and children, getting in and out of the trains under these conditions. I hope the matter will be attended to.

That part of the North Coast between Cooran and Gympie, which was recently included in my electorate, is one mass of railway curves. When discussing the matter with the Commissioner, I was told officially that between Cooran and Gympie there were 62 curves over a distance of 16 miles. Those conditions should not be continued and they could well be avoided in this type of country, which is flat and level and presents no engineering difficulties. Even back in 1930, when the North Coast line was being regraded, it was not thought necessary to do this work, except for a small section of the line near Gympie. Let me remind hon. members of one of the greatest tragedies in railway history, which occurred on 9 June, 1925, at Traveston on the North Coast line. I was able to get some photographs of that disaster, which occurred on a 5-chain curve. That curve was responsible for the disaster—the baggage coach left the rails and was dragged two miles and the train then toppled over a bridge and a number of people were killed and injured. The train was known as 21A, hauled by two engines and was running late, the baggage van left the rails, and a number of coaches followed. Thirty to 40 people were injured and 10 killed. Nothing has been done to improve these dangerous curves. I have examined it very closely and I have the photographs here, which the Minister may have. These curves should be eliminated at the earliest possible date because what happened in 1925 to a passenger train might well happen to another train, unless the danger is removed. I have the photograph of the curve where the train left the line, the very curve that was regarded as being responsible for the disaster. It would be in the interests of everybody, in the cause of public safety, to have these curves eliminated.

I want to say a word or two about the staff position, which is becoming very serious. I recognise the great responsibility placed on the Commissioner in this matter. From what I have been told many young men who have joined the service have unfortunately not shown that they had their hearts in the job. That is unfortunate. If the evil increases, that is, if the young trainees have not their hearts in the job and do not do what is expected of them, the effect of the Minister's efforts in incurring millions of pounds in new equipment will be lost. I realise that this is not peculiar to the department but it is regrettable, seeing that the Minister and his department has seen fit to embark on a considerable expenditure to improve the service, that these new employees have not shown the keenness of the older employees.

The question of accrued annual leave is a serious one. There is still leave worth £720,000 outstanding since the last war, a large amount when we consider that last year the railways lost £1,500,000. I venture the opinion that quite a considerable amount of sick leave, which last year was valued at £235,062, is paid out because these men have not been able to take their holidays to maintain themselves in good health. If this position is allowed to drag on indefinitely it will be found that the amount of sick leave will increase until it becomes unbearable.

The 40-hour week has made great inroads into the revenue of the department and the report shows that last financial year £1,279,421 was paid out in overtime. I would go so far as to say that the railway men have had no benefit from a leisure point of view through the introduction of a 40-hour week. They are working extremely long hours and will continue doing so while the staff position remains as it is.

Another matter that will give the Minister a headache is the impending increase in the basic wage. That will have a grave effect on railway and governmental economy generally. It will increase expenditure enormously.

Mr. Power: Do you oppose it?

Mr. LOW: No, I stand four-square behind whatever is granted by the court. I am merely pointing out that the budget will be thrown out of proportion when the full impact of the increased basic wage is felt, especially as this department has 25,674 permanent and temporary employees.

There is one matter that is not coming any closer to realisation. On many occasions the Government promised the railway men a superannuation scheme as a reward for the services they rendered during the war. The Premier and other members of his party have referred to the fact that one million pounds would be set aside for that purpose, but evidently the whole scheme has been

left in abeyance and the promise will not be fulfilled. I believe that if the rank and file had the scheme properly explained to them a majority would vote for it. It is the union bosses, not the rank and file, who have already decided this matter. I have asked many of them what they knew of it and they said, "Absolutely nothing." I believe that if the Minister took a ballot of the men apart from the union bosses, the result would be a clear indication of whether they wanted it or not. When I say the bosses I mean the bosses of the union—the executive. They do not always tell their members what they are doing; they do it and keep it to themselves and if it does not leak out the rank and file know nothing about it.

Government Members: Nonsense! Absolute rot!

Mr. LOW: The Minister knows that is true. They might have a different way of going about things. Not 80 per cent. of the things that take place at the union executive meetings are made known to the rank and file.

Mr. Ingram: You don't know what you are talking about.

Mr. LOW: I do. Transfers and promotions are very slow in the Railway Department today. Again I do not blame the Minister. I realise there is a housing shortage and that that is holding up many transfers and promotions and causing a slowing down of the whole arrangement. I believe that the department will have to give consideration to building more houses for its own employees. I do not think such a move would be a losing one. When a position was advertised the department could also advertise the fact that the house was there to let for their use. That position will have to be faced because it would then step up transfers and promotions, which are lagging nowadays. I am sure, as we debate these Estimates, the Minister will find many of the suggestions we make worthy of putting into effect.

I feel that when freights and fares are dealt with from time to time the whole thing is loaded against the country people. The statement was made on one occasion that the producers would have to make a greater contribution to fares and freights on account of prosperity in their industries. When we look at the various primary industries, we find that they are not based on a 40-hour week but on a much longer working week and they are not so well off as some people imagine. I say to the Minister: do not put the fares and freights up on the people in the country to the benefit of those in the cities. An examination of the increases shows that the country increases have been greater than city increases. The Minister, as a result of a recent increase, received additional revenue to the extent of £25,487 on account of the cartage of fertiliser alone. That hits industry direct and must be regarded as an expense in the cost of production. Then we take timber, bricks, etc., and we find there has been a substantial increase, which hits the home-builder.

(Time expired.)

Mr. WOOD (North Toowoomba) (8.49 p.m.): I am sure most members will join with me in expressing our appreciation of the determination with which the Minister has tackled the work of administering the very important portfolio that he has held for the last four years. I was personally very pleased at the hon. the Minster's re-election to Cabinet and that he was re-entrusted with the very difficult and often unpopular portfolio of railways. I think all hon. members recognise the earnestness with which he tackles the many problems confronting him and the zeal he displays in the performance of his task. I have had a very close association with the Minister, as his electorate joins mine, and I think no-one is more aware than I am of the earnestness with which he has tackled this very difficult job. If the feeling among the public and the large section of railway employees in Toowoomba is any indication, he is highly thought of throughout Queensland and in the southern States for the capacity he displays.

I have a very few moments at my disposal tonight and I should like to mention briefly the matters raised by the hon. member for Lockyer. At the outset I make it clear that I am in no way disagreeing with his contention that he has a case to put up. He has a case to put up but he has put it up in the wrong way. It is quite true, as stated by the hon. member, that the Brisbane-Toowoomba train stops at Helidon, and invariably at that station the great majority of passengers trans-ship to the co-ordinated motor service, but the train then runs on to Toowoomba, frequently with only one passenger. I agree there is a case for an alteration.

The hon. member started off in a blaze of glory by drawing attention to the deficit in the railway accounts last year of approximately £1,500,000, and estimated that there would be a hypothetical deficit for the ensuing year of £3,000,000. He then proceeded to show ways by which this deficit could be avoided. I do not question that the hon. member has a case for some alteration in that train between Toowoomba and Helidon, and vice versa, but I doubt very much whether he will thereby reduce his expected deficit of £3,000,000. The hon. member showed that the cost of operating that train from Toowoomba to Helidon was approximately £30 a journey—£60 for the return trip but, it would take 100,000 such trips to wipe out his deficit of £3,000,000. In addition, if his suggestion was adopted—and I do not say that there is no good reason why is should not be—it would involve the expenditure of approximately £100,000 in construction works at Helidon to cater for the change that would be necessary.

Mr. Aikens: Would it cost that much to put an angle in?

Mr. WOOD: I am given to understand by responsible officers of the department that

locomotive sheds, staff quarters, and all the other alterations that would have to be made would cost approximately £100,000, to offset the saving of £30 a train trip. I suggest that the easier way to overcome this difficulty—and I think it should be overcome——

Mr. Chalk: Hear, hear!

Mr. WOOD: I agree with that. You have read in the Commissioner's report, Mr. Farrell, that orders have been placed—as just one phase of the ambitious plan for the development of our railways—for six twin-engine motor trains. I am going to ask the Minister for Transport to make the first available for use on the Brisbane-Helidon run because if that is done we shall have a very efficient service and one that will satisfy all the requirements of those who are using that line.

The railways have a very big job to carry out; they have carried out their work efficiently in the past and I am quite convinced that we in our day shall not see the replacement of the railways as a major carrying service by any other means of transport. No matter how we develop our roads and expand our air services, in our lifetime the railways will remain predominant as the chief means of transport in this State. In previous sessions I have heard hon. members—most of them on the Opposition benches—advocate the gradual lessening of interest in railways with the consequent development of road and air services, to their disadvantage. I am convinced that it would be a fatal step for this Government, with such a vast space to service, to neglect any opportunity of further expansion of the vital railway system. There is no industry in Australia today that is more complex than the railway service and we only need to look at the wide variety of occupations of people engaged in the railways. A few minutes ago I picked up a Weekly Notice—not a special notice and I saw the following positions held—clerks, drivers, firemen, cleaners, station-masters, night-officers, porters, fettlers, bridge carpenters, guards, signalmen, checkers, boilermakers, fitters, wagon-builders, inspectors, night-watchmen, number-takers, lifters, coalmen, pumpers, and so on. Those are a few that appeared in one Weekly Notice and I say that there is no industry with such complex ramifications as the railway system and there is no industry that has such a wide variety of uses. One of the most important of course is the transport of people and no matter how we expand our road services we still shall never do away with the necessity of a well-developed transport system to move the bulk of our people. As an illustration, let me say that today the Melbourne Cup was run and because of a railway strike in Victoria the attendance, which was expected to be a record, was 45,000 below the estimated figure because no trains were available to take the people to see the race. In the shifting of people, the railways, in spite of the greater use of the motor-car by owner-drivers, are still the greatest means of getting people from place to place quickly and safely. Nothing else supplies the same safety as our railway system.

Secondly, for the transport of livestock—and every hon. member is sincerely interested in this—to the abattoir for slaughtering, to the saleyards to be sold, or to areas for agistment in times when feed runs out and stock have to be moved from place to place, the railways are used. Although there are complaints, and the complaints made are generally justifiable, in the great majority of cases livestock are lifted safely and expeditiously to the satisfaction of those who own them.

And we have the great service our railways give in the moving of our primary products. Every farmer recognises what the railways do in helping him to move his products from the place of production to where they are to be consumed. I think all of them who are fair-minded—and most of them are—will give to the Queensland railways the credit that is due to them for the great job they have done in that respect.

Finally, I come to all the other items of merchandise that are carried—anything from Wirth's Circus to a baby's stroller—and in the great majority of cases, I repeat, those goods are carried safely and are delivered in good condition and within a reasonable time.

Our railways frequently meet with criticism. We do not mind that; I think everybody is entitled to offer his criticism. However, some of the criticism is rather hard to understand. On the one hand we have the complaint that our railways are losing and that therefore there should be some curtailment of expenditure, and generally a nebulous proposal is put forward. "Appoint a couple of men to inquire into something that may happen," is the general proposal submitted to us. No direct evidence of a major breakdown in policy or administration is given. I do not say that sometimes there are not misfits in our administrative positions; I have seen examples of them, and unfortunately it is not the misfit who usually has to bear the brunt of anything that goes wrong; it is the Minister, and through him the Government who have to take the responsibility. And I should like to say for the Minister that if responsibility has to fall on his shoulders, he is big enough to take the blame.

Government Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. WOOD: As I say, he is big enough to take the blame, even though sometimes he may not have anything to do with the cause of it and may have to suffer through the errors of an administrative misfit. I know that the Minister is just as keen as we all are to have the misfits in his department cleaned out as they are discovered. Although this criticism is offered—and much of it is sound criticism—on the other hand hon. members come here and speak from a parochial angle, asking that a line be built in this area, or that a curve be eliminated somewhere else, or that a line be duplicated, and so on ad infinitum. If all those things were carried out, instead of having a deficit of £500,000, we should have a deficit of £100,000,000 a year. If criticism is offered, it should be offered on broad lines. It is the duty of

every hon. member to submit a proposal to the Minister if he thinks it is in the interests of his area, but hon. members should not condemn the administration of the department if they find that all they require in their areas is not done.

In my maiden speech in this Assembly in 1946, I referred to the marvellous job that was done by the railways in wartime. I saw ample evidence of that when the equipment of the railways and the employees who serviced that equipment did a stupendous task, and everybody was loud in their praise. We have seen railway men who broke down as the result of the long and strenuous hours they worked in those years. The job they did then was recognised. However, they are doing just as good a job today as they did in the war years, and are no more due for criticism for failing to carry out their service to the community now than they were then. From time to time we see people who do not do their jobs, but the great majority of railway employees are loyal, are efficient, are interested in their jobs, and are giving a very good service to this State of ours.

I was indeed sorry when the South-western Division recently lost its general manager, Mr. Con. Byrne, who was not only a good railwayman but an outstanding boss. He was just to his employees, but had the interests of the department at heart. He could be firm, but just with it. If ever the department lost a brilliant railwayman it was Mr. Byrne. I hope that I shall have an opportunity on some future occasion of continuing my remarks on the Railway Department. I congratulate the Minister on the industry he has shown in his job and on the results that are becoming evident now.

Hon. J. E. DUGGAN (Toowoomba—Minister for Transport) (9.6 p.m.): I thank hon. members for their contributions to the debate so far. Perhaps I shall have the opportunity of replying to some of them on Thursday next. For the present I shall content myself with now asking you, Mr. Farrell, to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

Progress reported.

The House adjourned at 9.7 p.m.