

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 13 NOVEMBER 1952

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

QUESTIONS.

CONFLICT OF FEDERAL AND STATE AWARDS.

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

“In reference to his published statement that any lengthening of weekly hours by the Commonwealth Arbitration Court would not affect employees under State awards, will he kindly state for the information of those concerned what action he proposes to take, in the event of an increase in the standard hours by the Commonwealth Court, (a) to prevent Queensland employers from obtaining an award in that court instead of the State Court, and (b) to enable Queensland industries to compete with similar industries working longer weekly hours in southern States?”

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

“It is not proposed to disclose Government policy in answer to a question.”

PUBLICATIONS ON WATER CONSERVATION.

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

“In reference to the following publications by his department, namely, (a) The Mareeba-Dimbulah Irrigation Project, (b) Water is Magic, and (c) Conservation (J. A. Gresty)—

1. How many of each such publication have been printed to date?

2. What is the total cost to date of each such publication?

3. How many of each such publication were distributed in the Keppel electorate during the recent by-election?

Hon. T. A. FOLEY (Belyando) replied—

“For quite a number of years, pamphlets of a documentary nature, describing various phases of Government activity, have been published for distribution to the public at large. The publication of the booklets referred to by the hon. member, was in keeping with this policy. I felt that the enlightened people of Keppel would be interested in the work carried out by the Irrigation Department and in consequence, arranged for the distribution. It so happened that the distribution coincided with the by-election, and the splendid result of the poll indicated that the people of Keppel fully appreciated the information supplied to them.”

POWER OF ARREST, DRUNKEN AND DANGEROUS DRIVING.

Mr. MORRIS (Mt. Coot-tha) asked the Secretary for Labour and Industry—

“1. Is it a fact, as reported in ‘The Courier-Mail’ of Tuesday, 11 November, that Inspector Patch, Metropolitan Traffic Superintendent, instructed police officers not to make arrests under the Traffic Acts except for drunken and dangerous driving cases when motorists or pedestrians refuse to give their name and address? If so, has this instruction now been revoked? If so, by whom?

“2. Is the name of the person reported as having been taken to the watchhouse after allegedly refusing to give his name and address for a traffic breach now known to the police? If so, what is that name and address?

“3. Has any charge been preferred against the person? If not, then why not?”

Hon. A. JONES (Charters Towers) replied—

“1. No.

“2. and 3. As the incident in question is still the subject of Police investigations, it is not customary to disclose particulars pending their finalisation.”

PLAY AND LUNCH ROOM, MAROOCHY RIVER SCHOOL.

Mr. LOW (Coorooora) asked the Secretary for Public Works and Housing—

“With reference to repeated representations and in view of the fact that there is no playshed provided at the two-teacher Maroochy River State School, will he now give favourable consideration to the work of concreting or asphaltting the underneath portion of the school building, which is used as a lunch and play room, but is in a dirty, dusty and filthy condition and definitely undermining the health of the children?”

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

“Because of the drastic reduction by the Commonwealth Government in the amount of Loan Funds made available to the State for the current financial year, it is not possible to carry out, at the present time, many improvements considered desirable at schools and other public buildings. Funds must be conserved for and priority given to the provision of additional accommodation necessary at schools, hospitals, etc. At a later stage in the financial year if it be found that funds are available for works in the nature of improvements, I will give consideration to the request for surfacing the playing area under the Maroochy River School in conjunction with a number of other similar requests.”

LAWS OF EVIDENCE, RAILWAY APPEAL CASES.

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) asked the Minister for Transport—

“1. Has his attention been drawn to a Press report of a railway appeal case, appearing on page 2 of the ‘Townsville Daily Bulletin’ of 17 October, 1952, wherein the chairman of the Railway Appeal Board, Mr. J. Hickey, S.M., said, with reference to the abolition by the Government of the laws of evidence in railway appeal cases, ‘I hope you are not blaming me. I had nothing whatever to do with the matter! I am prepared to resign my position with the Public Service if it can be proved that I had anything whatever either directly or indirectly to do with that matter’?

“2. As the railway unions strongly oppose the abolition of the laws of evidence in railway appeal cases, and it now appears that the chairman of the Appeal Board also opposes it, are we to understand that this drastic step was taken only at the instigation of the Railway Commissioner and solely in his interests?”

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

“The hon. member is in error in assuming that the Chairman of the Railway Appeal Board is opposed to the amendment made to the Railways Acts under which the Board is required to investigate any and every appeal without regard to legal forms and

solemnities and to direct themselves by the best evidence they can procure or that is laid before them whether the same is such evidence as the law would require or admit in other cases or not. This amendment of the Railways Acts is in harmony with the Public Service Acts, 1922-1950 and the City of Brisbane Acts Amendment Act of 1943 as appeals conducted under these Acts are not governed by the laws of evidence. Neither is the Industrial Court in the exercise of its functions under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act."

SEALING ROAD SURFACE, KURANDA.

Mr. WORDSWORTH (Cook) asked the Minister for Transport—

"When is it expected that a commencement will be made with sealing the road section between Kuranda railway station and the existing bitumen main street of that township?"

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

"I have no information of any request having been made for this work to be done. However, the matter will be inquired into."

COAL-MINE WORKERS' PENSIONS.

Mr. LLOYD ROBERTS (Whitsunday) asked the Secretary for Mines and Immigration—

"1. Has he seen the announcement in the Press to the effect that the New South Wales State Cabinet have approved of the following increases in coal-miners' pensions:—(a) Single or widower's pension, from £3 17s. 6d. to £4 10s. per week; (b) For wife, de facto wife or adult female dependent, from £3 2s. 6d. to £3 15s.; (c) Widow, from £3 2s. 6d. to £4; and (d) Nurse, from £2 15s. to £3 7s. 6d.?"

"2. If so, will he give urgent consideration to introducing a Bill to grant similar increases in Queensland?"

Hon. E. J. RIORDAN (Flinders) replied—

"1. Yes.

"2. The matter of increased pension rates has been under consideration for some time and a decision was reached by Cabinet prior to such Press announcement."

ALLEGED BREAKDOWN, DIESEL-ELECTRIC LOCOMOTIVE.

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

"In view of his half-column statement published in the 'Toowoomba Chronicle' on Friday last that the new diesel-electric locomotive would haul the morning passenger train to Toowoomba next day and inviting the public to inspect the Inlander at the Toowoomba Railway Station between 12.15 p.m. and 2.30 p.m., also the fact that the locomotive did not arrive because of

what he briefly described in the Press as 'due to a rearrangement of the testing period', will he state—

"1. Whether it would be more correct to say that the locomotive broke down while in actual service hauling a minor load over a slight incline?"

"2. Whether in an effort to locate the trouble, engineers at Mayne found that the set up of the unit was such that it was impossible to remove the engine head because of the structural design of the encasement and that finally an oxy torch had to be used in tin opener fashion to cut the cowling away?"

"3. Whether the American experts have yet ascertained the cause of the breakdown, and if so, will he fully explain this to the House so that statements rapidly spreading, even within his own department, that the unit has burnt out bearings, faulty cams, fuel and oil blockages can be denied or confirmed?"

"4. When it is anticipated the unit will now visit Toowoomba and whether the first run to that city will be on a passenger train and for public inspection as originally indicated by him?"

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

"I need no advice from the hon. member in regard to the form in which Press statements released by me should be made. If I were so foolish as to be guided by his criticisms or advice, I would—unless I were a less sensitive person than the hon. member—feel embarrassed by the successive successful refutations of his groundless attacks. I have no need to defend my own personal reputation against the hon. member, but as the Ministerial head of a department, I am obliged to object to the tactics employed by him, which follow a familiar pattern, known in the United States as 'McCarthyism,' namely by innuendo or wild allegations smearing the administration or particular persons in the administration. I think hon. members will agree that the hon. member for Lockyer is doing a serious disservice to the office of Member of Parliament and to the good of Queensland, by his completely irresponsible and ill-founded criticism of the Queensland Railways, and particularly by the furtive means employed by him to prosecute these attacks. I am informed on reliable authority by persons with whom he was associated that he is not a trained engineer, but a salesman, and that only by instinct. The arrangements made whereby the diesel-electric locomotive would work the Brisbane-Toowoomba and Toowoomba-Brisbane passenger trains on Saturday last and be available for inspection by the public at the Toowoomba Railway Station were in anticipation that the various running tests which the locomotive had first to undergo would have been satisfactorily completed in time to permit of such an arrangement. It was found, however, during these tests that the locomotive was not developing its full power and that

further tests would be necessary to locate the trouble, which since has been found to be due to the two exhaust pipes of the exhaust manifold rotating slightly, thus blocking off the exhaust from some of the cylinders. The conditions of contract provide that the locomotives will not be accepted by the Commissioner until each has satisfactorily completed 5,000 miles test running on the Queensland Railways. If, during such test running, any locomotive proves in any way defective in operation, material or workmanship, the contractor shall make good such defect. The defect has now been remedied. The removal of portion of the cowling, in order to obtain access to the exhaust pipes, was the quickest and most economical method of carrying out the work, and will not affect the strength or appearance of the locomotive. The portion removed had been originally welded into position during manufacture and was merely cut at the points of the previous welds and then re-welded. The circumstances did not justify the haulage of the unit to Ipswich for lifting by the shop cranes and, contrary to the hon. member's suggestion, the cowling can be and is normally removed by that means. No other defect of any description has been observed in the locomotive, and the hon. member is accountable to his own conscience for the wild and extravagant rumours which he himself has been spreading about the locomotive. The locomotive left for Toowoomba at 4.25 a.m. today and arrived at Toowoomba at 9.16 a.m., hauling a load of 424 tons unassisted throughout, the maximum permissible drawgear load up the Range for a single engine being 425 tons. The next most powerful locomotive—namely, the Garratt, is capable of hauling only 375 tons unassisted throughout, and a 'C19' locomotive 285 tons. The time for the journey was 4 hours 51 minutes, whereas a similar train hauled by a steam locomotive would take 8 hours 15 minutes. The diesel locomotive left Toowoomba again at 10.10 a.m. with 533 tons—scheduled maximum load 540 tons—on the return journey to Brisbane, only 54 minutes after arrival. A steam locomotive so employed could not have returned under 2 hours, as it would have required to go to the depot for re-coaling, watering and other attention. The above test completed this morning provides a most complete refutation of the hon. member's allegations, and reveals the hon. member to be nothing more than a petty, meddlesome busybody."

KEPPEL BY-ELECTION.

ORDER FOR RETURN.

Mr. NICKLIN (Landsborough—Leader of the Opposition): I move—

"That there be laid upon the table of the House, and printed, a return in the usual form showing details of the polling at the recent Keppel by-election."

Motion agreed to.

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DISEASES IN STOCK ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

THIRD READING.

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

SECOND-HAND FRUIT CASES ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

Debate resumed from 12 November (see p. 1204) on Mr. Collins's motion—

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

Mr. MORRIS (Mt. Coot-tha) (11.19 a.m.): As the Leader of the Opposition said yesterday, the Act has proved of great value to the people who were unable to get fruit-cases throughout the difficult war period and the introduction of this legislation has been unanimously acclaimed, but the Bill could be made more effective by a small alteration and with that object in view I propose to move an amendment at the Committee stage.

The definition in the Act of second-hand fruit cases does not go far enough. As most of us know, there are second-hand cases that are very good, almost equal to new cases, but there are also second-hand cases that in actual fact are probably 100 times second-hand. They have been used so often and knocked about so very much that they are almost completely unusable for packing fruit or vegetables. Greengrocers, fruiterers and others, after buying cases of fruit and vegetables in the market, open and handle them carelessly, knowing that they can get the same money for the cases from the merchant as if they had done so carefully. There are other retailers who open cases carefully and treat them well and when these cases are resold to the farmer he can use them without any repair. It seems quite wrong that cases that are badly knocked about should bring as much as cases that have been well cared for, and I would like to seek a new definition of second-hand cases so that not only will there perhaps be different prices for the good as against the bad but the retailer will take some care of the cases and keep them in good condition. I have known of people who, not being able to buy new cases, asked for a consignment of 100 cases, only to receive 100 cases that were only cases in name, so that they had to break up 50 of these cases to make the other 50 usable. On another occasion such a purchaser may buy a consignment of 100 cases and be able to use them all.

Yesterday the Leader of the Opposition made a plea that second-hand cases be released from the control of the Commissioner of Prices and I am very pleased to know that the Minister considered that plea very sympathetically and that today second-hand cases are freed from price-control. All of us commend the Minister for his prompt action.

We do need a second classification of second-hand cases. There are retailers, fruiterers and other people who buy cases of

different types of fruit—oranges, bananas, plums, peaches, grapes, tomatoes, etc.—and these cases are of very many kinds, as was mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition. Some are in great demand and some are hardly called for at all. Some traders, in contravention of the regulations, send a type of case that is in great demand direct to the farm, knowing that when they sell to the farmer they can get a better price than when they sell to the merchant. That is bad enough but the worst aspect is that when they sell all the better-class cases to the farmers they are left with cases that are of no use to any farmer and they send these to the merchants. It is certainly a pretty raw deal to the merchant. I should like to see the regulations altered in that respect. The law now says that the retailer must sell his cases to the merchant. That being so, I suggest that he should sell them to the merchant and not try to get round the regulations by selling them direct to the users perhaps at better prices.

I should like to see the control of these prices placed in the hands of the Second-hand Fruit Cases Committee because I am confident that committee would appreciate the need for a dual classification of second-hand fruit cases. Since I spoke on the introduction of the Bill, I have been told that some years ago the committee did in fact have classifications for fruit cases. I have not been able to get proof of that but if it did have that further classification it adds strength to my argument that the Government should accept an amendment that I propose moving when we are in Committee. I know the Minister has listened with interest to the debate and that he will analyse what I have said, and I am certain that if the amendment that I propose to move is going to be helpful to the trade in general he will accept it.

Finally, I make the point that there are many people who would sooner pay 1s. or 1s. 3d. for a second-hand fruit case that they could use without having to repair it in any way than 6d. for one that had a split in the main side board or in such bad condition that it was almost impossible to use it even after a great deal of repair. On the other hand, there are farmers who have ample shed space and who buy the cheaper inferior cases with the object of repairing them in rainy weather when they are unable to work in the open. In this way they occupy their time and at the same time derive the advantage of getting cheaper cases.

For those reasons, I suggest that it is advisable to have new classifications.

Mr. TURNER (Kelvin Grove) (11.28 a.m.): I listened with interest yesterday to the speech delivered by the Leader of the Opposition, and I was pleased when I heard him say that he was confident that if a vote of the fruit-growers was taken it would be 100 per cent. in favour of the Bill we are now discussing. It is gratifying to know that at least one section of the primary producers are 100 per cent. in favour of a measure this Government have brought down in their interests.

I was keenly interested in the statement of the Leader of the Opposition about the difficulties experienced by the fruit-growers in the Stanthorpe district some years ago. That was an extremely difficult time for those growers. They had produced an excellent crop but were unable to get cases in which to send their product to market, but I disagree with his objection to having the prices of second-hand cases controlled by the Commissioner of Prices. I remind him that there can be only one price-fixing authority. He argues that because the timber for new cases is decontrolled, second-hand fruit cases should be decontrolled also.

Mr. Nicklin: Second-hand cases are decontrolled now.

Mr. TURNER: I was surprised that he, as a representative of the fruit-growers, should have advocated that course because, under the present system by which dealers handle the second-hand cases, I can imagine the raw deal the primary producers could get if these dealers had a free hand to charge what they liked for the second-hand cases.

Mr. Nicklin: They have it now.

Mr. TURNER: I know it has been eliminated.

I have often wondered why the primary producers, crop producers in particular have never seen fit to charge for the containers, whether they are cases, bags, sacks, cartons, or anything else, in which they pack their products. I see no reason why a man who is growing fruit, for example, should not make a charge for the case in which he packs it. I see no reason why the grain-grower should not charge for the sack in which he sends his grain to the market, especially when sacks are so costly. Some years ago grain-growers had to pay as much as 4s. 8d. for sacks to put their grain in, and I understand that the present price is about 2s. 8d. I can remember the time when they were from 4½d. to 6d. each. As these bags are imported, there is every reason why the grain-grower should make a charge for them. Further, they should be returned to him from the user, just as other packages are. I see no reason why some Smart Alec should make a comfortable living from buying cheaply second-hand sacks from the produce merchants, reconditioning some of them, and rolling them up and selling them back to the producer at a fabulous price.

Then we have the small-crops farmer who produces peas and beans. He uses many sugar-bags in which to pack his products and has to pay through the neck for them. Why should he not be placed in the same position as the merchants? I have here a roneoed list of merchants' charges for the different packages in which they pack their goods.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! We are dealing with second-hand fruit cases only.

Mr. TURNER: I am pointing out that merchants charge for every container that they pack their commodities in, and I want

to know why the primary producer, particularly the fruit-grower who packs his goods in cases, should not make a charge for those cases so that they will be returnable to him.

I know of no better authority to deal with this matter than the Committee of Direction of Fruit Marketing, of which I am a great supporter. It has a big area of land at Banyo and has plenty of room for second-hand cases if they were delivered to it. It would look after the interests of the primary producers far better than the dealers in the second-hand cases do. A charge could be made for each case, which could be returned to the Committee of Direction and a refund made to the person who returned it. That would be better than allowing these Smart Ales to deal in second-hand cases.

Another improvement would be the elimination of lids on fruit cases. The fruit-growers of Griffith, New South Wales, have developed a new type of case in which to pack their fruit. It has no lid. They put a triangular piece of about 1½ inches on each corner, and the cases can be stacked on top of one another without damaging the fruit. Such a practice eliminates the waste that the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha referred to when agents break the lids off fruit cases.

Mr. Nicklin: Those cases are suitable only for local trade.

Mr. TURNER: That does not matter.

Mr. Nicklin: My word, it does!

Mr. TURNER: If they can bring fruit up from Griffith in them, they could be used here. They could be put carefully in our trains—

Mr. Nicklin: You do not know our trains.

Mr. TURNER: If they can pack cherries, grapes and apricots, which are very easily damaged and very perishable, in them and send them to the Brisbane markets, where they arrive in a really good state, I am sure our own producers can do likewise.

I support the Bill and sincerely hope that it goes through in its present form.

Mr. CLARK (Fitzroy) (11.35 a.m.): I am very interested in this Bill. Both the late hon. member for Keppel and I often wondered why it was not extended to the Central and Northern Districts and I am pleased that this is now to be done. The trouble in the Central District was that the merchants there bought all the second-hand cases they could in which to send their goods to customers in the country, leaving the fruit-growers to search fruitlessly for second-hand cases, and even new ones. Some had to travel mile upon mile in search of them and at times could not get enough to send their crops to market. That is why the Act is now being extended to both the Central and Northern Districts.

It is true, as the hon. member for Mount Coot-tha said, that some of the cases are in very poor condition and worth very little. Frequently the people who buy the product

in the cases take little care of the cases in unpacking the goods, because they know that they can get as much for one of poor quality as one in fairly good order.

I congratulate the Minister on introducing the Bill and I endorse the view of the Leader of the Opposition that the growers in both the Central and Northern Districts are 100 per cent. in favour of it.

Motion (Mr. Collins) agreed to.

COMMITTEE.

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

Clauses 1 and 2, as read, agreed to.

Clause 3—Amendments of s. 3; Meanings of terms—

Mr. MORRIS (Mt. Coot-tha) (11.39 a.m.): I move the following amendment—

“On page 3, line 4, after the word ‘vegetables’ insert the words—

‘and being either a first-grade second-hand fruit case (a case suitable without repairs thereto for use as a container of fruit or vegetables) or a second-grade second-hand fruit case (a case not suitable without repairs thereto for use as a container of fruit or vegetables).’”

There is no need for me to repeat the argument that I advanced in favour of the amendment when I made my second reading speech. I made it abundantly clear that my amendment would be to the advantage of the grower, the merchant, and ultimately the fruiterer who bought the case. It would encourage him to protect the good asset in the form of the case because he would be able to get a better price for a good case than for an inferior one. The amendment would encourage him to take care in opening the case. It would be to the advantage of all concerned.

No doubt it will be argued that it would be difficult to implement the amendment. I realise that there may be a slight difficulty in controlling and policing it, nevertheless the advantages that would accrue would make it well and truly worth while. It may not be 100 per cent. effective, but, as I said, it will be well worth while.

Hon. H. H. COLLINS (Tablelands—Secretary for Agriculture and Stock) (11.41 a.m.): My desire is to make the Bill as workable as I can and when the hon. member for Mount Coot-tha first drew my attention to the amendment I thought there was something in it, and that it was desirable. I had an opportunity of making an investigation after the debate on the second reading was adjourned yesterday—the matter had never been brought under my notice before—and my inquiries revealed that it is not practicable. I had the Second-hand Fruit Cases Committee communicated with with

respect to it, and for greater accuracy I will read the report that was furnished to me. It is as follows—

“It was considered that the application of the amendment would be impracticable as it would be difficult to determine precisely what the demarcation was between a first-grade and a second-grade fruit case. It is considered that now the price of second-hand fruit cases has been decontrolled and in view of the committee's decision to allow prices to find their own levels, the laws of supply and demand will effectively police the quality of case that is supplied to farmers.”

Conditions have changed very materially, even in the year we are passing through. At the beginning of the year there was a very great shortage of timber because of the heavy demand, but that demand ceased very suddenly for many and varied reasons. Today millers milling new timber are looking for purchasers of new cases, whereas at one time they were unfortunately looking for excuses to avoid their obligations to cut case-timber until the demand for other timber was met. The timber merchants today are looking for this trade whereas at one time they tried to avoid it. It appears that the second-hand fruit case trade is quite a business, and that a dealer on receiving a case that has been knocked about goes to some pains to repair it. In fact, there is quite a trade in repairing them. Evidently those dealers, on days when it is too wet to work or when there is a lull in business, put in a lot of time repairing damaged second-hand cases. As the Second-hand Fruit Cases Committee is of opinion that the amendment is not practicable I see no advantage whatever to be gained from accepting it.

Mr. NICKLIN (Landsborough—Leader of the Opposition) (11.45 a.m.): There is a great deal of merit in the amendment moved by the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha. One of the greatest complaints growers have made against the operation of the Act was that there has been no control of the quality of cases coming forward from the dealers; there was one fixed price for all cases, good cases as well as cases that should have been retired, under a pensions scheme. (Laughter.) I realise the difficulty that is entailed in the sorting and grading of cases. Now that the price of cases has been decontrolled and a free market will operate, the various dealers will have to do some grading themselves in order to retain business, therefore I believe that the object of the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha will be achieved as a result of the competition between the various dealers; and possibly that may be the best way to allow the matter to develop.

There is a mighty difference between cases. The case that has been used once is often equal to a new case, and it has the advantage of being ready for use, after the removal of the original grower's brand and is worth considerably more than a number of the cases referred to by the hon. member for Fitzroy that I have seen on the Rockhampton market

on many occasions. I thought it was remarkable that they held together and they also had the disadvantage that they did not add to the attractiveness of their contents, which is a very important point.

Mr. Power: They were built by contract; the others were built by day-labour.

Mr. NICKLIN: The Attorney-General is always trying to introduce some side-issue. If he had to scratch round the countryside for cases in which to put his fruit he would not give two hoots whether they were made by contract or day-labour, as long as he could get them.

The object of the Bill is to utilise to the full the cases that are available. When we consider the cost of these cases we realise how important the Bill is. A few years ago, when a case cost a few pence, it did not matter what happened after you used it once, but now, when a half-bushel case costs 3s. for timber alone, it is a very big factor in growers' expenses and in the price of the fruit to the consumer. We have to use our containers as long as we can and to the best advantage in order to reduce the cost to the grower and to the consumer.

In view of the fact that the very wise decision to decontrol second-hand fruit cases has been made and as a result of the competition that will be brought about among the dealers, the object the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha desired to achieve by his amendment will now be achieved without it. In view of the difficulty that would be met with in grading I think possibly it would be wise to let the Bill go as it is at the present time and see how it works out under the decontrol of the price of cases.

Mr. MORRIS (Mt. Coot-tha) (11.49 a.m.): I was very interested in the remarks of the Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. When the amendment was framed I did not know—and I do not think the public or the merchants knew—that cases had been decontrolled. In view of the argument advanced by the Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, which have a great deal to commend them, I think the law of supply and demand will probably have the same effect as the amendment would have.

Amendment (Mr. Morris) negatived.

Clause 3, as read, agreed to.

Clause 4—Amendments of s. 4; Constitution of the Second-hand Fruit Cases Committee—as read, agreed to.

Clause 5—New s. 4A inserted; Separate committees—

Mr. NICKLIN (Landsborough—Leader of the Opposition) (11.51 a.m.): This clause deals with the setting up of separate committees and no doubt very shortly after the passage of this Bill the Minister will receive an application from the fruit-growers of the Rockhampton district, and one from the fruit-growers somewhere in North Queensland, probably about the Townsville area. These committees are to be set up and the only connection between the committees operating

in the different parts of the State will be the Director of Marketing. It is essential that there shall be close liaison between the operations of these separate committees and in view of the fact that they will be operating at widely separate points I trust that the representatives of the Director of Marketing, on the central and northern committees will be men who are in close touch with the operation of the South Queensland committee, so that there can be co-ordination in the handling of second-hand fruit cases. For example, if there is a surplus of second-hand cases in South Queensland and an area in North Queensland can use that surplus, it can be transferred by arrangement to the northern or the central area, as the case may be. This will enable the fullest advantage to be taken of the supplies available.

Hon. H. H. COLLINS (Tablelands—Secretary for Agriculture and Stock) (11.52 a.m.): It was very difficult at times to hear the Leader of the Opposition, but I can assure him that there will be a very close liaison between the committees set up in Central and Northern Queensland with the committee operating in the Brisbane area. The Director of Marketing, or his nominee, will be a member of each local committee, and this will ensure that liaison. Of course, no new committee will be set up in an area contiguous with the present area, it will be covered by the present committee. I can assure the Leader of the Opposition that there will be a liaison between the committees and that common sense will be the guiding principle in administration.

Clause 5, as read, agreed to.

Clause 6—Amendment of s. 16; Orders for second-hand fruit cases to be submitted to the Committee—as read, agreed to.

Clause 7—Insertion of new ss. 16A and 16B; Power to direct dealers to supply second-hand fruit cases to certain growers; Dealers obliged to buy second-hand fruit cases available—

Mr. NICKLIN (Landsborough—Leader of the Opposition) (11.53 a.m.): This clause takes power to direct dealers to supply second-hand fruit cases to certain growers and that dealers are to be obliged to buy second-hand fruit cases available. This involves the question of price. Since the Bill was first discussed, the Commissioner of Prices has decontrolled second-hand cases. The hon. member for Kelvin Grove does not understand the position as to the fixation of prices of cases as it operated up to the present. I can assure him that the decontrolling of cases at the present time will not mean that growers will be placed at a disadvantage in any way; rather will they be placed in a more advantageous position than formerly. The decontrol will eliminate the black-marketing that operated to the detriment of growers.

Mr. Hilton: There is a surplus of cases at the present time.

Mr. NICKLIN: They are increasing and when the crop at Stanthorpe is harvested I

hope there will be no shortage of second-hand cases. To show how price-fixing operated, I would mention that a new half-bushel case cost approximately 3s. 3d., 3s. for the timber and nails, and 3d. to make it up. The price fixed by the Commissioner for a second-hand case was 9d. That was an absolutely absurd price in relation to the price of new cases.

As cases were in short supply, the growers naturally went round the various retailers in the city offering as much as 1s. for good half-bushel cases, and took all they could get at that price. As the retailer could only get from the dealer a very much lower price than that, it was only natural that he should sell direct to the grower. The grower was willing to pay more for cases, but was prevented from doing so by the Commissioner of Prices, but now that there is a free market, the position will adjust itself. The growers will get a fair deal, the black-market will be eliminated, and the dealers, who are responsible for the distribution of the cases, will collect them and bring them to the various depots. The committee will have power to direct where they shall go from there.

The hon. member mentioned a charge for containers. All growers would like to see that practice introduced, but there are so many difficulties in the way that it seems to be impracticable at the moment.

Mr. Collins: I tried to arrange for that before I amended the Bill.

Mr. NICKLIN: I know the difficulties only too well. For years the fruit-growers have been examining this question without success, and as the many points involved would take me half an hour to explain, I content myself with saying that it is desirable to do as the hon. member suggests, if something practicable can be evolved, but at the moment I cannot see that it can be done.

The hon. member suggested also that we should use fruit cases without lids. That is practicable only on the local market. He mentioned that grapes, apricots, and other things were brought from the southern States in that way. That is true but they were brought here in full truckloads, all consigned to the one person, and they were not interfered with from the time they were loaded on the train until they arrived at South Brisbane, but because the cases had no lids they were usable only on the local market.

The hon. member should know that the best market for the fruit-grower is the country trade. If he puts fruit of country-trade quality in lidless cases he will get only the local-market price, so that for general purposes the lids must be used on cases unless we can overcome the difficulty experienced on the railways where we already find people helping themselves to the fruit in the cases. This takes place even when the cases are lidded and wired, so that the contents of a case without a lid would not have much chance of getting far.

I trust that as a result of the removal of cases from price-control a better method of handling second-hand cases will be arranged. I trust also that the Minister will be able to arrange for the co-operation of the Railway Department in connection with freight charges on the transfer of second-hand cases from one area to another. There is a special rate now for returned empties, and I suggest that this rate should apply whenever it is found necessary to transfer cases from one place to another.

Clause 7, as read, agreed to.

Clauses 8 to 14, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

SUPPLY.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE—ESTIMATES— EIGHTH AND NINTH ALLOTTED DAYS.

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

ESTIMATES-IN-CHIEF, 1952-1953.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS.

CHIEF OFFICE.

Debate resumed from 11 November (see p. 1192) on Mr. Moore's motion—

“That £454,681 be granted for ‘Department of Health and Home Affairs—Chief Office’,”

Mr. CHALK (Lockyer) (12.1 p.m.): Throughout this debate we have heard quite a great deal about the arrangements between the Commonwealth and the State in respect of hospitalisation. It is not my intention, in the short time available to me, to discuss that matter any further, but there is one thing that I think has not had quite as much publicity as it should. I refer particularly to the T.B. campaign throughout Queensland, which I believe is an indication of what can be done by unity between the Commonwealth and the State. However, it appears that some attempt is being made by this State Government to take from the Commonwealth Government credit that is due to them.

The other morning we had what I should say was a satisfactory answer to a question asked by the hon. member for Warwick as to what was being done about T.B. within this State. In reply to the hon. member, the Secretary for Health and Home Affairs said—

“The hon. the Minister for Transport opened an X-ray unit for tuberculosis purposes at the Toowoomba Hospital on 24 October last. Work has commenced on the building of a tuberculosis wing at the Cairns Hospital and tenders have been let for a tuberculosis wing at the Townsville Hospital. Plans for tuberculosis wings at the Toowoomba and Rockhampton Hospitals are in an advanced stage. The establishment of X-ray facilities at other base hospitals similar to those now operating at the Toowoomba Hospital will be further considered after a period of

observation of the working of the plant at the Toowoomba Hospital. The ordinary X-ray facilities are also available free of charge at public hospitals throughout the State.”

The point I want to make clear is that the Commonwealth and State Governments entered into an arrangement in 1948 as the result of which the Commonwealth Government are responsible for the capital cost of improvements carried out throughout Queensland, and for that matter throughout the Commonwealth. Furthermore, the Commonwealth Government are responsible for all maintenance costs above the amount provided by the State during the base year, the 12 months ended 30 June, 1948. I do not want to take from the State credit for the part it is playing, because I believe this is one instance where the State and the Commonwealth are working together very unitedly. However, it is only right that the people of Queensland should be acquainted with the fact that the Commonwealth Government are playing a very vital part in this campaign.

In the campaign in Toowoomba, the Toowoomba Apex Club, with the help of the citizens of Toowoomba, very kindly made available an amount of £708 towards the purchase of an X-ray plant. Every citizen of Toowoomba compliments the club on the work it has done. An extra £251 was required to meet the cost of the complete unit and this amount was readily forthcoming from the Commonwealth Government through the State Government to the Apex Club. The cost of the installation has also been borne by the Commonwealth Government.

It is important that the happy arrangement that now exists between the Commonwealth and the State for the treatment of sufferers from tuberculosis should be maintained. Let me give hon. members some idea of the amount of money made available by the Commonwealth to the States for this purpose since the present agreement was entered into. Up to the base year, that is, the year prior to the introduction of the Act now in force relating to Commonwealth aid for this purpose, the State Government had spent £87,687 on the treatment of tuberculosis in Queensland. I acknowledge that to be a reasonable sum for this purpose, but since 1948, that is, from 1 July, 1948, to 30 June, 1952, the Commonwealth Government have made payments totalling £243,236 for maintenance work in connection with tuberculosis in Queensland and £145,812 has been made available to the State Government as capital reimbursement. In all the State has benefited by the agreement with the Commonwealth to the extent of £389,048. Those figures conclusively indicate that the Commonwealth Government are doing all they possibly can to help this State in its campaign against tuberculosis.

The Commonwealth Government are also paying pensions to the unfortunate sufferers from tuberculosis. For instance, under the Commonwealth agreement a married man suffering from the disease can get £9 a week while he is getting treatment and a single

man, not in hospital, £5 10s. a week or, if in hospital, where he is treated free of charge, £3 7s. 6d. a week. Each dependent child of a sufferer gets 10s. a week in addition to the normal child endowment.

Mr. Clark: And the Commonwealth Government have gathered more taxes over that period than in any corresponding period before.

Mr. CHALK: I knew that some hon. member opposite would interject along those lines and it is only right to point out to the hon. member for Fitzroy that today we are discussing the administration of an important department whose purpose it is to help the community, that we are not discussing tax collections by the Commonwealth Government. I was pointing out what the Commonwealth Government were doing to help to get rid of this dread disease in this State.

Mr. Aikens: Not every sufferer from tuberculosis gets those pensions.

Mr. CHALK: The hon. member for Mundingburra is at liberty to get up in this Chamber and make his own case; I am dealing with the position as I know it. It is our duty to express our appreciation of the actions of the Commonwealth Government in this regard and I should not like the Minister to think that I am doing it with the idea of having a lengthy discussion or any argument about it. I am doing it simply because I think that the people of Queensland should know what the Commonwealth Government are doing. The relationship between the Commonwealth and the State is a happy one and there is no reason why it should not continue with advantage to the people of Queensland.

Hon. W. M. MOORE (Merthyr—Secretary for Health and Home Affairs): (12.10 p.m.): It is rather interesting to hear the hon. member for Lockyer admit that questions are answered satisfactorily, for we always contend that they are. My Government have never denied the contribution made by the Federal Government towards the tuberculosis campaign. Both I and my Government have always given them full credit. I would remind the hon. member, however, that the first contribution made to the tuberculosis campaign was made by the Chifley Government in 1948, and that contribution is being carried on by the present Federal Government. We appreciate it very much and hope that with their co-operation we shall do much to stamp out this disease.

We are moving along in this matter as quickly as we possibly can. We have found it difficult to go on with the construction of the hospital at Chermide as quickly as we should like. The work could not be done for various reasons. Eventually the department decided to import prefabricated buildings, and progress is now being made. It takes quite a time getting prefabricated buildings out from England, but when they arrive they will be used for the purpose intended. When labour and materials are available the work on the hospital as planned will be proceeded with, and these prefabricated buildings will

be used for ancillary purposes. Officers of the Federal Government were in Brisbane a fortnight ago making a survey of the position and co-operating with officers of my department in the scheme. I hope that co-operation will exist between the two Governments and that as a result we shall do something worth while to stamp out tuberculosis. I want to make further reference to a matter that has been very widely debated on these Estimates, namely, the agreement between the Commonwealth and State on hospital benefits. I would point out that very belatedly on Tuesday night, when it was thought this vote would be put and the debate concluded, the hon. member for Mount Coot-tha introduced what would appear to have been a statement made by the Federal Minister for Health and Social Services, Sir Earle Page, and by the use of a very garbled and spurious argument not founded on fact accused my Government and my department of preventing the Mater Hospital from coming to an agreement with the Commonwealth. That is a very serious matter. It would appear, however, that it was a last desperate effort to besmirch the good name of this Government and confuse the minds of the people.

The hon. member repeated the statement made by Sir Earle Page that the Queensland Government was responsible for the withdrawal of the subsidy from the Mater Public Hospital as they had not registered the Mater Public Hospital as a denominational hospital and consequently placed that institution in an invidious position. He said that the State Government had refused to allow denominational public hospitals to become registered as private hospitals for Commonwealth hospital-benefits purposes. That is a very serious statement. Fortunately the statement made by the hon. member is not true. As I and my colleagues have done since the initiation of this debate I propose again to produce documentary evidence to prove the actions of the Queensland Government in this matter and to show that they at all times tried to come to a fair agreement with the Commonwealth Government on all these matters provided that we as a Government were able to preserve the rights of the Queensland people.

I propose to read a letter I forwarded to the secretary of the Mater Misericordiae Hospital Mr. H. A. Hegerty concerning the statements made by the hon. member on Tuesday night. The letter reads—

“Dear Mr. Hegerty,

“I would refer you to the statement appearing in last Friday’s ‘Courier-Mail’ by the Federal Health Minister, Sir Earle Page, with reference to the question of the granting of the 8s. a day Commonwealth Hospital Benefit to denominational hospitals, and would advise that this statement was repeated in Parliament House last night by the member for Mt. Coot-tha, Mr. K. J. Morris, M.L.A.”

“As these statements contained references to the relations between the State Government and your hospital, which are,

as far as I am aware, not in accordance with fact, would you be good enough to set out in a letter the facts as known to you concerning the negotiations which took place between your hospital, the Commonwealth, and the State authorities in this matter.

"Yours faithfully,
"W. Moore."

Here is the reply I received. I ask members to bear with me while I read this document, which is a comprehensive answer. The letter is signed by John P. Kelly, chairman of the advisory board. For the information of members, I tell them that J. P. Kelly is one of Brisbane's leading solicitors and he is very competent to give opinions on regulations of the Federal Government. The letter reads—

"The Office of the Secretary,
"Mater Misericordiae Hospitals,
"Justice Chambers, 17A Adelaide
Street,
"Brisbane, B.4.
"13th November, 1952.

"Dear Sir,

"The administration of these hospitals has received your request for a statement concerning negotiations affecting hospital benefits and has asked me to forward the following information to you. In doing so the administration wishes to make it perfectly clear that it has no desire to enter into any controversy but feels in view of the public references that have been made to these institutions and to its correspondence that some clarification is necessary.

"When the original hospital agreement was signed in 1945 by the Commonwealth and State Governments both governments recognised the Mater Misericordiae Public Hospitals as public hospitals for the purposes of the agreement. The consequences of this recognition were that the hospitals undertook in terms of the agreement not to charge fees to in-patients, that the Commonwealth was to make payments of 8/- per day per patient and that the State Government was to meet the balance of the daily maintenance (not capital) costs. In addition the hospitals were to receive 8/- per patient per day for intermediate patients, but no State subsidy, the patients paying the balance of their fees. The private patients, of course, received 8/- per day under the Commonwealth Private Hospital Regulations made under the same Act but these benefits were not received by virtue of the agreement.

"This position continued until August 1952 when the agreement was terminated as a result of a notice of termination given in February 1951 by the Commonwealth Government. No notice of this termination was ever given to the Mater hospitals.

"On 11 December 1951 by virtue of the Hospitals Benefits Act 1951 all existing Commonwealth hospital legislation was repealed. Existing agreements were preserved until termination and existing regulations were preserved until substitute

regulations were passed. This new Act foreshadowed the new policy of the Commonwealth Government."

I ask hon. members to pay particular attention to the following—

"The Commonwealth was empowered to enter into agreements on unspecified terms with the States for the payment of hospital benefits in public hospitals, to make regulations to provide benefits to patients in private hospitals, to make regulations for the payment of additional hospital benefits to contributors to benefit organisations and to make regulations to provide benefits for patients in public hospitals in States where there was no agreement in force between the State and the Commonwealth."

That last statement agrees with the statement I made that under their own Act the Commonwealth Government had the right to make regulations and to give benefits to such charitable and denominational hospitals. That is what I have argued all the time.

The letter continues—

"This latter provision is most important in the light of subsequent events."

Put in ordinary language, the Federal Government, had they wanted to, had the right to enter into an agreement with the Mater Public Hospital but would not do so.

The letter continues—

"Early in 1952 provision was made by way of regulation to enable public hospitals to register their intermediate patients as private patients so that additional benefits could be obtained for contributors to approved societies, the condition of registration being that the fees charged should be at least 18s. per day. The Queensland Government apparently registered its intermediate patients in all State hospitals in February 1952. Our hospitals did likewise in May 1952. It is important to note that it would not have been competent for the State to register the Mater Intermediate without the consent of these hospitals and further that when registration was effected by us it was done without reference to and entirely independent of the State Government. It is quite confusing—"

That is what I and my colleagues have said throughout this debate. The Opposition have attempted to confuse the people of Queensland.

Mr. Morris: The hon. gentleman has confused himself.

Mr. MOORE: Hon. members opposite cannot blame anybody if they have not the mentality to assimilate very plain language. They are now hearing very plain language from a person in no way connected with the Government.

The letter proceeds—

"It is quite confusing to suggest that this registration had anything to do with the payment of benefits to public patients.

The effect of registration was that payment of benefits to intermediate patients no longer depended on the existence of an agreement between the State and Commonwealth Governments but were payable as a direct result of regulations in the same manner as private hospital benefits. Benefits to public patients still depended on the agreement.

"On 20 August 1952 new regulations were made under the Hospital Benefits Act 1951 and all existing regulations were repealed. Elaborate regulations were passed to implement the new policy but although the Commonwealth was empowered to provide benefits by way of regulation for patients in public hospitals in States where there was no agreement between the State and Commonwealth Governments no regulations were passed to provide such benefits by the Commonwealth authorities. The position then was that in Queensland on the 20 August 1952 the date of the termination of the agreement and the date of the promulgation of the new regulations no provision had been made by the Commonwealth to continue benefits to patients in public hospitals which were not State owned. In other words these institutions which were powerless to enter into agreement with the Commonwealth had their benefits withdrawn because of the failure of the Commonwealth to pass regulations to pay such benefits."

That is an answer to the contentions of hon. members opposite.

I will proceed with the letter—

"On 6 September 1952 the Mater Hospitals wrote to the Commonwealth Minister for Health requesting that immediate arrangements should be made to continue the 8s. per day payments. At the same time representations were made to the State authorities who assured the hospitals that the State contribution to the hospitals would continue despite the termination of the agreement. The letter to Sir Earle Page was followed by telegrams asking for urgent attention as the hospitals were in a desperate position. No charges were being made to the patients and the withdrawal of 8s. per day meant that the hospitals were carrying a burden of £500 per week."

Now, I ask, who was penalising this hospital?

The letter continues:—

"On 30 September, 1952, by telegram confirmed by a letter dated 2 October, 1952, Sir Earle Page advised the Mater Hospitals that legally no benefits could be paid to public patients in our hospitals because there was no agreement signed between the two Governments. The Minister, however, went on to suggest that subject to the State authorities agreeing he was prepared to recognise the Mater Hospitals as private hospitals and suggested that we confer with the Commonwealth authorities at Brisbane as to procedure. This we did and we were informed that our public hospitals could

be registered as private hospitals under the regulations and that we should charge £2 16s. per week."

I ask hon. members to note the words, "We should charge." I remind hon. members also that the hon. member for Yeronga said there had never been any suggestion of a charge in any letters or deliberations.

The letter continues—

"... we should charge £2 16s. per week to patients which amount would be refunded by the Commonwealth by way of the 8s. per day benefit. It was made clear that the benefit would be confined to 8s. and that the additional benefit of 4s. to contributors would not be paid. We then conferred with the State authorities, who informed us that they were not happy about the proposal but that if we desired to accept it we would continue to receive the State subsidies provided we continued our full public in-patient and out-patient public hospital services and refrained from in-patient charges.

"We, however, came to the conclusion that the Commonwealth Minister's proposal to us was entirely unacceptable..."

There are some very shrewd business men on this committee. This document goes on to say—

"We, however, came to the conclusion that the Commonwealth Minister's proposal to us was entirely unacceptable because to qualify as a private hospital under the regulations we would have to acknowledge that our hospitals were not public hospitals."

This is the snide agreement that the hon. member for Yeronga, acting on a brief sent to him from Canberra, suggested at one stage—

Dr. NOBLE: I rise to a point of order. I have had no brief from Canberra at any time.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the the Minister to accept the denial of the hon. member.

Mr. MOORE: I accept the hon. member's denial. The letter goes on to say—

"The Commonwealth regulations in effect define a private hospital as a hospital which is not recognised as a public hospital by the State. The acceptance of the Commonwealth proposal would accordingly have put in jeopardy the public hospital status of our hospitals.

"On 18 October, 1952, our hospitals by letter of that date conveyed our decision to reject his proposal to Sir Earle Page. This decision was not influenced by the State and indeed, as pointed out above, the State was prepared in the circumstances to accept the arrangement. A copy of our letter to the Minister is enclosed. To this letter no reply has ever been received."

When I said here, and proved by documentary evidence, that certain correspondence from the State was never acknowledged by the Commonwealth Minister, hon. members opposite said, "We do not believe you."

The letter continues—

"The next development was that we read in the Press that an agreement had been signed.

"The above are the facts as known to us. You are free to make this letter public.

"Yours faithfully,

"(Sgd.) John P. Kelly,

"Chairman of the Advisory Board."

I do not propose to comment on that. I leave it to the public who read it to decide the facts of the case, but I do propose to read another letter that throws some more light on the negotiations between these hospitals and Sir Earle Page. The following letter was written by the Mother Superior—

"Dear Sir,

"Following upon the receipt by us of your telegram dated 30th ultimo and your letter dated 2nd instant, the receipt of which we gratefully acknowledge, representatives of the hospital called as suggested upon the Commonwealth Deputy Director of Health at Brisbane to discuss procedure with regard to the proposals set out in your communications.

"Careful consideration has been given to those proposals and it is appreciated that they represent a desire on your part to assist our public hospitals as much as possible in the present dilemma that has arisen. We feel, however, that the registration of the Mater Misericordiae Public Hospital as a private hospital for the purposes of the Hospital Benefit Regulations would be a step fraught with great consequences as far as the status of these hospitals is concerned. It is pointed out that in terms of the regulations our hospitals are approved public hospitals for the purposes thereof as they were at the commencement of the regulations in receipt of financial assistance as a result of an agreement then existing between the State and Federal Governments. It is further pointed out that to qualify as a private hospital for the purposes of the regulations it would be necessary for our hospitals to be brought within the provisions of paragraph (b) of the definition in regulation 4 of the regulations, that is, to acknowledge that the hospitals are not a public hospital. It is further pointed out that a public hospital is defined in the same regulation as a hospital which is recognised as such by the law of the State. Consequently, to apply for recognition as a private hospital in terms of the regulations our hospitals would have to concede that they are no longer recognised as public hospitals for the purposes of State law. This concession may have serious consequences for our hospitals not only in regard to the legislation which we are considering but in regard to taxing, death duties and rating legislation."

None of these things, of course, worry the Opposition.

The letter continues—

"In raising the above difficulties we are not unmindful of the fact that the offer

has been made on the basis that its legalistic consequences should not be over-emphasised. Whilst we are really appreciative of the spirit in which the offer has been made, we feel that upon consideration you will see the real and not imagined difficulties which are involved."

There again, there is no worry by the Opposition. They would get over that by a mere wave of the hand.

The letter continues—

"We think you will agree that these difficulties should be avoided in the circumstances. Your communications proceed upon the basis that the present legislation prevents you from entering into an arrangement whereby benefits would be made available in our public hospitals so long as there is no agreement between the State and Commonwealth Governments. This statement is correct if the legislation referred to is as set out in the regulations."

The Federal Government definitely refused to make the regulations that Sir Earle Page's own Act gave him power to make.

The letter continues—

"We respectfully point out to you, however, that Section 6 of the Hospital Benefits Act of 1951 enables regulations to be made to provide for the provision of hospital benefits in respect of persons who are patients in public hospitals in a State in which there is not for the time being any agreement under Section 5 of the Act."

That is what I have said repeatedly, and here we are in pretty good company. Some of the best legal brains in Brisbane are associated with this committee.

The letter continues—

"There can be no doubt, therefore, that Parliament has given power for regulations to be made to provide for benefits for public patients in public hospitals in those States where no agreement exists."

That has been said here repeatedly and scoffed at by the Opposition. I repeat that we of this Government are in the company of some of the leading brains of Brisbane.

The letter continues—

"True it is at the present time no regulation has been passed to implement this power but we suggest that regulations could quite easily be passed to deal with the situation which has arisen in regard to our hospitals, and that Parliament has given that power and recognised circumstances in which it may be necessary to regulate accordingly. We understand that a similar situation has arisen with regard to a certain number of other institutions in this State.

"In requesting you to give consideration to this aspect of the matter it may be desirable for us briefly to set out the legal position of our hospitals in this State because that situation may not be properly appreciated at Canberra."

This is not coming from the Queensland Government. My knowledge, gained through the attendance at conferences in Canberra

convinces me that the present Federal Government do not know anything about most things in the State of Queensland.

The letter continues—

"In Queensland the only hospitals subject to the Hospitals Act are State-owned and controlled hospitals. There is a small number of institutions outside this Act which are not owned and controlled by the State but which the State recognises as public hospitals and recognised as such for the purposes of the lately terminated agreement between the Commonwealth and State Governments. These institutions have no legislative status whatsoever and these are the very institutions which are caught by the present lack of agreement between the two Governments."

It has been made abundantly clear from my reading of these letters that the committee of this hospital at all times suffered through the lack of such agreement.

Mr. Low: Did you write it and ask them to sign it?

Mr. MOORE: That interjection is typical of the indecent interjections that come from an hon. member who attends conferences and snoops and gets behind a man to read over his shoulder. He is running true to form. That is why he and his colleagues are always in Opposition.

The letter continues—

"These institutions depend then for their public hospital status not on legislative recognition but upon the traditional test by which a public hospital is differentiated from a private hospital. This lack of legislative status of our hospitals makes it all the more necessary for us to ensure that no step is taken by us that might now put that status in jeopardy.

"The suggestion now put up by us if carried into effect would not in any way prejudice that status and would provide a convenient and helpful way out of the present difficulties. All that would be required would be to pass regulations to enable benefits to be made available in such public hospitals in Queensland as are not subject to the Hospitals Acts of 1936 to 1946, such benefits to be made available at the rate of 8s. per patient per day. If the regulations were passed in these terms it would cover all those non-State owned institutions which are presently not receiving benefits. We also would ask that such provision should be made retrospective to the date of the termination of the agreement.

"We would be grateful if early attention were given to these proposals as the present position is one of grave difficulty for us.

Yours sincerely,
Mother Superior."

That letter was never acknowledged. I leave it to the people of Queensland to decide between the actions of both Governments in the matter.

I conclude by saying that at all times the Queensland Government have, not only on behalf of our own public hospitals but also on behalf of these magnificent institutions, which give a humane service for the sick of the State, endeavoured to safeguard their interests. We were highly successful and I should say that the Opposition, acting in accordance with briefs given to them from Canberra, have only succeeded in worsening their position in the eyes of the public by their distortion and misrepresentation of the facts.

Mr. COBURN (Burdekin) (12.40 p.m.): I had decided not to take part in this debate, but the statement made by the hon. member for Haughton when he spoke on Tuesday night made me alter that decision. He said that the Ayr Hospitals Board was exceedingly resentful at a statement attributed to the hon. member for Burdekin that 5,000 people were without medical attention. Strangely, I never made that statement.

The hon. member for Haughton very significantly did not express his approval or support the attitude taken by the Ayr Hospitals Board. He evidently knew there was no semblance of inference on my part that the Home Hill and district people were without the services of a medical officer. The only reference that was made in this Chamber to the matter of the Home Hill hospital was made by me when I asked the Minister in charge of this vote the following question on 17 October—

"As Dr. W. H. Golding has resigned his position of medical officer of the Home Hill District Hospital and has also discontinued private practice, thus leaving an area with a population of approximately 5,000 people without the services of any resident medical practitioner, will he kindly arrange for the immediate appointment of a relieving medical officer at Home Hill to act until a permanent appointment is made?"

Mr. Aikens: The word "resident" is the significant word in that statement.

Mr. COBURN: As the hon. member said, the word "resident" in the statement is very significant. In my experience as a teacher I came across hundreds of instances of children who could read words successively but after reading them had no idea of the meaning they conveyed. It is quite evident, by the storm in the teacup which has developed over this matter, that there are adults in the same category. Whether they have done this wittingly or unwittingly does not worry me. I was only endeavouring to get the services of a resident relieving medical officer at the earliest opportunity. My concern was the well-being of the people at Home Hill whom I have the honour to represent in this Parliament. No criticism will deter or prevent me from doing the things that I think are in their interests. I was actuated by that motive only.

The Minister in his reply, and before he gave me the reply, said that the hon. member for Haughton had received a telegram from Mr. Wall, of Home Hill, that read—

“Golding resigned stop board desire full-time medical superintendent Home Hill appreciate assistance.”

The point is that an hon. member outside the area that is served entirely by this hospital was communicated with by a member of the Ayr Hospitals Board, and I, as the member for the district, was ignored. We heard a good deal of criticism from Government members because the hon. member for Isis did not approach the hon. member for Maryborough and discuss the matter of the Maryborough Hospital dispute with him.

Mr. Moore interjected.

Mr. COBURN: The Minister shows his ignorance. There is a saying, “out of the mouths of babes and sucklings,” etc. The Minister said Mr. Wall did not know that I was the member. Mr. Wall is the endorsed Labour candidate for Burdekin to oppose me at the next election. The point I want to make is that I never made the statement that the Home Hill district was without the services of a medical officer. I knew that a service was provided because I had a source of information on which I can implicitly rely as to the conditions that exist in connection with the Home Hill Hospital. I knew that Dr. Constable and Dr. Taylor were both visiting that hospital for a period of an hour a day. I have the greatest respect for both those gentlemen as medical practitioners. Dr. Taylor happens to be my doctor and the doctor of everybody connected with me on all occasions.

Mr. Power: I think it would be better if you were under Dr. Stafford.

Mr. COBURN: It's a pity he didn't get you earlier; he might have made something out of you. (Laughter.) I am not much concerned about this Ayr Hospital Board, but I am concerned about the opinion of me held by other people who might through this misconstruction or misrepresentation think that I was stupid enough to make a statement like that. Their audacity will be borne out by what I am going to read to the Committee from “The Home Hill Observer”, as follows—

“We acknowledge the following letter addressed to the Editor, which was received from the Secretary to the Ayr Hospitals Board yesterday.”

A Government Member: Do you believe in the freedom of the Press?

Mr. COBURN: I am behind the Press. The old saying—“Fools rush in where angels fear to tread” is exemplified often in this Chamber. I am not attacking the Minister. This is a matter between the Ayr Hospitals Board and me; the Minister does not come into it. Later on I shall have something to say in praise of the Minister because his attitude to the question was in direct opposition to that of the Ayr Hospitals Board.

I continue the quotation—

“At the general meeting of the Ayr Hospitals Board held last evening, strong resentment was expressed by the members at the erroneous information published in “The Home Hill Observer” on the 17th instant.

“The Ayr Hospitals Board is entrusted with the administration of the hospital at Home Hill and the members considered that the facts should have been verified by first contacting this Board before publishing the subject matter referred to in the previous paragraph.

“Such an enquiry would have disclosed the fact that the board had entered into an arrangement with two private medical practitioners at Ayr (Drs. Taylor and Constable) to provide a medical service for the people of Home Hill as soon as the anticipated resignation had been received from Dr. Golding. These doctors have been visiting the Home Hill Hospital every day. The arrangement is only of a temporary nature but will operate until a full-time medical officer has been appointed—at no time has the Home Hill Hospital been without the services of a doctor.”

Nobody contended that it had been. Here is another who could not interpret correctly. The whole trouble is that there are too many people who are not possessed of sufficient intelligence to be able to analyse statements correctly, and all their lives they go on misconstruing statements.

This is the gem of the whole thing—

“The board has also been negotiating for a relieving doctor to be sent from one of the larger hospitals.”

The very thing I made representations to the Minister that he should do. I knew that he and his officers, Mr. Coll and Dr. Fryberg, would have a much wider sphere of information than these people in Ayr, and it was more likely that they could recommend a doctor than those who knew very little about the position.

I continue—

“The members have taken a very serious view of this matter and have instructed me to ask you to make the necessary correction through your paper. Will you kindly advise in due course what steps you have taken for the information of my board.”

This is an example of dictatorship of the worst order, but fortunately the editor of this paper will not be dictated to. He stood up to them. I am reading the editor's comment on that letter from the board—

“We assume that the information referred to was the context of a telegram from Mr. Arthur Coburn, M.L.A., which read—

“Representations made Minister Health Home Affairs requesting immediate appointment relieving Medical Officer, Home Hill Hospital pending appointment permanent doctor.”

I knew that Drs. Taylor and Constable were going there but they are, probably, the two busiest doctors in Queensland and it must

have been a great inconvenience to them to give of their time to go to the hospital. Patients have to wait for long periods to have a consultation with them in their private practices. Dr. Taylor has been on the verge of exhaustion from excessive work and being saddled with the extra burden of Home Hill was fair neither to him nor to the people of Home Hill.

Mr. Aikens: You also know that the Burdekin River is between Ayr and Home Hill?

Mr. COBURN: Yes.

The editor's comment continues—

"We fail to see that any correction is required on our part, or in fact that any erroneous information was published. The matter complained of was published as a message from Mr. Coburn, and even had it been reported by us in the normal course of events, it is nothing more than a statement of an action taken by Mr. Coburn, as member for the district."

We are getting to that stage where a member cannot look after the interests of his own constituents.

The comment continues—

"We likewise fail to see that any verification from the hospitals board was necessary."

Nor was it. Can hospital boards tell newspapers what they shall and shall not include in their papers?

"The only question raised by the message was the reason for the appointment of a relieving medical officer, and as the information was required outside the board hours we checked with a reliable source and were informed that Dr. Golding had resigned. The attitude of the hospitals board in the matter is hard to understand as even though Drs. Taylor and Constable are visiting the Home Hill Hospital (at great personal inconvenience, no doubt), the fact that the member for the district is using his endeavours to secure a relieving doctor for Home Hill should not cause the board any misgivings. We take it that a relieving doctor would be a resident of Home Hill."

I agree with that.

The extract continues—

"In the past, any absence or indisposition of the resident doctor, has been met by daily visits from Ayr doctors, and any emergency cases had to be taken to Ayr, and while the board now claims that a medical service is provided for the people of Home Hill a number of out-patients have stated this week that they have been advised that they would have to go to Ayr. Children due for tetanus injections have also been sent to Ayr."

It is seven miles from Home Hill to Ayr, and the Government are always talking of the help they are prepared to give.

Mr. Moore interjected.

Mr. COBURN: It is a long way for those without motor-cars and it is expensive for for the poorer people who cannot afford to pay the bus fare of 2s. each way.

"The difficulty is fully appreciated when the visiting doctors have to sandwich their visits between their attendances on their own patients, but it is still hard to understand why the board should deprecate the action of the member for the district in pressing for the appointment of a relieving doctor."

I have known of some ludicrous attitudes adopted in my experience in public life but never have I seen anything more ludicrous than the attitude adopted by the Ayr Hospital Board. As representative of the people of that district, I do my utmost to get for them what they are entitled to, and the board takes umbrage at it. Fortunately, the Minister and his principal officers, including Dr. Freyberg, adopted a different attitude altogether. They regarded the position as serious and used their best endeavours to find a doctor who could be resident at Home Hill and who could relieve until a permanent appointment had been made.

Mr. Aikens: And they were not concerned with political propaganda.

Mr. COBURN: They never are. What the Ayr Hospitals Board wants is beyond my comprehension. Its inability to interpret a simple statement surpasses anybody's understanding. The word "resident" was significant enough for anything. I wanted a doctor to be resident in the area, a doctor who could give the people the service to which they are entitled, and this hospital board not only questions my right to do that but even asks the newspaper to come to it for verification before publishing anything in connection with local hospital matters, and goes so far as to ask it to correct what is in fact a true statement, although the board contends that it was erroneous. I have nothing to retract in this matter. I have acted in the interests of the Home Hill people. The significant point is that the only people to take objection to my endeavours were the members of the hospitals board. There was no mention in the newspaper article that the Home Hill people adopted that attitude or that any other sensible person adopted it.

Mr. Aikens: And the attitude of the hospitals board was prompted by political spleen.

Mr. COBURN: There is no doubt about that. It is significant that the telegram sent to Mr. McCathie was sent by Mr. Wall but I do not know in what capacity. I know he is a member of the Ayr Hospitals Board. He is also a member of the Home Hill A.L.P., he is the endorsed Labour candidate for the Burdekin to oppose me at the next State election, and he is a citizen of Home Hill. I do not know in which of those capacities he sent that telegram, not to me as the member for the district but to Mr. McCathie, who represents the adjoining electorate.

I emphasise that it does not worry me in the least whether they go to these "adopted" members. The only thing that worried anybody in this matter was that I was prompt and successful. There can be no other reason for their attitude to me. I wrote to "The Home Hill Observer" and stated my opinion of the Ayr Hospitals Board, and I got no reply. My concern is entirely for the welfare of the people whom I represent. I have no political associations of any sort, and I do not intend to have any. I am going to remain free to express the opinions that I conscientiously believe to be right. I have done that, as I invariably do in this Chamber. I leave the question of who was right in this matter to the judgment of hon. members and those other people who might read my statements in "Hansard."

Before concluding, I should like to express my thanks to the Minister for the courtesies he has extended to me and for the favourable consideration he has given to requests I have sent to him. In our district we often have aged and invalid pensioners, and other people who become ill and require specialist treatment but cannot get it in their own districts or in Townsville. I have had occasion to make representations to the Minister and his officers on behalf of these people to obtain railway passes, and in some instances tickets to travel by air. Invariably the Minister has made those passes available to me. When I have told people about this, some have said that it is only right that he should do it, but it is good to say, "Thank you," for things that are done, and I thank the Minister for those courtesies.

Mr. EVANS (Mirani) (2.15 p.m.): This is a very important vote. The Mackay Hospital is in my district and I should like to deal with it very briefly. I had something to say about it in the debate on the Address in Reply. As the Minister is aware, the Mackay Hospital is one of 90 beds, although at times it has to accommodate an average of over 120 patients and at times from 160 to 170.

I dealt with the isolation ward also during the debate on the Address in Reply. There was an isolation ward at the hospital when the joint hospitals board was in control. It was an old building then and eventually fell into disrepair. I was at the hospital only two weeks ago, when there was a polio case in what is called the isolation ward. It is actually a private ward.

I know that the Minister fully appreciates the position at the Mackay Hospital. I have had letters from him and he has told me that finance is the trouble. If we are getting the same consideration as Brisbane and other centres we shall have to accept the position, but I should like to stress the conditions that exist in Mackay at present. The hospital is overcrowded, not only from the point of view of the patients as the hospital is shamefully overcrowded but also from the point of view of the nurses, there is no proper isolation ward, and the cooking for the patients and the staff has to be done under very unsatisfactory conditions. The Minister and

the Government should give every consideration to doing something immediately to rectify the present state of affairs. I know that the Minister will tell me that the Government are building new nurses' quarters. They had to do that because of the increase in the number of patients and the unsatisfactory condition of the present nurses' quarters. They were simply corridors with no tops on them. The nurses who were off duty could not get any sleep because they were disturbed by those who were going on shift and those coming off. New nurses' quarters were also necessary because more nurses were required to look after the increased number of patients. It was impossible to carry on any longer under the present state of affairs.

The private hospitals in Mackay are full; the Mater is full and the Lister is full. There are spare beds on the verandahs of the district hospital but during the monsoon season they have to be shifted. The beds on the verandahs are only two or three feet apart. Neither the chairman of the hospitals board, Mr. Baker, nor the secretary, for both of whom I have a very high regard, would comment on the statements I made in the Address in Reply debate, because those statements were correct. I do not want to attack the hospital or the Minister, but it is the duty of the Government, irrespective of what Government they may be, to see that decent hospital facilities are made available to the people. If it is a matter of loans, let us see that those loans are spread equitably over the whole of the State. I do not think that is being done at the present time.

For some time I have pressed for the approval of the department of the preparation of structural plans, but so far I have not been able to get that approval. I put the case very fairly. I wrote to the Minister and suggested that he should give instructions to have structural plans prepared so that when labour and material and, of course, the necessary capital became available everything would be ready to begin the work. The preparation of the structural plans have not yet been approved, or at least they had not been approved up to a few weeks back.

Mackay is a very big city with a district population of 30,000-odd. The public hospital and the two private hospitals supply the hospitalisation for the district, including Sarina, which also is in my electorate. Going back over the records I find that when the present Secretary for Public Lands and Irrigation, the hon. T. A. Foley, was Secretary for Health and Home Affairs, he promised a clearing hospital at Sarina with a maternity wing. I am pleased that the Secretary for Labour and Industry is in the Chamber because I want to tell hon. members that I made arrangements for him to visit Sarina when he was in the North and he too promised a deputation of citizens of Sarina that he would approve of a clearing hospital with a maternity wing for Sarina. If that had been done it would have helped the situation very much indeed, but since the present Minister

has been in charge of the department the proposal has been vetoed—knocked on the head.

Let me give you some idea of the size and importance of the township and district of Sarina. The township, with the district, has a population of 5,000. It is 25 miles from Mackay and the boundary of the Sarina shire extends roughly 60 miles from the town, taking in places like Carmila, Koumala, and Ilbilbie. The whole district has quite a large population, including school children and others who need hospitalisation from time to time, but at the moment they have to go right into Mackay. In many parts of the district the roads are bad and for four months of the year quite untrafficable because there are no bridges across many of the creeks. That is the position they would have to face if they came by road to the hospital at Mackay. On the other hand, they can come by rail-motor or train, but then they would have to take a taxi or a bus from the point where the rail-motor dropped them to the hospital, roughly three miles, for treatment as an out-patient. Incidentally, there is an out-patient clinic in Sarina now. Very frequently people on workers' compensation, those who have met with accidents, have to go to Mackay for hospital treatment. They have to pay a taxi or bus fare from the station to the hospital and back again to the station, where the rail-motor picks them up for Sarina. When the present Secretary for Labour and Industry was Secretary for Health and Home Affairs the power-alcohol factory at Sarina offered to supply a building at a nominal rent for hospital purposes there. I give the then Minister credit for investigating the matter, but he said that nothing could be done. If the building could have been accepted it would have relieved the position considerably. A new building could have been erected even if it was only a wooden one. There are wooden schools and wooden hospitals in other parts of the State. I know the position that exists at other places in North Queensland with, a hospital at Gordonvale and another at Babinda, although Gordonvale is only 14 miles from Cairns and has not nearly the population there is at Sarina. Decentralisation is all right when it suits the Government and where you have bitumen roads you can centralise to some extent. The Minister has used against the establishment of a hospital at Sarina the argument that there is a bitumen road from Sarina to Mackay, but there are no bitumen roads from West Plane Creek, Ilbilbie, Blue Mountain, and other little places. At times there are not even trafficable roads, because for a large part of the year they are untrafficable. If we could have a clearing hospital with a maternity wing at Sarina, the situation would be relieved considerably and it would help to ease the congestion that now exists at the Mackay Hospital and will prevail there for a long time yet.

It is going to be a multi-storied hospital. I take some responsibility in this regard. When I was a member of the board I thought it essential to have a multi-storied hospital

at Mackay. We cannot go on spreading buildings. The department and the Minister at that time, the hon. member for Belyando, the present Secretary for Public Lands and Irrigation agreed.

That is the position of hospitalisation in my area. In addition, I find that last year there were 100 maternity cases from the township of Sarina alone. Do not these people merit some consideration when we are talking of free hospitalisation? Consider the extra cost and the inconvenience women are put to when they have to go into Mackay to wait in hospital for confinement, when if they had a maternity hospital reasonably near to them they could remain at home in the normal way? We all believe in free hospitalisation, irrespective of our political opinions, but I shall deal with that later. Not only do we believe in it, but the Federal Government have stated definitely that it is the prerogative of this Government or any other Government to decide their own hospitalisation policy.

Mr. Foley: They are only recent converts.

Mr. EVANS: It is there on record. The fight that went on was not the fight between the State and Federal Governments.

I believe that the proposal that had the approval of the Secretary for Public Lands and the Secretary for Labour and Industry when they held the portfolio of Health and Home Affairs should have been carried out and it should never have been vetoed. I say that not only the best interests of the people of Sarina and district but the whole of the district of Mackay would be served by giving immediate consideration to the carrying out of the promise made by both these Ministers that hospitals would be decentralised to some extent by the establishment of a clearing hospital and a maternity wing at Sarina.

An Opposition Member: Where do the infectious cases go?

Mr. EVANS: Infectious cases from the 32,000 people in this area go to Mackay. Sarina has a sugar mill with an income of about £2,000,000, it has a power alcohol distillery, and both endeavour to employ their people all the year round. I do feel that the people of Sarina and district are not receiving the consideration to which they are entitled from the Government; that is emphasised by the veto of the project that was approved of by two previous Ministers.

Centralisation may be all right if the transport is there and roads are bitumen but when these facilities are not there and you find the people in the outlying areas are suffering it is the duty of the Government and the Minister to reconsider the policy of the Government, particularly in view of the situation that exists today in Mackay. The position could be relieved considerably within six months if they so desired. I leave that matter in the Minister's hands.

This morning I listened attentively to the Minister when he spoke and read letters, and

the only conclusion I could come to was that Mr. Kelly has an opinion, and the lady superior at the Mater Hospital was pretty definite that it was a disagreement between the two Governments. That was the conclusion that I came to; they were actually a go-between for the people affected.

In one of the letters read it was stated—

“Sir Earle Page was satisfied, in view of the facts of the case, that Mr. Moore was attempting to hide the Queensland Government’s muddling by making these unwarranted accusations involving responsible departmental officers.”

This has been read.

A Government Member: Whose letter are you reading now?

Mr. EVANS: I am reading from Sir Earle Page. The conclusion I have come to after hearing the Minister this morning and the letters written by Mr. Kelly and the lady superior is that the Government had not made application in connection with denominational hospitalisation. That has not been denied. The Commonwealth Minister for Health, Sir Earle Page, made that very clear.

Mr. Moore: What did Mr. Kelly say about that?

Mr. EVANS: Mr. Kelly’s opinion may not be any better than the hon. gentleman’s, mine, or anybody else’s. I say very definitely that a fight was going on in Cabinet and political considerations came before the hospitalisation of the people.

Mr. Devries: In what Cabinet?

Mr. EVANS: In the hon. gentleman’s Cabinet. I say that very definitely. That fight has been going on. I have many quotations in my possession. It was stated in the House of Representatives—

“Under the hospital-benefits agreements which have been or are being negotiated, each State is having restored its complete authority to determine hospital policy within the State. Thus the question of charges for patients or visitors is entirely a matter for the State or hospital authority concerned.”

These statements have been made and when it is all boiled down it is a matter of the interpretation of the State and the Commonwealth Governments. The final result of all these discussions and this fighting in the Cabinet—and there was a fight in the Cabinet—was that the Government eventually did agree to come in again on the same provisions and agreement as approved by other States.

Mr. Walsh: That is entire bunkum.

Mr. EVANS: The hon. member for Bundaberg interjects. I know how bitter the fight was in Cabinet and how bitter the hon. gentleman could be. If three of the most prominent Cabinet Ministers had to get into the same bed tonight none would be game to go to sleep. You all know whom I mean.

Mr. Walsh: Who are they? I cannot understand how you can go to sleep at all.

Mr. EVANS: I never employed orphans and never sweated them.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. EVANS: The hon. gentleman is looking for it.

There was a fight in the Cabinet. They used the hospital benefit scheme for political purposes in the Keppel by-election. They saw it was no use going further, so they capitulated. I will read the statement of the Prime Minister, in order that it will be incorporated in “Hansard”—

“Queensland Hospital Benefits.

“Exultation by the Queensland Premier at what he terms a major tactical triumph in that State’s belated entry into the Commonwealth’s hospital scheme is utterly grotesque.

“I do not propose to enter into any protracted verbal tug-o’-war with Mr. Gair on this matter. I merely reiterate these simple truths.

“Firstly, Queensland has now come to an agreement with the Commonwealth on precisely the same terms as proposed to Mr. Gair in February, 1951.

“Secondly, his Government’s 21 months’ procrastination cost the people of Queensland approximately one million pounds in lost benefits.

“Thirdly, there is not the remotest foundation for Mr. Gair’s claim that the Commonwealth had refused to sign a hospital agreement with him unless he agreed to charge for public beds.

“The highly coloured accounts released by Mr. Gair suggested the signing of the agreement with the climax of a long and successful fight by the State with the Commonwealth. This is the first we have heard about any fight. On our part there has been only genuine regret that Queensland’s tardiness delayed the nation-wide application of the scheme for so long.

“It was an expression of relief at Queensland’s ultimate consent that we decided to make the agreement retrospective to August 21st.

“This at least ensured that the people of that State would not be fleeced of Commonwealth benefits by its own Government’s neglect.

“Public life regrettably conditions us to political cynicism. But I hope never again to witness such an uninhibited campaign of smoke-screening by a leader of a Government.

“In this case it goes perilously close to leaving the realm of politics for that of public scandal.”

That was the position as I saw it.

Here is another interesting statement—

“I assure you that my Government has no wish to dictate the hospital policy to be applied in your State, nor would the proposed agreement have that effect.”

That was written to the Premier. What more do the Government want? They had all these letters, but they went on fighting, as they always do, always putting political considerations before the welfare of the people, and on this occasion they were prepared to sacrifice the health of the people, if necessary, to win a political fight.

Mr. Power: No.

Mr. EVANS: Yes. Hon. members on the Government side have said that they were going to win the next State election on the hospital-benefits issue. I heard it at Keppel. Not once during the Keppel by-election campaign did they mention the State Labour Party's policy. All they spoke about was hospitalisation.

I have proved that there was a fight in Cabinet. Hon. members on the Government side cannot deny it. They know there were Ministers who wanted to accept it long ago, and now the Minister comes along with these letters, which merely express opinions, just as I or any other man would express an opinion.

Mr. Power: No.

Mr. EVANS: Then why did New South Wales, Victoria, and Tasmania come in? They were prepared to put the welfare of their people before filthy politics, but the Government here were not.

The hon. member for Lockyer dealt with tuberculosis this morning, and I remind this Committee that the following question was asked in the Federal Parliament—

“Will the Minister for Health inform me broadly of the nature of the provisions in Queensland for dealing with tuberculosis before the present Australian Government assumed office? What has been done since to improve the position? Would it be correct to say that any improvement that has taken place in Queensland has been chiefly due to the actions of this Government?”

Sir Earle Page's reply to that question was—

“Up to 1950 the Westwood Sanatorium of about 50 beds was the only tuberculosis institution in Queensland. Tuberculosis patients not resident in that institution were generally treated in public hospitals. Since 1950 I have made available to Queensland, with the approval of the Treasurer a sum of about £1,800,000 to provide a 500-bed tuberculosis hospital at Chermiside and hospital annexes at Townsville and Cairns. We have also provided £20,000 for a Chest Clinic and tuberculosis laboratory in Brisbane to try to deal with tuberculosis in the early stages, and to establish various X-ray clinics in the true sense. Special accommodation and equipment costing £34,000 have been approved for use in the far north of Queensland in the diagnosis and treatment of tuberculosis among the aborigines. For these reasons there has been a noticeable improvement in the standard of treatment of tuberculosis in Queensland since 1950.”

That is the Government whom hon. members on the Government side here condemn. What did they receive prior to the election of the present Federal Government?

Mr. MOORE: I rise to a point of order. I did not condemn the Federal Government on this matter at all. Only within the last hour I said in reply to the hon. member for Lockyer that we at all times gave the Federal Government full credit for the money they are spending on tuberculosis in Queensland.

Mr. EVANS: I am pointing out that the present Federal Government have been so generous as to give this State Government £1,800,000 for the treatment of tuberculosis and now, when it comes to the hospital-benefits scheme, hon. members of the Queensland State Government condemn and defame the Federal Government for things of which they are not guilty. It will be seen all through the pages of “Hansard” where hon. members have asked questions.

(Time expired.)

Mr. GRAHAM (Mackay) (2.41 p.m.): It has been said that a healthy nation is a wealthy nation and consequently the activities of the Department of Health and Home Affairs throughout the State have been directed to helping the people to be healthy and providing the services required by those who have been unfortunate enough to meet with ill-health. No department of State has a closer relationship with the people than this one. The Queensland Labour Government over many years have endeavoured to extend the activities of the department and today we see in the Queensland health organisation one that the people of this State certainly agree is comparable to that of any other State. Despite the difficulties the Government are endeavouring to provide for a further extension of this work throughout Queensland, and it is regrettable that their activities should be interfered with by the action of the Commonwealth Government.

It has been pathetic to listen to the defence put up by the Opposition in the dispute between the Commonwealth and State Governments on the matter of subsidy. Despite what has been said it must be understood that we as a Labour Government have been adamant and have persisted that the help from the Federal Government should not interfere with our decision to provide free hospital services to the people of this State. We believe that the service we have given to the people has been justified because in times of urgency and necessity our service has been helpful to the people. I should say that at no time in a person's life is help more acceptable than in time of sickness. Over the years we have seen our Government provide a system of free hospitalisation to the people. How many times have we seen the worker being impoverished because of ill-health? In days gone by, before the institution of these free hospital services, many families were impoverished when ill-health struck the breadwinner or a member of his family. The Government are to be commended for the work done in providing

this free hospital service to the people and I am sure that whatever we have done to bring the Commonwealth Government to heel has been justified. One would have expected support from the Opposition in our fight to maintain our free hospital system but instead of supporting us they have criticised us for what we have done. The Secretary for Health and Home Affairs has put up a remarkably good fight to show—and eventually he was successful—that we were prepared to lose the subsidy rather than bring about a termination of our free-hospital system. It has been the policy of a Labour Government to provide the service and we as a Government should be failing in our duty if we capitulated to the Federal Government. I believe that the workers—the useful people in the community—who make their contributions to the Federal Government by way of social-service taxation are entitled to free hospitalisation. No-one can say that our hospital services have been affected adversely in any way because we have provided those services.

We have heard criticism from the Opposition about the money that has been provided for our hospital services by the Golden Casket, but to what better purpose could any money be put, whether it comes from the Golden Casket or any other source, than the building up of our hospital system, which means so much to the people of this State?

For many years, long before the Commonwealth Government made any contribution to hospitalisation in Queensland, the Queensland Government provided for the expansion of hospitalisation in this State. I have heard members of the Opposition speak of the great work that was done by our late Premier, Hon. E. M. Hanlon, when he was Secretary for Health and Home Affairs, and we have seen the work that he was responsible for starting carried on by successive Ministers. The Queensland Government are quite conscious of the needs of the people of Queensland, not only those in Brisbane but those in other parts of Queensland, and of their responsibility for improving our hospital buildings and services. One would have expected to hear Opposition members give some credit to this Government, because I think that they believe in their own hearts that this State is ahead of all others in its hospital services and that we should be very foolish if we did anything to hinder the Government in their plan to go ahead with the improvement of our hospital buildings and services.

I should like to refer to the remarks of the hon. member for Mirani who I remember made some reference during the Address in Reply debate to overcrowding in the Mackay Hospital, but I assure this Chamber that the position there is not nearly as bad as he has tried to paint it. I visit the Mackay Hospital just as much as does the hon. member for Mirani, and I have a close association with the hospitals board. Although the hospital is in the district of the hon. member for Mirani, as the member for Mackay I believe I have just as much

right to speak about it as the hon. member. I am at a loss to understand why he has made these charges, because they are not all true. I admit that we have not got a new hospital in Mackay, but the hon. member for Mirani should be aware of the reason for that; he should realise that there have been difficulties in the financing of new hospitals, and unfortunately Mackay has been one of the places affected in that way. The same remarks apply to the building of a hospital at Sarina. However, I am quite confident that when the time is opportune this Government will honour their promise to build a new hospital in Mackay and one at Sarina.

I ask hon. members not to be misled by the remarks of the hon. member for Mirani about the present position in Mackay. The Mackay Hospital contains 124 beds in the wards, 45 veranda beds, and 20 beds in the maternity section. For the quarter ended September there was a daily average of 134 occupied beds. Consequently, as 189 beds were available and the daily average was only 134, the overcrowding is not nearly as bad as the hon. member would have us believe.

At times, because of climatic conditions, many patients ask to be placed on the veranda, where it is much cooler. It is much more congenial, if one has to be confined to bed, to be on a veranda than in a room. There is no hardship on the patient in being put on the veranda because in adverse weather he is taken back to the ward. In any case, there are awnings over the veranda and if there is a high wind or other unsuitable climatic conditions the patients can always be protected. I am at a loss to understand the attack made by the hon. member for Mirani in connection with the alleged overcrowding at the Mackay hospital, and I assure hon. members that it is not as bad as he would have us believe. Perhaps he has other reasons for endeavouring to get some publicity from his criticism of the Government on this score. Perhaps his complaint is that a new hospital has not yet been built there.

The hon. member went on to say that there were new nurses' quarters, but he complained that there was no isolation ward. Again he did not tell the whole story. Provision has been made for an isolation ward at Mackay, but because of the unforeseen increase in the cost of the nurses' quarters the loan funds that had been allocated for the construction of the isolation ward have had to be used to meet the increased cost of building the nurses' quarters. The initial estimated cost was £65,000, but already they have cost over £80,000 and are not yet finished. The money allocated for the isolation ward had to be diverted towards meeting the increased cost of the nurses' quarters, and so the isolation ward has not been built.

The hon. member would have you believe that there are hundreds of cases in Mackay calling for isolation, but that is not true. We have had very few infectious cases in Mackay over the years, and while there is

no isolation ward in the strict sense of the term a section of the hospital is available for isolation purposes. Therefore the construction of an isolation ward is not an urgent matter, although it is desirable, I admit. We should be foolish indeed to believe all that the hon. member has said about the Mackay Hospital. He tried to make political capital out of his suggestion for the construction of a hospital at Sarina, but I venture the opinion that if it was built the majority of patients from the district would go to the Mackay Hospital for treatment. We have five doctors at the Mackay Hospital, and if a hospital was built at Sarina it would be staffed, I should say, by one or perhaps two doctors at the most, but most of the patients from the outside areas would still take advantage of the treatment provided at the Mackay Hospital instead of the one at Sarina.

The hon. member sought to gain a little sympathy by saying that the patients who went to the Mackay Hospital had to pay a bus fare in and out of town or a taxi from the railway station, but that happens in Brisbane. If I go to the Brisbane General Hospital I pay tram fares or a taxi fare, if I take a taxi. It is impracticable to have a hospital right in the centre of a city where everyone can walk out of his door into the hospital. The Mackay Hospital may be 1½ miles out of the town but I do not think it could be put in a more suitable position.

I believe that things are running along reasonably well at that hospital, and I am assured that at the opportune time a new one will be built. When that is done I hope that the existing building will be converted into an Eventide Home for Mackay. Already we have an Eventide Home at Rockhampton and one at Charters Towers. The Mackay Hospital, with all its buildings, is eminently suitable for conversion into an Eventide Home and it could be done at little cost. I believe that the Government will do that when the new hospital is built.

We must give credit to the people who are controlling our hospitals in the various parts of the State. I wish to pay a tribute to the matron, the medical superintendent, and the staff of the Mackay Hospital, who are doing a very good job. No matter where one goes throughout the State one hears favourable comment from all classes of people who have used our hospitals, and it makes us proud to know that we have such an efficient system operating in Queensland. I believe the Brisbane General Hospital is one of the greatest hospital institutions in Australia. I have spoken to people from other States who came to Queensland to get treatment at the Brisbane General Hospital. As one of the members representing a northern constituency I am aware of the number of people who come from the North to Brisbane to receive specialist treatment there. I thank the Government for what they have done in providing specialist treatment for the people of the North. At the present time we have a system in operation whereby a specialist makes periodical visits to the North and people can consult him at towns such as

Rockhampton, Mackay and Townsville. The people are thus saved much expense and delay.

I wish, too, to say a word of praise of the officers of the Department of Health and Home Affairs in Brisbane. I am sure I speak on behalf of every country member when I say that on the occasions that we have to approach the department in Brisbane on behalf of a constituent, who is seeking a railway pass or concession we have received the utmost courtesy and consideration. On no occasion have I ever submitted a request to the Minister that has not been granted. The Government did pay the air fares, from Mackay to Sydney, in a special case in which the doctor certified there was only one specialist in Sydney who could do the job, and the concession was worth over £100. That is one instance in which the department has carried out very humane work. I make particular reference to Mr. M. Little, of the Department of Health and Home Affairs, who is a very courteous and able gentleman who is always ready to help. Mr. Little and other officials of the department are a fine body of public servants who are doing a great job for the Department. As a Government we have nothing of which we need be ashamed in the service we provide for the people through the Department of Health and Home Affairs.

Irrespective of criticism from some people the Government will continue to carry out the policy of providing free hospitalisation for the people of this State.

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) (2.59 p.m.): I thought I had 10 minutes left but I have only five, so I shall have to speak quickly and condense my remarks.

I make an appeal to the Minister to resolve or settle as far as he can and as quickly as he can the deadlock that exists in Townsville between certain unions and unionists and the Townsville Ambulance Committee. I will give the Committee the salient facts, which are as follows:—For many years the ambulance has worked well. It was controlled by a committee, most of whom were elected by subscribers. Many of these subscribers were members of the big unions in Townsville, particularly the Waterside Workers' Federation, the A.M.I.E.U., and other big unions. A couple of years ago, as a result of a deputation to the then Premier, who was visiting Townsville, the Secretary for Health and Home Affairs, for reasons that he has never disclosed, appointed seven Government representatives to the Townsville Ambulance Committee. That was as many as were then on the committee by election or mostly by election, and it made a committee of 14; and one or two of the seven of the original committee, I really believe, were Government nominees also, with the result that most of the big unions decided to withdraw their contributions to the ambulance. They have withdrawn, in the main, their contributions to the ambulance and in a very short space of time this once prosperous ambulance committee which I think had the biggest cash reserve of any provincial ambulance committee, is now in a

state of financial stringency. It was the popular belief amongst the citizens and unionists in Townsville at the time that these seven extra Government nominees were appointed to the committee only until the next annual election of committee representatives was held. The election for the committee members—I am not exactly sure how many Government members there were of the original seven—was held recently. They were elected by the subscribers. Everyone naturally thought that a committee of seven democratically elected or appointed would then take over the control of the Townsville ambulance and again there would exist a spirit of co-operation between the big unions and the ambulance committee that would enable it to get out of the financial morass. Townsville is a big unionist town. It is the biggest and most industrialised town proportionally speaking, in Australia. Certainly the biggest proportion of unionists in Australia are in Townsville compared with the total population.

To the astonishment of everybody in Townsville and everyone connected with the ambulance, when the fresh committee was elected democratically this year, the Secretary for Health and Home Affairs again appointed another seven nominees to the committee in order to swamp the committee with Government nominees. It is known, of course, that the Government give a small subsidy of 10s. for each £1 subscribed to the ambulance. I have been unable to find out how much it cost, for this year at any rate, to run the Townsville ambulance but I should say that the Government do not provide one-fifth of the expenditure but by their appointments on the second occasion—not only on the first occasion—of seven Government nominees the Government have taken complete control of the Townsville Ambulance Committee with the result, and I repeat this, that the majority of the big unions just will not co-operate. They have withdrawn their co-operation and their financial assistance.

Mr. Morris: Do the Government appoint members to other ambulance committees?

Mr. AIKENS: I am not absolutely certain on this point but I believe that of the original committee of seven the Government had some representation—it might have been one, two, or three members—but no-one would object to that. The remainder of the members of the committee were appointed by ballot of all subscribers to the ambulance, most of them unionists. No-one had an objection to that.

(Time expired.)

Mr. McCATHIE (Haughton) (3.4 p.m.): I wish to comment on certain protestations made by the hon. member for Burdekin in respect of resentment shown by the Ayr Hospitals Board at his action in reference to the need for a full-time medical officer for that district.

On the morning of 16 October I received a letter containing certain information as a result of which I made an approach to the

Secretary for Health and Home Affairs to discuss the appointment of a resident medical officer at Home Hill. During the course of our discussion I received an urgent telegram over the signature of Mr. Wall, a member of the Ayr Hospitals Board, who I think had every right to approach me, as the Ayr Hospitals Board meets in my electorate and Mr. Wall has been a particular friend of mine for many years. The fact that he is to be the opponent of the hon. member for Burdekin at the next State election does not give rise to any suggestion that there was anything political about the approach. I handed the telegram to the Minister and asked him to look into the matter. As a result of that, the hon. member for Burdekin asked a question without notice the following morning. Having made my approach, I merely told my informant by letter of what I had done, and I leave it to hon. members to put their own interpretation on the actions of the hon. member for Burdekin, who in a desire to gain publicity asked a question without notice, knowing that it would be published in the Press. For that reason I should say that the people of the Burdekin electorate will have their own ideas about what action was taken in this matter.

After that incident, the Ayr Hospitals Board approached "The Home Hill Observer" and said over the radio in the area that it was resentful of the representations made by the hon. member for Burdekin. Despite any protestations that he might make, that board took the action it thought necessary. I have already mentioned the personnel of the Ayr Hospitals Board and the fact that all members belong to the Australian Labour Party does not mean that an approach made to me has any political significance. I feel sure that the people of the Burdekin electorate, knowing the circumstances and having followed the incident as they have done, will know who was seeking publicity from it. They will know that it was not I but the hon. member for Burdekin who sought publicity and they will place on his actions the same interpretation as they do on the fact that the Home Hill branch of the Country Party has indicated already that it does not intend to oppose the hon. member at the next State election. The people know that if it will mean keeping a Labour man out of this Parliament the Country Party will not put up a candidate for the area. I have never attempted to hide my belief that the hon. member for Burdekin gets support from the Country Party. I have said that openly, and I repeat it now. The workers, farmers and business people on the Burdekin very shortly will have their opportunity of deciding whether they want a continuation of representation from the Country Party or whether they wish to support the endorsed Labour candidate and send another Labour man to this Parliament.

Hon. W. M. MOORE (Merthyr—Secretary for Health and Home Affairs) (3.8 p.m.): Mr. Turner—

Mr. Sparkes interjected.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Turner): Order!

Mr. MOORE: This incident amounts really—

Mr. Sparkes interjected.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. MOORE: It is really only a storm in a tea-cup.

Mr. Sparkes interjected.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! If the hon. member for Aubigny does not obey my call to order I will name him.

Mr. Aikens: It is about time, too.

Mr. MOORE: I ask you, Mr. Turner, to be lenient with the hon. member for Aubigny because I do not think he has fully recovered from his altercation with the railway truck.

As in all similar cases, my department is fully conversant with all the circumstances surrounding the matter. It was conversant with all the circumstances obtaining prior to the doctor's resignation and immediately after that resignation arrangements were made to make medical attention available to the people of the district.

Mr. Coburn: You were the best people to do it.

Mr. MOORE: That is so, and I appreciate the interest taken in the matter by members of Parliament and members of the public. I do not think we can completely ignore requests from the general public in these matters because they are the people who are to receive the medical attention. If they have suggestions to make and information to give, it is very useful to have that from them.

Mr. Sparkes: It was the right thing for the member to bring it to the notice of your department.

Mr. MOORE: That is so. We arranged for a locum to take over and we advertised for a doctor and we will get one as soon as we can.

Mr. Coburn: Everybody is now satisfied.

Mr. MOORE: I am pleased to hear that.

The hon. member for Mirani made a sort of a deathbed attempt to save his party from the mess they are in.

Mr. Aikens: His swan song?

Mr. MOORE: And a pretty weak one too. According to that hon. member, everything Sir Earle Page has said is right and everything anybody else has said is wrong. We have put sufficient documentary evidence into "Hansard" to convince all people interested, and all who have the ability to think, of exactly what happened in this matter, but if there are some of the Opposition who are not sure or who have not been able to follow the correspondence, I will read this paragraph from a letter that sums up the position. I might say that this letter was written on 19 June when, fortunately, the late Walter Ingram was alive, and there was no talk of a by-election in Keppel, and our

policy on this matter had already been disclosed. This is a paragraph from a letter dated 19 June from the Acting Premier to the Prime Minister—

"I have noted that your Government desires the removal of any restrictions on the rights of the States to raise any charges whatsoever in public wards. My Government is prepared to enter into a fresh agreement with the Commonwealth excluding this restriction, but only on the consideration that Queensland retains an unfettered discretion to provide free treatment in public wards."

For the information of the hon. member for Mirani, who probably did not follow the letters I read, I want to say that the Mater Hospital authorities set out the position clearly and definitely in their letter. They are an outstanding factor in the whole dispute. The Federal Government did withhold certain moneys, the property of the people of Queensland. When the Commonwealth Government did try to interfere, we resisted them and resisted them successfully, and there are in my office letters from the appropriate Ministers in the other States—and they come from both Labour and anti-Labour men—wanting to know how the Queensland Government resisted the Federal Government so successfully. In due course I shall be proud to tell them the story on behalf of the Queensland Government. Probably the greatest reason why the Queensland Government won the argument is that we had enough money to go on with, which goes to prove that the financial policy of the Queensland Government over the years has been highly successful. Our policy with regard to hospital finance was ruthlessly and viciously challenged by the Tory Federal Government.

The hon. member for Mirani became humorous—and it would be a humorous matter if the fight had not been so serious—when he said that there was grave dissent in Cabinet. I have been a member of the Cabinet for only a short time but I have never seen any Cabinet more unanimous on anything than on this matter. I have said that about 19 months ago I went to Canberra, and how some members of the Opposition got it into their heads that I was not there, I do not know. I talked harder than any other Minister at that conference, and when we could not get what I wanted—

An Opposition Member: You walked out.

Mr. MOORE: No, I did not. The hon. member is mixed up. If he is wise, he will keep right out of this, because all people are not stupid enough to fall for it. If he continues saying those things he will continue to be in Opposition. Hon. members opposite think that the people out in the street are not wide awake to their political activities. Until they realise that, they cannot become a Government. They underestimate the intelligence of the people outside. They seem to think that because there are people outside who are engaged in menial occupations, they are not wide awake to the tactics used here. The people appreciate these things, and the

Premier was acclaimed from one end of Queensland to the other when he made the tour that was so carpingly criticised by the hon. member for Lockyer.

Mr. Kerr: The people are thoroughly disgusted with the whole thing.

Mr. MOORE: If the hon. member for Sherwood is sincere—and I believe he is—it shows what a miserable knowledge he has of the political feeling of the people outside. As I say, Cabinet was never more unanimous on anything. I came back from that conference and put the case to Cabinet, they immediately decided to resist the Federal Government. It then became my job to devise ways and means of carrying on our free hospitalisation in public hospitals. It was a matter of finance, but my officials showed me how we could carry on till the next financial year. Immediately that information was taken back to Cabinet by me, Cabinet reaffirmed their decision to fight. Subsequently the Premier went from one end of Queensland to the other and was acclaimed in every centre he visited. I am not saying that there is never a difference of opinion in Cabinet. I remember, after a good, solid argument lasting the best part of a day in Cabinet, Forgan Smith saying, "This is not a hallelujah chorus," and that is quite correct. It is not. Is there any place where it is more important that there should be a free, frank and open expression of opinion than in Cabinet, the place where the Government business of this State is transacted, and, I suggest, transacted very successfully? This story about dissension in the Cabinet on that occasion is just so much moonshine. No-one will believe the hon. member; as a matter of fact, I am sure he does not believe it himself.

After listening to the arguments of the Opposition I am quite sure that even at this stage, after some 42 or 43 speakers have taken part in the debate, they still know nothing about this subject. It is a shocking thing that a statement to the effect that we have thrown away £1,000,000 should have come from the Prime Minister. I should not believe he made it unless I read it in print. The agreement with Queensland terminated on 20 August of this year, and the new agreement began on the 21st. That is proof positive that the Prime Minister knew nothing about the matter and, what is more, Sir Earle Page not only misled his own party and a lot of other people, but he committed the major crime of misleading his leader.

Mr. Low: You misled your party, too.

Mr. MOORE: It would be a physical and mental impossibility to mislead the hon. member for Cooroorra, because there is nothing in the hon. member's head with which to lead him.

Then we have had all this talk about the other States coming in. They came in because they could not stay out—they had no money. The unfortunate people in the South are crying out daily because they cannot get the hospitalisation they require. Despite all the talk to the contrary by hon. members opposite, all this parish pump stuff, the people of Queensland are better supplied with medical

services and hospitals than the people anywhere else in Australia, and I ask hon. members opposite not to be content simply to interject here but to read the southern newspapers for themselves.

Mr. Sparkes: We shall be reading about this in Goodna if we are not careful.

Mr. MOORE: If that is the way in which the hon. member is heading, we shall be delighted to give him the excellent treatment that we give the other inmates up there.

We have never denied the fact that the Federal Government have made finance available to this State in other connections but they have also made it available to the other States as well and before this debate is concluded I will tell hon. members how the Federal Government have flatly refused to help us in connection with many diseases in this State.

I thank the hon. member for Mackay for his contribution to the debate. He drew attention to the fact that our hospital services were very fairly apportioned throughout the State. We have always endeavoured to do that so that they will be available to the greatest possible number of the people. We could not spend all our money in the one place because that would be unfair to the people generally. Yet the hon. member for Mirani insinuated that we had not been fair in our allocation of loan money for hospitalisation. When I became Secretary for Health and Home Affairs, I found that the city of Brisbane was worse off than any other part of the State from the viewpoint of hospital services, and amongst other projects we expedited the hospital on the South side.

That is enough of that for the moment. I return now to the Mackay Hospital. As far back as 1944 this matter was brought before the Co-ordinator-General of Public Works by the Mackay Hospitals Board, which asked that additions be made to the hospital to meet the growing needs of the community. Fortunately most of the towns in Queensland are growing towns and of course the hospital services have to grow with them. The board's proposals were the construction of a new ward, alteration to kitchen block, and extension to nurses' quarters. The first loan of £2,500 was approved in the 1945-1946 programme.

Hereunder is an extract from a letter sent to the board on 24 May, 1944—

"Referring to your letter of 15th instant, regarding the proposal of the Mackay Hospitals Board for additional accommodation at the hospital, I have to inform you that Mr. Evans, chairman of the Pioneer Shire Council and a member of the board, called on the Minister recently and advised that the hospital was overcrowded at present. The doctor's residence, isolation ward and verandas were being used to accommodate cases.

"Mr. Evans mentioned that the Department of Public Works had, some years ago, prepared a plan providing for additional wings. He stated that some of the

members of the board were of the opinion that the present design of the hospital caused much additional work on the part of the staff and thought that in any future planning, consideration might be given to the construction of a multi-storeyed building."

"As the Department of Public Works had previously performed the board's work of construction and design, the Minister promised that he would make representation to the Under-Secretary of Public Works that the services of an architect from the department be made available to visit Mackay and confer with the board on the subject of the proposed additions."

The hospitals board wrote on 30 August, 1946, as follows—

"At a meeting of my board held on 28 August, the matter of accommodation for the nurses came up for discussion and I was instructed to draw your attention to the unsatisfactory conditions the nurses are living under at the present time.

"We have already, in most instances, two nurses occupying each room, which in itself is not adequate for one nurse let alone two, and when the construction of the two new wards which has already met with your approval is under way, more staff would have to be engaged. This, under the existing conditions is impossible and board members request that together with the construction of the new wards, consideration be given to the additions to the nurses' quarters at the same time. The nursing staff, it may be pointed out, have practically no recreation room, the study room is far too small and if the staff is to be maintained, something will have to be done and almost immediately.

"Your advice would be appreciated."

A firm of private architects was appointed in February, 1946, to plan the board's programme. The board in October, 1946, withdrew a proposal to build two temporary wards in favour of the construction of a new hospital. The department had agreed to the construction of a new hospital to allow for construction in progressive stages to permit of its being used sectionally.

The board decided that the additional accommodation for nursing and domestic staff be provided. Plans and specifications were prepared and tenders called and accepted for the work. Construction is at such a stage that it will be completed at the end of the year.

During 1950 and subsequent years, £10,400 was expended in improving dining rooms and lavatory blocks and making other additions for ancillary services and installation of fittings and plant. During the period of construction until the present financial year the board had no difficulty in obtaining the required loan moneys. This year, however, it has obtained a loan of £15,000 for the nurses' quarters project but will require to raise an additional £19,751 to meet the costs of the completed building. With the present restriction of finance due to the financial

policy of the Federal Government, the board will have extreme difficulty in raising the money.

It was probably intended that the two projects, accommodation for nurses and additional accommodation for patients, would proceed simultaneously. The working drawings and specifications for the nurses' quarters were completed in December, 1949. The sketch plans for the new hospital were completed on 30 August, 1950. It will be seen that if the original proposal of constructing two new wards adjacent to the present hospital had been proceeded with, the accommodation problem would have been overcome. However, the decision by the board of which the hon. member for Mirani was a member to make the additional accommodation form part of a new multi-storeyed building on an area removed from the hospital with all the difficulties associated with the planning of a major hospital project, has been responsible for any shortage of accommodation.

Sketch plans have been prepared for a two-storeyed building to accommodate 79 patients. It will form a wing of the new hospital. The estimated cost is £123,296. When this project has been completed it will relieve the accommodation problem of the hospital. As the Government cannot enter into contracts for the construction of new buildings until they can ensure that moneys will be available to meet the contractors' claims, it is not possible to make further progress on the work. Loans totalling £3,000 have been obtained. An allocation of £7,000 which includes £5,000 for 1951-1952 but was not raised, was made in the present financial year's programme for the work on the new wing. The board received an offer of a loan for this amount but this amount, because of the present financial circumstances, has had to be diverted to the nurses' quarters. The board is faced with the problem of obtaining the amount of £7,000 and until the money is raised it would be foolhardy to invite tenders.

We should like to start many jobs, but they would take years to complete. We have to find the money; that is the big difficulty all over the State today. It will be seen that this project has not been absolutely neglected. If the completion of the necessary hospitals throughout the State were as easy as it might seem to some people, why would not the Government have the work carried out? At the present time we are pressed for finance. We have had a number of conferences on this subject and wherever possible works under construction have been cut down. In some cases, where new drugs are diminishing the need for isolation wards, we have cut them out. We try to allocate the moneys in hand fairly for absolutely urgent work. We put the whole of our requirements into the melting-pot.

We are exploring the possibilities of finance throughout Australia. I must confess that at the moment prospects do not look very good but I can assure all hon. members that we desire to proceed with the work of building new hospitals and modernising old

ones. Everybody will concede that medical men cannot be expected to work in outmoded buildings or use outmoded equipment. Nurses cannot be expected to do the work in hospitals that are overcrowded. There is a difference of opinion in some circles as to whether we should provide modern quarters for nurses. I believe we must—it is absolutely necessary—but these quarters cost a lot of money today. However, if they are properly built of brick they are there for, say, 50 or 60 years. They are the nurses' homes. We build them to conform with modern technique. Nurses work three shifts and consideration has to be given to those girls who work at night and who have to sleep during the day.

Mr. Low: Why do you not make a more friendly approach to the Commonwealth Government? I have summed the whole thing up: you are hostile to the Federal Government and therefore you cannot get the best co-operation.

Mr. MOORE: If the hon. member desires a closer relationship with the Federal Government I would advise him to go from his own electorate for a while and slip down and watch the other Government.

Wherever possible, we try to provide these facilities. At times one can get oneself into a fix. Recently at Gympie I opened part of the new wing of the nurses' quarters and my attention was drawn immediately to the old wing, which in comparison with the new building is out of date. I can assure hon. members that we are making every effort to get the necessary finance and if we can get it we will not only complete the buildings in course of erection but we will improve existing buildings and conditions wherever we can.

The hon. member for Mundingburra raised the matter of the Townsville Ambulance Committee. He did not have the time to complete his speech but I do not think he wanted the time. Ambulance committees are established to carry out the job that is the policy of the ambulance brigades throughout the State, to collect the necessary money, which is subsidised by the Government, and to control the expenditure of that money. Some very foolish things have been done in Townsville by the members of the committee. I must confess that at one stage it was in rather an invidious position. Some of these people were very badly advised in what they did but the Government took a very benevolent view of the whole matter. The former Premier, the late E. M. Hanlon, was visiting Townsville to do a job and I asked him to have a look into the matter. I thought that the committee was a little bit misguided. It had done a number of foolish things. What I did was to strengthen the committee. A number of additional members were placed on the committee and the new committee immediately started to straighten things out.

In due course the annual election was held. Certain unions got in touch with me, asking what the procedure would be. I told them the election would be conducted strictly according to the Act. I gave the

union executives information as to what should be done to elect a new committee in accordance with the Act. We told them all straight out what they would have to do. We told them that if the election was not carried out in conformity with the Act the whole thing would be cancelled. Certain people were elected, and I as Minister, with the approval of Cabinet, felt that we might add a few to the committee to break the new fellows in. I have pointed out that my department does not want to interfere in the domestic affairs of these committees. We have plenty of work without interfering in the domestic affairs of committees and boards throughout the State.

Mr. Low: You are champions at it.

Mr. MOORE: Let me tell the hon. member for Cooroora that if it is in the interests of the people of that area, we will interfere. We are the elected Government and it is our policy to see that certain administrative acts are done. The hon. member may be a young and vigorous type of cove who is throwing his weight about in his own electorate, but he has a job in front of him when it comes to tackling my department. It would appear that he is the only one who is at "outs" with the department. I have heard hon. member after hon. member of the Opposition commending the work my officers are doing in the interests of the people, and I appreciate that commendation. This young fellow who has burst into public affairs rather quickly will have to learn that there are other people besides himself about the place. Although the teaching takes a little time, my officers will be delighted indeed to make of him one of those good public men who put public interest before a lot of other things.

Mr. Aikens: The people of Townsville would like to know whether they are to have any rights on this committee.

Mr. MOORE: I cannot handle two at once, although I do say that the hon. member for Mundingburra is just a little clearer in his thoughts than the hon. member for Cooroora.

Mr. Aikens: I am trying to get a plain statement for the people of Townsville.

Mr. MOORE: The plain statement is that in the interests of the people who subscribe to the ambulance in Townsville and in the interests of the people of Townsville whom this ambulance brigade serves so well, we will, when we are satisfied that the committee is doing the right thing, withdraw the additional members from it.

It would appear now that this very important vote is about to be agreed to by the Committee. We have had a very interesting debate indeed and I thank hon. members of the Opposition for proving to the people of Queensland that the Chief Office of this department is doing an excellent job and that this State Government did in fact win the battle to preserve free hospitalisation to the people of Queensland.

Vote (Department of Health and Home Affairs—Chief Office) agreed to.

NATIVE AFFAIRS.

Hon. W. M. MOORE (Merthyr—Secretary for Health and Home Affairs) (3.39 p.m.): I move—

“That £481,930 be granted for ‘Native Affairs’.”

The amount appropriated last year was £417,472, and the amount actually expended was £412,034. The £481,930 asked for this year is therefore greater by £64,458 than the amount appropriated last year, and £69,896 greater than the amount expended in that year. The increased amount required for 1952-1953 is made up of an increased provision of £36,219 for salaries and £33,677 for contingencies.

The increase in salaries is mainly consequent upon variations in awards and adjustments in the basic wage and re-voting of provision for the appointments of certain officers not made last financial year. The increase in contingencies is brought about by increased cost of commodities at all settlements; re-voting of expenses for certain projects provided last financial year; and provision for certain urgent works.

An examination of the detailed items mainly responsible for the total increase of £33,677 in contingencies gives a very good picture of the work being done by the Government for our native peoples, through their Department of Native Affairs, and the continual improvements that are being made in both their standard of living and the amenities being provided for them. Grants to missions, on which £58,212 was expended last year, are £46,900 this year. Whilst at first glance it would appear that the help being given by the Government to the various religious bodies to carry on their aboriginal mission stations has been reduced, that is not so. The reduction this year is due mainly to the fact that the Yarrabah mission of the Church of England received an amount of £31,000 in 1951-1952, made up of the annual grant of £20,000, plus an amount of £11,000 as a special grant to liquidate accumulated deficits. The provision for this year for this mission is the normal amount of £20,000. I want to say that I visited that mission some time ago and found conditions were not very good. It would appear that the mission was short of money, and the staff position was pretty low. I had a talk to the local committee, and this was followed by a number of conferences with Archbishop Halse and other important people, and I suggested on behalf of the Government that they should remove the mission from the island. The Government offered to provide a suitable area of land—

Mr. Wordsworth: It is on the coast.

Mr. MOORE: Yes, it is on the coast.

Mr. Wordsworth: To a more accessible area.

Mr. MOORE: Yes, we wanted to put it inland and we offered to provide some land, but for sentimental and religious reasons the church authorities desired that the mission remain at Yarrabah. It was decided to have a survey made by officers of the Department of Public Lands, Department of Agriculture

and Stock, Department of Native Affairs, and others, and it was found that with modern methods of agriculture—the natural resources of the place, apart from timber, are not very great—and with modern sawmilling equipment, we might be able to put new life into the mission. Personally I think that the Church of England should have accepted the offer we made. Because of its inaccessibility the mission is very difficult to administer and costs are high.

The Church of England authorities are appreciative of the work done by the Government. It is part of our policy to help church missions in the good work they are doing. Incidentally, we hear charges of Socialism being thrown about the place but here is an item of Socialism that evidently is producing good results. We propose to train these native peoples to take their places in the community. Hon. members will hear more about this before the debate is concluded. We do appreciate the work these church people are doing in the Far North and they are carrying on successfully in parts of the State where the State could not carry on, because in the first place we could not get staff to go to these places. Part of the religious training of these church people is that they shall serve in remote parts of the State. There is an exceedingly noble outlook and for that reason they are able to carry on in parts of the State where the Government could not get staff to go. As I say, the Government fully appreciate the work being done by these church missions.

We cater for the natives in our own aboriginal townships—and “townships” is the correct word. South of Cairns is the area where most of the settlements are. It is well known to members of the Assembly that we have certain towns and settlements, such as those at Palm Island, Woorabinda, and Cherbourg and the basic principle underlying those towns is that we are bringing our people together there and training them to live their lives in a regulated way. We can extend those areas when materials, particularly building materials, become more freely available.

The increased provision for Cherbourg, apart from provision for increase in native wages and most commodity items, is brought about by the additional amount required for—

	£
Extension of water supply	2,500
Hot-water installation	1,000
New truck	1,600
Baby welfare	1,200

For Palm Island there is similar provision for the increased cost of foodstuffs and other commodities. Other items requiring increased provision are—

	£
Extension of water supply	1,000
Maintenance of administrative buildings	1,600
Increase in native wages	500
Maintenance and fuel for electric light supply	1,150
New barge	300
Settlement interphone	300

For the other township, Woorabinda, in addition to the increased provision for the rise in costs of foodstuffs and other commodities, there are the following items:—

	£
Hot-water installation	500
Baby welfare	500

The increased costs of all these items, however, are more than offset by non-recurring expenditure undertaken during 1951-1952 and in consequence the vote for this township this year is £600 less than that for last year. Incidental and miscellaneous expenses have been increased by approximately £2,000, mainly because of an increased provision of £1,700 for improvements to country reserves.

Further items provided for under this vote are £3,000 to provide suitable accommodation for aboriginals in the Normanton and Cooktown camps. For the Normanton camp building material has already been ordered. At Cooktown camp a welfare officer has been appointed, and welfare work, including accommodation is under way.

An amount of £2,000 is provided for the expenses of transferring the native people from Cowall Creek to Aloa. There are approximately 200 aboriginals at Cowall Creek, at the tip of Cape York Peninsula, and their living conditions are not good. Water supplies are bad, gardening is impossible, and generally the conditions are very unsuitable. The transfer of these people to the Bamaga area is already in progress. Their houses, schools, hospital buildings, etc., must be removed as part of the transfer, and the amount sought is required for that purpose. The new site to which these people are being moved provides excellent living conditions, with a good, fertile soil and a plentiful water supply.

A further amount of £1,000 is provided under this heading for accommodation for out-patients from the various Torres Strait islands attending the general hospital at Thursday Island. The development of Cape York Peninsula and the provision thereon of accommodation for Torres Strait islanders, particularly those at Saibai Island, is one of the most important and necessary schemes in native-affairs activities in the North, and accounts for £17,000 of this vote. The name of the township is Bamaga, and its construction and development constitute a major advance in the most northerly mainland part of this State. A weir has been constructed on Nona Creek that will provide plentiful water for domestic use and farm irrigation. What was previously an unused and undeveloped part of the State is rapidly being turned into an area of productivity.

The population of this township is approximately 500. The people have been given houses and sufficient good land to maintain themselves. In addition, the Department of Native Affairs has established a fruit and vegetable farm that will ultimately supply these commodities to the population of 2,000 in Thursday Island and adjoining areas in Torres Strait. Although it is only in its early developmental stages, this project last

year supplied a large amount of fresh vegetables to the Thursday Island General Hospital, and the Waiben T. B. Hospital. As an example of the production already becoming available, it is estimated that 15,000 pine-apples will be harvested before the end of this year. These will be supplied to the Thursday Island Hospital and marketed in Thursday Island, supplying a long-felt want of the people there.

This project is a very good example of the Government's policy in the care of our native people. Unused good land in a remote part of the State has been given to these people with the twofold result that they will, by their own efforts in tilling this soil, become independent and self-supporting, and idle land will be brought into production and supply to Thursday Island and the Torres Strait commodities that, whilst being very necessary for health, become very costly indeed when they have to be transported very long distances as at present.

The aboriginal population of Queensland falls readily into two distinct groups, the people on the mainland and the Torres Strait islanders. The closer settlement and development of the mainland over the years have deprived our natives of their natural way of life. Lands from which they once obtained their sustenance are no longer available to them, and the old tribes have broken up with the result that those of our native people in the more closely settled areas of the State have become detribalised. In the remoter regions, where white settlement did not occur so early, action by the Government in declaring tracts of country aboriginal reserves and placing them under the control of church missions has to a great degree preserved their tribal entities. This makes it desirable that they be treated as distinct communities, and the present system of church missions meets the position admirably. That explains why the church missions are situated in the remoter parts of the State. In the closer-settled parts of the State the natives have had a great deal of contact with the white people and their method of life and, as I said previously, they have lost their distinct tribal characteristics.

The object of our native affairs policy in general is to fit our native people to take their place in the community. The establishment of our native townships is the main step in this direction. The remnants of many tribes can be accommodated there amicably, and without distinction, owing to the factors that I have mentioned. Here they are cared for and given a social life of their own, and at the same time trained in skills and trades to enable them to enter employment, and be assimilated into the general community. At present, however, a degree of protection is required for the majority, but every day those who are capable of looking after their own affairs and supporting themselves are released from the control of the department and assimilated into our community.

It is an unhappy fact that throughout Australia unscrupulous people have looked on our natives as a source of labour that could be exploited. Queensland leads every other

State in the degree of protection provided against this evil, and anthropologists and social workers not only from the other Australian States but from other parts of the world also who have examined our system have given it unqualified praise.

Last year, under the chairmanship of the Commonwealth Minister for Territories, a meeting of State Ministers in charge of native affairs was held in Canberra, and a body, comprised of the State Ministers with the Commonwealth Minister as chairman, was set up to be known as the Native Welfare Council.

An Opposition Member: That was a memorable conference.

Mr. MOORE: Publicity was given to the things that did not count but no publicity was given to the things that did count. We will tell hon. members where the Commonwealth Government failed to realise their responsibility to the natives, not only of Queensland but of Australia. For the information of the Committee, I point out that most of the hospitals now come under the local hospitals boards. We can give them more nursing service in this way. In effect, these people are getting the same treatment as is obtained in our ordinary hospitals throughout the State.

The States of Queensland and Western Australia and the Northern Territory have by far the largest number of native people and it is interesting to compare the conditions of the natives in those States. In Queensland all our aboriginal people come under the control of our Native Affairs Department unless they are specifically exempted. Protectors of aboriginals are appointed all over the State and, when they are not officers of the Native Affairs Department, they are the local police officers. Before any aboriginal person still subject to the Act can be employed by an outside employer the person wishing to employ him must be approved by the department, and the conditions of employment of the specified native person must also be approved. He can rely on the local protector to see that he is paid the wages due to him and that he is not exploited in any way. Natives to whom exemption has been granted become members of the union covering their calling, and must be paid the same as any other member of that union. These provisions have a twofold aim and effect. First, they protect the aboriginal himself from exploitation by unscrupulous employers and, secondly, they prevent their being built into a cheap labour force that might, at the opportune time, be used to break down the wages and working conditions of white men employed in the same industry. This could be so particularly in the pastoral industry but for the policy of this Government.

In Western Australia and the Northern Territory an employer wishing to employ aboriginal labour is simply given a permit to do so and his native workers are more or less at his mercy. It is a common thing in those territories for a number of natives, sometimes up to 200 or 300, to be living on the large station properties. The menfolk

who are not too old work on the property and the women and children and old people have to exist as best they can on the inadequate wages paid to the working man. No provision is made for the education of the children and, in most cases there is no provision at all for medical attention. The best that can be said is that they eke out a mere existence.

In Queensland, under our Government, every aboriginal working on a pastoral property must be paid the fixed wages due to him and have accommodation up to the standards laid down by law. The worker in this industry in this State has only to support himself and his wife and children. His relatives or connections or members of his tribe who for any reason cannot work are cared for in our Government aboriginal townships, or on our mission stations. If they have not relatives or dependents who can look after them, we take them back and make them the responsibility of the department.

As I have said, the native peoples of our Torres Strait islands form a distinct section of our native population, by reason of the fact that they have inhabited islands mainly too small to attract early white settlers, and their distance from the first-settled parts of this State. They remained undisturbed in possession of their islands, and the Government were able, when their native-affairs policy was formulated, to make these islands reserves and guarantee their possession to the native people. Each island more or less forms a separate community or tribe, and the Labour Government have granted to them what may be termed local self-government. They elect their own councillors, who under the direction and with the advice of the Director of Native Affairs, control their own domestic matters.

The sea surrounding their islands has always provided them with their living. First it supplied their chief requirement, food. With their development and education in the standard of living under a white civilisation, their requirements became much more than mere food. They were faced with the problem of obtaining goods. Prior to the last war their income was derived mainly from performing the unskilled work in the pearl-shell and trochus fishing boats. The skilled work on these boats was almost invariably done by Japanese divers and tenders. The outbreak of war led to the suspension of this industry and the disappearance of the Japanese. At the end of the war, the Director of Native Affairs and the Island Industries Board helped the Torres Strait islanders to re-establish the industry. The boats are now completely manned by islanders, and this has meant a tremendous uplift in their standard of living and economic position. When the Japanese monopolised the skilled positions of divers and tenders, the islander received only £3 15s. to £5 a month. Today the crew members receive a basic wage of £15 a month and keep, and on native-owned boats they receive also a bonus in the nature of a percentage of the catch, which brings their

monthly earnings up to, in many cases, £25. This alone shows that the building up of this industry under the guidance of the Department of Native Affairs, with the collaboration of the natives, has meant an increase in wages and gives some idea of the improvement made in the conditions to the benefit to the natives.

This bonus or profit-sharing explains the charges that are made by some interested parties that native-owned boats obtain preference for crews. Is it any wonder that the islanders get preference when conditions are so much better? However, the islanders are free to work on whatever boat they choose. It is only reasonable that they should prefer to work on boats where they get the opportunity of increasing their earnings by their own skill and industry. In short, they work where they get the better deal. There are interests, however, that are anxious, for their own profit, to see a return to the conditions prevailing before the war, conditions whereby natives could be exploited and profit made out of them. The reintroduction of the Japanese would mean a return to low wages for the islanders and a greater return for boat-owners. Under present circumstances, the high earnings of the islanders remain in the islands and the consequent increased spending power of the islanders must lead to further development in this area. When the Japanese members of the crews were receiving the main portion of the wages earned, very little if any of that money remained in the Torres Strait area. It went to Japan. That is another very important point in the argument of native versus Japanese divers.

It has been stated that the islander could not compete with the Japanese divers and that exclusion of the Japanese would mean a falling-off in production. This has proved to be false, as boats wholly manned by islanders are providing a greater production than was achieved with the Japanese divers and tenders. For various reasons, the Commonwealth authorities allowed a few Japanese divers to remain in Australia during the war, and these men—among them being some of the most skilful and experienced Japanese divers—are again operating in Torres Strait. There are also some Malayan divers.

The annual report of the Director of Native Affairs shows that the highest catches were made by island divers. The record is 22 tons, set up last year by an island diver. This figure has never been exceeded by a Japanese diver. There we have proof positive that these native divers are equal to the best in the world. It is interesting to note also that the native divers and crew members are under the control and protection of the Director of Native Affairs and that payments to them are strictly policed. This prevents exploitation and guarantees that they receive the full amounts due to them. The position is very different where Japanese divers are concerned, because they are not under the protection of the Director of Native Affairs and it is easy for unscrupulous boat-owners to exploit them and pay them less than their genuine earnings. Attempts are made from

time to time by boat-owners to evade payments of the amounts due to islanders, and the Director of Native Affairs has been forced to take action on their behalf to compel these people to pay what they legally owe to the islanders. The plain fact is that the Department of Native Affairs and its Director stand between would-be exploiters and the islanders, and while this Government are in power that condition will remain.

We know that for some time now certain people have been conducting a campaign against the Director of Native Affairs with the aim of undermining the department in Torres Strait. I should say the greatest offence the Director of Native Affairs has committed in Thursday Island in the eyes of some pearl-shellers has been his opposition to the introduction of Japanese labour. He strenuously opposed the introduction of this cheap labour. Towards the middle of 1951 the Pearl Shellers' Association had a meeting in Thursday Island at which it was determined to approach the Commonwealth Government to obtain Japanese labour to supplant Torres Strait island divers and tenders on their boats. The deliberations were so secret and the correspondence with the Commonwealth Government so covered up that the negotiations continued for several months without the knowledge of a Torres Strait islander or the Director of Native Affairs. Ultimately, of course, as happens in most cases, this secret information got out. Someone divulged it, and rightly so, and when it was spread about, the islanders became incensed and, as many of them are returned soldiers, they went so far as to appeal to the Returned Soldiers' Leagues throughout Australia to help them. In the recent public discussion of this matter, the Director of Native Affairs was made the scapegoat; all sorts of charges were levelled against him, and it is to his credit and that of the department that not one of those charges was proved.

Despite the good work that these islanders are doing, there are still people who would like to see the Japanese back. I should say that the reason for that is that certain people want to exploit these native divers. It has been the duty of the Director of Native Affairs to take legal action against certain of these people who have robbed the natives, and to compel those people to pay the wages lawfully due to the islanders. I propose quoting a list of some of the people who have been forced by law to pay these native divers the money to which they are entitled. If we peruse the list we find that it includes some of the friends of the hon. member for Cook who made such an outburst against the Director of Native Affairs. These debtors are—

Debtors.	Vessels.	Amount.
		£ s. d.
Messrs. Blanchfield and Wallman	Trade Winds and Mary Ann	273 0 0
Mr. H. N. Hoekings	Penguin	170 0 0
Owen Mass and others	Tina	133 17 11
P. Mallie	Taletta	274 19 2
Torres Strait Pearl-shell Co.	Cormorant	346 2 6

I think that the owner should have been called "Cormorant."

Mr. B. E. Bolger ..	Francis Pritt ..	218	8	1
Mr. J. B. Wits ..	Whynot ..	147	17	8
Mr. A. Qvist ..	Neptune ..	1,062	18	9
Deep Sea Pearling Co. }	Albatross and	1,410	9	11
Messrs Lucas and	Marcia Nina			
Vandenriesch				
Captain Bahnmann ..	Northern Star ..	530	8	0
R. S. Tait Pearling Co.	Moia and Fram	1,171	14	11
		5,744	16	11

Of this total £4,042 14s. has been collected and paid to the islanders. The balance, in the cases of Captain Bahnmann and R. S. Tait Pearling Company, is still in action with the Solicitor-General.

These facts and figures must be evidence of the determination of the administration in Thursday Island to protect the islanders against these exploiters. Are we to wonder that the Director of Native Affairs is defiled by certain people? These figures indicate only a small part of arrears of wages that the Director has collected from would-be defaulting employers. The checking of wages due and owing to island workers is exhaustive and accurate. It leaves no loophole for exploitation. Innumerable cases have occurred in which many pearl-shellers—there are two or three in Thursday Island who cannot be brought within this category—will deliberately lie in an effort to obtain some reduction of wages against islanders. Invariably, however, when pressure is brought to bear on these people they will pay. If they do not, there is always the recourse to law.

Without the protective measures adopted by the Director of Native Affairs in the interests of islanders, exploitation would be rampant, and the islanders would be fleeced at every opportunity. It is safe to say that the amount of attempted exploitation by employers and storekeepers is greater with the 1,000-odd Torres Strait working islanders than with the 5,000 working aborigines throughout Queensland.

Here is one specific case indicating the degree of exploitation to which a pearler will descend. Three years ago a pearler with a crew of Torres Strait islanders was engaged in the pearling industry. The terms of employment were that when the crew obtained 10 tons of shell during the season, they must obtain a bonus payment for any additional shell produced. When this crew produced 9½ tons of shell, they were discharged, and an application was made for re-engagement of a new crew. Naturally, the new crew would not share in the bonus payment to which the original crew would have been entitled. The Director refused to supply a new crew on these terms, and the old crew lost their bonus. The pearler left the industry; he was one of the gang behind this vicious attack made on the Director.

An even greater field for exploitation returning very large sums of money to the unscrupulous, which would be open but for the protection of the Department of Native

Affairs, is the buying of the islanders' production of pearl-shell and trochus shell. The Island Industries Board acts as selling agent for the islanders, and has consistently obtained for them higher prices than have been obtained by other producers.

Whilst practically all trochus and pearl-shell is produced by Torres Strait islanders, and sold through the Island Industries Board, a mainland mission station, the Lockhart River mission, owns a cutter that is used by the natives of the mission in gathering trochus shell. This shell is marketed by the mission authorities, independent of the board. It would seem that we shall have to give some protection to these pearlers in regard to their dealings in shell. Last year the superintendent of that mission was approached by the agent of a shell buyer, named Kulenkampf, and was offered £290 a ton for their trochus-shell. That was in April or May. In about October he reduced this price to £180 a ton. Compared with the price of £300 a ton that was received by the Island Industries Board for the trochus-shell marketed by it on behalf of the islanders, the natives of this mission were exploited to the extent of several hundred pounds on the small amount of shell produced by them. Trochus-shell marketed by the Island Industries Board sold for £300 a ton, yet this fellow offered the mission £290 a ton in the first instance and finally gave them £180 a ton. Had the Island Industries Board been placed in the same position by dealing with this man, the loss entailed for the amount of shell produced would have been £30,000. You will remember, Mr. Clark, a motion for the adjournment of the House was moved to discuss a matter and that in the debate this man Kulenkampf received quite a lot of prominence.

Unfortunately, without any request to the board for advice, the superintendent of the Lockhart River Mission walked into the trap that Kulenkampf had set also for the Island Industries Board. I am sure that the Director of Native Affairs will advise the Lockhart River Mission to be guided in future in its sale of marine produce, relatively small though the quantity might be, by the Island Industries Board. If that is done, the protection that will be given by the Island Industries Board to the natives will probably result in getting rid of these people who are setting out to exploit them. When certain people who are being used by these exploiters appreciate the full facts of the case, I feel quite sure they will be satisfied that the Director of Native Affairs and his colleagues are doing the right thing by these Torres Strait natives.

MR. NICKLIN (Landsborough—Leader of the Opposition) (4.18 p.m.): The vote that we have under consideration involves quite a sum of money, but as this is a very important sub-department it is only right that we should vote to it sufficient finance to carry on the really excellent work it is doing among the original Australians in this State. Queensland has nothing to be ashamed of in the record of service that it has given to

these native peoples in recent years, and great credit is due to Mr. Bleakley and Mr. O'Leary for the parts they have played in building up the organisation that exists in this State.

It is unfortunate, however, that the good work being done by our officials stands a chance of being ruined because the Minister is allowing to creep into his department things that are not to the advantage of the natives or the administration of the department. I refer to the Minister's allowing or encouraging, I do not know which, the use of departmental facilities and the officers of the department for party-political purposes. The Minister had a great deal to say about protecting the natives from exploitation, but he does nothing to protect the natives under his care from party-political exploitation. We have had an excellent example of that in what has taken place in recent weeks by the use of a departmental facility, the broadcasting station on Thursday Island, for party-political purposes.

This station is a necessary facility to help the department at Thursday Island and in the surrounding islands. It can be used for the purpose for which it was intended, that is, to keep the Director of Native Affairs and his officers in touch with the various outposts round Thursday Island and to give them the information they should have, but no-one will agree that it should be used for political purposes or for dealing with such things as alleged subversive activities by means of a broadcast of statements without a record of what was said. If the Minister is quite satisfied with that state of affairs in the administration of his department he shows a great deal of laxity or indifference. If he does not know what is happening in his department, it is time that someone took charge of it who does know; if he does know what is happening in the use of that station and he has condoned it, he is guilty of a grave dereliction of duty as a Minister of the Crown.

Mr. Power: That is a cowardly thing to say about a Minister.

Mr. NICKLIN: I am prepared to stand up to it; I can prove it. He is guilty of a grave dereliction of duty by allowing the station to be used as it was, or condoning the use of the station to broadcast to the native population defamatory remarks about an hon. member of this Parliament. In doing that he was guilty of a dereliction of duty as a Minister of the Crown.

Mr. Moore: It was not defamatory.

Mr. NICKLIN: What was the effect of that broadcast? It could have no other effect than to tend to destroy the prestige of this Parliament and the prestige of those who are in authority over the native population of this State. Instead of checking the alleged subversive activities that were occurring in the area, according to the Minister's word, he was positively playing into the hands of those who may be responsible for these alleged subversive activities because he was breaking down authority, he was breaking

down the prestige of the Government of this State and the prestige of Parliament itself. When we look round the world today and see some of the unsavoury things that are happening in conflicts between whites and blacks, for example in South Africa, we do not want anything like that to happen here. The Minister by his action in condoning what went on in that broadcast from Thursday Island is playing a very big part in encouraging conditions like that right here in the State of Queensland.

Mr. Moore: It was a hook-up between your party and the Communists.

Mr. NICKLIN: The Minister is getting hot under the collar, but he will get hotter under the collar before I have finished.

Let us examine the circumstances of this broadcast. I asked some questions on the subject in the House. First of all I asked him whether he had authorised the broadcast and the Minister said that he had not authorised it. Then I asked him whether the licence for the station permitted its use for party-political purposes and the Minister said in reply—

"I am informed that the station was not and never has been used for party-political purposes."

Mr. Moore: That is true.

Mr. NICKLIN: It is true?

Mr. Moore: Yes. You prove that it is not true.

Mr. NICKLIN: I have been informed by a gentleman who heard the broadcast that the hon. member for Cook was accused in that broadcast of being a liar. In addition, the member for Cook was defamed in that broadcast, and this gentleman said that if he only had enough warning of what was going to be said he could have taken a record and there possibly might have been an action for defamation. (Government interjections.) Is it right that a State instrumentality set up for the benefit of the native population should be used to say that a member of this Parliament, no matter what party he belonged to, was a liar? Are we going to allow public servants of this State to use a State instrumentality to refer to members of this Parliament as liars?

Mr. Power interjected.

Mr. NICKLIN: I know what the reaction of the Attorney-General would be if anything like that happened to him—pretty violent.

Let us go a little further and examine this broadcast. The Minister, in answer to the question, said, "I am further informed there is no script or record of this broadcast." I want members to note that particularly—that a broadcast of this kind can be put over a station like this without any record of what has been said. Would any Minister of the Crown be satisfied to give one of his officers ad. lib. permission to say what he liked when the Minister has to accept the responsibility for what he said? If I was a Minister I should not be satisfied with that.

Do not forget that the Minister has to accept responsibility for what was said. (Government interjections.)

Mr. Moore: I am challenging you now to tell us what was in that broadcast.

Mr. NICKLIN: The Minister knows what was in the broadcast.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Clark): I should like a little more silence in the Chamber while the hon. member is trying to make his speech.

Mr. NICKLIN: I do not know the whole of what was in that broadcast, only some of the things that were said. The hon. member does not know anything that was said.

Mr. Moore: You do not know what the Minister knows, neither did he when he got up.

Mr. NICKLIN: After all, the Minister has to accept the responsibility for that broadcast—for the fact that an hon. member of this Chamber was accused of being a liar in that broadcast. Does the Minister stand for that? Does he stand for that in any broadcast authorised by him. After all, he has to accept the responsibility?

Mr. Moore: I told you it was not authorised by me.

Mr. NICKLIN: If the hon. gentlemen did not authorise it, he would accept the responsibility or risk as the Minister.

Mr. Moore: I am not accepting what some of his friends said.

Mr. NICKLIN: Let us examine the Minister's reply. First of all he said there was no script or record of the broadcast, that it was purely a report given in the ordinary way of a matter vitally affecting the affairs of the Island, that it was a report of the proceedings in Parliament on the motion of the hon. member for Cook, and was based on the reports of the debate appearing in "The Cairns Post," "The Courier-Mail" and "Hansard." I say definitely that it was impossible for any quotation from "Hansard" to be used in that broadcast because no "Hansard" was in Thursday Island the day the broadcast was made. The debate took place on Tuesday, 23 September. The broadcast was made on Thursday Island at 8 a.m. one week later, on 30 September. The "Hansard" from which these alleged quotations were made was published on the afternoon of 29 September. How could it get from here to Thursday Island in a few hours? This reply of the Minister's was wrong, false, and misled the House, because "Hansard" was not available in Thursday Island at the time the broadcast was made.

That would be sufficient to condemn the whole of the attitude of the Minister in this matter, and it shows he has completely neglected his duties as Minister of the Crown by allowing things like this to happen, but in addition he puts information before the House that is not correct. First of all, he allows an important matter like this to go

over the air without any script or record and then, to cover himself, he gives false information to the House. He does not know the responsibility of the office he holds. The Minister, in answer to my question, said—

"... The Department of Native Affairs radio station is the only means available to the Director to acquaint the islanders of matters affecting them, and in which they are interested, and it is used frequently for this purpose. Prior to the debate, rumours were being spread in the islands by undesirable and subversive elements to the effect that they had had the Director 'sacked' from his position and urging the islanders to take no further notice of the Department of Native Affairs."

According to the Minister, there was a dangerous subversive activity in the island to the detriment of the authority of the Department of Native Affairs, but a broadcast to the natives on this very important subject was made without any record or script, according to the Minister's answer. I do not believe it. There is no doubt that there was a script for that broadcast, and the Minister is again derelict in his ministerial duties in suppressing the script that was used in that broadcast. No thinking man will imagine for a moment that a broadcast on such an important matter and dealing with subversive activities that are allegedly taking place on Thursday Island would be allowed without one. If the officer did that, he is not fit to be an officer of the Department of Native Affairs.

The Minister went on to say that it was necessary that those on the island should be given the true facts. The true facts? How do we know they were getting the true facts?

Mr. Moore: You fall for the Mulligan story the hon. member for Cook fell for. That is your trouble.

Mr. NICKLIN: If the alleged facts calling for the broadcast were true, what is the Minister's answer to me? They were not facts at all, because the Minister said they were published in "Hansard" and there could have been no "Hansard" on Thursday Island at that time.

Mr. Power: I think you are making it up yourself. You have no evidence.

Mr. NICKLIN: I do not say things in this Chamber unless I have facts to back them up. I have shown definitely on the Minister's answer to my question that he deceived the House. He deceived the House by giving incorrect information and I ask anybody with ordinary intelligence whether he would imagine for one moment that the officer who was making this broadcast would do it ad lib., without script. If he used the reports of the day's debate as appearing in "The Cairns Post," "The Courier-Mail," and as appearing in the "Hansard" that was not there, at least he could have produced them.

When I asked the Minister a further question on the matter he dodged the issue whether he should table in the House the

newspaper and "Hansard" extracts that were used. Surely they could be procured, and if it was an ad. lib. broadcast, which I deny, at least the officer who made it would know what he quoted out of "The Cairns Post", "The Courier-Mail", and the "Hansard", that was not there. If the Minister had wished to do so, it would have been quite easy for him to table those newspaper extracts in the House. He dodged the issue by saying—

"No mention was made in my answer to the question on 16 October of newspaper and 'Hansard' extracts. In my answer I stated that the broadcast was based on the reports of the debate appearing in 'The Cairns Post', 'The Courier-Mail' and 'Hansard'. These publications are readily available to all."

Certainly they are readily available, but the "Hansard" from which the quotations were made was not readily available at Thursday Island on the day on which the broadcast was made.

Then the Minister goes on to say—

"It has already been denied that the station has been used for any party-political purposes."

One could not call a broadcast in which an honourable member of this side is accused of being a liar praising him up. The Minister then went on to say—

"nor has it been used to impute alleged subversive activity against anyone."

He makes that statement there, but in his first answer to me he said that one of the prime reasons for the broadcast was to inform the natives of the subversive activities that were going on. What are we to believe about this, except that it is purely political? That is emphasised by the last sentence of the Minister's answer, in which he says—

"It was purely a report from the Director to his people—they are not electors, and have not a vote."

We do not care about votes. The Minister has a vote complex. We want this thing cleaned up. We want this department run as it should be. We want the Minister to realise his responsibilities to the department and to the State. We want to eliminate from this department any activities that will tend to bring into disrepute this Parliament and the authority of the State. By agreeing to that broadcast, by condoning what was done on that occasion, the Minister has indicated that he is willing to allow the authority of this Parliament, the prestige of hon. members of this Parliament, and the prestige of the State to be degraded by actions such as this in an endeavour to gain some party-political advantage. The Minister should be ashamed of himself for taking so lightly his ministerial responsibilities in this most important matter.

In conclusion I say that the Minister has acted in such a way in regard to this whole affair that he should be ashamed of breaking down the excellent work done by the department he represents.

Mr. WORDSWORTH (Cook) (4.41 p.m.): I have noted the Minister's remarks and will deal with them to some extent. I was prepared to bury the hatchet, but it now appears necessary to bury it in someone's head. Now that the matter has been brought up again those who have brought it up will have to take what is coming to them.

First of all let me say that I endorse the Minister's remarks about the standard of native welfare in Queensland. In the early days of the war I had occasion to cross Australia on a troop-train on several occasions and I was never so disgusted at being an Australian as I was when I saw the natives on the Nullarbor Plains. When the train stopped and we got out with our mess-tins and opened up our bully-beef and what-have-you, they came along with their little tins to get our scraps. I was ashamed of the standard of their lives but I am proud of the standard in Queensland. But do not let the Minister take all the credit because the credit lies with one man, Mr. Bleakley, who was Protector of Aborigines. He set the standard, which I feel is being carried on and is so worth while.

I want to say to the Minister that I find it difficult to know on which side he is. I do not know on whose side he is—whether he likes the natives or the white man or whether he has little love for either.

Mr. Moore: I do not care for exploiters.

Mr. WORDSWORTH: The Minister can talk for hours and I can speak for only 20 minutes. I stress the fact that he is using very dangerous talk today when he is defaming the white man in the eyes of the native. That is a bad thing. He gave a list of men who he says exploited the natives.

Mr. Moore: So they have.

Mr. WORDSWORTH: I know some of them.

Mr. Moore: You know Hockings.

Mr. WORDSWORTH: And I know Witts, but there are only about three more on the island who could have given me a brief. The hon. member for Carpentaria mentioned Abednego as my informant whereas the minister said in his A.B.C. broadcast that Farquhar was my informant. It is a wonder that gentleman did not sue him for defamation. He has suggested so many people as having been my informant that only two or three possibles are left. The Government can ask who my informant was but they will never find out who told me. The Minister has had about 47 goes but will never find out. He has put about 14 haloes around his neck as to the good job he is doing but I am saying to this Committee—and it is a disgrace to Parliament that it should be so—that I doubt whether in the British Commonwealth of Nations any Minister or Secretary for Health and Home Affairs has had to be put into such a humiliating position that he has had to go before the natives in a settlement and apologise for calling them "niggers," when

he lost his "block" like a 'teenage school-girl. The Minister has had to do that and now he is trying to make amends and get on their side, but they will not forget it.

Mr. Moore: You are worried because we put you on the side of the Communist, Abednego.

Mr. WORDSWORTH: In reply to that interjection, I say that like every member on this side of the Chamber I got up on the stumps and on street corners speaking in favour of the Commonwealth Anti-Communist referendum about 18 months ago.

We advised the people to vote in favour of the referendum to outlaw Communism, and the people of Queensland voted that way. But the Minister and his colleagues did not have the guts to do it. They did not have the guts of a louse.

Mr. Moore: You are in it and you cannot get out of it—Abednego the Communist and Hanson the Communist defending Wordsworth.

Mr. WORDSWORTH: There are people in the gallery, and I feel ashamed to think that a Minister of the Crown should act like a spoilt 15-year-old schoolgirl.

Let me go on and tell the Minister a little bit about what is going on. A good deal has been said about what a good job the Island Industries Board is doing and what a good job the Director of Native Affairs is doing. I have no doubt they are doing a job, but they are a little dictatorship on their own. Their main object is to get every private-enterprise pearling organisation out of that area. Private enterprise is being defeated in detail in that region. The Minister talks about all these people who have been summoned. He got most of his luggers up there by summoning people. Why were they summoned? When a gentleman made an appointment a couple of months ago to see me, having heard Government members eulogising the honesty of the hon. member for Toowong, I made arrangements for that gentleman to see me in the presence of the hon. member for Toowong. His name you will not get.

This is the sort of thing that happens. If the department wants a boat it gives the owner a poor crew. The crews of D.N.A. boats are paid by results and I quote the instance of the crew that was given to a certain lugger. The members of the crew were not particularly keen on looking for shell, and they told the owner they were not. They went out on the boat for a cruise lasting two or three months and went round the islands where they used to live. They did not get half enough shell to pay their wages. The result is that the Department of Native Affairs tacks a writ on the mast and gets the boat.

Mr. Moore: Who owned the boat?

Mr. WORDSWORTH: Never mind about that.

Most of the week-ends I am in Cairns I spend attending various duties in my electorate, but last week-end I decided to spend with my family. I did not let it be known that I was going there. However, I got word on Monday that some gentlemen from Thursday Island wanted to see me. They put in my hands a letter addressed to the Minister that tells its own story. The letter is dated 23 November, 1951. They did not give the original to me, but to a member of the A.L.P. in Cairns. Whether he sent it to the Minister or not, I do not know. The letter reads—

"Mr. Moore,
"Minister for Home Affairs,
"Brisbane.

"Dear Sir,

"With reference to lugger 'Yana' and Messrs. Louie Bros.

"Originally the 'Yana' was in New Guinea and was balloted for at Thursday Island and Louie Bros. (John, Belford, Smith, Tom, Erie, Andrew, Murray and Morris) were successful at the ballot, and paid over £1,000 for the ship. They used their deferred pay to procure it. They used the boat for pearling (hand pump) and trochus. When they bought the ship it was not in good condition, and they asked the Protector for permission to have it repaired at the I.I.B. Slips.

"When it was shipped, Mr. Thash, the Protector's shipwright, condemned the ship, but it only wanted about 6 or 7 boards each side of the hull, and a new decking and a few new ribs, and a stern post. The rest of the ship was in fair condition. They bought new sails on their account at I.I.B. They gave the work to I.I.B. so they could use their account and have time to pay.

"I told Mr. Fred Bowce what had happened, and Mr. Dunwoodie looked at the boat, and he wanted to buy it in its then present condition, off Louie Bros.

"When Thash heard this, he told the Protector, and immediately Thash began work repairing the boat. After the ship was finished, the Protector wanted Louie Bros. to take it out for one trip to end the 1949 season, but the divers requested a compressor instead of hand pump, and Louie asked the Protector to instal a compressor. He said O.K. They then left the ship with the Protector at Thursday Island whilst they went home to their respective islands.

"They did not hear any more of the ship until about the middle of 1950 when they heard that the Protector was going to hand the ship over to Jim Moresby to work it with Moresby's crew to pay off the debt already incurred.

"Louie Bros. went to the Protector and complained, and requested that they be allowed to work the boat with their own crew, but the Protector used his authority and said that he had the last word in the matter, and just handed the ship over to

Moresby, and he still has it, and Louie Bros. have received no statement to show how they stand excepting verbal, and they have received no money.

"At the time Moresby got the ship, he already had two boats of his own, and Louie Bros. only had the 'Yana.'

"I would suggest to you, Mr. Moore, that you have a conference with John, Belford and Smith Louie in the presence of Mr. O'Leary, and these people know all the details re money and costs, etc.

"I hope this matter receives your attention, and Louie Bros. get a fair deal."

Mr. Moore: Whom is it from?

Mr. WORDSWORTH: The original was signed by Joe Hansil.

Mr. Moore: Whom is it to?

Mr. WORDSWORTH: You.

Mr. MOORE: I move that the letter be tabled.

Mr. POWER: I second that.

Motion agreed to.

(Whereupon the hon. member laid the letter on the table of the House.)

Mr. WORDSWORTH: That is O.K. by me, I took the precaution not to bring a signed copy into this chamber. There is the story. I have given two stories to show how injustice is meted out when the Department of Native Affairs wants a boat. If it does not like the fellow, all it has to do is to put on an inefficient crew. These men were half-caste ex-servicemen who had spent their deferred pay in buying a lugger cheaply for £1,000. They had it repaired and they hope, if they can get it back, that they will be able to pay the cost of the repairs.

Here is another thing: the Island Industries Board buys trochus shell from the natives. This will be one for the Minister to wriggle out of it if he can. Boats belonging to the islanders sell trochus shell to the I.I.B., and with one exception—which I shall mention later—they are called upon to pay the freight on the shell to Brisbane. If they go along to any pearling company they still can get the ruling price and without having to pay the freight. The fact is that one boat, the Idiana, belonging to Murray Islanders, supplied trochus shell but did not have to pay freight from Thursday Island south but all the other boats that sold trochus shell to the I.I.B. had to pay the freight which they would not have had to if they had sold the shell to private buyers. The Minister can wriggle and squirm as much as he likes. That letter was signed. He can put another broadcast over the I.I.B. broadcasting station. I have taken him on and I know that I shall now be taken on, so I will reserve the remainder of my time until later.

Mr. NICHOLSON (Murrumba) (5.5 p.m.): In order to give the Minister time to frame his reply to the hon. member for Cook and the Leader of the Opposition I will do some talking on this section of the Estimates.

I listened attentively to the Minister's opening remarks about the great job that the State Government were doing in the protection of aboriginals. I have great admiration for any person, committee or Government who have the welfare of the native population at heart. I particularly noticed the statement by the Minister that the reputation of a white man who applies for native labour is carefully gone into by the Native Affairs Department before they are allowed to work for him. The employer has to be approved by the department and that is an admirable state of affairs.

The point I want to make is this: in exactly what position does the Native Affairs Department stand in relation to aboriginals who are in the boxing business? I use the term "boxing business" because it is no longer a boxing game; it is a business that has a very sordid side.

Mr. Moore: You mean professional pugilists.

Mr. NICHOLSON: Yes, professional pugilists. What I wish to bring to the notice of the Native Affairs Department and the Secretary for Health and Home Affairs is something that is causing grave concern and that is the number of aboriginal professional pugilists who sometimes rise to the peak of fame in the championship class and who when they are defeated are soon forgotten—as happens with many champions—by the people who once lauded their success and showered praise on them. That is an unfortunate state of affairs but it is all too evident in connection with aboriginal fighters. The aboriginal is more or less susceptible to praise and flattery, and when he is at his peak there are many people who are only too willing to fatten and batten on his prowess. After he is beaten—when he is a stumble-bum, in other words punch-drunk, he is no longer wanted by the people who once lauded him, and he ends up not only broken in health but broken in the money sense also. Who gets the money? The only persons who get the money are his manager, his trainer, the promoters of the fight game and the dens of iniquity that he is so easily led into. I appeal to the Minister to take into consideration the plight of these poor unfortunates who have got into the fight game and who invariably end as a charge on the State.

I do not want to bring any names into this, but I do know that one of the most unfortunate examples of the exploiter's work was our own Queenslander, Ron Richards.

Mr. Power: What about Jerry Jerome?

Mr. NICHOLSON: I could not quote Jerry Jerome because the Native Affairs Department was not operating then. Unfortunately the Attorney-General is in the habit of making jokes on serious matters. He is making a joke of the health of the aboriginals. That is very unfair.

Mr. Power: I am not making any joke of them at all.

Mr. NICHOLSON: Unfortunately the hon. gentleman will not take the matter seriously. I appeal to the Minister to endeavour to protect these people in some way. It might be possible to set up a trust account into which a certain amount of their savings and earnings would be paid. That would be going a long way to avoiding this very unsavory state of affairs in the exploitation of the native pugilist.

Mr. TURNER (Kelvin Grove) (5.1 p.m.): The hon. member for Norman the other day said that the Government were not doing enough for the aboriginals and that the Government should protect them. The Government do protect them. This is a sub-department worthy of great praise. While under the control of this department natives have to bank money and they are allowed to withdraw only a certain amount at a time. The aim is to give the natives enough education so that they may look after themselves and if the Director of Native Affairs thinks a native is in a position to look after himself he is given his freedom. That was the suggestion of the hon. member for Norman. But it is when the native has his freedom that there is exploitation, and exploitation takes place to a greater degree in the pugilistic world than in any other sphere. For example, I would quote the late Jerry Jerome. Ron Richards, the native fighter, reputedly earned £45,000. He is now on Palm Island. At the instance of the then Secretary for Health and Home Affairs, now the Secretary for Labour and Industry, he was picked up in a street in Sydney and brought back to Queensland for his own protection. Dave Sands, another native pugilist, won the championship of the British Empire in his class. Unfortunately he was killed in an accident but the hat is now to be taken round to pay his debts. According to reports, he earned £43,000 in his fighting career. Dave Sands had his freedom, the freedom for natives suggested by the hon. member for Norman.

The Department of Native Affairs cares for the earnings of the natives and in another speech I told the Committee the savings of the natives in Government and church mission stations, the amounts of their banking accounts and their withdrawals. These people cannot be given protection and freedom at one and the same time. It is one or the other. If they think they can do better for themselves outside the protection of the department the Director is at liberty to give them their freedom.

It is the hope of the Government that the native people will be educated to the standard at which they will look after themselves and take their place among ordinary citizens. Everything is being done to do so. Looking at the Estimates we find that provision is made for seven teachers at Thursday Island at a cost of £6,974. At Cherbourg provision is made for nine teachers, salaries being £6,719. Included in them is a manual training teacher and a domestic-science teacher and when I visited Cherbourg with the Secretary for Labour and Industry when that hon.

gentleman was in charge of native affairs some years ago the official dinner was cooked by the girls of the domestic-science class. It was equal to what one could get in any restaurant in Brisbane.

The hon. member said he thought we should teach the aboriginals trades. I interjected that this was being done already. There is a manual-training instructor at each of the settlements and he teaches the native boys trades. At times Mr. O'Leary brings boys down from the islands to Cherbourg and puts them into manual-training classes to give them an elementary knowledge of the various callings. As a result of that policy I know of one lad who came from Weipa, a Presbyterian mission settlement, and who is now a first-class shipwright earning good money in Thursday Island.

Hon. members should go to Cherbourg and see the homes these boys have built for themselves. Every home has electric light and water, all installed by these boys. It is the aim of the department to make these boys self-supporting, to teach them to do all the things the hon. member mentioned. At the time when the Press gave the hon. member such wide publicity for his suggestion, it should have pointed out that the Government are doing these things already, because the Press does know that they are being done. Minister after Minister has invited representatives of the Press to visit these places.

About two or three years ago there was a cavalcade of progress made by these people at Cherbourg. I was not fortunate enough to see it, but people who did see it said that it was one of the greatest object lessons in native progress that one could wish to see. It depicted the progress of the native from my day, when he carried his swag with four or five mangy dogs following him, through the age of the horse and dray, right up to the modern tractor. The climax was boys driving tractors and graders through the showgrounds.

In answer to an interjection by an hon. member on this side, the hon. member said he had been in Australia all his life and knew more about the natives than any hon. member on the Government side. He has proved by his own statements that he knows nothing about the natives. He has suggested that we should formulate a new policy. He stated that those who pay tax should have a vote and the right to representation in this Parliament. I am confident that when this Government have educated these natives to the standard that will make them eligible to take their places in the House they will have that opportunity if the people wish it. If by their intelligence the natives prove that they are capable of representing their people in the House I am sure no Government would dare stop them.

Mr. Sparkes: The other coloured peoples of the world are not too pleased with the way in which you treat the natives.

Mr. TURNER: Let me point out to the hon. member that some time ago I represented the Premier at a dinner given by some women's organisation to Dr. Mee, a lady

from America who had lived most of her life amongst the natives in the Honolulu area. Dr. Mee was the guest speaker that day and I did not agree with some of her statements. When moving the vote of thanks to her, I pointed out that the natives where she had lived were entirely different from the Australian natives, and I stated the difference as I saw it. She was very interested, and a gentleman from America who had sponsored her visit here was so interested that he told me they were more interesting than anything Dr. Mee had said, because I referred to things that he had never heard of before.

There is a great deal to be said about these natives and I want now to express appreciation, not only of the Presbyterian Missions Committee but of all the denominational missions committees operating in the Gulf Country, where the department has the right to look after these good people. Every possible request we as a committee make on the department is granted.

When the present Secretary for Labour and Industry was in charge of this department he made certain promises but before I deal with them I want to refer to the work on the Islands. The islanders have their councillors who are elected and each council looks after the affairs of its own island. In dealings with the Director of Native Affairs each council appoints a spokesman. When an appeal is made to the Director, the councillor takes the information he gets from the Director back to the council and it goes from there to the people. They are all happy and satisfied.

Councillors from each of the mission stations approached the then Minister about amenities and among the amenities sought were those of electric light and refrigeration. I have letters with me showing that the missions were given these amenities and two of our Presbyterian missions have both in operation. In this connection I read the following extracts, the first from the Weipa Aboriginal Mission—

“I must now report that the job is completed and working satisfactorily. The engines are three in number Southern Cross—one 20 H.P. with 9 K.W. generator No. 2 is a 10 H.P. with 4½ K.W. generator, No. 3 is a 5 H.P. engine with 1½ K.W. generator. The small one is able to run all the lights we require in the Mission compound including the street lights 6 in number. It is not able to run the cold room and fish cabinet. So we run the 4½ K.W. during the day to maintain low temperatures sufficient to keep our meat in. Meat has kept quite fresh after a fortnight in the room. Meat or fish kept in the fish cabinet goes solid and brittle. I run the 9 K.W. once a week to keep all parts in lubrication and movement. The larger one will be brought more into use when the reticulation of lights extends to the village street lighting and extras round the Mission. Then it is also possible to run the 9 K.W. and 4½ K.W. and even the 1½ K.W. together synchronising or equalising the loads the switchboard provides for such

arrangements. The workmanship is neat and tidy—a power-house anyone might be proud of.”

The second one is from the Rev. Mr. MacKenzie, Superintendent of Aurukun, and reads—

“The two engineers have installed the lighting plant and the cold room and have gone on to Mitchell River. I wish you could have been here when the lights were first switched on to the village. The people crowded up into the lighted area and soon a dance was on the go. It was a case of the centuries meeting, a stone age dance danced by the light of the 19th/20th century invention. The cold room and fish cabinet are all that could be desired, and keep beef and fish quite good.”

One of these lighting plants has been promised to each mission station and one will be installed at Mornington Island, and if the mission is shifted from that island it will be available at the other spot.

The Secretary for Public Instruction has promised the missions a 16 m.m. film projector for educational purposes, and the department will supply educational films so that the native children will have the same amenities as the children in metropolitan schools.

Many things were suggested by the hon. member for Cook. For example, he suggested that we should put these people into the fishing industry. As I interjected, however, he is seven years behind the times. Seven years ago a former Air Force pilot met us in conference with the suggestion that if the Mornington Islanders could catch sufficient fish he would take them to Burke-town, Normanton and Cloncurry by air. After going fully into the matter, however, he decided that even if the natives filleted the fish and he took only the fillets away, the cost would be too great. At that time I suggested that we should convert the old prison at Normanton into a freezing works; it is a very solid concrete building with 12-inch walls and rooms very suitable for conversion into a freezing chamber, and I believed that it could be easily converted into a freezing works, and meat and fish from that part of the State could be put into it and flown to Brisbane. I find, however, that the Torres Strait Islanders are now being employed to catch mackerel, which are being sent to Brisbane in large quantities.

On our visit to Thursday Island the native people put on a dance in premises owned by the Church of England. I was amazed at the rhythm in their dancing and singing; their drumming and stamping were something to be amazed at. These people should make great musicians. I suggested at that time that they should be able to form a good band, and I am happy to know that through the assistance of this department there is now a brass band of 28 players on Thursday Island. It is a very fine band and is to be increased to 32 players. I hope that in the very near future the department will be

able to bring it to Brisbane and allow the people here to see and hear the standard it has reached.

Aided by a very active committee, the people of the island put on their annual show in November of last year. The band gave a recital and the native people had an excellent display of arts and crafts. To give members of the Committee some idea of the capabilities of these people, I have here a few samples of their work. These are flowers made from the feathers of parrots, many kinds of which are to be found in the islands. Native girls make these flowers and send them down to our mission committee, which sells them. Here are some d'oyleys made by the girls and the womenfolk. We can sell that type of work in any part of Australia and get a very good price for it.

Mr. Aikens: Those are better than the things you can buy in the shops.

Mr. TURNER: Many of them are.

Here is a fan made out of the grasses that grow in the Gulf country. The grass is first treated by the native men and then the womenfolk make it into fans. Hon. members should examine this fan and see how neat it is. The natives make them in hundreds. And here are some strings of beads made from shells. All this work is done by the natives, yet it is suggested that we should teach them something! That work is already being done by them in the church missions and in our native settlements. Yet we have people who stand up in this Chamber and show their ignorance of the work that is being done in the interests of these people to enable them to take their places with the white people.

I should like particularly to express my gratitude to the department and particularly to the Director of Native Affairs for the help given to our committee as recently as 5 November last. Our own boat, which was used to carry foodstuff from Thursday Island, had broken down and the department came to our rescue immediately. This telegram was sent to our committee—

“As promised previously Island Industries Board vessel Gelam will proceed your Gulf missions next week carrying cargoes now lying Thursday Island.”

The following reply was sent to the Island Industries Board—

“Heartiest thanks for prompt assistance to stations through Gelam.”

Despite the fact that the Island Industries Board is a commercial venture this help will be given free.

The department is always ready to help us in every way. When the former Secretary for Health and Home Affairs, the Hon. Arthur Jones, visited the mission stations in the North he was welcomed by the native people. We have photographs of the native councillors standing before their tribes expressing their gratitude to the Minister for what the Government had done to help them to live as decent citizens and as human beings. They have their cottages and they are well clothed. The male folk are taught

droving and work on farms, just as they are on Government settlements. At all our mission stations they are trained in farm work. The hon. member for Norman suggested that the young boys, 12 years of age, should be sent to work on pastoral holdings, but I will oppose that idea to the utmost of my endeavours. For years they have been exploited on the pastoral stations and it is one of the greatest difficulties of the Director and his deputy to protect the native boys so that they will not be robbed in the matter of wages and exploited generally by their employers. Under the present system of control the boys are properly trained as stockmen and can do this work quite well. It is one of their natural attributes. They need no training in it. At 16 years of age they can take their places on the station in this work. At most of the mission stations each boy is provided with four horses, and when he is called upon to do a job of droving he can take his four horses and drove the cattle down to Dunbar, where they are sold to the cattle buyers. Then he returns to the mission station for another lot. Everything humanly possible is being done to educate and fit these young people for proper life.

An experiment is being conducted by one of our missionaries, Mr. Wynn, at Weipa station. He realised that many of the old native people had much cunning and that they married very young. When the old man got too old to work or his partner got too old to work for him it was his practice to cast her aside and take on a younger girl, knowing full well that she could work for him and bring him his food. Mr. Wynn observed this practice and decided that it should cease. It is something that I am watching very closely myself. An attempt is being made to stamp out the practice of old men marrying younger girls and having children by such a union. An attempt is now being made to match couples of similar ages, and in this way Mr. Wynn is developing a very fine type of native at the mission. They are all full-bloods and the contrast between the present generation and the generation previous to it is remarkable.

Mr. WHYTE (Mackenzie) (5.25 p.m.): At the outset I wish to congratulate the Minister, members of his staff and the department generally. I congratulate the Minister on the able way in which he has handled his subject during the discussions on these Estimates. I should also like to mention the courtesy extended to me by the Minister and his staff. In common with other country members I receive numerous complaints and I have to make many requests and at all times I have received the greatest courtesy from the Minister and his staff.

It has been said that other States are not making the same success of the administration of native affairs as we are in Queensland. Great credit is due to the Queensland Government for the outstanding success of the work of the Native Affairs Department. I think it is a testimony to the excellent administration that within 50 years it has been able to alter the outlook of the native population of the State. We have set up various

settlements for the natives. We found that there were encroachments on their areas and we had to allocate special reserves for them in order to enable them to follow their natural habits and develop into useful citizens. Today there are certain reserves known as Government reserves and others known as church missions. There are five Government-controlled reserves and 11 church missions.

As a pattern of a Government settlement let us look at Cherbourg which is a settlement of approximately 1,000. There are an excellent hospital there, an adequate water supply, electric light and power. The hospital is under the control of the Kingaroy hospital and is staffed by a matron, four white sisters and four white assistants and a coloured nursing staff and domestic staff numbering 25. There is a primary school at Cherbourg that is staffed by the Department of Public Instruction teachers assisted by trained native teachers. There is also a child-welfare centre that can compare with anything in my area.

The settlement of Woorabinda is in my electorate. It was moved from Taroom in 1927, 25 years ago, to the present site. The major success of this settlement can be attributed largely to the Director of Native Affairs, Mr. O'Leary, the Deputy Director, Mr. Richards, and the superintendent, Mr. Naggs, together with their very efficient staff. I must pay a tribute to the excellent work of these officers who know their job and who are giving a good service to the natives. The hospital for natives in this settlement is under the control of the Rockhampton hospital. It is staffed by a matron, two white sisters, and six trainee nurses; and there is a child-welfare clinic that was opened in 1951 and is run on similar lines to every similar clinic in the State.

The school in the settlement is under the supervision of a Mr. Jarrett, who has three assistants, and they are doing an exceptionally good job for their native charges. The boys are taught tinsmithing, woodwork and leatherwork. Girls are taught cultural work in black and white, pastel-drawing and modelling. The social activities at this settlement are under the direction of Mr. C. Jensen. I visited there recently and had the pleasure of attending a concert given by the natives. This concert was a great credit to those who were responsible for the training of the girls and boys. Pictures are shown every night and dances are appreciated by the natives.

An inspection of the houses completed and in process of construction indicates that we have come a long way from the grass humpies and the galvanised-iron shanties. The timber used in the construction of these houses is cut on the settlement. The cottages are 750 square feet, which includes a laundry and a bathroom. Each is equipped with electric light. The water supply is almost completed. It consists of an elevated concrete tank 40 feet high, capacity 30,000 gallons. Water is to be reticulated through the settlement.

The first legislation that provided some measure of protection for the Queensland aboriginal was enacted in 1897. Looking

back to those days, when the majority of people were not interested in the future of the natives, we find that in the light of our present-day legislation that Act was a rather crude effort to promote the advancement of this particularly backward people. However, that Act was the foundation-stone on which has been built a structure which over the years has given the Queensland aboriginal a status and a stake in the country to which we think he is genuinely entitled. It is a tremendous compliment to the administration in Queensland that in a period of a little over 50 years, an uncivilised people who possess no initiative in the ways of life as we know them and who depended for their existence on the country which treated them rather harshly have been converted, in the main, into the ways of a civilisation that took the white races many generations to achieve.

Because of this rapid advance the administrator has not had an easy task and the aboriginal who has had to absorb so much has been even harder pressed to gather this knowledge. It has been his task to fit into the civilisation aimed at by the administration. Taking everything into consideration, progress has not been slow. It has been methodical. It has always been based on examination of the psychology of the aboriginal. Every endeavour has been made to advance on a standard consistent with his intelligence. It has been difficult at times to make the native fully appreciative of a new standard of life vastly different from what he has been accustomed to in both industrial and spiritual respects. Both Government authorities and church missions helped with his spiritual advance. There have been many disappointments, but because the advance has always been made within the range of the intelligence standard of the native we have today reached a standard of which we can be very proud.

Progress in the development and extension of the living conditions of the people on the reserves over the last decade makes it fair and reasonable to describe as townships the settlement that gives every facility provided in Queensland's small towns. This is certainly so at Cherbourg and Woorabinda, which I have already mentioned.

Under the overall scheme this Government have undertaken we accept the training and care of the aboriginal from the day of his birth. The most modern hospitalisation is available to expectant mothers. The child-welfare centres are available to give the most modern treatment to the baby. The child attends the primary school. Later there is the manual-training centre for boys and the domestic-science class for girls. With this training the native can venture out into the world as a trained domestic or an apprentice. A girl has also the opportunity on the settlement of training as a nurse. A boy can continue his apprenticeship or go to the country as a partly-skilled youth, which enables him to take his place in the community. Of course, the success of the individual depends mainly on himself. If it is found that he is making good, we are very

pleased with what has been taught at the settlement. If he fails, he can return to the settlement.

The general impression prevailing in Queensland is that the aboriginal is a heavy burden on the taxpayer. This opinion is quite incorrect. It cannot be supported by facts or figures, and I propose quoting the figures relating to Cherbourg. It must be remembered, however, that Cherbourg is not the most outstanding industrial centre under the control of the department. It is the settlement to which the training farm is attached. Here the boys are trained in farm procedure and the care of stock. The farm originally bought by the Queensland Government has more than repaid its cost and it has proved a successful commercial venture. It has a fully developed agricultural area of 703 acres and runs a herd of 125 head of dairy cattle. It possesses a modern dairy, and the cream is sold to the Murgon Co-operative butter factory. The Department of Native Affairs, on behalf of the settlement, is a member of this co-operative society as well as of the Darling Downs Bacon Society. The training farm supplied produce to the Cherbourg Settlement to the value of approximately £4,000, and this during one of the worst droughts experienced for many years.

Of an overall coloured population, in Queensland, controlled and uncontrolled, of 21,400, 13,800 maintain themselves fully and the balance of 7,600 are either partly or wholly maintained in the Government townships or church missions. The efforts of these residents of townships and church missions are indicated by the following figures relating to the value of produce resulting from their efforts—

	£
Retail stores	57,000
Cherbourg Training Farm ..	4,000
Value of cattle sold and consumed	40,000
Value of sawn timber produced for erection of buildings on settlements and missions ..	30,000
Value of vegetables, pigs, milk, etc., consumed	20,000
	<hr/>
	£151,000

It is contended that the cost of caring for these people, who are incapable of caring for themselves, is less per head of population than that of caring for white inmates of homes and institutions. In effect, the majority of Queensland aboriginals and other coloured people maintain themselves. Considering all these facts, we cannot say that the aboriginal is an undue burden on the taxpayer.

One of the major developments in recent years in connection with the cattle-raising activities at Woorabinda was the acquisition of a 27,000-acre property, portion of Balcomba pastoral holding. It is now known as Foleyvale, and since 1946 the male cattle from Woorabinda and Cherbourg have been fattened there. This area is excellent fattening country, and the bullocks are sold at either Rockhampton or Cannon Hill, as prices

determine. The department is proud of the high prices obtained for cattle. One of the last sales from Foleyvale saw 208 bullocks average £39 16s. 2d. a head. Those bullocks were the progeny of Hereford breeders from Cherbourg and Woorabinda.

The cattle-raising is supervised in the main by full- or half-blood aboriginals. That they were able to survive the drought so successfully reflects great credit on the improvements that have been made to the watering facilities on the properties. The cattle sold from this property were 202 bullocks at a value of £4,925, and another 400 head are to be offered for sale soon, and it is expected that they will bring approximately £15,000. The sale of cattle should return approximately £24,000.

This country was bought for cattle-raising but its agricultural possibilities cannot be overlooked. The harvesting of wheat at Woorabinda is now complete and the following facts are supplied:—

Total area under wheat	299 acres
Area harvested for grain	257 acres
Area cut for hay	42 acres
Yield of wheat	1,750 bags
Quantity forwarded to Wheat Board	1,705 bags
Quantity retained for pig feed ..	45 bags
Amount of hay harvested	124 tons
Hay sent to Woorabinda for feed for dairy herd—	
Estimated value of crop—	
1,750 bags at 50s. a bag	£4,375
124 tons of hay at £15 a ton ..	£1,860
	<hr/>
	£6,235

A main road and causeway and a telephone line have been built to give Foleyvale contact with Woorabinda. They were built by native labour under supervision. In addition these improvements have been effected: clearing for ploughing, 1,000 acres; erection of two cottages for staff; two buildings for accommodation of natives; machinery shed; stock dip, and 3,000 acres of ringbarking; two dams with capacity of 10,000 cubic yards; 5 miles of fencing; 3 bores and preliminary work for irrigation-scheme road. The total value of these improvements is £23,000, in addition to which the Foleyvale property has earned and paid for £10,000 worth of machinery and plant. In effect, therefore, and apart from the cattle the property carries, the assets created since 1946 total £33,900. In addition to these assets is the fact that Foleyvale is carrying 1,500 head of male cattle, which could be valued at £30,000. These cattle, once the property of Cherbourg and Woorabinda, have been taken over as a cash transfer to the credit of Foleyvale. The original cost of Foleyvale bought by a loan from the Aboriginal Trust Fund was £10,000. Therefore, since 1946, this property originally valued at £10,000 carries assets in cattle, plant and improvements which in all total £63,000.

The major source of dissatisfaction amongst Queensland aboriginals is against the Commonwealth Government, who fail to treat them in the same way as whites are treated in respect to social-service benefits. There

is no reasonable excuse for legislation discriminating against the native. Every aboriginal worker, like every white worker, is required to pay taxation to the Commonwealth Government—

Mr. Wordsworth: They get child endowment.

Mr. WHYTE: I will deal with that. As a taxpayer I maintain that as a State worker the aboriginal is entitled to social-service benefits. To illustrate my point I quote cases where anomalies exist. An aboriginal worker and a white worker can be employed in the same calling, pay the same taxation on the wages they receive and at the age of 65 be retired from their jobs. The white worker can be admitted to an Eventide Home and receive a pension. The aboriginal worker goes to a settlement which is his Eventide Home but he does not get a pension. A half-blood mother and a full-blood aboriginal mother both are eligible for child endowment, but the half-blood mother receives maternity allowance on the birth of her child and the full-blood mother is ineligible for it.

Mr. Aikens: That is a pretty rotten state of affairs.

Mr. WHYTE: That position exists and how the Commonwealth Government can reconcile their announced advocacy of a better deal for the aboriginal in the face of such a decision is beyond my powers of reasoning.

A white sufferer from tuberculosis can receive the tuberculosis allowance, but an aboriginal suffering from the same complaint is ineligible for any allowance. An aboriginal and a white man can work in the same calling. If the white worker dies his widow can receive a widow's pension, but not the widow of the aboriginal. She is ineligible for the pension. This is so despite the fact that they have both paid the same taxation over the years.

It has been suggested that in some cases the department should exempt the aboriginal from the provisions of the Act to enable him to get the pension. By this means these elderly people would be removed from the surroundings in their settlements that they know so well, and forced to live in some town or city away from the company of those whom they know so well. If they become discontented with their conditions and return to the reserves, the Commonwealth Government stop their pensions immediately.

The Commonwealth Government have always recognised the justice of the aboriginals' claims, but the representations made on their behalf have been unsuccessful. These representations have been made by Ministers at conferences, by representatives of the department and by the Premier to the Prime Minister, but they have all met with the same result—exactly nothing has been done by the Commonwealth. I feel that the final representations that can be made are by this Parliament, and from the publicity that must result when their case is known something should be done. The expenditure on

the aboriginals is not an undue burden on the taxpayer in Queensland, and I repeat that the average cost of the native compares favourably with those of similar experiments.

Finally, we think that it is our duty to these people to see that they are given all facilities to fit them for the future, when they may have to compete openly for work. We think that they must be under no handicap, and that this experiment we have conducted over the years must continue.

Mr. HEADING (Marodian) (5.47 p.m.): I live very close to a native settlement so that I have some knowledge of the conditions obtaining on them. To me, almost £500,000 seems to be a lot of money to spend on this vote. I am not now intending to be critical, but I make the suggestion that these people should be able to work. If they were encouraged to work more, most of them should be able to earn a living for themselves and their families. I see many of them every week, and it appears to me that most of them are quite capable of doing a lot of work. I hope that the future policy of the department will be towards making these people self-supporting. I have to earn my own living, and I do not see any reason why these people should not have to earn theirs.

I want also to say a few words about the education of the people at Cherbourg settlement, and at the other two settlements that I know something about. Although I have not visited them, I have attended the agricultural show that is held at Cherbourg on every possible occasion to which exhibits are sent by Palm Island and the other settlement. It would be an eye-opener to people who have not attended that show to see some of the work our natives do. Their furniture is well made and compares favourably with much that is sold in the shops. I should like to have the Minister's attention to suggest that the three settlements might combine to exhibit their work at the Royal National Show. I cannot say off-hand that the space is available but I think it should be possible to provide it. Perhaps the Department of Native Affairs would apply to the Royal National Association for the necessary space, when the matter could be taken up seriously. At the present time the exhibit is seen by only a few people in the area of the settlements, whereas if it was displayed at the Royal National Association's Show it could be seen by thousands. I have had an opportunity of observing the quality of the work in the exhibits at the Murgon show and I have noticed the eagerness and the enthusiasm of the natives who do the work. They should be encouraged and the best way to encourage them would be to arrange for their work to be displayed at the Brisbane show where I assure the Minister I will do my very best to see that the maximum amount of space is provided. Of course I readily realise that there will be some difficulty in that it will be necessary to have some of the native boys and the females too in Brisbane at the time, but that should not be an insuperable obstacle to the exhibition of their work here. Perhaps during the coming year some thought could be given to the suggestion and the Minister

will get in touch with the Royal National Association's office so that the necessary arrangements may be made.

The department acted wisely a few years ago in buying the farm near Murgon that is conducted in association with the Cherbourg settlement. It has given the natives an opportunity to learn farming practices. I have never had the opportunity or the time to look over the farm but I have frequently observed it from the outside. It appears to me to be very well worked and it is a credit to the manager. Of course, I have to admit that he has a plentiful supply of labour, which is a cause of envy to me as an agriculturist. He appears to have an endless number of people to give him a hand with the job, which is very desirable these days.

Mr. Moore: "Number" is the word.

Mr. HEADING: Yes, "number" is the word but if everyone does only a little bit you can get over a good deal of country. However, the department is working along the right lines and I hope that eventually these native people will be assimilated into the community generally.

I take it that is the objective of the Native Affairs Department. There are a few of these people who are sufficiently educated to live outside the settlement. If we continue along the present lines, eventually these people will become good members of the community, but at the present time not many are sufficiently advanced to go out by themselves. Personally I do not think the time is ripe to give them all the privileges of white people. After all, before you give people the right to vote they should be able to judge for themselves without being guided by other people and there are not many who are able to do this. I know one man at Cherbourg, who is the secretary of the show society to whom I should be willing to give a vote any time. He carries out the job in a manner that would do credit to anybody. However, as I said, there are very few who are sufficiently advanced to enable them to exercise intelligently the privilege of voting. I do not think we should let these go outside the settlement before they are equipped to look after themselves. There are many people who are ready to take them down and they need to be protected.

I do hope the Minister will take some cognisance of what I have suggested about giving these people a chance to show their ability at the R.N.A. Show in Brisbane so that people will learn more about them. Many people know very little about the aborigines; they have not had the opportunity to observe them or come in contact with them. The common idea is that they have not the latent ability of the average person.

The Minister would be well advised to take some action along the lines I have suggested.

Mr. McCATHIE (Haughton) (7.15 p.m.): I was particularly interested in the presentation of the work of this department by the Minister in charge and also at hearing the

words of commendation with which most hon. members opposite began their speeches but they then made specious attempts to rehash a movement made in this Parliament earlier in this session. The hon. member for Cook gains nothing by this additional attempt to besmirch the members of the Island Industries Board and if that is all he can do he will find the result will be not what he expected when he stands for re-election next year.

The hon. member for Mackenzie was particularly well fitted to speak on the subject under discussion, having spent much of his time in the past two years in and about his electorate and being one of the most conscientious members in this Parliament. From his numerous visits to the settlements in his area he has gained a very thorough knowledge of their requirements and of the good work being done there by the Department of Native Affairs. He spoke at length on the Woorabinda settlement and from my early association with the Central West I remember the years when that settlement was removed from Taroom, and the good work done by the then superintendent and the present superintendent in establishing the present settlement. I am quite sure the thorough dissertation given by my colleague, the hon. member for Mackenzie, will be appreciated by his electors. They will realise to the full the type of member they have representing them and at the elections next year they will have no hesitation in returning him to the Legislative Assembly of Queensland.

I had some brief association with the movement for establishing the settlement at Woorabinda in that in my early days when I was able to play a little football I was a member on many occasions of a team that played against that settlement. The enthusiasm shown by the natives in football then has continued over the years and the results achieved by the department since illustrate clearly what can be done with these people if they get a thorough training.

Another of the experiments conducted by the department appeals to our humanitarian side and each and every one of us should bask in the reflected glory of the work of the Department of Native Affairs. The department has conducted an experiment with a primitive people and is meeting with quite a measure of success. During my years in the Central West I saw these people in their native habitat. They were very primitive. I saw many of them working on stations on which the male members were employed as station hands and some of the lubras as domestics. The conditions of their camps left very much to be desired. I know the difficulty associated with the work of this department because of the varying mentality of natives. I can illustrate this point by quoting the cases of two police trackers employed at Mt. Coolon. One was sullen and stubborn. When there was no work to be done he sat on a box in the shade thrown by the trunk of a tree, following the shade round as the day progressed. He was not

kept very long. His successor was of quite a different type. Over the years he had put in many months at station work and was quite bright and able. His work was in distinct contrast to that of the first tracker. After studying and comparing the mentality of those two and other natives, I have come to appreciate the difficulties the department has had in attempting to bring these primitive people to a state approaching our civilisation in 50 years. The department is deserving of the greatest commendation for the fact that it has been able to go so far in its experiment.

The hon. member for Cook told us about what he saw in his journey to Western Australia. We in Queensland are very happy to think that our department has had such success with the natives and I am sure that the knowledge the hon. member will gain here of the work that has been done by the various settlements will give rise to an appreciation of just what we are doing here and that he will commend the Government for their efforts to bring these people to the stage at which they will be able to take their part in the affairs of the State. I should say they are not ready to do that yet and it may be many years before they are. Many of them still do not appreciate what is available to them. When they are allowed to come out and work amongst us they are not able to appreciate to the full the advantages we have and do not behave as we expect our citizens to do, with the result that they have to return to their settlements.

I was very interested in the contribution made to the debate by the hon. member for Kelvin Grove, who pointed out that many of these natives were exploited by unscrupulous whites. We have seen that happen year in and year out and it is because of this practice that we have with us the problem of the half-blood. I am not prepared to say yet what will be the result of any attempt to assimilate these people into our community, for I am certain that the problems associated with it are many. In our attempts to bring them to a standard similar to ours we do not want to create the problem they have in America, where their millions of free negroes are scorned by the whites. We want our people to be respected and I am sure that the work being done by the Department of Native Affairs will eventually result in making our natives competent and capable of carrying on in our community.

I have said before that the Commonwealth Government have not been fully appreciative of what is being done here, but that is nothing new for them. They have shown that lack of appreciation of many things connected with our administration. They did not appreciate our hospital system, they have not appreciated our attempts to develop North Queensland in the way we should like, and in this matter they are recreant to a trust that is theirs. The Minister was correct in adopting the attitude he did at a recent conference.

In conclusion, I suggest that the experiment we are conducting in connection with native affairs is deserving of success and the people of this State should commend not only the work this Government have done but they should show appreciation of what is being done by church missions that have helped the natives forward over the years. I am certain this progress will continue and the experiment with the socialisation of the problems of the natives of this State will be carried on to ultimate success.

Mr. SMITH (Carpentaria) (7.25 p.m.): There are numerous settlements in the Carpentaria electorate conducted by the Government and religious organisations. Those religious organisations, together with the State, are doing great work in their endeavours to bring our natives to the stage at which they can take their place in the community. After listening to the remarks of the hon. member for Haughton, I think the time is not opportune for allowing natives to enter the social or domestic affairs of this State. I suppose no hon. member of this Committee is more conversant with the aboriginals than I am. I have made representations to the department to have natives released from the protection afforded to them by the Department of Native Affairs, because they are eager to go out into the life of the State and do something as useful citizens. I have seen numerous instances in which natives have been released from protection and become good citizens and workers. The Australian aboriginal—and he has not received much credit for it—played a very important part during World War II, when white men were called up for the armed forces, Civil Construction Corps, and other labour groups, and when the graziers and sheep men in the North-West were hard-pushed for labour. They called upon the Government for help in making native labour available for the running of stations. And so the natives played a prominent part in droving and bringing in cattle, but I am sorry to say that the reward given to them was not what it should have been. I think the grazier and the cattle man should have given the natives a greater monetary reward. I could cite the case of an aboriginal for whose release I made application. The man from whom his release was sought told me that if I got him released he would have to employ two white men. The native was released and he joined the Railway Department and was second to none as a fletcher. Perhaps while working on the station property he should have been getting more than he is getting; I do not know whether he came under the award rate.

The native has certainly played a big part in the sheep and cattle industries. Everybody in this Chamber desires to see more done for the native than is being done for him at the present time, and great credit must be given to the State. I have personally travelled in the Northern Territory, and the northern part of Australia, and I know that the conditions under which the natives live and work there are deplorable. I have heard hon. members opposite eulogis-

ing the Commonwealth Government. The Northern Territory is under the jurisdiction of that Government, and I say that the conditions of the natives in the Northern Territory are deplorable. They are not provided for in settlements and I know of bands of them who keep close to the Queensland border to enjoy the living and working conditions that the native in this State works under. I know that in the outback native children are encouraged to go to school. They attend schools at Dajarra, Duchess, Camooweal, Burketown, and Normanton and through the Department of Public Instruction, the Government are doing all they can for the education of native children. I have known of people who have tried to further the education of native children by sending them to colleges at Charters Towers. The trouble is that immediately they return to their native haunts they revert to their tribal ways; they go to the native camps and do what the other natives do. It is hard to take from them their natural desire to live the same lives as the white people, and to bring them up to the level of the white people and make them live the same way as we do. However, the other States and the Commonwealth could well follow the example of Queensland; they could send their officials to the mission stations in the Cape York Peninsula to see how the natives are taken care of and educated up there.

Mr. A. Jones: Several of the secondary schools in Charters Towers have aboriginal pupils attending them.

Mr. SMITH: That is so.

On Thursday Island there are natives acting as school teachers. There is a school for native children on Thursday Island. There is one white teacher and the other teachers are natives. Children are brought to Thursday Island from the surrounding islands, educated there and then sent back to teach the children on those islands.

We have every reason to be proud of the great work the missions and the Government are doing to improve the standards of our natives and to make them good citizens. The annual report of the Director shows how the natives are being taken care of and how their money is looked after. One paragraph of the report reads—

“The war years showed to what extent aboriginal labour could be used on the home front. With the war years gone, that same spirit of determination for betterment and self support animates the Queensland native. The extent to which these 20,000 people now contribute to their own maintenance is indicated by statistics appearing in this report.”

The report goes on to show that gross earnings by aboriginals over the year totalled £354,637, and that savings bank deposits by Queensland aboriginals totalled £265,978.

This Government are endeavouring to encourage the natives to build their own homes. Advances have been made to aboriginals who have been released from the care

of the Director to enable them to build their own homes in back-country areas so that they will become good citizens of the State.

I suppose there are more aboriginals in the Carpentaria electorate than in any other part of the State, and I know the good work that is being done for them. I know, too, the good work that the Queensland aboriginal is doing. Once they are released, the aboriginals are keen to buy motor vehicles and become carriers, or to become stockmen. In fact, they get into every industry they can. They become very useful citizens, a credit to the State. We are very proud of the work they did during the last World War and the work they are doing now in the days of peace, especially in the cattle industry in the North.

I hope the Commonwealth Government will profit by the example Queensland has set in the care, training, and maintenance of the aboriginals and that shortly we shall see the Commonwealth doing much more for them than has hitherto been done in the Northern Territory. I know the Northern Territory and I know the aboriginals there are living under conditions that are perhaps worse than those that obtained prior to the advent of white people in this country. They are living on the cattle stations under conditions that would not be tolerated by any industrial organisation and I sincerely hope that better organisational work will be carried out in their interests and that Queensland's example in this respect will be followed.

Hon. W. M. MOORE (Merthyr—Secretary for Health and Home Affairs) (7.37 p.m.): First of all I should like to reply to the Leader of the Opposition. He became hysterical and worked himself up into a great frenzy on the matter of this alleged broadcast and I just want to say that the answer that I gave to the question he directed to me in this Chamber contains the facts. I always give factual information in reply to questions directed to me by hon. members of the Assembly. No political use was made of that broadcasting apparatus. The broadcast was not made for political purposes, nor was it used to abuse anyone. The Leader of the Opposition said that someone allegedly called somebody else a liar and in dealing with the hon. member for Cook I propose to say that he does not tell the truth.

Mr. Nicklin: Was he called a liar over that broadcast?

Mr. MOORE: I asked the Leader of the Opposition to quote some of this broadcast and he has not done it yet. There is not a scintilla of evidence before this Chamber from the Opposition to prove that a broadcast was made. (Opposition laughter.) He has not told us anything about it. All that he knew came from a gentleman. I am interested in what the Leader of the Opposition has said but he has been pooled into this matter by the hon. member for Cook.

Mr. Nicklin: Not at all. The gentleman who told me is just as reputable as you are.

Mr. MOORE: Then he must be a perfect gentleman. The Leader of the Opposition has been misinformed. He is simply acting on information supplied to him.

On 20 August last, during the Address in Reply debate, the hon. member for Cook started this tirade of defamation against the officials of the Department of Native Affairs.

Mr. Wordsworth: I did not mention any official at all.

Mr. MOORE: Let the hon. member read his speech.

Mr. Wordsworth: I have read it.

Mr. MOORE: Then read it again. On 27 August, I replied to his accusations. This broadcast was delivered on Tuesday, 30 September, and the matter that was dealt with that night after the adjournment of the House was very little different from the speeches made by hon. members opposite—the bases of the speeches were the same. The accusations were just the same—that the Director of Native Affairs and his colleagues on the Island Industries Board had defrauded the natives to the tune of £14,000. In the speeches on the Address in Reply some accounts were given of certain sales that took place.

Mr. Nicklin interjected.

Mr. MOORE: There is the evidence of the information that appeared in "Hansard." The hon. gentleman can look at the question and answer. I can understand the worry that the Leader of the Opposition is in. It was proved during the debate in this Chamber that the hon. member for Cook was briefed by certain Communists on Thursday Island.

Mr. WORDSWORTH: I rise to a point of order. The statement made by the Minister is untrue, it is distasteful to me, and I ask for its withdrawal.

The CHAIRMAN: I ask the Minister to accept the denial of the hon. member for Cook.

Mr. MOORE: I accept his denial. The hon. member for Carpentaria gave a true account of how prominent members of the Communist Party went to Thursday Island and how they formed the committee. He gave the names of certain Communists on the committee. He mentioned Abednego and Hosia Sam. Abednego is one of the disreputable Communists on Thursday Island who has been in correspondence with the hon. member for Cook. Let him deny that. We got further proof of the collaboration. The hon. member for Carpentaria, in defending the officials of my department against the charges by these people that they had been exploiting the natives on Thursday Island, was attacked in the Press by a well-known Communist, Jack Hanson.

An Opposition Member: Who is Jack Hanson?

Mr. MOORE: Who is Jack Hanson? No wonder the Leader of the Opposition is worried and embarrassed. Here is what "The Guardian" said—

"The Country Party demanded an inquiry, which was refused by the Government."

And rightly so. There was not a scintilla of evidence to support those foul charges against the Director of Native Affairs.

Mr. Wordsworth: Why didn't you have an inquiry? You only put an inquiry on against Pizzey.

Mr. MOORE: Pizzey put it on against himself. We had a Golden Casket inquiry, besides the Maryborough inquiry. It is true that the hon. member rose dramatically and said, "Here it is; we have got them at last."

"The Guardian" goes on to say—

"In a Parliamentary debate, Mr. Wordsworth (Country Party), sought an inquiry into alleged favouritism by the Island Industries Board to a U.S. company in the sale of pearl and trochus shell."

Throughout this article the Communists are joining up.

It goes on to say—

"The allegations over the board transactions demand a competent public inquiry, to disclose Government responsibility for disposal of shell at bargain prices to Yankee buyers, at islanders' expense."

There it is, as my colleague says; the Country Party is joined by the Communist Party in trying to traduce members of this Government who are preventing these islanders from being exploited by certain people in the North.

This afternoon I read a list of people who were actually prosecuted by the Director of Native Affairs and Hocking, a personal friend of the hon. member for Cook, robbed the islanders to the tune of £170. No wonder the islanders are very bitter.

Mr. Wordsworth: You are a moral coward.

Mr. MOORE: That is all right about being a moral coward but I observe that the hon. member availed himself of the parliamentary privilege of standing in this Chamber and accusing Mr. O'Leary and his associates on the Island Industries Board of robbing the islanders of £14,000. The hon. member never brought one scintilla of evidence to support the charge. What will be done to him when he goes back to Thursday Island, goodness only knows!

Mr. Wordsworth interjected.

Mr. MOORE: Unfortunately there have been threats by members of the Opposition to members of the Government Party. The hon. member for Cook made the charge that all the islanders who sell their trochus shell to the Island Industries Board have to pay freight to Brisbane on that shell, with the exception of the "Adiana." He further

stated that private buyers would pay cash in Thursday Island. This was the last charge made by him in his speech, but I am dealing with it first, because it is typical of all the charges, and the incorrect information the hon. member gives in this Chamber. It is completely untrue, and there is not one iota of fact to support it.

In previous speeches the hon. member made he has made bitter charges against the Director of Native Affairs and the Islands Industries Board, because all the shell produced by the natives' boats was sold to the firm of Gerdau. The whole shell production is sold f.o.b. Thursday Island to Gerdau. In case the hon. member does not understand what "f.o.b." means, it means that Gerdau pays cash for his shell placed on board ship at Thursday Island no freight whatsoever is charged against, or paid by the Islanders. Gerdau pays all freight. To suggest that freight is paid to Brisbane to disclose the hon. member's complete ignorance of the facts.

Mr. Wordsworth: I never spoke of Gerdau at all.

Mr. MOORE: Any time he thinks of Gerdau, he gets a funny feeling, and when they are finished with him because of what he has brought on them through the Taxation Department he will have a funnier feeling.

Mr. WORDSWORTH: I rise to a point of order. I never communicated with the Taxation Department on anyone's business apart from those people who asked me to do so. The statement is offensive and I ask the Minister to withdraw it.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Clark): Order!

Mr. MOORE: I never suggested he did. I said that when the Taxation officials are finished with some of his friends he will have a more sick or a funnier feeling. To say that all the production of all boats, with the exception of one, was debited with the cost of freight to Brisbane, and that one, for some unknown reason, received favouritism, is typical of all the charges made by the hon. member. He apparently listens to irresponsible and in his anxiety to find dishonesty that does not exist, accepts unfounded and untrue statements from irresponsible and malicious people. I should not care about his making a clown of himself, but I object when he makes these irresponsible charges against the honesty and veracity of public servants. I challenge the hon. member to deny that every bit of shell sold by the Islands Industries Board on behalf of the islanders is completely free of freight and that not one penny is charged to any islander or his boat for freight on shell to Brisbane. The fact that the hon. member states that freight is paid to Brisbane is proof in itself that he does not understand or does not want to put the position truthfully. He does not know anything about the details of these transactions.

In a recent debate the hon. member for Cook stated that certain buyers in Thursday

Island were paying £150 a ton for trochus shell and asked me to tell the House what the Island Industries Board was getting for its shell. I would inform the hon. member that Gerdau Company, New York, is paying the Island Industries Board £185 a ton f.o.b. Thursday Island, for its shell, which means that the buyers mentioned by the hon. member are making a profit from shell obtained from some producer of £35 a ton, compared with the board's prices.

The hon. member goes further with his misrepresentations and reads a letter that he got from somebody. I do not know whether he got it in that famous pub crawl on Thursday Island when he used a notebook and got quite a lot of information that he disgorged here, but he reads a letter with reference to the lugger "Yanna" and Messrs. Lui Brothers. He said that the letter was signed by a man named Johansen. I have the letter here, and there is no signature on it at all. I do not think hon. members want any more proof of the flagrant disregard of the truth exhibited by the hon. member. They should have ample proof now that he does not know what he is talking about, especially when we have his statement that somebody somewhere gave him a letter that my department was supposed to have received last year. I have had my officials make a search since he made that statement, and they cannot find any sign of such a letter. This letter implied that the Lui Brothers were cheated out of their boat by the Director of Native Affairs, and that the boat was handed over to other islanders, the Mosby Brothers. That is a very serious charge. He is not very fussy when he makes charges about people. He cannot substantiate them for a minute, whereas I have produced tonight irrefutable evidence that his friends robbed the islanders and the divers and that the Island Industries Board, through the Solicitor-General, forced these exploiters to pay to the islanders the money due to them for their shell. That is the difference between his statement and the case put forward by the Government.

He talks about a Fred Walters. Approximately three years ago he hired a boat on which he engaged Torres Strait islanders who engaged in shell fishing. Over a period of six months, he failed to pay not only the wages to the men engaged on his boat but, what was worse, even the allotments to their wives and children. The Director of Native Affairs was forced to take action for the protection of the men.

Mr. Wordsworth: They are returned service men.

Mr. MOORE: It does not matter what they are if they are not honest.

Mr. Wordsworth: Anyone who does not agree with you is not honest. You are like the chap who is out of step in the army.

Mr. MOORE: The Director of Native Affairs was forced to take action for the protection of these men. Walters was only the hirer of the boat and had no assets whatsoever, and therefore it was not possible to

recover anything against him. My officers are being maligned because they will not allow these people to exploit the natives of Thursday Island. He was refused any further labour, and rightly so. I do not think one hon. member of the Opposition would allow work to be carried on under those conditions, yet this fellow talks about my being out of step. He is certainly out of step. The charge that the "Yanna" was taken from Lui Brothers by the Department of Native Affairs and given to other islanders, Mosby Brothers, is completely false and malicious. The facts in this case are that Lui Brothers, after the war, bought the vessel "Yanna" and worked it for approximately 12 months. It was then found that the boat required an extensive overhaul, and this work was done by the Island Industries Board. The cost of the overhaul was debited to Lui Brothers. The success of the job done by the Island Industries Board on the boat is indicated by the fact that after this work was completed the vessel competed in the lugger race to determine the best sailing boat in the pearling industry at Thursday Island, and filled second place. The Lui Brothers continued to work the boat for another 12 months but were not successful in that they all were employed in the Government service as teachers and storekeepers on various islands, and were unable to give the supervisory attention required for the efficient running of the boat. They fell into further debt and even found difficulty in paying the wages of their crew.

The chief councillor of the islands on which these men live was Jim Mosby, and the Director of Native Affairs, as is usual in such cases as this, arranged a conference between the Lui Brothers and Mosby with a view to their determining the best action to be taken to help the Lui Brothers. At this conference it was mutually agreed that the "Yanna" would be sold to Mosby Brothers as the Lui Brothers were unable to continue to work the boat profitably. This was a free sale mutually arranged between the two parties. The Director of Native Affairs had nothing whatsoever to do with it, except to confirm the transfer. It was a duly executed sale of the vessel, and if Lui did not receive his payment in full, the usual avenues were open to him to take action. However, this question never arose, because Lui was paid, and the transfer of the money was made through the office of the Director of Native Affairs in the usual way. The agreement for the sale of the boat was for a purchase price agreed upon by the two parties, on the basis of a valuation made at their request by the Island Industries Board's shipwright. The suggestion by the hon. member that there was anything that was not completely correct in this sale is completely unfounded. There again he acted on any sort of information picked up anywhere. Anonymous letters are dangerous things.

Mr. Wordsworth: It was not anonymous.

Mr. MOORE: It has not got a signature to it.

As to the employment of labour, anybody wishing to engage island labour on his boat simply obtains a permit to do this from the

Director of Native Affairs. He then proceeds to engage his own labour. This complaint is based solely on the fact that the islander-owned boats, in addition to paying the wages due to the crews, grant them bonuses or a share in the profits. The pearl-ers, whilst being free to do this, will not. Can they then complain that the islanders prefer to work on the boats that give them the best pay?

So much for that part of the debate. I will now take it to a higher plane. The hon. member for Mackenzie made an excellent speech and gave to this Committee some very interesting information about the work carried on at the various settlements. The information he furnished is proof positive that the policy of the Government in training our natives to take their place amongst the white people has been highly successful. I repeat that his speech was very full of information and I was pleased that the hon. member for Haughton complimented that hon. member on his speech.

It might be interesting to the Committee to know that very successful experiments were carried out in the production of wheat. The crop harvested was 1,750 bags at a value of £4,375, and I congratulate the officials at Foleyvale who were able to sow this crop and harvest it. I was at Foleyvale prior to the harvesting of the wheat crop and it was very interesting to see full-blooded natives driving a modern tractor and ploughing a field; in another part of the farm the foreman and a number of native boys were harvesting sorghum. This is truly training native boys to be useful on the land, and it is very interesting to know that in central Queensland wheat can be grown successfully. The Government have great optimism concerning Foleyvale.

Mr. Sparkes: I would not take on wheat-growing there too much. You had a go at Peak Downs.

Mr. MOORE: The hon. member for Aubigny is not big enough to give a little credit where credit is due. The trouble is that when my hon. colleague, the Secretary for Lands and Irrigation, was responsible for obtaining this property, the hon. member for Aubigny and others said, "It will fail!" However, he cannot say very much now, because as well as successfully farming wheat at Foleyvale, they are successfully raising Hereford cattle. Hon. members opposite are very concerned about these things. They have made whoopee with their land for a long time.

Mr. Ewan: And you got whoopee the other day in Caucus.

Mr. MOORE: It is a pretty poor state of affairs when hon. members opposite have to stoop to that. They are devoid of policy and they have had a horrible licking. Now they are trying to dig up some Caucus stuff. The Secretary for Mines and Immigration gave it to them the other day when he mentioned certain things that happened in their own Caucus. In this, the last session of this Parliament there was a smear campaign and

they would love to get out from under their "Hansards" tonight. This session of Parliament has almost concluded and how have they come out of it? They have failed dismally. However, to get back to Foleyvale—let me return to a high plane.

Mr. Morris: Try to get onto realities for a change.

Mr. MOORE: When we get onto a high plane of debate, the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha is right out of his element.

This property was not used by private enterprise for years, yet it is now producing hundreds of head of useful cattle and thousands of bags of wheat. It is another Socialist enterprise that has succeeded. We have been successful there with dry-farming also.

Opposition Members interjecting—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! If I have to call order again because of the crossfiring that is going on in the Chamber, I shall have to deal with somebody. If any hon. member wants to enter a race for the first to be put out of the Chamber, I will oblige him.

Mr. MOORE: This handful of native boys is showing what can be done with these beautiful acres in Central Queensland that were allowed to lie unproductive for years. I know it is embarrassing to hon. members opposite that this handful of boys can produce such wealth, and I feel sure that my colleague, the Secretary for Lands and Irrigation, must be a very proud man tonight after the criticism that was levelled at him and the Government when we decided to take this land over.

I want to congratulate and thank the hon. member for Marodian for his contribution to this debate. I agree with him that probably some of these youngsters are not as industrious as they might be. He said there were numbers of them. Of course, we have our policy.

With the extension of agricultural pursuits at Foleyvale great opportunities are being provided for the younger natives. Cherbourg itself has very poor farmland but the property recently acquired alongside is an excellent one. Here the young fellows are given an opportunity to become good men on the land. I am particularly interested in the suggestion by the hon. member for Marodian that the aboriginals should exhibit their work at the Brisbane Exhibition. I thank him for his offer and I shall be glad at an early date to discuss the matter and make the necessary arrangements.

Mr. Dewar: But you will not be the Minister when the next Exhibition comes round. (Laughter.)

Mr. MOORE: I may not be the Minister in charge of this department when the next Exhibition comes along but one of my colleagues here will be. Moreover, the officials of the department are doing such a good job that they will be able to co-operate with

the hon. member for Marodian, who occupies a high position in the Royal National Association. Even if I am not here myself others will be here to carry on the work. We shall be here, have no doubt, and it is because we have been in Government so long that our policy in the matter of native affairs and in other directions has been so successful.

I join with the hon. member for Marodian in saying that perhaps the natives of this State should not be given all the privileges that some people would like them to have. That was a very debatable question at the conferences at Canberra and before this debate ends I hope to be able to give hon. members some information about them.

The hon. member for Haughton has shown that he maintains a very close interest in native affairs and I suppose nobody has a more extensive knowledge of the psychology and habits of the natives than the hon. member for Carpentaria. He has been closely associated with natives in different parts of the State for many years. He has always taken a very keen interest in their affairs and I always seek his advice on the matter of exemptions from the control of the protectors and other matters relating to native affairs in the country.

Dr. DITTMER (Mt. Gravatt) (8.8 p.m.): I had not intended to speak on this vote because I did not regard myself as an authority on anthropology or an expert in ethnology. The matter that agitated my mind and determined me to speak was the pattern followed by hon. members opposite in their speeches, not particularly of seeking to destroy members of the Government but of pillorying governmental personnel, men who had served the Governments in power irrespective of their political colour. I am on my feet to repel an attack, very thinly veiled, on Mr. Con O'Leary. Some 19 months ago I stood on my feet here defending another public servant.

Let us see it not in relation to the words they poured forth—let us look at the gentlemen under discussion when we are considering this attack. He is a man whose brow exhibits the wrinkles of wisdom, whose cheeks reveal the furrows of fairness and on whose chin is the dimple of decency. (Opposition interruption.) Within 10 years of his retirement after an honourable service in the Government service, these people are attempting to defame and destroy him. This man spent over 15 years on Thursday Island. Is there any member in this Chamber who would know the requirements of the natives in that area better than Mr. Con O'Leary. In 1948, because of a high sense of responsibility, this man was prepared to separate himself from his family. That was the depth of his interest in the natives, who were in rags when he went to Thursday Island. Their story under the control of Mr. O'Leary is the story of "from rags to riches and contentment." But now—and the hon. member for Cook, if he is honest enough, will admit that the standard they enjoy today is not the responsibility particularly of the Government, but is due to the

activities, knowledge and inherent decency and honesty of one man, the Director of Native Affairs.

Government Members: Hear, hear!

Dr. DITTMER: This is the man that they seek to besmirch and pillory. (Opposition interruption.)

The CHAIRMAN: Order! If the hon. member for Chermerside decides to be frivolous again I shall deal with him.

Dr. DITTMER: Because of the ill-health of one of his children the Director of Native Affairs left his family in Brisbane when he went to Thursday Island. Is he not entitled to expect some sense of responsibility on the part of the Opposition? He is doing an extraordinarily good job, yet he has to face up to attack after attack. This has been going on for weeks. The Leader of the Opposition referred to a broadcast that they implied was the responsibility of the Director of Native Affairs.

Mr. Nicklin: The responsibility of the Minister.

Dr. DITTMER: Well, we will say it was the responsibility of the Minister. I think he can look after himself, but the Director of Native Affairs has not the right to defend himself here. That is what makes it extraordinarily cowardly, that they should attack him here and then go outside and ask to shake his hand.

They say that no-one could memorise a broadcast of 20 minutes. Of course no member of the Opposition could, because in order to memorise it you have to be consistent with truth; that is the only way you can make a broadcast for 20 minutes without notes. That was the claim of the Leader of the Opposition—that you could not deliver a broadcast for 20 minutes without notes.

Mr. Nicklin: I did not say you couldn't; I said you wouldn't.

Honourable Members interjecting—

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order!

Dr. DITTMER: If I am not careful hon. members opposite will be making the speech and I shall not. (Laughter.) I do not propose to deal with anything in relation to the prices of pearl-shell. My interest was to defend the character of a particularly excellent gentleman. No-one is more authoritative in his particular sphere than the Director of Native Affairs.

The Minister and the hon. member for Carpentaria told the story of the Commonwealth's handling of the natives in the Northern Territory compared with Queensland. Imagine members of the Opposition seeking to attack this Government in relation to the welfare of the natives! Ask the hon. member for Barambah what he thinks of the handling of the interests of natives by the former Secretary for Health and Home Affairs of the mission station of which the hon. member has the honour to be chairman. Ask the hon. member to tell the story of how

this Government handle the affairs of the natives. He can tell that story, and I think he is decent enough to tell it truthfully, unlike some other members of the Opposition. I know he would tell the truth.

Now I should like to give a few facts about the natives of the Northern Territory as compared with Queensland. Go there and see the male aboriginal, undernourished and living in any sort of shelter. Have a look at the gins with their matted hair and generally filthy habits. (Laughter.) This is the only time the Opposition enjoy Parliament. We would not seek to deny them their amusement, as many of them will not be back next session. Even the hon. member for Cook does not deny the improvement in the condition of the natives under the Queensland Government. Surely there is visual evidence of that everywhere? Let the hon. member for Barambah compare the conditions of aboriginals in the Lutheran Mission under his control with what exists under the Commonwealth. Hon. members should compare the physical and mental condition of the aboriginals of this State with the present conditions of the aboriginals in the Northern Territory. It will be found that there is a marked difference and all credit is due entirely to the Queensland Government and Mr. O'Leary. The physical and mental amelioration of the natives in Queensland and their economic improvement are due almost entirely to one man and his associated staff, and to that man I have particular pleasure in offering an extraordinary tribute. That man is Mr. Con. O'Leary, Director of Native Affairs.

Government Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. SPARKES (Aubigny) (8.20 p.m.): I appreciate what has been done on the native settlements and it is very pleasing to know that the Government have made a success of their venture. I admit frankly that they were successful this year with their wheat-growing, but I think hon. members will agree that the country there does not lend itself to wheat-growing. The hon. gentleman has told us what they have made and how successful they are, but I point out that if I had the cheap labour he has, if I paid no rates, rents or taxes I too should be successful. I go so far as to say that probably the hon. member who has just resumed his seat could even make his gold mine pay under those conditions.

Mr. Walsh: You could not make your place pay but for the cheap freights and low rentals you pay.

Mr. SPARKES: The Treasurer says I could not make my place pay but for the cheap freights and rents.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Let me make it clear that the question of freights and rents has nothing whatever to do with the matter before the Committee.

Mr. SPARKES: It is linked up with the question in that the less you have to pay the more profit you make.

Mr. Nicklin: Do they make a profit?

Mr. SPARKES: That is doubtful.

Mr. Riordan: You do not want us to exploit the natives too, do you?

Mr. SPARKES: Apparently the Minister exploits other people and now wants to do it to the natives too. I think the Government should stop at the natives because they have done enough exploiting in other directions.

I have found that if you get a good native boy he makes an excellent stockman. I have had a good deal to do with boys on the run, and they are mighty good stockmen. I think it was the hon. member for Kelvin Grove who said that he would hate to think that any of these native boys went onto station properties.

Mr. Power: At the age of 12, he said.

Mr. SPARKES: Even so, I point out that some of the smartest men I ever met were reared on those stations on the western Darling in New South Wales. I suppose the hon. member fears that they will be exploited in the way in which the Secretary for Mines and Immigration hopes to exploit them. I admit that some of the boys are lazy, but a really good boy can be an outstanding man with stock.

I merely rose to say that this particular settlement is going along all right but I am sorry that the Minister's settlement at Peak Downs is not doing as well.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. SPARKES: I believe in doing everything we can for the natives, because after all they are the true Australians of this country. I was rather disturbed, however, to read of how countries overseas look after their native people. It is pleasing to know that the natives within this State are more or less a happy crowd.

Mr. KEYATTA (Townsville) (8.26 p.m.): I wish to add my support to the Vote. We as administrators in Queensland are in duty bound to give every consideration and encouragement to the natives who are the real pioneers of this great country of Australia and Queensland in particular. We have every right to train them to take their part in this civilisation. It is to the credit of the State Government that Queensland is one of the few places in the world that shows the native population any consideration. Each year the scope of the work is being widened and every possible encouragement is being given to provide for the natives, protect them, educate them, and do all things possible to fit them into society. They have played an important part in the development of Queensland and are worthy of every encouragement they receive. They have the capacity to assimilate teaching and are able to play a great part in agriculture, cattle-raising, fishing, and other industries. They have done their part well. The Department of Native Affairs sees that the money earned by natives is banked to their credit for use in the purchase of amenities and other things they desire. At one time these unfortunate people were at the mercy of unscrupulous people.

They were helpless because of their lack of understanding of the ways of society. The Government have done much to educate them to fit them for positions in industry and the missions, which are subsidised by the Government, have laid the foundation of christian teaching to equip them to take their places in our civilisation. The Island Industries Board has played a revolutionary part in establishing natives in vital industries on the shores of our distant frontier.

Very little consideration was given to the natives until this Government realised that they should be properly provided for. They were then established in industry; they set up their own executives and were able to operate successfully. They proved that when they were educated and given an opportunity they were able to assimilate the ways of life of their lighter-skinned brethren. The last war proved their loyalty to this country and their devotion to duty. They showed that they could be entrusted with the defence of this great land. They proved their worth as scouts in the islands and none realised their loyalty and devotion more than our own soldiers. Now they are organised for production in peace.

I appeal to the Minister to give our natives greater scope and greater freedom for the sake of their future welfare. They have shown that they are able to take their place in society, and I look forward to the day when they will be entrusted with the right to vote. Anyone who can give service in industry in war and in peace is entitled to vote, and I think the time is near when that matter should be considered. Anyone who proves his title to citizenship should be given a vote.

It is to the credit of this Government that our natives have been raised to their present standard. This is the only State in the Commonwealth that gives natives full protection. However, as this State's resources are limited, the Commonwealth Government should help us by subsidising our work. If they do not want to give us a direct subsidy they can help the mission stations to widen the scope of their work. We are doing a great work in protecting and educating these people, and I feel we should make an approach to the Commonwealth Government for some aid.

The administration of the regulations governing our native people is carried out by qualified practical officers. No-one can say that the officers of the department under the benign guidance of the Minister are not playing a very important part in protecting and helping the natives. Since the end of the war, the Government have established the various native communities, with their peculiarities and customs, under the control of their own local councils. They are conducted much along the lines of a local authority and they are helped and advised in the matter of procedure by officers of the department. They have been an overwhelming success. Their elections are keenly contested and their responsibilities are accepted with keenness and enthusiasm. Their work has extended

and in this respect too they have been outstandingly successful. I have frequently suggested that these people should be trained to depend on their own resources. They should have financial and other help from the Commonwealth in addition to the help given by the State Government. This would give them a splendid impetus, it would widen the scope of their opportunities and thereby extend training and protection to their people.

There are no greater bushmen in the world than the Australian aboriginals. They can be absorbed into our civilisation. They are naturally and generously endowed with bush lore and bush-craft. They have proved their worth as trackers in civil life and as scouts in the army. They can live off the land, and live well, where the average person would starve. They have instincts not known to the white man and they have a capacity for endurance the white man could never equal. They have proved their real worth under conditions of extreme hardship.

The Palm Island reserve, an area of great potentialities, is not far from Townsville. It has one of the greatest fishing grounds in the Commonwealth. The natives engage in agriculture. They cut their own building timber, they are taught to mix concrete, make concrete blocks, and generally build huts for their accommodation under the best hygienic conditions. At the moment Palm Island is conducted as a penal settlement, but it has a general settlement too. It is one of 11 islands and it has an excellent location. It is an ideal spot with an environment probably second to none in the world.

It is a revelation to see the work, both primitive and modern, that is done by the aboriginals at Palm Island. Their artistic ability was so evident that the Townsville show committee requested that some of their work be exhibited at the Townsville show. I heard the hon. member for Tablelands say, when opening the Townsville show, that he was amazed at the artistic work of the aboriginals. The work they did was evidence of the value of the training they had received.

They have also made a great success of the fishing industry. All kinds of production is carried on. They breed their own cattle and sheep and they have fresh meat that is killed and prepared by native butchers. I suggest to anyone who visits Palm Island that he see the results of the work of the natives carried out in an environment that was new to them. They indicated that they had great latent ability and a capacity of which any people could be proud.

The fishing potentialities of the Palm Island group could be a great tourist attraction. There are three openings from this group to the Barrier Reef, and they form the finest fishing grounds in the Commonwealth. During the war the American and Australian forces were amazed at the deep-sea fishing outside the Great Barrier Reef. It was a common sight to see 1,000-lb. marlin or shark. The natives could act as guides and thus help to advertise Queensland's fishing areas.

Having an interest in life has an important psychological effect on the human mind, and the department has done a great work in giving these people a feeling of responsibility and providing them with such an interest. These, the most primitive of people, have shown their innate capacity. They are second to none in the world as fishermen. Members of the Palm Island football team are famous for their prowess.

As a member of the North Queensland Football League I was entrusted to take a team of English footballers, led by Jim Sullivan, one of the greatest footballers in the world at that time, to Palm Island. These footballers were amazed at the ability at football of the lads on the island. The English team, as a complimentary gesture to the Palm Islanders and their ability, marched onto the football field and sang their football anthem, which is not sung even for distinguished people but only for Royalty or Vice-Regal representatives. The Englishmen were amazed at the role the aboriginals were able to take in society and their ability to play football, the game at which I suppose the English are the most adept people in the world. The English footballers stand second to none whether the game played is the Union, League or Soccer code.

Palm Island could be developed as a tourist attraction. The Government may think they are not in a position to provide the necessary transportation but some private firms, such as Taylor & Son or Hayles Ltd. may provide the necessary boats for tourists. They could be under the control of the Tourist Department and the Department of Native Affairs.

Mr. H. B. Taylor: Is that in your electorate?

Mr. KEYATTA: It is in the electorate of the hon. member for Hinchinbrook. The hon. member for Carpentaria can speak with great authority of the native people. He has been among them and he is one of their great champions. I am proud of the fact that I am a supporter of the Government who have played such a great part in helping the aboriginals. That is to their credit. The condition of the natives at present is a living testimony to the achievement of the Government. The Minister and his department are to be commended but I make the plea on behalf of the native who is in the position of being able to look after himself, that he be given his freedom. I know some natives have been granted their freedom but did not acquit themselves favourably. When this happens, of course, the native is brought again under the control of the department. In my electorate there are many who would be a credit to any community. In view of their zeal and industry, above all in view of their loyalty and service during the war, I urge that we give consideration to granting them full rights. Loyalty of service during the war is the greatest test of character and all natives, whether they are inland or coast natives or island-dwellers, proved true to their trust, and in return we should consider giving them full rights in the community.

Mr. MORRIS: (Mt. Coot-tha) (8.51 p.m.): During his latest contribution to the debate tonight, the Minister referred frequently to misleading statements and misrepresentation when he was talking about hon. members on this side of the Chamber. I say emphatically that he made those charges totally without reason or foundation. My main purpose in rising at this stage is to register a most emphatic protest against the Minister's making a statement in this Chamber when he knew full well that it was not true. It is a very poor compliment to a Parliament such as this that a Minister who holds an important portfolio will get up and deliberately mislead the Committee on a very vital issue. The Minister did that tonight, and he obviously did it to protect himself. When the Leader of the Opposition was referring to the broadcast that took place over the radio at Thursday Island, the Minister tried, unsuccessfully of course, to insinuate that no broadcast had taken place at all.

Mr. MOORE: I rise to a point of order. I did not make any such statement.

Mr. MORRIS: I did not say the Minister did. I said he tried to insinuate that there was no broadcast. Do not let the hon. gentleman misquote what I said. I said he tried to insinuate that there was no broadcast, and he did do that but did not get away with it. Then, because the Leader of the Opposition took him to task about his answer to a question asked by him, the Minister said that it was based on a "Hansard" report of a speech made by the hon. member for Cook on approximately 20 August. Tonight, the Minister said it was based on reports from "The Courier-Mail" and "The Cairns Post" and on a "Hansard" report of a speech made by the hon. member for Cook during the debate on the Address in Reply on approximately 20 August. If that is true, the answer the Minister gave the Leader of the Opposition some little time ago—I think it was 16 October—was definitely untrue. The Minister cannot have it both ways. One or the other is true, but they cannot both be true. Either it was taken from a "Hansard" report of the debate on the Address in Reply, as he told us tonight, or it was as he said in his answer to the Leader of the Opposition.

This is a quotation from the answer by the Minister—

"I am further informed that there is no script or record of this broadcast. It was purely a report given in the ordinary way of a matter vitally affecting the affairs of the Islanders. It was a report of the proceedings in Parliament, on the motion of the hon. member for Cook, and was based on the reports of the debate appearing in 'The Cairns Post,' 'The Courier-Mail' and 'Hansard'."

Either it came from the debate when the hon. member for Cook moved the adjournment of the House or it came from the Address in Reply debate.

Mr. Moore: There were two debates and I told you that.

Mr. MORRIS: The trouble is, Mr. Clark, that a man who does not tell the truth should have a very, very good memory and realise—

Mr. Moore: You are a bit unlucky in that regard.

Mr. MORRIS: That is all very well. That is not an easy way out for the Minister. I quite appreciate that a practice has been building up in this Chamber over the last few weeks by a few of the unscrupulous members to attack me personally. That does not worry me one iota.

Mr. Moore: Nobody would waste two minutes on you.

Mr. MORRIS: However, that attack—

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Clark): Order! I ask the hon. member to withdraw the word "unscrupulous."

Mr. MORRIS: Did I say that?

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: It is unparliamentary.

Mr. MORRIS: To whom did I refer?

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: The hon. member was referring to unscrupulous members in this Chamber.

Mr. MORRIS: I would not embarrass you, Mr. Clark, and in deference to you I withdraw it.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: The hon. member used the expression "unscrupulous members in this Chamber."

Mr. MORRIS: I will withdraw the word. That does not deter me from the point I am making. I know that there is this feeling on the part of the Government, but it does not worry me. I have proved conclusively from the Minister's own words tonight that he led us to believe that this broadcast was based on a debate in this Chamber on 20 August. From his own answer to the question by the Leader of the Opposition he refers to the hon. member for Cook and a debate that was not on 20 August but was on 23 September and that proves the falsity of the statement made by the Minister.

To get back to the question of the broadcast, the Minister hopes that we have no knowledge of the contents of the broadcast. I counsel him not to delude himself into living in a fool's paradise; he has given us evidence that he lives in such a place, but he deludes himself on that score. He is due for an unpleasant shock in the comparatively immediate future. The facts are that the station was used for party-political purposes and used to defame a member of this Committee. That, unfortunately, is in line with many of the things said by the Minister during this debate. I have proved that he deliberately misled the Committee tonight and I will reserve further time at my disposal for some of the personal attacks that will follow.

Hon. W. M. MOORE (Merthyr—Secretary for Health and Home Affairs) (9 p.m.): I think I have proved to the Committee on documentary evidence that the information could have been taken from "Hansard." I challenge the Leader of the Opposition to give us some matter from this broadcast. With all their talk, the Opposition have not given us one statement out of the broadcast. All they have said is that it was party-political and so on, and that somebody called somebody else a liar. As I said before, the hon. member for Cook read a letter and said that somebody wrote it. When he was directed to lay the letter on the table, there was no signature on it.

These are the people who stand up and accuse this Government. They started at the beginning of this session with a smear campaign and it has gone back all over them. They would love to get out of "Hansard" what they have said. Let them make no error; in the forthcoming election campaign they will get the lot.

Other matters were raised during the debate that I shall be pleased to reply to at a later stage. I now move, Mr. Clark, that you do now leave the chair and report progress.

Mr. Nicklin: It is not a quarter past 9 yet.

Mr. MOORE: I was informed that an arrangement was entered into with the Leader of the Opposition to adjourn immediately after 9 o'clock.

Mr. Nicklin: Between a quarter past and half past 9.

Mr. Jesson: At 9 o'clock.

Mr. Nicklin: You need not come near me again.

Mr. Jesson: You need not come near me, because you have not played the game yet.

Mr. MORRIS: I rise to a point of order. An hon. member on the Government benches, referring to the Leader of the Opposition, said he had never played the game yet. That is an untrue statement and it is offensive. I ask that he be directed to withdraw it.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Clark): The Secretary for Health and Home Affairs!

Mr. MOORE: I should like to compliment the hon. member for Mt. Gravatt for paying a tribute to the Director and his staff. It is refreshing to see that members are so conversant with native affairs. The hon. member for Aubigny also was complimentary.

Getting back to the wheat crop, I referred to that matter to demonstrate the great productivity of the soil. Somebody said, "You might not get another one," but at any rate we have had one. The farm supervisor is doing an excellent job and we shall profit from his highly successful experiment. He has proved the fertility of the soil and the potentiality of that part of the State. I

do not know that much wheat has been produced before in Central Queensland, but when the world is hungry for all kinds of grain we might play a great part in exploiting God's gifts in this State and in producing the food the world requires.

We have never denied that some of the natives are not as industrious as they might be. Even though we might use more natives than white people for a given task we are producing something. The natives are beginning to pay for their keep with the produce they grow. They are becoming proficient in farming methods, and in the use of modern machinery. Over all, an excellent job is being done.

I do not want to criticise the other States adversely but we are far ahead of them. In some cases the natives there live under the conditions that obtained in their tribal days. They are not being educated, their health is not looked after, and their outlook is not very good.

In this State we teach the young people to avail themselves of the bounty of the soil by the use of the necessary machinery. They have become proficient in the trades. We have turned out many good carpenters and plumbers. They can build their own houses. They are engaged in power-houses, and some have passed the necessary examinations to qualify for the positions in charge. They will be in a position to supply water and electric light to the little townships.

The hon. member for Mackenzie referred to a water system that was provided by digging in the bed of the river and laying pipes 18 to 20 feet below the bed. The natural sand and gravel provided a ready-made filter. This work was done under the supervision of an official of the Irrigation Department. The water is pumped and reticulated through the township, the plumbing too being done by the natives.

We usually have a storeman on the place and the last time I was at Woorabinda the department had bought a railway boiler, a P.B. I think they call it, which was put down on a concrete foundation. A modern sawmill will be erected on the site. Timber will be felled and sawn on the property. This will provide more houses and more houses will mean more families, and more families will mean more opportunities for farming, and so the work goes on.

The girls are learning domestic science and doing an excellent job. At Cherbourg we have a model kitchen, bedrooms, sitting-room and dining-room; and the girls learn cooking and housekeeping. I have visited the place and I have eaten meals that were cooked by the native girls under the supervision of the instructress, and they were very excellent. When they go out to service they do very well.

The hon. member for Townsville made an excellent speech and showed that he had a wide knowledge of the Department of Native Affairs. His remarks concerning Palm Island were very interesting. He and his colleagues have always been very useful in their suggestions concerning the affairs of Palm

Island. The suggestion that Palm Island might be made a tourist attraction is one worthy of consideration, and I shall be pleased to pass that information on to the appropriate authorities.

Mr. JESSON (Hinchinbrook) (9.12 p.m.): Perhaps one of the biggest aboriginal settlements in Queensland, Palm Island, is in my electorate. I intended to speak of it at a later date but owing to the unfortunate episode a few moments ago I rise to keep the debate going till as near 10 o'clock as I can.

I congratulate the Director and the other members of the staff on the very fine work they have done on the various aboriginal settlements throughout the State. I wish also to congratulate the people who have the care of these aboriginals in their hands. The superintendents, the nurses and other people looking after the aboriginals have virtually given up their lives to the care of these unfortunate people.

I wish to congratulate also the hon. member for Marodian on his suggestion that the aboriginals make an exhibit at the Royal National Show. The idea of an aboriginal display was first started at Palm Island by the school-master. They used to go across to the Townsville show to get ideas regarding displays and then they started to do this work at the settlement. The Minister in charge at the time, the hon. member for Charters Towers, gave a shield that is known as the Jones shield and if it was won twice by the same settlement it became the property of that settlement. I suggest that a miniature shield be given to the various settlements that win from time to time.

Competition made the natives keen. There is not the slightest doubt that the furniture, handwork, children's drawings, handwriting, and painting could take their place in any exhibition in Australia. It is good to know that the natives are being educated and helped in these directions.

Palm Island settlement is somewhat different from other settlements inasmuch as it is a penal settlement to which are sent most of the native lads who have committed crimes, less serious than murder or something of that kind. After serving a certain time at Stewart's Creek or Boggo Road Gaol they are released and sent to Palm Island. The Palm Island settlement does much to rehabilitate and help the native lads who have run off the tracks, usually because of their association with whites. On being sent to Palm Island the boys are put to work on a farm, looking after stock, roadwork, or on timber work. This settlement is a credit to those who work on it. It has its own water supply and electricity. The natives' houses are a credit to the Government. In the course of a speech this evening, I made an interjection about the conditions of the aboriginals in New South Wales and Victoria. Mr. Farrell, I propose to pause until the conversation on my right is finished. I certainly cannot make a speech when two hon. members opposite are talking of the prices for wool and beef. I want a little respect shown to me.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. JESSON: I will continue my speech when the Opposition do not interrupt so rudely.

Mr. Sparkes: Not interested.

Mr. JESSON: The hon. members should leave the Chamber and have their conversation outside.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. JESSON: When I was so rudely interrupted by the Opposition Whip and the hon. member for Roma, I was pointing out that I was astounded that such a large State as New South Wales and a thickly-populated State like Victoria should treat the native population as they do.

Mr. Farrell, I should like to draw your attention to this matter; it may have relevance to the subject before the Committee. A few weeks ago the hon. member for Aubigny stood up in this Chamber and spoke of the dignity of Parliament. Crocodile tears ran down his cheeks. I would draw your attention to what the hon. member did while I was speaking. He walked across the floor and handed me this slip of paper, on which some artist has drawn a picture of ex-King Farouk. I can take a joke but when these hypocrites can stand in this Chamber and with crocodile tears running down their cheeks speak of the dignity of Parliament I must draw your attention to this incident. You did not see it, Mr. Farrell, you were consulting with the Clerk. If I was about 30 years younger and not a grey-haired old Digger from the first war I would do something to the hon. member for Aubigny that a bull would not do to him. He wants to get smart. He cannot get anywhere so far as I am concerned. The loud laughter that denotes the vacant mind, one can always hear from the Opposition.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. JESSON: Now that I have given that little homily, I will continue my speech.

I was saying, when I was so rudely interrupted, that many years ago I went to the native settlement at La Perouse, Sydney, and upon visiting that settlement only a year or two ago I found very little change in conditions. The same old humpies were there and the natives were living under very primitive conditions indeed.

Again, the Commonwealth Government's attitude to our natives is a crying shame. They call a conference occasionally to pull the wool over the eyes of the people of this country but actually their policy is a negative one. The Minister was quite within his rights when he walked out of a recent conference. It was supposed to be a conference of Ministers whose object was the formulating of some plan for the benefit of the natives. When our Minister arrived, he found that it was a conference of chief clerks or under-secretaries from other States, that not one other Minister had attended and he, as was natural, stood on his dignity and

walked out. If he had been told that it was to be a conference of such officers, it is probable that he would have sent Mr. O'Leary or someone else to represent this State and would not have wasted his valuable time and risked his life in travelling by air to Canberra to sit amongst a group of public servants and listen to a lot of clap-trap put forward by the Commonwealth Government who had no intention of doing anything for the natives. What the hon. member for Carpentaria said was quite true. I too know that in the journey across to Perth it is pitiful to see the thin, miserable, half-starved natives cadging tobacco and food at the railway stations in an attempt to keep themselves alive. And the Commonwealth Government try to tell us they have the welfare of these natives at heart! All they do is call a conference now and again and cause so much blah to be published in the Press and then leave it at that. It is time they awakened to their responsibilities to the aboriginals and made some reimbursement to this State for the enormous sum of money expended on the various settlements.

Let me quote some of the figures to give hon. members an idea of the amount of money expended by this Government on this work. For maintenance and incidentals alone, the expenditure at Cherbourg last year was £51,904 and the amount required for this year is £60,755. For grants to mission stations the amount expended last year was £58,212 and this year £46,900 is required for that purpose. The amount expended at Palm Island for maintenance and incidentals last year was £69,413 and it is estimated that £77,480 will be required for this year. At Woorabinda settlement £37,979 was expended under this heading last year and the amount to be asked for this year is £37,310. At Fantome Island, which is connected with the Palm Island group, £14,777 was expended last year under this heading and £16,180 will be required this year. The total amount expended last year on all settlements for this purpose was £412,034 and this year it is estimated that £481,930 will be required.

I congratulate the Government and the people concerned upon the way in which those unfortunate natives who have contracted leprosy, or Hansen's Disease, are being looked after at Fantome Island. I should also like to pay a special tribute to that great band of women, the Franciscan nuns, who have devoted their lives to looking after natives suffering from that disease. They virtually never leave the island and are doing a remarkable job. I have been on Palm Island often. I go there nearly every Easter just to spend a few days, to see what is what and if possible attend the show. I pay a great tribute to these women. Their work is a labour of love. They have gone to an island that is without communication with the outside world and are nursing extremely sick people. There are some exceedingly bad cases of leprosy on the island. Natives contract the disease in the bush and without knowing they have it they go to sleep alongside a fire and get burnt about the body and then go to the island

for treatment. I should be lacking in my duty as a public man if I did not offer praise to the people who are doing this great work.

I express my appreciation also to the superintendent of Palm Island, to whom pounds, shillings and pence mean nothing. It is his life's job to look after these people and he has taught them to grow vegetables, do farming work, so that they really seem to be interested in life. There are a sawmill and a farm and the Government have given them every encouragement to get them back to normal peace of mind. The native is easily led astray and often falls for the lure of the grog; he is an inveterate gambler and sometimes gets into serious trouble.

I think the hon. member for Carpentaria spoke tonight about the natives who went out to the West and the North-west when the Japs. entered the war to help on the grazing and pastoral properties. I offer my thanks to the natives on behalf of the cane-growers I represent for the marvellous job they did in the Ingham district during the war. If it had not been for Palm Island natives, the economy of this State would have been considerably reduced. Some 70, 80 or 100 of them went across on different occasions and helped with the cane-cutting. It was hard to make them work hard and long, but they did a remarkable job in the Halifax and Macknade areas. We had to struggle to get them to go from Palm Island to cut cane in the following season. I thank the then Minister, the present Secretary for Labour and Industry, for allowing the natives to come across to cut cane at a time when there was plenty of work for them in their own area. It was after the war and they could have been fully employed on the island because a water and electric-light system was being installed and labour was required on the island. There were many women and kiddies on Palm Island. I pay a tribute to those men for the good work they did in helping the district out when we were short of cane-cutters. Quite a lot of them are still cutting cane and doing other work about the district. They have built small homes for themselves, and have settled down and are rearing families. They are an acquisition to the district. If those people are properly cared for we have not much to worry about.

I want to close my remarks by referring to the attitude adopted by the Opposition in this debate. They have told untruths and made misrepresentations. As to the broadcast from Thursday Island, they have no proof at all of what they have said. The hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha tried to create the impression in the minds of the public and the members of this Committee that a verbatim report of the broadcast had been taken down. The Opposition asked in the House a week or two ago whether we could produce a transcript of it. They were only fishing then for something they did not have themselves. Then they have the audacity to come into this Chamber and say they have a shorthand verbatim report of the broadcast and are keeping it up their sleeves for some

future occasion. That is the sort of clap-trap we get from the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha. He is always making stupid statements for political expediency—

Mr. Morris: It is getting under your skin.

Mr. JESSON: The hon. member has no chance of getting under my skin. I deplore the fact that any hon. member should come into this Chamber and make statements that he knows are not true. I defy him or any other member of the Opposition to produce a report of that broadcast. I am prepared to donate any sum at all, without limit, provided he can produce a receipt for his dues to the Rechabites.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. JESSON: It ill becomes a member of this Chamber to get up and make accusations and veiled threats against the Government without having any proof.

Progress reported.

The House adjourned at 9.35 p.m.
