

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 8 NOVEMBER 1956

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

QUESTIONS.**DEATH OF MRS. MARY ANN GARTON.**

Mr. NICKLIN (Landsborough—Leader of the Opposition) asked the Attorney-General—

“1. Will he kindly advise if a coronial inquest was held into the manner and cause of death of Mrs. Mary Ann Garton who died as a result of injuries sustained in a traffic accident in Kent street, Maryborough, on 29 January, 1955?

“2. If so, (a) on what date was such inquest held, and (b) what were the coroner's findings in this regard?”

Hon. W. POWER (Baroona) replied—

“1. Yes.

“2. (a) 7 June, 1955; (b) The coroner found that deceased died on February 10, 1955, as a result of injuries sustained by her in a collision which occurred at or near the intersection of March and Kent Streets, Maryborough, between a Holden sedan motor car driven by Michael James Althaus and a pedal cycle ridden by the deceased on 29 January, 1955.”

HOUSING COMMISSION TENANTS.

Mr. NICKLIN (Landsborough—Leader of the Opposition) asked the Secretary for Public Works, Housing and Immigration—

“1. What was the total amount of rent collected from State Housing Commission tenants for the year ended 30 June, 1956?

“2. As at 30th June, 1956—(a) How many such tenants were in arrears with rental payments; (b) What was the total amount of rental so in arrears?

“3. During the year ended 30 June, 1956, what was the total amount (if any) of rental arrears written off?”

Hon. C. G. McCATHIE (Haughton) replied—

“1. £1,135,919 16s. 9d. during the year 1955-1956.

“2. (a) 6,722 including 4,690 tenants in arrears up to four weeks and 917 tenants in arrears four to thirteen weeks; (b) For the eleven years to 30 June, 1956 arrears totalled £52,484 11s. 11d., including £21,577 arrears for June, 1956

£15,529 arrears of over one month and up to three months, and £6,892 credit balances at 30 June, 1956.

“3. £54 5s. 8d.”

DAMAGE TO TOWNSVILLE-AYR ROAD BY HEAVY TRANSPORT.

Mr. COBURN (Burdekin) asked the Minister for Transport—

“In view of the fact that the Ayr Shire Council strenuously complains that the bitumen-surface is failing rapidly and other serious damage has been, and is being done, to the Townsville-Ayr road by the continual pounding of the road by heavy transports, mainly fuel-tankers, will he kindly inform the House what steps have been taken, or are contemplated, to stop or minimise the damage being done to this road which was not designed or constructed for such fast heavy traffic, or what financial compensation will be granted to the Council which is responsible for 50 per cent. of the maintenance costs?”

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

“The Ayr Shire Council is charged only 40 per cent. of the cost of ordinary maintenance of this road. When vehicles are submitted for registration, the matter of carrying capacity and tare is taken into account. It is not considered that tankers would cause more than ordinary damage, but the situation is being watched.”

FAMILIES IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION.

Mr. DEWAR (Chermside) asked the Secretary for Public Works, Housing and Immigration—

“Would he kindly advise the number of families housed in temporary accommodation in Queensland and in the metropolitan area at the following periods:—

(a) The peak period after the war; (b) at 1 November, 1956?”

Hon. C. G. McCATHIE (Haughton) replied—

“(a) Queensland, 2,023; Metropolitan, 1,887. (b) Queensland, 665; Metropolitan, 609.”

INCREASE IN UNIVERSITY FEES.

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) asked the Secretary for Public Instruction—

“1. What justification exists for the recent staggering increase in University fees, amounting, in some instances to a 100 per cent. rise?

“2. In view of the fact that the opportunities for University education have always been loaded against the northern scholar, who has to pay for board and lodging in Brisbane in addition to

University fees, does he not consider that the increased fees will impose an intolerable burden on these scholars and still further reduce the small number of northern scholars who can afford to attend the Brisbane University?

“3. Is not the decision to increase University fees a negation of the policy of the Government to provide education from the Kindergarten to the University absolutely free?”

Hon. L. F. DIPLOCK (Condamine) replied—

“1. Fees payable by students attending the University of Queensland have not been increased since 1 January, 1951. Costs of conducting and maintaining the University have risen steeply since that date. Despite increased Government endowments, additional revenue is required for the University. It was, therefore, decided that fees should be increased to bring fees payable to the University of Queensland more in line with fees paid by students in the Universities of Sydney and Melbourne. The increased rates are still lower than the fees charged by Southern Universities.

“2. The increase in fees does not affect the majority of day students attending the University as most students are holders of scholarships, fellowships, cadetships or some other form of benefit. Over 500 scholarships, fellowships, cadetships and the like are awarded each year. Holders of these awards attend the University without payment of fees and, in many cases, the students receive liberal allowances.

“3. It is considered that no student with ability is debarred from attendance at the University on account of the increase in University fees.”

PAPERS.

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

Report of the Fish Board for the year 1955-1956.

The following papers were laid on the table:—

Order in Council under the State Housing Acts, 1945 to 1955.

Order in Council under the Workers' Homes Acts, 1919 to 1953.

TRADES AND LABOUR HALL MANAGEMENT ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION.

Hon. V. C. GAIR (South Brisbane—Premier): I move—

“That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirableness of

introducing a Bill to amend the Trades and Labour Hall Management Acts, 1934 to 1954, in certain particulars."

Motion agreed to.

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION.

Hon. G. H. DEVRIES (Gregory—Secretary for Mines): I move—

"That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirableness of introducing a Bill to amend the Weights and Measures Act of 1951, in certain particulars."

Motion agreed to.

MINERS' HOMESTEAD LEASES ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION.

Hon. G. H. DEVRIES (Gregory—Secretary for Mines): I move—

"That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirableness of introducing a Bill to amend the Miners' Homestead Leases Acts, 1913 to 1951, in a certain particular."

Motion agreed to.

MINING ON PRIVATE LAND ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION.

Hon. G. H. DEVRIES (Gregory—Secretary for Mines): I move—

"That the House will, at its present sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirableness of introducing a Bill to amend the Mining on Private Land Acts, 1909 to 1954, in certain particulars."

Motion agreed to.

BUILDING SOCIETIES ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

(The Chairman of Committees, Mr. Clark, Fitzroy, in the chair.)

Debate resumed from 1 November (see p. 1216) on Mr. Power's motion—

"That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to amend the Building Societies Acts, 1886 to 1952, in certain particulars."

Mr. DONALD (Bremer) (11.11 a.m.): When the debate adjourned last week I was speaking of the magnificent service rendered over the years to home-seekers by building societies in Ipswich.

The Bill is brought down to deal with the borrowing powers of terminating building societies. It has nothing to do with the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement Bill introduced yesterday by the Secretary for Public Works. The Ipswich societies must not be confused in any way with permanent building societies. All of them are terminating societies and have up to date terminated before their allotted span. Twenty-year societies have terminated in 17 years, 15-year societies have terminated in 13 years, and so on.

Years of experience gained in the management and control of these societies in Ipswich assure their members of efficient management and protect the society against any danger of collapse. The societies have sought a more generous upward limit to the amount which they may borrow at any given time during the life of the society. The principal Acts limited this amount so that it would not exceed three years' income on the shares for the time being in existence.

The Bill as outlined by the Attorney-General will permit the terminating societies in Queensland to borrow up to either—

1. Three years' income on the shares, or
2. Two-thirds of the amount secured by mortgage, whichever is the greater at any time.

The principal Act was amended as long ago as 1943 so it is difficult to understand why hon. members opposite should regard this as new legislation. Prior to this the restriction on the borrowing powers of the Ipswich societies was limited to three years' income on the shares for the time being in existence. The 1943 amendment eliminated the restriction imposed in the original Act for a period of five years. The Act was further amended in 1952, again eliminating the restrictions of the original Act until 31 December, 1955. From 1 January, 1956, the normal three years' income limit again became effective. The result was that the societies have been unable to continue lending money to members who had been promised, or at least were under the impression that they were promised, that they could expect early advances, and had therefore entered into contracts.

All the Bill does is give to the eight terminating societies, six of which are in Ipswich, the same conditions that prevailed following the first amendment in 1943 for a period of five years, and the amendment of 1952 which extended the privilege until the end of December, 1955. It now means that they will be able to borrow without any upward limit until 31 December, 1960. After that date these societies, or any terminating society which may come into existence, will again be covered by the limits prescribed by the new Section 26.

At the moment approximately 60 people wish to build homes with the assistance of these societies in Ipswich. The longer we

delay the passage of the Bill the longer they will have to wait for their homes. I take this opportunity of sincerely thanking the Minister for this amending legislation, and I have much pleasure in commending it to hon. members. It will mean that more people will become home-owners, and that is what we all desire.

Mr. MORRIS (Mt. Coot-tha) (11.15 a.m.): I am glad to join with the hon. member for Bremer in thanking the Minister for introducing this legislation. From what we have heard it appears to be a good Bill as far as it goes, but it is also a monument of lost opportunity. There was a real opportunity for the Attorney-General to do a great deal of good for every building society, but he has missed grand opportunities that were available to him. During the previous debate on this Bill the Treasurer said quite unequivocally that he did not believe in building societies. I am glad that there are some on the Government side who do.

Mr. Walsh: I said that I did not believe in profit-making building societies.

Mr. MORRIS: That is a different interpretation. I am glad that the majority of the Government party do; had they not this Bill would not have been introduced.

For a few moments I shall look at the good points of the Bill, so far as one can judge, without having seen a copy of it. It does give certain terminating societies a chance to pursue the very desirable objective of providing homes, as they have been doing for some years. It registers an acceptance of the principle of building societies, from the point of view of the majority of the Government Party, but inferentially it shuts the door on an extension of the principle to building societies in other spheres. I dislike that part of it. It is surely known to the Government and the Minister that a limit of three years' income to any building society, whether a permanent or a terminating building society, does in fact restrict the operations of the society and, in certain cases it will almost cripple it. I think the Attorney-General recognises that, because the amendment, in effect, removes every limitation on certain existing societies. I commend the Attorney-General for recognising that principle but I am sorry that he did not go further. I am afraid that a section of the Government party have the desire to perpetuate State landlordism. That was confirmed by the Treasurer on Thursday last when he said in effect that he did not believe in building societies, that their results were higher rents.

Mr. Walsh: I say without qualification that I have no time for profit-making building societies. I agree with the hon. gentleman. I am not happy about the profit-making building societies but I am very keen on the development of the co-operative or mutual building societies. The mutual societies are not necessarily as good as co-operatives. I prefer the co-operative building society.

Mr. Aikens: What is your attitude to the setup proposed by the estate agents?

Mr. MORRIS: I am very happy to answer that question. I gave my attitude last evening, but evidently the hon. member for Mundingburra was not present. He apparently followed his customary practice of leaving the Chamber after making a speech. For his edification I repeat my statement. I do not care whether the people who form co-operative building societies are estate agents, members of Parliament—

Mr. Aikens: I was not at the Liberal Party meeting.

Mr. MORRIS: Even Liberal Party members. I do not care who they are, if they are prepared to organise a co-operative building society. They must operate according to the law and their operations will be of great value to the people.

Mr. Walsh: Co-operative societies and associations are endorsed in the platform of the Labour Party.

Mr. MORRIS: I know that.

This Bill is an indication that the Government are not encouraging the development of building societies other than those mentioned in the Act.

Mr. Aikens: Will you answer this question: If the Government did not build homes for rental, where would the people live, in view of the fact that private enterprise is not building homes for rental?

Mr. MORRIS: I am happy to answer that question. Prior to the war when there was no close restriction on rentals, before the 1942 limitation, private enterprise did provide very satisfactory rental homes. That practice of building homes for rental has been discontinued because it is not economic to do so. That is known to every hon. member.

Before the war, many people with a moderate income saved over the years to buy a home, and then bought another home to provide them with an income on their retirement. I am not ashamed to say that it was a very commendable practice. Those people were able to look after themselves in their years of retirement.

Mr. Aikens interjected.

Mr. MORRIS: If the hon. member wants an answer to his previous question, I suggest he keep quiet.

Mr. Aikens: I shall ask another question later.

Mr. MORRIS: I suggest he be courteous enough to wait for my complete reply.

Because of the 1942 limitation, not many homes for rental have been provided by private enterprise. There is a great number of rental houses available within the State,

houses built with Commonwealth finance, so the problem is not nearly as severe as the hon. member for Mundingburra suggests.

Mr. Aikens: The 1942 restriction does not apply to houses built today.

Mr. MORRIS: I have taken five minutes of my time to reply to the hon. member. That is more than he is worth. I shall now proceed with my speech.

There are many instances of the general opposition of the Government to the encouragement of building societies. That being so, I ask why the Bill has been introduced. I think I have given the answer, that some members of the Government Party favour building societies. Fortunately the Attorney-General is one of them, and I commend him. I think the real reason for the introduction of the Bill was given by the Minister. He said he had been constantly pressed by the hon. members for Bremer, Somerset and Ipswich to introduce it.

In doing so I think they have given a good service to the people because in a restricted way they have permitted the extension of building societies. In that way, it becomes obvious that there are certain people in Ipswich who, having been closely associated with these building societies, prefer it to State landlordism and all it implies. Good luck to them, but there are many people outside Ipswich and the Bremer electorate who are anxious to see an extension of building societies. There are many people particularly, as a result of recent legislation, anxiously awaiting the development of more building societies of a co-operative and non-profit making nature. I repeat that they are the ones I am very keen to see established. I cannot but agree with what the Leader of the Opposition said, that this Bill is too late.

Mr. Power: Don't get into the same mess as he got into, because I have an effective reply to him.

Mr. MORRIS: I am telling my story and I want the Attorney-General to know that I think the Leader of the Opposition was absolutely right when he said the Bill was too late. The operations of the Act expired ten months ago and building societies have been trying to operate under an illusion ever since. Incidentally, the Attorney-General said he was waiting for the outcome of the housing talks between the Commonwealth and the States before deciding on the introduction of this Bill. If that is his alibi it shows that the Leader of the Opposition was right when he said the Bill was too late. It is too restricted and I give my reasons for saying that. Permanent non-profit making societies as well as terminating societies should have been brought within the ambit of this Bill in regard to borrowing limits. It is stupid to argue as the Attorney-General has done that such organisations have not asked for such a privilege. The Attorney-General is not here only to legislate for those

people who ask for legislation, he is here to legislate for the good of all the people. Because a section associated with building societies asks for an improvement in the law and others do not, surely he is not carrying out his duty thoroughly if he legislates only for those who ask. Why not include the lot within the ambit of this Bill? I do not think he has selected the most advantageous provisions from both the English and the New South Wales Acts. He suggested to us a week or so ago that he had. I have an extract from "Hansard" of the earlier debate when the Attorney-General said that in England, in New South Wales, and in other places, the upward limit on borrowing powers gave an alternative to the three years' income. Those alternatives varied between countries, but in England the alternative was two-thirds of the amount for the time being secured to the society by mortgages from its members. He said that in New South Wales the alternative was four-fifths of the amount secured to the society by mortgages from its members. He went on to say that New South Wales differed from England in that the English Acts required the society to adopt either of the alternatives for the whole of its active lifetime, whereas in New South Wales the society may adopt both and use whichever allowed of greater borrowing at any given time. According to the Attorney-General the New South Wales societies are able to operate on a four-fifths basis. The Bill restricts societies in Queensland, in fact, to two-thirds. The Attorney-General is really selecting the less advantageous and the less beneficial provisions of the New South Wales Act. He has been under-generous rather than over-generous.

Mr. Power: What you have said is as clear as mud.

Mr. MORRIS: That is characteristic of the Attorney-General. He can understand only what his officers put before him in black and white. The time may come when he will be able to understand a logical argument, although he is probably a "little over the edge" for a change of heart. He is discriminating against the people of Queensland. I ask him whether that is quite clear.

Mr. Power: It is pure rubbish.

Mr. MORRIS: He is giving a facility to certain people in the Ipswich district—I am glad of that—but he is withholding it from people elsewhere. He is not giving satisfactory facilities for any new co-operative non-profit building societies that may be formed. He is discriminating against some people simply because, as he says, he has not been asked for the facility by anyone other than those in the Ipswich building societies.

Mr. Power: That is pure rubbish, too.

Mr. MORRIS: The Attorney-General may think so.

The Bill has the foundation of something worth while; it will do a limited amount of good. However, with some amendments it

it could do a tremendous amount of good. I hope, therefore, that the Attorney-General will be willing to consider some amendments at a later stage. They would improve the Bill considerably.

Hon. W. POWER (Baroona—Attorney-General) (11.32 a.m.): At this stage I want to put the Opposition on the right track. They are making statements that are entirely incorrect. I have not heard for years such stupid and incorrect statements as those of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

To deal with the speakers in their order, the Leader of the Opposition said—

“I have no objection to this legislation. My only regret is that it was not introduced years ago when it was first suggested by members of the Opposition that building societies in this State should be given greater opportunities.”

That statement shows that the hon. gentleman is unaware of what the Bill contains. It deals with terminating societies, which were granted certain borrowing powers by Act of Parliament many years ago.

Mr. Morris: We knew that.

Mr. POWER: The Leader of the Opposition obviously did not know it.

Mr. Morris: Of course he did. You are completely misconstruing what he said.

Mr. POWER: I am pointing out what he said in “Hansard.”

Mr. Morris: You are misconstruing it.

Mr. POWER: I am not. Those are not my methods.

Hon. members opposite obviously do not understand the Bill. They talk about it without knowing what it means. They should spend more time studying it and acquainting themselves with what it means, instead of making useless, incorrect and misleading speeches. The Leader of the Opposition said it was a pity this legislation was not introduced years ago, but terminating societies were granted certain borrowing powers by Act of Parliament many years ago, as I have already said. Those borrowing powers were granted for a limited period only. The first period expired in 1943 and the borrowing powers were then renewed until 1952. They were further extended to 31 December, 1955. There was no criticism then. The Bill now before hon. members extends the borrowing powers until 31 December, 1960. It is therefore quite absurd to say that it should have been brought down years ago as suggested by the Opposition. It would have been better if hon. members opposite had read the Bill and made themselves au fait with it.

Mr. Morris: It had not been printed.

Mr. POWER: I gave the hon. gentleman a copy of the Bill.

Mr. Morris: Not to me.

Mr. POWER: I gave it to his Leader.

Mr. Morris: You did not give it to me.

Mr. POWER: The Leader of the Opposition is much more co-operative than the hon. member for Coot-tha.

Mr. Morris: You would not expect him to hand it to all of us.

Mr. POWER: No. That is his business. I think the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha at least should have consulted him before making his stupid speech today. Had he consulted him he would not have made it.

Mr. Munro: Can we be clear on this—when you hand a copy of a Bill to the Leader of the Opposition, is he authorised to hand it to every member?

Mr. POWER: No, nothing of the kind. You cannot put that onto me. If hon. members opposite consulted him as Government members consult with their leader on all legislation brought forward, and made themselves aware of it before rising to speak, it would save much time in this Chamber, give the “Hansard” staff less work, save stationery and spare me some effort. My efforts are wasted on certain members of the Opposition. They oppose anything the Government bring forward.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition made the same mistake that his leader made about the introduction of the Bill. He said, too, that we should have brought it in years ago. I replied to him, therefore, when I answered his leader. Apparently he has just wakened up.

He made the further stupid statement that the Government are opposed to co-operatives. I have with me the Australian Labour Party's Constitution and General Rules printed in 1953.

Mr. Aikens: Is that the hammer and sickle on the front?

Mr. POWER: There is no hammer and sickle on this. The hon. member for Mundingburra would have more knowledge of the hammer and sickle than I because he associates with those people from time to time. He would climb onto any platform if he could gain some political benefit from it. Half the time he is in the Chamber he is over consulting with members of the Opposition. He is just a stooge for the Opposition the same as he is for other political parties.

As to the charge that we are opposed to co-operatives, I point out that on page 84 of the Queensland State Labour platform this appears—

“The organisation and establishment of co-operative activities, to which the workers and other producers shall be trained in the management, responsibility and control of industry.”

Hon. members opposite have no knowledge of Labour's policy but they have the temerity to say we oppose co-operatives. They only

engage in destructive criticism. We do not prevent co-operative societies from being established. Anybody can establish one if he so desires.

Mr. Morris: Why did you not extend the four-fifths privilege to them?

Mr. POWER: Because any co-operative building society would have to come under the Co-operatives Act. The hon. member is talking about another Act of Parliament altogether which I do not administer. It would be a good idea if he read it some time. Give me half an hour and I will educate him a little. If he had read the Co-operatives Act he would not have made such statements.

Mr. Aikens: You give me half an hour and I will educate you.

Mr. POWER: The hon. member for Mundingburra could not educate himself. The building societies I want to see established are those that will build homes. I am not greatly interested in the societies that are to be established merely for the purpose of making money available for a person to buy a house. That will not give us one more home.

Mr. Nicklin: There would be some advantage. There would be one more homeowner.

Mr. POWER: Yes, and another fellow would be getting an ejection order. He would be going out to Victoria Park, Gregory Terrace, Kalinga, or some other area of temporary accommodation. The Secretary for Public Works, Housing and Immigration will not be able to build the same number of houses this year because of the action of the Commonwealth Government in reducing the allocation for home-building. In addition, 20 per cent. of the allocation must go to building societies. Had the Commonwealth Government made the total allocation to the Government and a further sum available to building societies for building homes, more money would have been available. I do not often agree with the hon. member for Mundingburra but he has exposed some of the abominable things done by the Commonwealth Government in respect of money allocations. What has happened now? There has been an increase in the interest rate.

Mr. Sparkes interjected.

Mr. POWER: The hon. member for Aubigny has just come into the Chamber. All he thinks about is the price of his bullocks.

Many people talk about establishing building societies. Real estate agents are concerned about establishing them. But what will be the position? What guarantee have we that they will build homes? They may use the money only to buy new homes already built. If that sort of building

society is to be established to operate on the $\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. basis, they will get a decent return from commissions for selling houses built by spec builders. I am interested in building societies that are prepared to build homes for the people.

Let us look at the other building societies. The Brisbane Permanent Building Society has done an excellent job but it does not come under this Act. It comes under the Companies Acts. There are three other important building societies operating in Townsville, on the Darling Downs and in Ipswich. These three societies each have large capital and they are permitted to borrow three times the amount of the existing paid-up capital and subscription and the accumulation thereon. The capital of the two Toowoomba societies exceeds £2,500,000. These three societies have not reached the limit of their borrowing powers under the Act and therefore there is no question that borrowing power for them should be extended. Hon. members opposite do not take time to study the legislation. If they did there would be no necessity for these explanations. All that we are doing is extending something of which the Opposition have approved on more occasions than one, yet we are now told by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that we should have done it years ago.

Mr. ROBERTS (Whitsunday) (11.47 a.m.): It appears to me that the Bill deals with the conditions under which terminating societies may borrow money. In defining a terminating society in the Act it states—

“It is a society which by its rules is to terminate at a fixed date or when a certain event or result specified in its rules happens or arrives.”

I refer to the Cairns Starr Bowkett Building and Investment Society, which comes under the definition of terminating society, although the society in itself is not terminating. It originated in 1907. Various groups in this society terminate. From memory, Groups 1, 2, 3 and 4 and maybe 5 have already terminated and others will from time to time. For the benefit of hon. members who may not know, a group of the Cairns Society consists of 8,000 £50 shares. The people pay for them at the rate of 6d. per share per week, which would mean that anybody desiring £2,000 worth would be making a contribution of £1 per week. As soon as the total of these shares have been sold the payments are made at the rate of 6d. per share per week. As soon as the first £2,000 has been collected, normally in 10 weeks, a ballot is held, and they allocate £2,000 to a marble which would mean that there are 200 marbles in the original ballot. The person or persons in this marble would receive £2,000 free of interest over 15 years. Their repayments would be at the rate of 2s. 6d. per £100 per week, which would be 25s. per £1,000 or £2 10s. for the £2,000. They are

already contributing £1 per week subscription which would mean that they are repaying the loan at the rate of £3 10s. per week. By allowing the subscription to go on with the repayment instead of taking 15 years the loan is usually liquidated in about 10 to 11 years.

When the second £2,000 is collected, in another 10 weeks, it is sold, as they term it, by auction. It is really not an auction, because the price is pegged, and the present limit is £16 for £50, or £320 for £1,000. On my calculation, that is between 2½ per cent. and 3 per cent. over the period. As soon as the third £2,000 is collected, a ballot for it is held. The fourth £2,000 is auctioned and alternatively auctions and ballots are held for a succeeding £2,000. Once a shareholder has won a ballot or purchased his money at auction, that marble is eliminated, so that the marble of every person must be drawn at some time.

This organisation has been in operation since 1907. It is a purely co-operative organisation, the only people who get anything out of it being those who put something into it.

Mr. Aikens: How do they get the cost of administration?

Mr. ROBERTS: From the auctions. I mentioned the figure £320 for £1,000. That is the equivalent of 2½ to 3 per cent. interest, and it goes to the credit of the particular group. When there are many groups—I think there are 25 at the present time—the cost of management is shared by the groups and it works out at a very small amount for each group.

I am not too sure of the amount handled by this organisation, but it is near the £1,000,000 mark. There are seven directors. There is no such thing as a rake-off for the directors, as they share only about £150 a year. I should say it would be the most cheaply-run organisation of which I have heard. It is doing more to get people into homes than any other organisation.

Mr. Aikens: It is regarded very highly in many parts of the North.

Mr. ROBERTS: That is so.

The Queensland Housing Commission and many other building societies, good as they are, are not dealing at all with the owner-builder. We were told during another debate that it is virtually impossible to get the services of a builder. This society helps people who are capable of building a home. I mention the case of a railway bridge carpenter. He had been married for 20 to 30 years and had never been able to get his own home. He purchased £1,000 from the Cairns Starr Bowkett Society at a cost of £320. Over the period he will pay £1,320. With the assistance of his son, an apprentice cabinet maker, he built a very nice home that I should say would be worth £2,500. It cost him £1,000.

I want to touch very briefly on another matter. I ask the Minister to allow an organisation such as this to invest portion of its money in bonds of such instrumentalities as the Queensland Regional Electricity Boards or the State Electricity Commission. I should like to go into this in more detail, but I know hon. members want to get to the first reading stage so that they will have a copy of the Bill. I may have an opportunity later to comment further. If not, I shall discuss the matter personally with the Minister in the hope that some provision of this nature can be included in the Act later.

Motion (Mr. Power) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING.

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

SUPPLY.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE—ESTIMATES—SIXTEENTH ALLOTTED DAY.

(The Chairman of Committees, Mr. Clark, Fitzroy, in the chair.)

ESTIMATES-IN-CHIEF, 1956-1957.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, HOUSING AND IMMIGRATION.

CHIEF OFFICE.

Hon. C. G. McCATHIE (Haughton—Secretary for Public Works, Housing and Immigration) (11.58 a.m.): I move—

“That £146,099 be granted for ‘Department of Public Works, Housing and Immigration—Chief Office’.”

In moving this motion I think it appropriate to review the work of the Department for the past year. With this review and the report of the department which has been in the hands of hon. members for some weeks, I think that they will be able to debate these Estimates quite competently. The department is responsible for the construction of new public buildings and additions and improvements to existing buildings, as provided in the approved programme of Loan works. The department is also responsible for the maintenance of existing Government buildings. We are fully conscious that such buildings are State assets and to the best of our ability we do not allow them to deteriorate in any way but maintain them. If there is any lack in that regard on our part it is only because of the shortage of finance.

Public buildings include State primary schools, State high schools and technical colleges, Government hospitals, maternity hospitals, court houses, police stations and administrative buildings generally throughout the State. The total amount expended by the department during the year was £4,298,800 compared with £3,865,580 in the previous financial year.

Dissection of the expenditure shows—

	£	£
1. Public buildings—		
Schools	2,098,842	
Other buildings ..	1,463,336	
Total (buildings) ..		3,562,178
2. Services to public buildings ..		295,668
3. Salaries and general administration ..		440,954
Grand Total		£4,298,800

Expenditure on buildings was an all-time high, and is a measure of the heavy programme of building construction carried out during the year. Persons with experience of building construction will realise readily that such a large programme of building spread throughout the State required a high degree of organisation and management.

Whilst we realise that conditions in the building trade have eased to a great extent compared with the immediate post-war years, nevertheless there are still many difficulties in marshalling materials and getting enough skilled labour to carry out the various work. Excessive wet weather during portion of the year delayed logging operations, and at times created difficulties in supplies of timber. In many districts, particularly those remote from the larger centres of population, shortages of skilled labour militated against the expeditious carrying out of work.

The capital works carried out from Loan Funds require prior preparation of plans by the Architectural Branch of the department. The shortage of professional men, including architects and quantity surveyors, still exists, while the volume of work demanding their attention has increased to a great degree. Hon. members generally, in their keenness to look after the needs of their electorates, are always ready to suggest improvements, as they should, but those suggestions mean additional work for the architectural staff. Standard plans have been utilised as far as possible, particularly for school buildings, but each project requires a certain measure of specific planning. The services of architects in private practice have been co-opted, particularly for the preparation of working plans. Similarly, the services of quantity surveyors in private practice have been availed of. Without this help, much of the approved work could not have been carried out.

Dealing with educational establishments throughout the State, it will be noted from the figures I have quoted that of the total expenditure on buildings of £3,562,178, the amount expended on State educational establishments was £2,098,842. This represented 58.9 per cent. of the total expenditure on buildings. The relative percentage in the previous year was 52.7.

The rapid development of the State, with its concomitant increase in population, brought in its train a heavy increase yearly in school enrolments. It has been necessary to erect numbers of new State schools and to provide additional classrooms at many schools throughout the State. In recent years

there has also been a great demand for accommodation for State high school purposes and this demand is continuing at a high level. The greatest importance has been attached to the provision of adequate accommodation at both State primary and State high schools throughout the State.

The numbers of additional classrooms provided at State primary and high schools during the year 1955-1956 were—

Primary	298
High	71
Total	369

The net increase in enrolment at State primary schools during the year is estimated by the Department of Public Instruction at 8,750. The accommodation in the 298 classrooms built, taken on an average of 40 pupils in each, makes provision for 11,920 pupils.

During the past six years, the net increase in enrolments at State primary schools has been estimated at 39,140 and 1,298 new classrooms have been built providing accommodation for no fewer than 51,920 pupils. Obviously any lag that may have existed some years ago has been overtaken, and it would seem now that the need for a number of additional classrooms at primary schools in the past few years was brought about by the increase in the output from the Teachers' Training College, the decrease in the size of classes, and the need for a separate classroom for each teacher. In other words, the Department of Public Instruction is coming nearer the ideal number of pupils in each class and trying to build more primary and secondary schools as rapidly as possible.

In the framing of the approved programme of works each year, it has been a matter of some difficulty to estimate the probable requirements of the Department of Public Instruction for its new school buildings, and additional accommodation at existing schools.

Amounts voted for school buildings during the year 1955-1956 totalled £1,876,062. Actual expenditure on school buildings in that year was £2,098,842, or 11.9 per cent more than the amounts voted. During the past three years amounts spent on school buildings in excess of amounts voted totalled £818,871. The extra sum could be provided only by reducing expenditure on the capital projects of other departments. It has been the policy with new school buildings and additional classrooms to provide not only basic accommodation of a high standard, but also reasonable amenities, such as staff rooms, medical service rooms, libraries, concrete floors under buildings and so on. We think the first requirement is to give teachers and pupils the best possible standard of classrooms and other accommodation and Government policy is directed to that end.

With continuing increases in costs and reduction in the loan funds available for the financial year 1956-1957, it may not be

possible to provide amenities on the same scale as hitherto, but the provision of basic classroom accommodation of a high standard will be maintained.

The Government have provided all necessary accommodation to meet educational requirements; it cannot be said that any child has been denied education for want of accommodation. In this respect Queensland has been much more fortunate than some of the other States in Australia and places overseas. It will not be out of place to refer to a news item that appeared in "The Courier-Mail" on 8 February this year, which read—

"Melbourne—At least 2,000 children could not be enrolled when Melbourne schools reopened yesterday. Some will attend on alternate days until extensions can be completed to suburban schools."

While priority has rightly been given to building requirements of education throughout the State, provision has also been made to meet the urgent requirements of other Government departments, particularly for Government hospitals, maternity hospitals and public buildings generally.

Some little time ago prominence was given to deficiencies in accommodation at mental hospitals in various parts of Australia. For years progressive action has been taken in this State to meet those needs; including action for the progressive development of a new mental hospital at Charters Towers and for the building of extensive new accommodation at the Brisbane Mental Hospital. In both these centres new brick buildings are being built, and the value of the various works authorised and under construction exceeds £1,000,000. New buildings are also being constructed at other mental hospitals. Approved works recently completed or still under construction at maternity hospitals exceed in value £300,000. Many other projects of an extensive nature are under consideration.

Because of the tropical and sub-tropical conditions prevailing in Queensland, the department has pursued a policy of connecting its public buildings, particularly schools, to sewerage where town sewerage systems are in operation, and in other cases, the installation of septic systems where water supply is available, and the absorptive capacity of soil is satisfactory. A total of 56 installations were in course of construction during the past year and 13 others had been authorised. Any delay has been due to the limited finance this financial year.

Government policy is to carry out the various works by day labour, a policy which has been followed effectively for a number of years.

The number of building workers employed by the department on day labour at 30 June last was 2,030. Many of these men have been employed in remote localities carrying out works in rotation, involving absence from their home towns for extended periods.

Were it not for the public spirit of these men, there would have been long delays in having many works carried out. I commend the workers who have been prepared to go into remote areas in the service of the State.

In certain districts where the day labour resources of the department were insufficient to allow works to be carried out expeditiously, use has been made of the contract system. I interjected the other day that we were pursuing that policy to enable the department to complete its commitment towards school buildings. It has been difficult in a number of cases to obtain satisfactory tenders in outside districts. Where we could not obtain tenders we endeavoured to do the work by day labour.

The training of apprentices in the various branches of the building trades has at all times received close attention. The department has pursued a policy of indenturing and training the maximum number of apprentices in each branch of the trade. The number of apprentices indentured or allotted at 30 June, 1956, was 348, compared with 294 in June, 1955.

I wish to comment on the general financial position from the point of view of the Department of Public Works. As already indicated, total expenditure inclusive of administration was £4,298,800. This sum was £433,219 in excess of the sum expended during the preceding financial year. Of the total expenditure, £921,433 was provided from Consolidated Revenue, £3,161,175 from Loan Fund, £67,458 from Trust Fund and £148,734 by other departments.

Building expenditure totalled £3,562,178, made up as follows:—

	£
Loan Funds	2,845,739
Consolidated Revenue	533,282
Trust Fund	67,458
Other departments	115,699

Building expenditure from Loan Funds exceeded by £221,016 or 8.4 per cent. the amount of £2,624,723 expended in the financial year 1954-1955 from Loan Fund.

The amount of £533,282 expended on the maintenance of Government buildings exceeded by £72,608 the amount so expended in the preceding financial year.

Expenditure from Consolidated Revenue for services to Government buildings in the financial year 1955-1956 totalled £262,633, or £17,143 in excess of the amount so expended in the previous financial year. It will be noted that the total amount appropriated under Chief Office for the financial year 1956-1957, namely, £146,099, is £15,058 in excess of the amount of £131,041 appropriated for the financial year 1955-1956. As a further sum of £4,200 was provided for 1955-1956 in the Supplementary Estimates, there is a net increase in the appropriation now requested of £10,858.

This increase is accounted for by the fact that additional provision has been made to meet increases in salaries granted to permanent and temporary officers by the Industrial Court, and to meet higher costs of general items of Contingency expenditure.

As there is only a limited time, I shall limit my remarks. I wish to pay a tribute to the services of my Under Secretary, Mr. Lyons, and his staff of very enthusiastic officers who have helped me immensely in my administration of the department. Without their help and guidance I would not have been able to handle the department. I also place on record my appreciation of what has been done for me by the staff officers. I express sympathy with Mr. East, the manager of the Construction Branch, and Mr. Way, the chief architect, for their period of illness during the year. I hope that they will soon be recovered completely and be able to carry on with their excellent work for the department. I pay a special tribute to Mr. Richardson, the Valuer-General, who has administered a most difficult department capably and fairly. The department has not brought particular kudos to the Government, but Mr. Richardson has been scrupulously fair in his administration and most helpful. I also pay a tribute to Mr. Longland, the State Migration Officer, who has handled that section of the department very capably. I express my appreciation to my Leader, who agreed to a request by me that I should take the Department of Migration with me when I went to the Department of Public Works and Housing.

Rt. Hon. F. M. FORDE (Flinders) (12.17 p.m.): At the outset I congratulate the Minister on his administration of the department. I also congratulate the Under Secretary and the professional staff. A special word of praise is due to Mr. David Longland, who is in charge of immigration. He is a man who has a great deal of knowledge of the subject and he is guided by the highest motives in encouraging the right type of migrant to come to Queensland in accordance with the Queensland Labour Government's policy. The Minister controlled this section when he was Secretary for Mines, and I was glad that the Premier allowed him to continue to administer it. Anyone who travels over Queensland is impressed with the tremendous importance of the Department of Public Works. After being abroad for some years I returned to Queensland three years ago and during my travels over the State since then I have been amazed at the number of large administrative buildings, additional hospitals, high schools and many new primary schools that were constructed in the immediate post-war years.

It was extremely difficult to get trained personnel at that time. There was great competition for architects, engineers, carpenters, and other tradesmen. Private enterprise offered fantastic wages in some cases in order to encourage these men to leave Government

departments. To the credit of many professional men and tradesmen in the department, who felt they were doing their duty for the State, they refused to be tempted by these offers. The increased emoluments offered in many instances would have proved temporary or spasmodic. Those men would have lost the continuity of employment and security that they have in the Public Service.

The Minister has given a very clear and lucid explanation of the ramifications of this very important department. The Estimates cover Chief Office, Services—Public Buildings, Buildings, Valuer-General and Immigration. The Vote is £1,270,517, an increase of £178,271 over the amount expended last year. In respect of Buildings the amount required for salaries is £205,916, for Contingencies £2,759,084, a total of £2,965,000 including £1,124,500 for State School Buildings and £450,000 for Technical Colleges, State High and Post Primary Schools, which in the aggregate is approximately £212,000 less than the amount spent last financial year. Of sheer necessity there must be a reduction as the Government have been unable to get the required Loan money for developmental work in this State. Hon. members on both sides of the Chamber will very much regret the fact that the Government have been unable to get from the Commonwealth Government the funds they require.

The policy of the department has been related to the bold developmental policy of the Government on water conservation, irrigation and hydro-electric schemes. We have examples of over bold development works in the Burdekin and Mareeba-Dimbulah schemes and the Tully Falls hydro-electric scheme. There are many others that I could not deal with in detail.

The amount to be credited to the Queensland Housing Commission is £1,654,000. Under the Chief Office Vote, provision has been made for 14 engineers, as well as the Chief Engineer and Assistant Chief Engineer. I am sure hon. members were gratified to hear the statement of the Minister yesterday that £2,250,000 will be spent on housing this year. I will not be allowed to discuss that at the moment.

It was said by a great social reformer that, "The strength of a nation is in the intelligent and well-ordered homes of the people." By providing additional educational facilities the children of the great mass of workers and middle-class people of this State can be given a higher standard of education.

The expenditure by the department during the last five years on public buildings has been over £11,000,000. The expenditure on buildings in 1955-1956 was £3,562,000 or £359,000 more than the previous year. The Minister's statement as to what is being done by the expenditure of public money on State schools was interesting. When we examine the expenditure of £3,562,000 we

find that £2,098,000 was spent on State schools, high schools, technical colleges and other educational establishments. That represents 58.9 per cent. of the expenditure on buildings and disposes for all time the spurious propaganda indulged in by hon. members opposite that the Government have given niggardly treatment to the Department of Public Instruction which they regard as the Cinderella department. The Government were justified in giving this high priority to educational establishments and they provided for 369 additional classrooms in addition to 11 new primary schools in the last financial year. That is as it should be.

Representing a northern electorate I am delighted to find that the Government have spent much money on new hospitals in the North. Expenditure has been well spread right throughout Queensland. We cannot implement a free hospitalisation policy if we do not provide the necessary buildings and beds for patients. The Government have been generous in their treatment of the claims of Hughenden. They have also recognised the claims of the North-west. They were good enough to approve of the erection and furnishing of an up-to-date hospital at Hughenden at a cost of £286,000. In addition they modernised and enlarged the Richmond hospital and renovated and improved the Julia Creek hospital with additions for out-patients. The work done in Charters Towers is really outstanding and no doubt the hon. member for that electorate has had a good deal to do with it. The Government erected a new mental hospital equipped with a water supply and sewerage system at a cost of £702,885. Previously many mentally sick people in the North had to be sent South. Sometimes they were in such a condition that it was not easy for them to travel. It was very worrying for the sick people and to their relatives to take them to a mental hospital in the South. The mental hospital at Charters Towers will be a great boon to the people of North Queensland. The establishment of a farm colony, new wards, a dining and recreation block at the Goodna Mental Hospital will cost nearly £318,000. People today are taking a greater interest in mental illness than ever before.

In Canada and the United States of America—and this applies to most other countries in the world—the incidence of mental illness is growing rapidly. In Canada 50,000 beds are available in general hospitals, and the same number in mental hospitals. Although the Queensland Government have not been able to do all that is necessary for mental patients, they have done a great deal within their financial limits. Dr. Stoller, the eminent specialist who was brought out to Australia some years ago by the Victorian Government and who was asked by the Federal Government to visit the various States and report upon mental institutions, was very fair and just in his

commendation of what was being done for the mentally ill in Queensland. In comparison with the other States, Dr. Stoller's comments on Queensland were very favourable.

In the annual report of the department, I notice that new residences have been provided for important public servants at country centres throughout Queensland. That is an excellent idea. At Richmond the Government spent £4,330 in erecting a new residence for the local married constable. More of that will have to be done. Frequently Government officials are transferred to country centres and cannot get accommodation for their families. The married constable at Hughenden is now in need of a house, as the one he was occupying has been sold. Of course, the Government cannot meet all the demands for the housing of public servants in country areas, because loan moneys provided by the Federal Government are limited.

If hon. members will look at page 23 of the report of the Department of Public Works they will see reference to the following buildings provided for public servants in country areas—

Place.	Particulars.	Estimated Cost.
		£
Alpha ..	Residence for Stock Inspector	3,590
Goondiwindi	Purchase of residence for C.P.S.	3,750
Dalby ..	Purchase of residence for Stipendiary Magistrate	3,750
Innisfail ..	Purchase of residence for Industrial Inspector	3,300
Longreach ..	Residence for Stipendiary Magistrate	4,085
Mitchell ..	Residence for C.P.S. ..	3,244
Mossman ..	Residence for C.P.S. ..	3,550
Mt. Isa ..	Two residences for Inspectors of Mines	9,857
Mundubbera	Purchase of residence for Stock Inspector	2,400
Murgon ..	Purchase of residence for Stock Inspector	2,250
Quilpie ..	Purchase of residence for Stock Inspector	2,750
St. George ..	Purchase of residence for C.P.S.	3,000
Taroom ..	Purchase of residence for Land Ranger	2,250
Mourilyan Harbour	Residence for Caretaker ..	3,500

The total expenditure on residences in country centres is estimated at more than £50,000.

It is essential that housing accommodation be provided for public servants in country centres. Very often they cannot get suitable accommodation for their families. Recently, because the Regional Director of Education could not get accommodation for himself and his family in Hughenden, he had to live in a hotel. Consequently, the department transferred him to Longreach, where he could get a house. I have brought to the notice of the Minister that a house at Hughenden is nearing completion and that the owner is prepared to sell it to the Government for occupation by the Regional Director of Education or some other public servant. These men are entitled to decent

accommodation at a reasonable rental, just the same as Railway men on transfer to Hughenden and other centres.

We frequently hear criticism by hon. members opposite of the policy of day-labour. It was gratifying to hear the Minister speak favourably of the accomplishments of his department under day labour. The Under Secretary says at page 6 of his report—

“The day-labour system has had particular value to the Department. In many cases, buildings were urgently required for school accommodation. Working to standard plans, such accommodation has been provided by day labour in much less time than would have been necessary for the calling of tenders and carrying out works by contract.”

That disposes of the argument that day labour is costly and otherwise undesirable.

Time will not permit me to deal with all the sub-departments but I want to speak on immigration. We are asked to vote it the modest sum of £71,817, covering the cost of the migration officer and his staff, and the hostel staff that provides accommodation for migrants on arrival.

Mr. Pizzey: You opposed immigration before the war.

Mr. FORDE: We did not. The hon. member does not know anything about it. Both the Federal Labour Party and the State Labour Party have a very sane and reasonable policy on it. The hon. member's interjection is not based on fact.

I congratulate the Minister and his migration officer on their splendid work. The Chifley Labour Government laid down a bold constructive policy on immigration, which brought about an increase of 1,000,000 in Australia's population in the last 10 years in new arrivals alone apart from natural increase. Basically, the present system is the same as that introduced by the Chifley Government and administered by Mr. Arthur Calwell, who was Federal Minister for Immigration for some years, in the Chifley government.

Australia is essentially a country for migrants. Our first settlers were migrants, mainly from the United Kingdom, and our present population are their descendants, supplemented by an irregular intake of migrants from the United Kingdom and other European countries. Australia must populate or perish and, with her sparse population, averaging three persons to a square mile, she must continue to take an active interest in immigration. We learn from the United Nations, and others who should know, that two-thirds of the world's population are underfed. 1,200,000,000 people, half the population of the world, live between the north of Australia and the north of China. The world's population is increasing at the rate of 30,000,000 a year. Under present condi-

tions millions of them are doomed to die of starvation. If we do not populate our land we will be guilty of grave neglect. If we are to hold Australia and enjoy the amenities of the Twentieth century and build up a society with a high standard of living for all, we must be strong enough to defend ourselves. Furthermore, we need an ever-increasing number of workers to exploit our natural resources and to share our privileges and responsibilities.

The population figures for Queensland, compared with those of Australia, show that without doubt we have received our share of migrants. In 1910 we had 493,847 people, or 13 per cent. of the Commonwealth total of 3,765,339. In 1955 we had 1,350,684 people, or 14.7 per cent. of the Commonwealth total of 9,313,291.

Assuming the natural increase to be consistent throughout the Commonwealth we have quite definitely improved our position by migration in comparison with the rest of the Commonwealth. That should answer those who claim that Queensland is either losing migrants or failing to attract them. The State Minister and his office are charged with a great responsibility in implementing the Queensland Labour Government's very sound immigration policy. The State Migration Office handles nominations and the reception and after-care of British migrants. It has built up a comprehensive service of guidance and advice to new settlers which has contributed considerably to the splendid figure of 97 per cent. of settlement among British migrants in Queensland. Advice is available to the newcomers on all phases of settlement, including house purchase, business investment and land settlement. The Government have appointed linguists to assist the new Australians who come to the southern parts of Australia and afterwards move up to Queensland.

The State Migration Office has also encouraged migrants who are themselves happily settled to lodge personal nominations in favour of their friends and relatives. This policy has succeeded, and today nearly 70 per cent. of the new arrivals are so nominated. It will be readily realised that this snowballing effect places British migration on a much sounder basis than it has been for many years. It is a permanent process that can continue indefinitely and is much better than the impulsive migration that comes in spurts when people become unsettled by a war. It is very pleasing to record that 30,000 British migrants have come to Queensland since the inception of the present scheme in 1947. Most of them have settled happily and it can be expected that a steady flow of nominations will continue. That will be to the advantage of Queensland and the whole of Australia. I was glad to see that Sir Arthur Fadden said in the course of his speech on the Federal Budget that migration would continue to the extent of 1 per cent. of the population of Australia.

(Time expired.)

Mr. DEWAR (Chermside) (12.43 p.m.): I congratulate the Minister on his appointment. I can speak gratefully of his sympathetic approach. I have made representations for the installation of a septic system at the Nundah Infants' School. A few days ago I was advised that the work had been approved. I approached the Minister two or three months ago, and stressed the urgency of it, and he had the matter investigated, and the work has now been approved. I commend him for his sympathetic outlook which I am sure will mark his whole administration. His department plays an important part in the community life of the State. It embraces court buildings, hospitals, schools and such like.

However, it is high time that consideration was given to an allocation to the Department of Public Instruction Vote for school buildings. I cannot approve of the position that arises every year when the Department of Public Instruction approves the construction of buildings and the Department of Public Works does not carry them out. If the Department of Public Instruction had a building fund it could use the Department of Public Works as its constructing authority and, in an emergency, it could call tenders. It is obvious that the growth of population is creating more demands on the services of the Department of Public Works for hospitals, court buildings, schools, etc.

Mr. McCathie: Your suggestion would only increase the difficulties.

Mr. DEWAR: I have a letter that shows that the Department of Public Instruction approved of concreting underneath the Nundah infants' school and repairs to the leaking roof some months ago, but as far as I know, it has only attended to the leaking roof. It is common sense that the department concerned should be the one to decide whether certain work should be done.

Owing to the tremendous growth of population extra accommodation is needed at the Wavell Heights State school. The increase in population is very great in other electorates such as Sherwood, Mt. Gravatt and Kedron, and the provision of schooling facilities has become a greater problem. Early in the year the Department of Public Instruction and the Department of Public Works approved the building of six extra classrooms at the Wavell Heights school, and after the work was commenced two rooms were eliminated from the plan. Obviously the reason was the strained state of the finances. The approximate enrolment is 760, and 120 more will come in January and 34 will go out on scholarships, leaving a net increase of 86, which will make the total enrolment 846. The peak enrolment will not be reached for two or three years. The recent census taken in connection with poliomyelitis showed that there are approximately 500 children in the area between the ages of one and four years, so in two or three years' time there will be over 1,000 children attending the school. The

control of such a large school will be beyond the capacity of one head teacher. The Department of Public Instruction naturally has a better knowledge of its requirements than the Department of Public Works. The Department of Public Instruction is in a better position than the Department of Public Works to determine where new classrooms and schools are needed. The overall position would be improved if the Department of Public Instruction had control of the finance for the purpose, whether a separate constructing authority was set up or not.

As four rooms only are to be provided at the Wavell Heights school, instead of the six-room wing, the unsightly and unsavoury Army hut now used there will have to be retained.

The 3-ft. connecting veranda between the rooms is very unsatisfactory and causes great inconvenience to the children in the junior grades.

There will be two classes, three at the most, in the building next year. I make my annual plea to the department to convert the five rooms into two or three rooms by knocking down partitions so giving more decent conditions to the young children in their first year at school. They are cramped in the present small rooms. It would also mean decent conditions for the teachers.

I hope it will be possible next year to remove the Army hut.

I commend the decision to put a wooden floor over the concrete floor under the school. I hope it will not be long before a wooden floor is put over the concrete floor under the infants' school at Nundah.

I have suggested the building of a new school in the electorate of the hon. member for Nundah, on the easterly side of the railway line. That would ease the strain on the Nundah and Wavell Heights schools. Unless it is built, I warn the Government that conditions will be chaotic at the Nundah and Wavell Heights schools within the next three or four years.

Our future economy depends on education. The amount for school buildings should not be reduced while the Government are spending money on "Binna-Burra." During the debate on the Financial Statement the Treasurer said there will be very little expansion in Government services this year. He said, or suggested, that there is likely to be retrenchment of staff. That does not indicate the need for more office space. Education, and more adequate school accommodation, are of paramount importance.

I am thankful that after agitating for five years, the playshed and classrooms at the Chermside school have been demolished and that the attractive wing depicted in the annual report of the department was built. There is a library at the end of it, the wing has made a vast difference to the school. The seven schools in my electorate probably house and educate more State school children than any

other electorate. Four of the schools adjoin the boundaries of other electorates. There must be between 5,000 and 6,000 children attending State schools in my electorate. Nundah has an attendance of 2,000, Virginia up to 1,500, Kedron, Cherm-side and Wavell Heights approximately 700 to 800 each, Aspley and Bald Hills about 600 between them. Page 17 of the report shows that every school in the electorate has had additions made to it in the last 12 months, which is as it should be. It is not only because of my representations but because the needs of the district have made it necessary. The voting strength in the Cherm-side electorate increased from 12,000 six years ago to 18,000 today. People have moved into the electorate and so the educational needs of the area are heavy. No State school in the electorate has registered a drop in enrolment in the last six years; the increases have been fantastic.

There is a need for a realistic policy with regard to the growing electorates of Cherm-side, Inala, Sherwood, Kedron and Mt. Coot-tha where the Queensland Housing Commission have built hundreds of homes. It is essential that there should be a closer liaison between the Housing Commission and the Department of Public Instruction to see that schools are built in advance of housing projects and I cannot stress that point too much. It applies more forcibly to education than to other things. We do not have decentralisation of hospitals with the exception of a few private hospitals. There is a big general hospital at Bowen Bridge and another at South Brisbane. But there is a real problem with education, especially in providing adequate schooling facilities in decentralised areas in advance of the growth of housing projects and I emphasise that point.

I pay a tribute to the initiative of the Kedron State School Committee.

When they realised that the department would not agree to the style of library that they wanted for the school, they provided all the money and had it built the way they wanted it. The Department of Public Works painted it in three shades, and it is one of the best school libraries I have seen.

During the six years that I have been in Parliament—and particularly about the time of the recent State elections—there has been continuous criticism by the Queensland Government of the Federal Government for their alleged niggardly treatment of this State. There may be some justice in some of their claims at times but as they are crying wolf all the time the people have come to regard it as a popular catch-ery for political purposes. If the Government sifted the genuine arguments from the political propaganda, they might get somewhere with the Federal Government. For example a case could be put up for a special grant for education, included in which of course would be the provision of school

buildings. I do not criticise the Federal Government for financing works from revenue in times of plenty. I am not misled by the claim that posterity should pay for many of these things and that they should be built from loan funds. Posterity should not have to pay for the dreams of this generation. It will have its own dreams and what we consider right for the future may not coincide with the beliefs of future generations. I repeat, the policy of financing works from revenue is quite sound. In addition, by their method of budgeting, the Federal Government have been able to liquidate a considerable amount of the national debt, which was built up largely by the cost of two world wars. Surely nobody will criticise them for that.

Nothing is more important to the development of a country than education, and the Queensland Government could make a good case for grants from the Commonwealth Government's Consolidated Revenue Fund to further their education aims. As a matter of fact, each State could seek grants from the Federal Government for works of a national character.

I applaud the policy of successive Federal Governments of increasing Australia's population by immigration. There is no doubt that the country will not be able to develop properly until it has a larger population. I took part in a naturalisation ceremony for 62 New Australians a week or so ago and I saw from the cross-section of the immigrants and their varied vocations that nothing but good can flow from the Government's immigration policy. I pay tribute to the work of the immigration officer, Mr. David Longland, for his excellent work, his sympathy and his understanding. That can be said of all his officers. They are carrying out an extremely useful service, the benefits of which will be felt for many years to come.

The ever-increasing problem of building up new areas and preparing in advance for educational requirements demands a more realistic approach. As I said in the debate on the Estimates last year, it is all very well to prepare estimates of the works required but it is not good enough to start on them so late that they are not ready for use until about May. Such works as extensions to school buildings are required in January. I am happy to say that six out of seven extensions in my electorate have been completed. If that applies throughout the State and if it represents a new approach, it is a good thing.

Mr. DAVIES (Maryborough) (2.23 p.m.): The Minister, by his enthusiasm and ability, ably aided by his officers, has shown that he is a worthy successor to the hon. member for Carnarvon. I congratulate him and his officers on their excellent work. I am pleased that the hon. member for Isis recognises the Government's good work in looking after educational and building requirements generally.

I wish to have recorded in "Hansard" some figures from the report that speak for themselves so that the people of the State may know what is being done and see that the statements of members of the Opposition during the election campaign were lying propaganda.

In 1955-1956 the Government spent £3,562,178 on buildings, as follows:—

	£
State Schools, State High Schools and Technical Colleges and other Educational Establishments	2,098,842
Queensland University	41,708
Court Houses and Police Buildings	256,301
Government Hospitals and Mental Hospitals	297,598
Maternity Hospitals	60,814
Maternal and Child Welfare Centres	12,478
Aboriginal Establishments	85,038
Other Buildings	709,339

That expenditure would have been very seriously reduced if the Opposition Parties had been in power. What a remarkable programme, unequalled in any other State in Australia! A new mental hospital is under construction at Charters Towers at a cost of £703,000, and this despite the Commonwealth Government's niggardly allowance. In addition they have refused to pay pensions to people in mental hospitals. Other major projects under construction include—

	£
New public offices, Anzac Square, Brisbane	561,000
Farm colony, and other works, Brisbane Mental Hospital	336,000
Mental hospital, Ipswich—new ward accommodation, and other works	236,000
New workshop building, and other works, Central Technical College, Brisbane	112,000
New courthouse building, Bundaberg	108,000
Maternity hospital, Ayr	80,000
Bundaberg—additions Walkervale school	73,000
Maternity hospital, Gordonvale	38,000
Rebuilding the Gympie State High School	37,000
Additions—Maryborough West State School	34,000
New State High School, Camp Hill, Brisbane	31,000

This remarkable programme would have been even more extensive but for the Commonwealth Government. Despite the fact that the State has 22.5 per cent. of the area of the Commonwealth, 14.6 per cent. of the nation's population, and contributed approximately 20.2 per cent. of Australia's exports during 1954-1955, we received only 3.8 per cent. of all the moneys the Commonwealth received, an amount equivalent to 12 per cent. of the total made available to the States. If we had a Commonwealth Government who saw to it that Queensland received a fair share of available moneys we could proceed with a much bigger building programme in the interests of the State.

A total of £154,000,000 has been made available by the Commonwealth Grants Commission to South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania since 1938. Great criticism is hurled at the Queensland Government because the amount spent on education has not been equal to or greater than the amounts spent in other States. No doubt it is a little less than what has been spent in Victoria, but making a comparison between the total amounts spent on education, health, hospitals and charities, law, order, and public safety, Victoria has spent a total of 313s. 2d. per head and Queensland 327s. 1d. per head.

Hon. members opposite are clearly failing in their duty in not raising their voices in indignation and protest against the niggardly treatment received by this State. Yesterday morning the Premier exposed the whole business in relation to the floods in South Australia. He presented an unanswerable case of the victimisation the State is suffering at the hands of the Federal Government.

In reply to the hostile interjection by a member of the Opposition I am prepared to speak in defence of the great effort put forward by Walkers Ltd. to re-establish themselves as one of the country's leading engineering firms. They have received every assistance from the State Government. Despite the attack by the hon. member for Mundingburra when he spoke disparagingly of the workers in engineering works, the men at Walkers are equal to the best in the Commonwealth.

We have heard strong criticism about the poor accommodation provided in Brisbane for public servants. The hon. member for Chermide protested strongly against what the Government are doing with "Binna Burra" in George Street to provide additional accommodation for public servants and said the money should be spent elsewhere. How ridiculous was that statement. Another member of the Opposition condemned the Government for not providing sufficient accommodation in the city. Despite the lack of help from the Commonwealth the Government has improved accommodation requirements each year. This is most necessary as under the administration of this Labour Government this State, despite vindictive treatment by the Commonwealth Government, is more progressive than any other State. Take the case of Maryborough. Approximately £10,000 was paid for a building, and improvements have been carried out to provide adequate accommodation for public servants. The branches of the Department of Agriculture and Stock and the Valuer-General's Department are comfortably housed in the building. I make a plea to the responsible Minister that an inquiry be made in Maryborough for further land and buildings because with the growth of the town the time will come when it will not be possible to purchase more land close to the heart of the city. I believe

the Government has no more land, but very shortly a fine building will be available on an excellent block of land in the heart of the city. It could be purchased, and after additions were made adequate accommodation for public servants in the future would be assured.

The department has also provided four new State high schools and 42 additional classrooms at 18 existing State high schools, and a total of 71 classrooms were provided. All that has been carried out despite the big headlines in the Press and the statements by the Opposition during the election campaign that nothing had been done to improve educational facilities.

I wish to comment on the work done by men working in the Department of Public Works. I remind members of the Opposition that these men are working under far superior conditions to those that operated when the Opposition was in power in this State. The hon. member for Whitsunday would no doubt be the Minister to control the Industrial Court if his party were in power, and he would undoubtedly outclass the previous ringbarker in 1929-1932. During the election campaign some leading members of the Opposition Parties praised the conditions that existed industrially in this State before the advent of Labour in 1915. I shall enumerate some of the conditions that operated in those days. I have no doubt they would be similar today if the Opposition was in power. The hon. member for Cunningham stated, "We must balance the Budget at all costs." That is what they always said. That is what they said to the public servants of this State when they reduced their salaries and restricted their conditions prior to 1915, and during the period 1929-1932. Prior to 1915 a 48-hour week was worked and one hour was allowed for lunch. There were no smokes and no payments for wet weather and no annual leave. Works usually closed down for two weeks at the Christmas period and the men were stood down without pay. There was no payment for statutory holidays. There was payment for overtime if an employee worked 15 minutes or more. During the election campaign members of the Opposition in various centres advocated the conditions that operated in the good old days before 1915 and claimed that they were not as bad as Labour claimed they were. In those days employees working in Government buildings had to supply their own tools. The law was to pay overtime if an employee worked 15 minutes or longer, but in order to overcome that when an employee worked 12 minutes' overtime he was sent home by many unscrupulous employers.

Workers received workers' compensation only if they were injured on the job. The companies were always represented by lawyers and by the time the worker briefed a lawyer and took the case to appeal he generally ended up by getting a bill instead of a cheque for compensation.

I pay tribute to Mr. Tom Cook the District Supervisor of Public Works in Maryborough. He has done an excellent job over the years. Under his direction splendid work has been done on public buildings. I draw attention to the difficulty experienced by the department in obtaining tenders. Opposition members do not make any allowance for that when they criticise the work of the department. The Government are desirous of extending main road developmental work, but they are handicapped because private enterprise lacks the initiative and the pioneering spirit of early settlers. There was an imaginary ring drawn by the Government of early days around Sydney and Brisbane. They said to the settlers, "You must not go beyond that line." Those pioneers laughed at the Government. They were imbued with the pioneering spirit and were determined to shape their own destinies. They defied the Government and went to the western areas, many of them never to return. They never squealed or complained about the old age pensioners living on the State, but that is the attitude of private enterprise today. Many of them are always crying. The Hyne, Walker, Wilson and Hart families were among the early pioneers, to mention only a few in Maryborough who were prepared without Government assistance to go out into country areas to build up new industries.

Mr. Pizzey: The Labour Government were not in power then.

Mr. DAVIES: The hon. member for Isis is crying. He objects to all the good conditions enjoyed by the people under Labour Governments. We want men with initiative and courage to form contracting firms for the road and bridge work required in this State. The Department of Public Works supervises the contracts for main roads work, but how many tenders were received during the year? Applications were invited through the Press on 77 occasions during the year. On two occasions, although tenders had closed, none had been accepted as at 30 June. Nine had not closed at that date. Of the 66 other contracts no tenders were received in 20 cases. No tenders were received for 30.3 per cent. of those contracts. No satisfactory tender was lodged for 10 contracts, representing 15.1 per cent. Satisfactory tenders were received in 36 cases only. Tenders were received for only 54.6 per cent. of the main roads contracts last year. That was a poor response. It is a condemnation of private contractors who engage in road and bridge construction. That is why the Government have not been able to do all they desire to develop the State.

I congratulate the Government on the improvement of educational institutions. During the election campaign in Maryborough the Country Party issued propaganda in sheet form and in newspaper advertisements. This propaganda no doubt originated in the Liberal Party rooms in Brisbane and was

sent to the Country Party organisation in Maryborough. In one electorate the issue was that a sanitary can was used in the district and the seating accommodation at a school. That was ridiculous and preposterous, but that was the form of propaganda. It was said that nothing had been done for schools in the Maryborough electorate, and that all money had been spent in the Bundaberg electorate. That was a deliberate lie. Some people may have believed it. Let me point out what has been done in the Maryborough electorate. The Government have spent £116,000 on public works and schools in that electorate over the last three years. The West State School, a brick building, is a model one. It has a new addition costing £34,275. The Central School is being remodelled and painted. It is magnificent. The Infants' School has been completely remodelled. Every parent is proud of that school. I might mention that in many of the southern States the standard of school accommodation is not as good as that in Queensland despite the propaganda put forward by members of the Opposition.

Mr. Pizzev: Which State?

Mr. DAVIES: Victoria for one. The Albert State school was remodelled and painted and the whole roof is being replaced and I request the Minister to give consideration to the painting of the assembly room. It is the only big room to which attention has not been given. I suggest also to the Minister that his officers consider certain remodelling improvements to the Boys' State High School. In addition, they might do a certain amount of work on the Girls' High School, as well as that planned and now being done. These schools have a record equal to any high school in the State. The Maryborough police station has been remodelled and new garages built. Alterations have been made to the office of the Inspector of Machinery and Scaffolding and nearly £2,000 has been spent. The dental clinic building has been improved and I appeal to the Minister to give consideration to work at the Insurance Building and the court house. If officers have to work back at night it is advisable to have strong lighting in front of the court house. The lighting generally in the court house might also receive consideration. The Government have done much in the matter of amenities and I appeal for consideration of the amenities in the State Insurance building. The Government have always set an example to private enterprise. The new amenities block for railwaymen, when completed, will be a splendid achievement, something of which the Government can be proud. I should mention that the Department of Public Works supervised tenders for the erection of a home for the aged and infirm and the lowest tender was accepted. The next lowest was £60,000 dearer and the tender of M. R. Hornibrook & Company £96,000 dearer. The department made investigations and found that the lowest tender

was satisfactory and £15,000 has already been spent. Labour administrations have profited by experience and are constantly improving in all they do. The Opposition have often said that they would attend to the accommodation question in State schools. When the Moore Government were in power in 1929-1932 they cut down the number of Scholarships considerably and as a consequence the number of children who passed the Scholarship examination was considerably reduced. This in turn meant a smaller number of pupils requiring accommodation. They were bitterly opposed to State High schools and many of them so expressed themselves. I wish I had a record of their remarks at meetings at which they spoke. They expressed themselves forcibly against the existence of State High schools. It would astound the people of Queensland if they could be made aware of some of the speeches made by hon. members of that Government. They would have wiped out State High schools altogether and forced children to attend other high schools. I want to quote the remarks of Mr. Maher, now Senator Maher, one-time leader of the Country Party in this House. I quote an extract from "Hansard" of 27 October, 1932—

"Mr. Maher: A system that provides that any boy or girl who can get 50 per cent. shall be educated by the State in a secondary school is wrong.

"Mr. W. T. King (Labour): What do you suggest?

"Mr. Maher: I personally believe that the standard should be raised to not less than 65 per cent. A boy who cannot secure a pass equal to 65 per cent. should not have the benefit of a Scholarship.

"I have the feeling that the cost of secondary education is too great and that, if the State vacated the whole field and left it to approved secondary schools—denominational schools and Grammar schools—we would be really achieving something useful for the taxpayers of this State."

In "The Daily Mail" of 1 August, 1933, Mr. Nimmo, a Liberal member, was quoted as follows:—

"He did not consider the State was justified, particularly in these times, in spending large sums of money on education. He thought it would be far more suitable if the Government controlled primary education and abolished the State High Schools, which were, in his opinion, an unnecessary expenditure."

What a snobbish, petty, class-conscious, Tory outlook!

The then Secretary for Public Instruction, Mr. R. M. King, said—

"The Government has decided to modify the scholarship system because the finances of the country cannot stand the cost."

In 1915, only £705,580 was spent on State education. I know hon. members opposite will say that was a long time ago. In 1929 people thought that 1915 was a long time ago, but during the Moore Government's regime the statements that I have just quoted came from their leaders. After the way hon. members opposite, particularly the hon. member for Chermide, have attacked unionism, they would be capable of anything. Their predecessors reduced the allowances to State children; they reduced the number of scholarships; free school requisites for State children were withdrawn by them. They made it impossible for the ordinary men and women in the community to get their just entitlements.

In 1928-1929, 2,490 full scholarships were granted, whilst in 1931-1932 the number was reduced to 1,012. The Moore Government could have found other ways of economising than by hitting the children of the State. They could have hung on to the millions of pounds that they sent to the southern States.

(Time expired.)

Mr. LOW (Cooroora) (2.48 p.m.): I cannot understand the attitude of the hon. member for Maryborough. If his Government can grant the requests from this side of the Committee for improvements in secondary education in Queensland, they will be doing a good job. We are not going back into the dark ages. I assure the hon. member that we will continue to remind the Government of needed improvements in the education of our children, and if all our requests are granted he can rest assured that the children will not be neglected.

Since the Minister has occupied his present portfolio—and this applies also to the period when he was Secretary for Mines and Immigration—he has adopted a common-sense attitude towards the many problems associated with his department. If he continues along those lines—and I feel sure he will—he should go far in the Government party. I do not say that lightly. All hon. members appreciate co-operation and assistance from a Minister, particularly when their requests are genuine and sound. The Minister is always very prompt in replying to correspondence. Unfortunately, I cannot say that of all Ministers—some of them are extremely slow in replying to correspondence—but the Secretary for Public Works, Housing and Immigration always replies promptly.

I have studied the report of the Department of Public Works with very great interest. I have been keenly interested in public works since I have been a member of this Assembly. At first I criticised the department but it has greatly improved over recent years, under Mr. Lyons.

One matter that received very prompt attention was the replacement of the Gympie High and Intermediate School building that was destroyed by fire in 1954. Although it

is in the Nash electorate, the school serves many children from Cooroora. When the old school was destroyed the hon. member for Nash was in Western Queensland, and I took the liberty of requesting the Minister to give its replacement his prompt attention. For an expenditure of £36,937 they now have a fine new building. As the Gympie district grows, further extensions will no doubt be made.

Mr. Aikens: Are you the adopted member for Nash?

Mr. LOW: No, I am not, but I do co-operate with those representing adjacent electorates, particularly when people in my electorate are affected.

Mr. Skinner: You are not suggesting that the hon. member for Nash did nothing about it?

Mr. LOW: I believe he took action when he learned of it, but at the time he was away in Western Queensland. On matters affecting the welfare of school children we should co-operate irrespective of party politics.

In the past ten years large sums of money have been spent on the extension of school buildings in my electorate, made necessary by the increased population of the area and the greater attendance at the schools. They include works particularly at Pomona, Cooroy, Tewantin, Eumundi, Yandina, Nambour and Woombie. An extension is urgently needed at the Carters Ridge State school, and it will not cost very much.

Mr. Gair: The Government have done a good job in your electorate.

Mr. LOW: Yes, and I have made very strong representations from time to time and kept in touch with the Ministers concerned. I am very much happier now than I was 10 years ago. The public buildings in the Cooroora electorate then were possibly the worst in Queensland.

Mr. Gair: You have not built that hall yet.

Mr. LOW: No, but we still live in hopes and it will be built when the right time comes. The Department of Public Works will be doing good work if it keeps up to the same standard of building as provided by private enterprise in the Nambour district in recent years. The Nambour High School is growing rapidly. With an attendance of about 750 children drawn from a very large and closely settled district, it is one of the most important high schools in Queensland. The Minister is very well acquainted with our requirements and we look forward to considerable expenditure on new classrooms and further additions in the near future.

I appeal to the Minister to pursue a more vigorous policy on the provision of school residences in Queensland. I notice from the report that 22 have been provided or were in the course of erection during

1955-1956. From my own observations approximately 500 are required throughout Queensland.

Mr. Aikens: Do you not think that school rooms should receive preference over residences?

Mr. LOW: It is not a matter of preference. Funds should be made available for school residences as well as new classrooms.

Mr. McCathie: Suggest it to the Commonwealth Government.

Mr. LOW: We must find funds somewhere. The department should be given at least a couple of years of full and plenty to catch up with the State's requirements. If sufficient money is not otherwise available the department should be given special priority for a time.

I ask that the Minister continue to arrange for the sealing of floor areas underneath school buildings to provide play and lunch rooms. This is very important for the health of the children.

The report indicates that a large amount of money has been spent on new maternity hospitals throughout Queensland. There must always be adequate maternity hospitals. I hope that the Minister will be able to expedite the building of the very necessary new maternity wing at the Nambour hospital requested by the Brisbane and South Coast Hospitals Board. The latest advice was that the department was awaiting the services of an architect. I hope one will be found very quickly so that work can proceed. The Nambour hospital serves 35,000 people. It will be readily agreed that a maternity wing is an urgent necessity.

Page 9 of the report mentions that a new building of concrete construction for a court house and public offices has been completed at Goondiwindi at a cost of £69,843. It is certainly a fine building. A new building for court house and public offices is also being erected at Bundaberg at a cost of £108,861. These buildings are in the electorates of the Secretary for Public Lands and the Treasurer respectively. I am very interested in the erection of a similar new building of brick construction on Crown land at the corner of Currie and Mitchell Streets, Nambour. The Minister has inspected the suggested location. He pointed out that his department was a constructing authority and it would be necessary to get the approval of the various Government departments whose employees would be housed in the suggested building before the matter could be put under way. I took the matter up with the various departments concerned. There appears to be a lack of co-ordination in these matters. The reply I received from each Minister was that it was a matter for the Secretary for Public Works. I am convinced that there should be a co-ordinating authority

to deal with these matters affecting employees of the different departments. I should like to know how the buildings at Goondiwindi and Bundaberg, each of which houses employees of various departments, were approved. It is difficult to get co-ordination between the departments on such a matter.

The court house at Nambour is 65 years old. It was first erected at Woombye in 1891 and transported to Nambour in 1901. A number of Government departments have employees in the Maroochy district. A new court house similar to the one built at Goondiwindi would provide adequate office accommodation for Government departments such as Police, Agriculture and Stock and any others who had to send employees to that area. I ask the Minister to confer with his senior executive officer, Mr. Lyons, to see what can be done.

The matter of valuations is of great concern to local authorities. At the recent conference in Brisbane a number of resolutions were submitted for the consideration of delegates from the 133 local government areas in Queensland. I have a high regard for the Queensland Local Government Association, and I took note of the more important resolutions carried by that body. I consider that the valuation fees charged to local authorities by the Valuer-General's Department are excessive in view of the benefit derived by the Land Tax Department and other Government departments. The local authorities throughout Queensland have considered this matter carefully. By the time all local authority areas were valued they would have made a very substantial contribution towards the funds of the Valuer-General's Department. I suggest that the Valuation of Land Acts and regulations be amended to provide for a considerable reduction in fees in the case of a revaluation of land in local authority areas. A vast amount of research is necessary on the first valuation, but on the second valuation a great deal of it is unnecessary and the local authorities consider that the cost of the second valuation should be very much less.

I suggest that the Minister direct the Valuer-General to refrain from carrying out revaluations of towns and shires until the whole of the State has been valued. A little more than half the local authorities in Queensland have been valued twice, while about 50 per cent. of the number have not been valued at all.

Mr. Walsh: The land valued does not comprise only 50 per cent. of the value of the land in the State. The value of the South-Eastern Division may be more than the total value of the rest of Queensland.

Mr. LOW: That may be so.

The period of five years between valuations seems to pass quickly. It is felt by local authorities that it would be better to value

areas that have not been valued before revaluing the other areas. That would mean that all land in Queensland had been valued. At the present time some areas have been valued twice, others once and others not at all.

The Government derive a great deal of benefit from revaluation. The values are built up. The subsidy to local authorities is in accordance with the rate struck by the local authority. If the valuation is higher the rate is less and the subsidy less. The local authorities lose in that way too. The local authorities with a high rate receive a greater subsidy, to which they may not be entitled.

I turn now to immigration. The arrangement to have naturalisation ceremonies carried out by mayors and chairmen of local authorities in an atmosphere of friendship and goodwill has proved very successful. I hope that will be the procedure at future naturalisation ceremonies.

In conclusion I sincerely hope there will be no serious curtailment of funds for the buildings so urgently required throughout Queensland and that the Treasurer will make available sufficient funds to carry out the work. I refer particularly to new schools.

Hon. C. G. McCATHIE (Haughton—Secretary for Public Works, Housing and Immigration) (3.9 p.m.): I shall deal first with the suggestion of the hon. member for Chermide that the Department of Public Instruction should have its own work force to construct schools. That suggestion has been made year after year. I point out that it is Government policy to have only one constructing authority. I refer again to my introductory speech. The amount needed for school buildings during the year 1955-1956 totals £1,876,062. The actual expenditure on State school buildings was £2,098,842 or 11.9 per cent. more than the amount voted. We spent more only by the piling down of other departmental votes. Duplication of staff would not have been in the best interests of the State. It would not have added any advantage to our present programme. The Government feel that they should continue as they are doing. With the close liaison between the Secretary for Public Instruction and myself and my officers the Opposition need have no worry about the future of Queensland. Cabinet is aware of the needs of education and we have already given an indication that our concentration is on classrooms. Other trimmings, whilst very desirable, are not considered essential in time of financial stringency. The concreting of surfaces under schools and the provision of teachers' residences must stand for the present so that we can provide the first essential, class-room accommodation for our rapidly increasing school population. We are alive to the needs of the State and will watch the construction of all buildings from the department's point of view.

I have not the time to comment on the speech by the hon. member who has just resumed his seat concerning the Valuer-General's Department. We have not gone into a local authority area—there are a few exceptions—unless asked to do so. If local authorities are fair they will agree that the values on their land can be justified. I do not think that anybody today would suggest that value of land should be static in a world of rapidly changing circumstances when the values of all commodities are increasing. I thank various speakers who spoke in favour of my departmental officers.

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) (3.13 p.m.): In view of the circumstances that surround this closing debate on the Estimates for the various departments I shall have to concentrate on conciseness and hope by doing so some other hon. member may be able to speak. I say quite frankly and openly that my associations with the Minister for Public Works have been very amicable. I have found him not only a very eager but courteous Minister and, to repeat the words used by a previous speaker, a Minister who applies common sense to the administration of his department. Some Ministers, unfortunately, in my opinion, are too prone to be, not exactly brow-beaten, but over-awed by the advice of their departmental officers. On the occasions I have put suggestions to the Minister in the way of an appeal as it were, from Caesar to Caesar, I pay him the compliment of saying that he applied what I, and what the people of my electorate, considered a common sense approach. I do not expect the Minister to admit it in his ministerial capacity or as a member of the Government, but he might in a private capacity, but it is true that we in Townsville have not got a fair share of homes erected by the Queensland Housing Commission since that Commission—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I will not allow the hon. member to discuss housing under this Vote.

Mr. AIKENS: Is this not the Vote for the Department of Public Works, Housing and Immigration?

The CHAIRMAN: It does not come under this Vote but under Trust Funds.

Mr. Morris: Did not you know?

Mr. AIKENS: I knew, but because of the Rafferty rules used by the Opposition and the Government, I thought I might be able to use the same tactics.

Mr. Morris: I thought you had learned something since you came here.

Mr. AIKENS: If the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha can teach me anything I shall be only too eager to learn. I know he can teach me a good deal about political roguery and political chicanery, but nothing about political honesty.

Now that we have as Minister a man who represents a northern electorate with a personal knowledge of the raw deal we have been getting in housing, we are hoping for a better spin.

Mr. McCathie: You are getting your fair share.

Mr. AIKENS: I know the hon. gentleman says that as a Minister, but I do not think he would as an individual.

Now that all the difficulties have been cleared away——

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I will not allow the hon. member to discuss housing under this Vote. It comes under Trust Funds.

Mr. AIKENS: If the Minister will acquire the Q. M. E. land known as Jang's Farm and use it for building purposes, the people of Townsville will be very happy.

At Hermit Park we had one of the largest primary schools in Queensland; it had an attendance of over 1,000 pupils. However, an officer of the Department of Public Instruction went up there a couple of years ago, and in what might be called a flash of genius he said, "We will divide this into two schools, primary and infants'." However, he did not make any provision for the setting up for the separate infants' school. He said, "These two classrooms will be the infants' school, and the rest of the school will be the primary school." The first intimation we had of it was the notification that it had been done. From that day till now I have been virtually on the shoulders of the Minister—I was on his predecessor's shoulders too—to provide some necessary facilities for the two rooms that were set aside for the infants' school. I compliment both the present Minister and his predecessor on their efforts to provide facilities at the school, but they are only temporary. Sooner or later the primary school will grow to such an extent that once again it will absorb the rooms now used by the infants' school, and it will be necessary to build a new infants' school on another site in the Hermit Park area. I know money is tight this year, and possibly the infants' school can carry on as it is for another year or so. But sooner or later—and the sooner the better—a new three-storey modern infants' school will have to be erected at Hermit Park, because there is no room for expansion on the present site.

Because I believe that good business is laid on the foundation of planning ahead, I ask the Minister to make plans now for the erection of a separate modern infants' school in the Hermit Park area. I know he cannot do it this year, and maybe not next year, but the sooner the better.

Tied up with this matter is the whole development of the Hermit Park area. I have mentioned previously the peculiar topographical layout of Townsville, with the city

on the sea-front, jammed between the creek and Castle Hill and spreading out into the suburban areas. Hermit Park contains about 25,000 of Townsville's population of 40,000, and those people have to travel from two to six miles to reach Townsville's main administrative centre. I suggest, therefore, that the Government should start planning for a new administrative centre in Townsville, and I am certain the Minister will agree that within a few years Hermit Park will become the real population centre of Townsville. It is only sensible to suggest that the administrative centre of the city should be at the centre of the thickly populated area. First of all, the Minister should make provision for the building of a high school in the Hermit Park area. Then we need the out-patients' department of the hospital as a step to a subsidiary hospital in the Hermit Park area. We also need an ambulance centre and a fire brigade there. In effect we need to transfer all governmental administration in Townsville from around the mouth of Ross Creek, where it is now, to the centre of population. The population in the city area of Townsville is decreasing. Homes are being bought up and the sites used for business and industrial purposes and the people are going out to Hermit Park, Currajong, Pimlico, Aitkenvale, Mundingburra, Stuart and Oonoonba to live. It is only right and fair and reasonable that the administrative centre should be where the great bulk of the population is. I ask the Government to plan ahead, particularly for Townsville and not leave the administrative centre and public facilities at the very edge of the town. In a year or two Townsville will be the second city of Queensland, if it is not now.

Mr. HERBERT (Sherwood) (3.22 p.m.): I support the remarks of the hon. member for Cooroora on housing for school teachers. It is regrettable that only a few homes have been built, or will be built, this financial year. I repeat the suggestion that, in providing homes for school teachers and other public servants who are required to live a semi-nomadic life, the Government adopt the scheme introduced by the Australian Army after the war. Their houses throughout the country are identical so that a member transferred from one to another faces a minimum of expense for floor coverings, curtains and other furnishings and furniture. A member of the Forces, say, at Wacol knows that if he is transferred to any other part of Australia the furniture and furnishings that he is using at Wacol will suit his new quarters.

I hope that money allocated to mental hospitals will not be diverted to other purposes. The Goodna Mental Hospital, which is in my area, and the North Queensland Mental Hospital need every penny they can get this year. The overcrowding at Goodna in particular is tragic and the more it is prolonged the more will be the suffering not only of the inmates but also of the relatives who visit them and see the conditions.

During the debate on the Financial Statement I expressed the hope that more money would be allocated for seniles. I am extremely interested in the farm colony under construction at Goodna. I hope that the work on it will not be unduly curtailed this year. I realise that the whole scheme cannot be finished this year but I hope any paring down will not be done at the expense of mental hospital work. It should have been done years ago and it cannot be held up any longer.

I hope to see Carole Park on the list of new schools next year. Carole Park school was built in 1948 from a converted Army hut. It is still only a very poor converted Army hut. The teachers at this two-teacher school are working under extreme difficulty. Although situated in the metropolitan area, the school has neither water nor electricity. Much work is needed to bring it to anything like the standard that should be expected in the metropolitan area. Drainage is a great problem in my electorate. Situated in the tongue of the river, much of the land is very low-lying. In most cases the schools are built on the lowest parts. I ask the Minister to give sympathetic consideration to bitumen-sealing the ground underneath the schools. At the moment water lies for long periods before it drains away.

If we could not get bitumen or cement underneath the school at least a concrete path to the toilet block at Darra School would be an improvement. Teachers have constructed wooden duckboards for use in wet weather.

Mr. Nicklin: The cement comes from Darra.

Mr. HERBERT: Yes. Seeing that most of the cement comes from Darra possibly we could be excused for asking for just a little bit for the school. During the debate on the Address in Reply I mentioned the unsatisfactory classroom accommodation underneath the Darra school. It is still there, but we have the Minister's assurance that additional rooms will be provided to obviate the necessity to use this unsatisfactory temporary accommodation. However, when the new wing is erected there will be additional drainage problems. Darra joins Graceville and Sherwood as the problem schools.

The back of the report contains photographs of the schools in my area. All these new schools have been necessary because of the tremendous increase in population over the last few years, particularly in the Housing Commission section. The Inala State school, although opened only 12 months ago, has an attendance of 800. It is an indication of the problem facing the department in the Sherwood electorate. The school committees and associated organisations are on my back and the back of the department for facilities the department are now cutting down on, but which are already provided in most other schools. Inala school has no

adequate playground. Other facilities are required. I know they will get them in time, but each year of delay deprives the children of something they are entitled to.

(Time expired.)

VOTES PASSED UNDER STANDING ORDER NO. 307 AND SESSIONAL ORDER.

At 3.30 p.m., under Standing Order No. 307 and Sessional Order, the questions for the following Votes were put by the Chairman and agreed to:—

	£	s.	d.
Department of Public Works,			
Housing and Immigration—			
Chief Office	146,099	0	0
Balance of Votes	1,124,418	0	0
Department of Justice	1,253,277	0	0
Department of the Treasurer	2,572,070	0	0
Department of Public Lands and			
Irrigation	1,808,091	0	0
Department of Agriculture and			
Stock	1,012,428	0	0
Department of Mines	734,838	0	0
Department of Transport	69,510	0	0
Trust and Special Funds Estimates	57,749,463	0	0
Loan Fund Account	22,000,000	0	0
Supplementary Estimates, 1955—			
1956—			
Revenue	1,650,531	10	1
Trust and Special Funds	1,555,556	5	9
Loan Fund Account	457,651	5	0
Vote on Account, 1957–1958	26,500,000	0	0

SEVENTEENTH ALLOTTED DAY—RECEPTION OF RESOLUTIONS.

Resolutions reported and, on motion of Mr. Walsh, received.

ADOPTION OF RESOLUTIONS.

The Resolutions being taken as read—

Hon. E. J. WALSH (Bundaberg—Treasurer): I move—

“That the Resolutions be now agreed to.”

Hon. members indicating a desire to discuss certain Resolutions—

Resolutions one to eight, both inclusive, agreed to.

Resolution 9—Department of Public Works, Housing and Immigration—

Mr. MULLER (Fassifern) (3.40 p.m.): I thank the Minister for the courtesy extended to me in matters of immigration. He has gone out of his way to help me and his efforts have been successful. He and his department were able to unravel many of the technicalities involved in some cases.

I am also thankful for the help given me by his Under Secretary. I was delighted that he should have acted immediately on a recommendation I made on these Estimates last year. Hon. members will recall that I criticised the policy of day labour in carrying out public works and I said that money could be saved by introducing the contract system. I know that in some cases

day labour is preferable but it has to be done thoroughly. I also realise that under the contract system one can be beaten badly when the number of contractors is not sufficient to create healthy competition. In some instances contract prices have been extremely high and we could not rely entirely on the contract system. If the policy is to be day labour it should be controlled carefully. It has been abused. Some employees in the Department of Public Works, more than any other department, have abused many of their privileges under the day-labour system. Complaints have been made of the high cost of work only because the system has not been properly supervised. However, some of the work mentioned in the annual report shows clearly that the system has paid dividends. Some of it compares very favourably with other work. The Under Secretary should obviate the abuses by a number of employees in his department. It is very upsetting to people in other departments to find that day labour has been costly.

I have some rather severe criticism to offer of the work done by the Valuer-General's Department. When the department was established, it was introduced under the guise of providing uniformity in land values. No-one could object to that but members of the Opposition were a bit chary about it. It turned out to be a measure to increase land values. I have no personal criticism to offer of the Valuer-General, Mr. Richardson. He is a gentleman in every sense of the word, but as a public servant he is obliged to do as he is directed. Now that the Act has been operating for a few years and we can realise the hardship it has caused, it is time to have another look at it. Last year the Department of the Valuer-General cost £165,136, and the estimated cost this year is £187,601. However, no mention is made in the Estimates of the fact that most of the cost of running the department was collected by local authorities from people who have been severely hit by this legislation. The Estimates should show the amount collected by local authorities to defray administration costs.

For 1956-1957 the department will have a staff of about 140. However, although it has been in existence for about 12 years, only about 25 per cent. of Queensland has been valued. It is remarkable that the department has been directed by the Minister to value only the shires that it suits the Government to value. Some have been valued once, some twice, and others not at all because it did not suit the Government's purpose to have them valued. That calls for some explanation. Some of the shires that have not yet been valued are represented by Labour. If they had been valued before the last State elections they would not be represented by Labour today. Legislation passed by Parliament should apply to the

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whole of the State, not only to those portions that suit the Government. I know the Treasurer will reply by saying that the incidence of land tax is not very severe. He has told us also that very few dairy farmers pay it, but he determines who are dairy farmers and who are not.

Mr. Walsh: I get information from the returns submitted to the Commissioner of Land Tax.

Mr. MULLER: That is what the Treasurer says.

In four years the amount collected in land tax has increased from £300,000 to £1,400,000 annually. The Treasurer does not tell us that his figures are always a year or two behind. The Valuer-General works in a district and his returns are not shown till the following year, and then the land tax is collected a year later. It takes two years, therefore, for the true results to be shown in the report that the Minister uses to defend himself. It is two years from when the land is valued till the land tax is actually paid.

It is necessary to see this type of legislation in operation before you can gauge its effects. Landholders in the coast districts have suffered droughts, floods, fires, caterpillars and grasshoppers, but not one of those things could equal the scourge of land tax. Nothing has been more harmful, and nothing has had a more depressing effect on the people, than the application of this unjust tax. The Secretary for Public Works and Housing said that he thought it was wrong that values should be struck at a time when prices were high because they were more or less fictitious, and that some method should be devised to arrive at values over a number of years. I compliment him on his fair statement. Areas have been valued in the last couple of years when primary production has attracted high prices. It naturally follows that people buying property in the areas have paid more than the actual value. The officer valuing land in the district uses as a guide the inflated figures of those comparative sales. Their effect is therefore carried right through. By far the fairest basis is what the land will produce. The many appeals to the stipendiary magistrate and the comparative few to the Supreme Court show clearly that the one argument used is comparative values, and that is very unfair.

Values of freehold land in the coastal districts have been boosted, too, by the purchase of land by Southern people. Southern values are higher than ours and those people, not knowing our values, have paid too much. The Valuer-General's staff take those inflated values into account.

Dr. Noble: That happens in the metropolitan area, too.

Mr. MULLER: That is so. Let me give hon. members some examples. I know the Treasurer will say that the Act is democratic and that if a man does not accept the Valuer-General's figure he has his remedy in the Appeal Court. If the valuation exceeds £3,000 the appeal goes to the Supreme Court. But, under the Act, the appeal is so arranged that the property-owner has little chance of winning. I will give hon. members particulars of a case within my own experience because it is typical of many and I know it well. I had a property valued at £5,200, nearly four times the previous valuation of about £1,350. I admit that the previous figure might have been slightly low, but I thought the new valuation excessive.

Mr. Walsh: How many acres?

Mr. MULLER: About 1,450. I decided to appeal to the Supreme Court, but I dropped the case and I shall explain why. In view of the legislation it would be dangerous to claim that the value was very much less because I should lose on the appeal even if I won. The Act provides that if the Valuer-General's determination is closer to the finding of the Supreme Court than the property owner's figure the property owner pays the cost. My property was valued at £5,200. I lodged an appeal, claiming that it was worth £4,500. Even that was high in my opinion, but I was aware of the danger of reducing it in case the court's findings were closer to the Valuer-General's figure than mine. I spent £26 on preliminaries. I found that before I completed the case it was going to cost me at least £150. Supposing the Supreme Court met me up to a point and reduced the value from £5,200 to £4,900, a reduction of £300, what would happen? My value of £4,500 would be £400 too low and the Valuer-General's would be £300 too high. The Valuer-General would be the closer. I would be spending £150 to £200 to gain £5 a year. I would be paying land tax on an extra £300 at 4d. in the pound, which would return me £5 a year. In other words, it would take me 40 years to recover my costs of the appeal. That is happening in almost every case. The Valuer-General himself told me, "You would be surprised to see how few cases go to the Supreme Court." I found it very hard to understand his statement. People must consider very carefully before they appeal. The case I have quoted is very moderate. There are other cases where the odds against the property owner would be very much greater. It is the first time, to my knowledge, that anything of this nature has been written into any legislation. After all, you either win an appeal or you lose an appeal. If the Valuer-General's determination is too high and the court finds against the Valuer-General, he should pay the costs. That is why no-one is game to go to the Supreme Court. I know of cases where values have been increased by 600 and 900 per cent. Some of them were absolutely ridiculous. At this very moment appeals in respect of

valuations under £3,000 are being heard in my district. They have been going on for the last fortnight. In 80 per cent of the cases the magistrate has upheld the decision of the Valuer-General. In 20 per cent. of the cases a slight reduction or concession has been made. Here again court costs make the small reductions not worth while.

High costs are placing such an impossible burden on the shoulders of many primary producers that they wonder whether it is worth while carrying on. I am not putting a case for myself. At my time of life it does not matter if you hunt me off the land. I have worked hard all my life for the land that I have. It would not matter very much if some of the older men left the land, but many of the younger men are being forced to leave it. It is not just a matter of land tax and rates, but the depreciated value of the land. There are scores of cases where young men have come in and bought land based on existing values for primary products, and although the values for primary products are falling the charge on the land is not falling, and nobody wants the land. Today the owner's equity in the land is almost negligible.

Mr. Power: What is the general rate in the £1 in your shire?

Mr. MULLER: Anything from 6d. to 1s. and in some cases more. I am not speaking of the shire rate; it does not make a great deal of difference. One cannot blame the Government for the shire rate. The rate is fixed according to whether the valuation is high or low. If the valuation is high, the rate is low and vice versa. I have a small property of 90 acres which was valued by the shire at £190, and valued by the Valuer-General's Department at £900. I am not blaming the young valuer who based his valuation on the adjoining property comprising 130 acres on which there was an inexpensive house which was sold for £7,500 or nearly £60 an acre. The purchaser of this property came from the South and lost £1,500 in 18 months and sold the property for £6,000. That is still double its value. The last purchaser was a semi-retired gentleman who wanted extra land to connect his property to the water.

Mr. Walsh: You are not suggesting that they based their valuations on a single case?

Mr. MULLER: That is happening all over the place. My information was obtained from people who have appealed and from solicitors who have appeared for property owners. Their only guide is comparative sales. That being so, what is the use of my going to the Court? That is not an isolated case; we have had hundreds of them. The legitimate farmers in the district are suffering as a result of these valuations and they are becoming disgusted with the whole set-up. Everyone is wondering what will happen next. The local authorities do not require

a valuation of their area to get sufficient revenue for their works. They can strike a rate to provide the money. If the value is low, they fix a high rate and so get the same revenue. The Government, however, get additional revenue by way of land tax. It has been hinted that the Treasurer is likely to increase land tax. If he does, primary producers will be ruined.

Mr. Walsh: If you keep on saying that, you will get me to the stage when I will increase it.

Mr. MULLER: The Treasurer is not going to bluff me by making that sort of statement.

To illustrate the hardship, I mention the plight of people running cattle in these areas. Some of these properties are not fit for agricultural purposes or dairying. A person with a piece of freehold land will run stock on it. Rates and land tax amount to £1 7s. 6d. a beast. How can a property owner survive under those conditions?

I am pleased to see that the hon. member for Somerset is taking note of my remarks. His electorate includes the Esk Shire which has been valued recently. I know he will support my very definite protest. Hundreds of property owners in his district will be seriously affected. No-one minds making a fair contribution towards the services of the State, but this outrageous tax makes one wonder what will happen next,

Take the position in regard to the land owned by the butter factory at Boonah. The buildings are erected on a couple of acres. It owns also an adjoining paddock of 45 acres used for drainage purposes. Waste water is run onto it. Rates and taxes for that land have been increased from £136 in 1952 to £586 in 1956.

My rates and land taxes have risen from £240 to £700 in a few years. Primary producers may experience droughts, floods, low prices, and so on, but they still have to find that money. If I were a younger man, I would not take on farming. I would take a job in the city at the award wage and enjoy the better working conditions, shorter hours and a five-day week. I would certainly have more money at the end of the year. This is the most vicious thing that has happened since I have been in Parliament. I have not the time this afternoon to debate whether the high costs are due to Labour's policy or to the Menzies-Fadden Government, but the fact is that costs are increasing. Primary producers have to carry these costs, and then have to shoulder this additional burden. If the Government want additional revenue the increased taxation should be spread evenly throughout the community. There is no reason why this department should be used to extract this money from one section of the community, money they should not be expected to pay.

Young men have called on me and asked if there is any hope of relief. We waited on the Treasurer and Premier, but so far without result. These young men have purchased these farms in the last few years, because farming was the only thing they knew. They paid ruling prices for the land. They were not in a position to gauge markets and whether overseas values would rise or fall. Overseas countries are producing on a different standard from that in Australia, with the result that markets must fall. There is justice and equity in taxation on income, because taxpayers have to earn the money before they are called on to pay the tax.

Land tax hits the man on the land whether he has any income or not; it is one of the most serious problems this Parliament has to deal with. It is not a question of increasing land tax but of providing relief. New South Wales introduced land tax recently and under a policy similar to ours, but they provided an exemption of £10,000 for all rural land. If we had an exemption of only half that amount it would be some relief to small farmers. Land tax hits the man on the land when the value reaches £1,950 and entirely dissipates the exemption when it reaches £3,000. With the extortionate prices paid for properties it would be a poor property that would not bring £3,000.

Mr. Collins: You are assessed on the unimproved value.

Mr. MULLER: I am speaking of unimproved value. I could show the Minister places that, if put up for public auction tomorrow, would not realise the Valuer-General's valuation with the improvements on them. They would not realise the value placed on them with all their fencing and clearing. It is fair to say that if you have a departmental value on inflated values the writing down of improvements should be at the cost of the improvements at the time of writing down. A property worth £5,000 today might have been worth £1,000 say 20 years ago. The value of improvements should be assessed at today's value. If it costs £10 to fall scrub today a person should be entitled to a deduction of £10 an acre for this improvement. It does not matter what it cost 20 years ago to fall scrub. Everything is loaded against the property owner. Stipendiary magistrates are directed to use their discretion but they have no right to say, "We will not accept today's improvement costs." I regret to say it but they must have been directed by somebody on their method of arriving at the value of improvements.

Mr. Walsh: You can rest assured that they would not be directed through any Government source.

Mr. MULLER: I am pleased to have that statement but I hope the Treasurer will see that this method is not continued. When I went to the Valuer-General about my own

case I was received with the utmost courtesy. He was prepared to listen to me when I told him how ridiculous the valuation was. If one goes to the Supreme Court, what benefit does one get? My case has been set down for hearing next Monday week and I can only say that it is useless for me to go on with it. I feel like withdrawing the appeal and putting up with the consequences. I will sell my land and get out of it, even if I have to take half its value. However, hundreds of young men on the land cannot do that. Their life's savings are in their properties and they cannot get out. Furthermore, we cannot afford to let them get out—we must do everything we can to keep them on the land—but they should not be expected to carry this heavy burden.

I am glad that the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock is in the Chamber, because he has a knowledge of primary industry and has done a good deal towards encouraging people on the land to produce more. But all you get for improving your pastures is an increased valuation! The property alongside mine is valued at £1 an acre, and it is still in the same condition as it was when Captain Cook landed in Australia. I have cleared all my land, poisoned it, fenced it, improved the watering facilities and the pastures, and I stock it lightly. It looks beautiful. What do I get for doing all that? The valuer puts a valuation of £3 15s. an acre on it! I mentioned that at the round-table conference, and the man who valued it said, "You would not say your property was not worth any more than that, would you?" I replied, "It is worth a lot more, but all my earnings have gone back into it." Are we going to improve our stock if this sort of legislation is to be passed by Parliament? We are endeavouring to meet the Government's requirements. They tell us to produce the right type of beef and butter so that it can be sold on the export market. We do that, and those of us who are enthusiasts put all our money back into improving our properties, only to find that the Valuer-General places a high value on them. Then, when we go to the court on appeal, he fights us. We have no defence, because some fool came into the district when prices were high and bought land at a much higher price than it was worth. If that is British fair play, I should like to know what is unfair.

I am glad that the Premier is in the Chamber, because I took a deputation to him on this matter and he was very sympathetic. He promised to look into the matter. In view of the case I have presented, is there any possibility of the Government's increasing the exemption from £1,950 to £10,000, as has been done in New South Wales? If the Government are not prepared to do that, they should increase the exemption at least to £5,000. We could then exist. However, as things are we cannot carry on. We will have to walk off our properties.

Hon. E. J. WALSH (Bundaberg—Treasurer) (4.19 p.m.): The hon. member for Fassifern is on his usual theme of criticising the Valuer-General and the valuations of his officers. I regard very seriously the hon. member's implication that magistrates are directed by somebody. By interjection I told the hon. member he could rest assured that magistrates were not directed through any Government channel. I now go further and say that I am sure magistrates are not directed by anybody, either within or outside Government circles. I know nobody in the House will take any notice of what the hon. member said, but it is wrong to have in print something that will convey the impression that the courts of this State are conducted improperly. I remind the hon. member that the method of appeal laid down in the Valuation of Land Act, passed in 1944, is exactly the same as the system that has been in the Local Government Act for 40 or 50 years except that the right of appeal to the Supreme Court in the case of larger valuations has been incorporated. It is no good his trying to convey the impression that a new system has been adopted.

He said, too, that southern buyers were responsible for many of the high valuations of land because they had no knowledge of the quality of land in Queensland. Goodness knows it is of high quality. However, he said that, having no knowledge of values of land in Queensland, they paid high prices and caused other valuations to rise. Let us examine that. An investigation carried out by the Valuer-General's Department showed that of 963 purchasers of rural properties on the Darling Downs, 790 were residents of the local government area in which the land is situated, 130 came from other rural areas on the Darling Downs, 28 came from other parts of Queensland, 11 from other States, and four from unknown places. The fact that only 11 out of 963 came from other States completely destroys his argument.

Mr. Muller: No, it does not.

Mr. WALSH: Does he suggest that 11 sales determined the valuation of all the other land on the Darling Downs? That is plain stupidity. I will again give examples to show that it is not the Valuer-General but the landholder who is responsible for the valuation in the first place. I challenge the hon. member to cite one case where the Valuer-General has not taken into consideration conditions in the whole of the surrounding area. If the hon. member took his case to court as he outlined it this afternoon and claimed that the valuation on his property was increased from £90 to £190, and that the valuation on other land in the area was similarly increased, because of one sale, it would not be accepted by any appeal court.

Mr. Muller: It has been done.

Mr. WALSH: I do not care what he says. I challenge him to produce concrete evidence that the determination of magistrates in the valuation appeal court would be influenced by the Valuer-General's valuation based on a single sale. It would never stand in any court.

Mr. Muller: He is the boss, anyway. He decides the issue.

Mr. WALSH: That may be. It is a good thing, too, that the magistrates should offer some measure of protection and relief as between disputing parties. For the benefit of hon. members I have details of certain properties in the West Moreton district. I have done this in previous years to prove that valuations were finally determined on sales of property in the area concerned. The figures include but a few of the many dealings in land in the West Moreton area in recent years. They seem to indicate, contrary to the belief of the hon. member for Fassifern, that the district is in a very prosperous condition.

The first one is a first-class irrigable, agricultural and dairying property of 344 acres. It was sold in 1945 for £4,550, resold in July, 1948, for £7,900, and resold in December, 1953, for £19,987.

Mr. Plunkett: What is the value of the improvements?

Mr. WALSH: The hon. member for Darlington should not be so stupid. These figures are on the unimproved value. He knows it. Improvements are not taken into consideration in determining the unimproved value.

Mr. Sparkes: The improvements are in the sale value.

Mr. WALSH: It is only the land. I could quote thousands of cases.

Mr. Sparkes: You say the property was sold?

Mr. WALSH: Of course the property was sold.

Mr. Sparkes: The improvements would be on it.

Mr. WALSH: The hon. member will get it all on another occasion. I have previously brought these details down.

Mr. Muller: You are not game to name it.

Mr. WALSH: I do not think it would be right for me to name it. I have never gone to that extent in this House. I have named particular districts and hon. members opposite have said, "That could be so-and-so's property." I will not say that the next one is the property of the hon. member for Fassifern. It is a second-class irrigable agricultural property of 90 acres. It was sold in 1951 for £8,000, resold in March, 1953, for £9,500, and resold nine months later for £15,000.

Mr. Nicklin: You do not say that that is only the unimproved value?

Mr. WALSH: Yes.

Mr. Nicklin: Nonsense!

Mr. WALSH: The next one is 76 acres of similar land, sold in 1944 for £1,850. It was resold in 1952 for £7,000, and resold in March, 1954, for £9,625. What the Leader of the Opposition is trying to say is that that property of 76 acres sold in 1944 with all the improvements on it was worth only £1,850, and 10 years later was worth £9,625.

The next one is a crop-assisted scrub dairy property of 80½ acres, sold in 1943 for £925 and resold in 1954 for £3,000. It shows the variation of the value of the land in the various parts of the district, even though the areas may be somewhat similar in acreage.

Now I come to a crop-assisted scrub dairy property of 198 acres, sold in February, 1951, for £5,000, and resold in December, 1953, for £9,000.

Then there is a crop-assisted forest dairy property of 240 acres sold in November, 1945, for £1,860, resold in 1948 for £2,650, resold in March, 1951, for £3,150, and resold in March, 1954, for £4,550. I suppose the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. members for Fassifern and Aubigny will say that the improvements are included in that too.

Mr. Sparkes: If you sell the property you generally sell the improvements.

Mr. WALSH: All the Valuer-General is concerned about is the value of the land. I brought returns down here two or three years ago which set out every phase. I have not brought all the sheets this time, but I did bring the actual figures for the sales of land. I think it will be agreed that local authorities are the chief beneficiaries as far as the Valuer-General's Department is concerned. In order to give hon. members some idea of what is involved in the valuation of the State, I point out that there are approximately 470,000 ratable properties in 134 local government areas. The Valuer-General has valued 275,000 properties once, and 69,000 twice, leaving approximately 126,000 yet to be valued. The areas valued once number 51 and those valued twice number 26. The Valuer-General's valuation was £179,500,000. The total valuation immediately prior to the Valuer-General's valuation was £73,300,000, or an increase of £106,200,000, representing 145 per cent. Who is going to quibble over 145 per cent. when we realise how values and costs generally have increased since 1940? Some of the areas valued by the Valuer-General were last valued five years ago, and at different periods prior to that they were valued by independent valuers. The last appraisalment in some areas was made before 1939. If I might make it clear to the hon. member for

Fassifern, the definition of unimproved value is the price land might be expected to realise if it was for sale assuming the improvements, if any, had not existed.

Mr. Muller: We are not taking that.

Mr. WALSH: It is all right if hon. members say they are not taking that. No valuer attached to the Valuer-General's Department could afford to make valuations that could be repeatedly upset in the courts.

Mr. Muller: You own the Valuer-General and you own the Court.

Mr. WALSH: There is evidence that the local authorities in many instances have no wish to appoint private valuers because they believe that some private valuers did not give a fair assessment of the value of the land within their area. I mentioned an instance that was brought to my notice in one of the northern shires which appointed a private valuer. He was well known in the North-west and other parts of Northern Queensland, and he made a valuation for the shire of something over £220,000. The council said that they were not happy about it, that they thought the land was worth very much more. It was not the Valuer-General's Department that objected, but the local council. And in eight days this valuer brought back a valuation of £600,000. How was he able to increase the value 200 per cent. in that period? When the matter came before the Appeal Court an experienced valuer was brought in to appear for some of the appellants, and he made a holy mess of the council's valuation. The local authority is frantic because of the way the magistrate has determined values in accordance with the principles. He has given considerable relief to appellants, and that is in direct contrast to the statement of the hon. member for Fassifern. The local authority is at sixes and sevens. It wants the Valuer-General to value the area.

Mr. Muller: That is a side issue and has nothing to do with it.

Mr. WALSH: It is not a side issue. That local authority would be happy to have a valuation tomorrow by the Valuer-General.

Mr. Muller: Apparently the valuations by the private valuer were ridiculous.

Mr. WALSH: I know any number of similar cases. Even in my own area, Bundaberg, there was a ridiculous position. The average allotment in Bundaberg was valued at £40. That was stupid. There were increases of 600 and 700 per cent. This tax is imposed equitably as a result of valuations by the Valuer-General. In local authorities all ratepayers bear an equal share of the rates. How could hon. members opposite justify the position that existed in the Greater Brisbane area? Some allotments were valued as low as £40, £50 and £60. How could that be justified when those areas were served by trams and had all other facilities. They were valued at those

amounts only because the allotments had been bought at those prices. When the areas were valued by the Valuer-General, he gave them a valuation consistent with the value of land in the surrounding district. Those people then claimed that there were increases of 600, 700 and 800 per cent., but how could they justify the original valuation?

I am not going to argue that there is no hardship. There are anomalies under any form of taxation. It may be that the hon. member for Fassifern is experiencing some hardship. It seems to be an obsession with him.

Mr. Muller: How would you regard the exemptions given by the New South Wales Government?

Mr. WALSH: I should not like them at all. I should hate to relieve a lot of the properties around the city areas.

Mr. Muller: I am speaking of rural land.

Mr. WALSH: The position is the same in regard to rural land. I think it can be said with truth that there is far too much land in Queensland not being put to its best use.

Mr. Muller: That does not apply to my area.

Mr. WALSH: It may not apply to areas such as the Darling Downs, but there is still room for improvement in farming methods. That improvement can be effected by advice from technical officers of the Department of Agriculture and Stock. A good deal of the money collected by way of land tax is given back to primary producers in the form of advice by technical officers.

There is abundant evidence to justify the Valuer-General's valuation. I regret that there is difficulty in obtaining qualified valuers. The Department of Public Lands and Irrigation has a substantial area of land under its control, approximately 92 per cent. of the total area of Queensland. That department must have experienced officers to value the land for rental purposes. That rent is eventually determined by the Land Court. Qualified valuers are also required by the Valuer-General's Department, and this department has been pirating these valuers from the Department of Public Lands. It is very difficult to prevent it. My rough guess is that the areas that have been valued up to date represent approximately half or probably more than half the unimproved value of this State.

Mr. Plunkett: That is beside the point.

Mr. WALSH: It is not beside the point. There are 134 local authority areas in the State, of which only 51 have been valued. The area of Brisbane alone comprises 385 square miles out of a total of 670,000 square miles for the State and the value in

Brisbane would represent the aggregate value of many local authority areas outside Brisbane.

Mr. Nicklin: It would not equal the aggregate of the other cities of the State.

Mr. WALSH: As a matter of fact, I should say, that it would aggregate more than all the other cities in Queensland.

Mr. Sparkes: Not the area of land.

Mr. WALSH: That shows what the hon. member for Aubigny knows. The Leader of the Opposition said that the aggregate of the Brisbane area would not equal the aggregate area of the other cities. The Brisbane area comprises 385 square miles. Bundaberg might have an area of 20 square miles or less, and Maryborough would be less in area again, but if we took the 11 cities and totalled their areas I doubt if they would be equal to the total area of the Greater Brisbane area.

Mr. Nicklin: I was referring to value.

Mr. WALSH: Well then if you take value we will suppose that there are 20 cities. The value of the Greater Brisbane area would be far in excess of that of the 20 cities outside Brisbane. If you take the total valuation for Queensland of the 51 shires out of the 134 valued, the value represents more than half the total value.

Mr. Sparkes: Not the area.

Mr. WALSH: Fancy the hon. member for Aubigny trying to classify Cape York Peninsula with the south-eastern division of the State. Take the large area of wasteland in the central part of Australia and compare that with the value of areas in the south-eastern division.

Mr. Sparkes: They have a value.

Mr. WALSH: From the point of view of local authorities or the Government it probably would not matter if valuers never got out to those places.

Mr. Sparkes: That is your view.

Mr. WALSH: The hon. member's proposal is that because half the area has not been valued—

Mr. Sparkes: You said it.

Mr. WALSH: I am speaking of value, not area. I would not say that half the area of the 670,000 square miles would be valued. I say that half the value of the State has probably been valued. To show how fantastic his statement is, let me take the Shire of Diamantina, an area of 38,000 square miles, with 20-odd people on the roll and eight ratepayers who pay £20,000 in rates. Who is going to be worried about the value of that shire? I think I have placed sufficient on record to show how futile was the argument of the hon. member for Fassifern in regard to land tax.

Mr. SPARKES (Aubigny) (4.44 p.m.): I hand it to the Treasurer as the greatest twister of figures. I am surprised that an hon. gentleman occupying such a position would make the statements he did about a property of 300 acres sold for so much in 1948 and so much in 1950. Everyone knows that that price would include all the improvements.

Mr. Walsh: Nothing of the sort.

Mr. SPARKES: Rats! That is childish.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. SPARKES: The Treasurer had a go, and I should like him to listen to me for a change.

What was the total value of the property? Why did not the Treasurer give us that information? He must know the total value. He cannot tell me than when a man buys a property he says, "This is what I am paying for the property unimproved." Does the Treasurer think we on this side are a lot of school kids?

Mr. Walsh: He is paying that for the land.

Mr. SPARKES: For the land and the improvements, otherwise the land would be valued at £100 an acre unimproved.

Mr. Walsh: You act like a school child.

Mr. SPARKES: The Treasurer tries to make us believe we are school children.

When the legislation setting up the Valuer-General's Department was passed we all thought we would have a body that would value the whole of Queensland and that we would have no further valuation troubles. We thought we would be able to say that once a property was valued, that would be the value for probate and all other purposes. The Treasurer was one of the greatest advocates of the legislation. But what happened? Where are we?

A Government Member: In the soup.

Mr. SPARKES: That is where the hon. member will be.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. SPARKES: I have the greatest respect for the Valuer-General and his officers. I have had many dealings with them and I have always received the greatest courtesy.

Mr. Hilton: It is a very efficient department.

Mr. SPARKES: I am glad the Secretary for Public Lands and Irrigation said that, because his department will not accept the Valuer-General's valuations. That shows how stupid the whole thing is.

Mr. Hilton: You are confusing issues.

Mr. SPARKES: I am not confusing issues. I am telling the hon. gentleman the plain truth.

Mr. Hilton: There is an answer to that, and you know it.

Mr. SPARKES: The hon. gentleman will have the opportunity of telling us the answer. I should like to hear it.

When the legislation setting up the department was going through the House, everyone on this side, and everyone on the other side with any brains, believed that once it was created we would know the value of all the land in Queensland.

Mr. Plunkett: A uniform valuation.

Mr. SPARKES: As the hon. member for Darlington wisely interjects, we thought we would have uniform valuation. But we have not got that at all. As is usual with the Government and Government departments, they have a craze for grabbing every penny that can from the producers. However, the Department of Public Lands will not accept the Valuer-General's valuations because it wants to extract more money from the producers.

Mr. Walsh: If the Land Court fixes the rents, what does that matter?

Mr. SPARKES: When the legislation went through the House the Treasurer said, "This will mean uniform valuations, and we will all know where we stand."

Mr. Walsh: You do not know what I said.

Mr. SPARKES: I do not know where the Treasurer stands, and neither does he.

One of my objections to the legislation is that appeals must be heard by the Supreme Court. We wanted them heard by the Land Court, but we were over-ruled. If you tell the average farmer that he will have to appear in the Supreme Court to have his appeal heard, he immediately folds up and says, "I am not going before the Supreme Court." Most farmers would sooner pay the increased taxation than appear before the Supreme Court.

Mr. Plunkett: He cannot afford it.

Mr. SPARKES: No, he cannot. I can give a good instance of that in the shire of Wambo, in which I own land.

Mr. Power: You were chairman of that Shire Council once, weren't you?

Mr. SPARKES: That is all right. I used to be chairman. But I am still the member for Aubigny. Numerous objections were sent in to the shire council but as soon as the objectors were told they had to go to the Supreme Court they all withdrew except me. Either they were afraid of, as the hon. member for Darlington said, they could not afford it.

Mr. Aikens: How did you get on?

Mr. SPARKES: I got a reduction.

Mr. Aikens: The others might have got the same if they could have gone on.

Mr. SPARKES: They probably would have. But I did not have to go as far as the court.

Mr. Hilton: Ah! You told us you did.

Mr. SPARKES: I would have gone to the Supreme Court if I had not got what I wanted. If the hon. gentleman wants to take it a bit further—why did he not go to the Supreme Court, or why did not they? That is the answer. They were prepared to settle. They would not go to the Supreme Court.

Mr. Aikens: Did you use political influence?

Mr. SPARKES: No, I did not. Apparently there is one law for the big man and another for the poor unfortunate farmer. The so-called Labour Government are always the same. They inflict all they can on the small man.

Mr. Aikens: You are right there. I am with you now.

Mr. SPARKES: They can hear me and they ought to be among the first to admit that this sort of thing is done.

The Treasurer said that half the value of the land is done but nothing like the area. In nearly every case it is the close-in land that is valued. They do not want to go into the leasehold areas, because they would not get land tax there. It is nothing more than an attempt to increase the revenue from land tax. On a previous occasion the hon. gentleman who is now Secretary for Public Lands said, "Don't be silly." But who was silly?

Government Members: You!

Mr. SPARKES: They can cry that out now but the facts show that they were the ones who were silly and when the valuation of the hon. gentleman's area is finished he will have many telling him they are more than silly. As the hon. member for Fassifern said, many shires have been valued twice.

Mr. Muller: Why?

Mr. SPARKES: Because they are getting more in land tax from the Darling Downs and adjacent areas and they are not concerned about Taroom, the Diamantina and such places. I know those areas only too well. I am interested in some parcels of land as far out as any place the hon. gentleman can mention. All those outside places have shires. They pay their way. They are supposed to build roads, too. Under present conditions they have not enough money to build them and they would not, even if the taxes were doubled.

Mr. Aikens: Are you suggesting that they revalue only those shires that have a great portion of freehold land?

Mr. SPARKES: That is, exactly the position.

Mr. Hilton: A very base suggestion!

Mr. SPARKES: That may be, but it is exactly the position.

Mr. Walsh: Would you say that was the case with the Jondaryan and Wambo shires? Is it mostly freehold land there?

Mr. SPARKES: As I said before, the hon. gentleman thinks we are school children on this side of the House. I will debate land matters with him on any public platform any time he likes. He might be able to push things here, there and everywhere about the House but he cannot twist me on land. The hon. gentleman is going to say, "What about the perpetual leases in the area?" I will say it for him. There is another case of the rottenness of the Government in wanting to lay off the perpetual lease fellow but to inflict more punishment on the freeholder. They do not want people on freehold land. Punish the men in the freehold area and extort as much as they can!

Mr. Walsh interjected.

Mr. SPARKES: The Treasurer has got to take it. He has had his go.

Mr. Walsh: I have another go yet.

Mr. SPARKES: He can have as many goes as he likes. The hon. gentleman talks about the area. He says that it is only the big men who are affected. Unfortunately the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock has left the Chamber. Would you say a man with 300 acres on the Darling Downs was a big man? No, he is a small farmer on the Darling Downs. If he has freehold land he is subject to the Government's rotten land tax. That is the position and yet the Government say that the small man is not affected. Come out into my area. I would like to take the Attorney-General around and let him see some of these people. The Government are always "Grab, grab, grab." That is why most of these things are brought in. If the Secretary for Public Lands is as enthusiastic as he appeared to be when the Bill went through the House, instead of going to all the trouble of bringing a farmer into court because of arrears of rent on 600 acres because he will not accept the Valuer-General's valuation—

Mr. Hilton: Do you want us to eliminate our land concessional valuations?

Mr. SPARKES: The hon. gentleman cannot tell me anything about concessional valuations.

Mr. Hilton: Do you want them abolished.

Mr. SPARKES: Do we want them abolished! The hon. gentleman thinks I am just a little sparrow hopping in for a couple of grains. The hon. member for Fassifern, a man who was born on the land and who has worked all his life on the land gave a very good illustration. Bring anybody you like to the bar of the House. It is impossible for him not to take improvements into consideration when he sees a well-improved farm alongside another that has never had a penny spent on it. We can prove it conclusively. The man who improves his property today is paying about 2d. an acre more than the fellow who does not. Why? Because the more you improve your land the more your values go up. It is a rotten state of affairs. The Government say, "Improve your land. Improve and produce." The more you improve the land the more you are penalised for doing it.

Mr. Hilton: You know very well—

Mr. SPARKES: I am telling the hon. gentleman! What I say in this House I can stand up to. I can show him in plain figures what I have stated today. I have silenced the Attorney-General and I will silence the Secretary for Public Lands, too.

Mr. Walsh: You did pretty well out of the Government's cheap land.

Mr. SPARKES: The department cannot point the finger at me in regard to any land that I have. I have been a good tenant and I have improved my property. What have I got for it? I have been penalised by having my rent put up more than my neighbours.

Mr. Walsh: By rates.

Mr. SPARKES: By my rents—if the hon. gentleman has any ears. You should know rates were not put up, you goat.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is not allowed to refer to an hon. member of the Cabinet in those terms.

Mr. SPARKES: I apologise to the goat.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. SPARKES: I withdraw the remark. These are the things that touch me on the raw. Although there has been a great increase in valuations I thought we now knew where we were. The Minister said that everyone will be paying the equivalent, there again misleading the House.

Mr. Walsh: I did not say anything of the sort.

Mr. SPARKES: The hon. gentleman will say anything and then he will withdraw it.

Mr. Walsh: You are the twister.

Mr. SPARKES: The hon. gentleman can have a look at his proof. The hon. gentleman will find it hard to find anything to suggest that I twisted. I wrote down the

hon. gentleman's words which were, "Everybody is paying on an equivalent basis." They are not. That is typical of the hon. gentleman. If he can say anything and get away with it, it is O.K., but when you pin him down he will wriggle and try to get out of it. No snake has anything on the hon. gentleman so far as wriggling is concerned.

I do not think that the hon. member for Fassifern is worried about shire rates. He believes that it is unfair that the land-owner should be responsible to such an extent for the upkeep of roads when other people use the roads as much as they do. He thinks that these land-owners are being unduly harrassed by the high valuation which attracts higher rates and land taxes.

Mr. Muller: And depreciates the value of the land.

Mr. SPARKES: And depreciates the value of the land.

It makes no difference whether the land is valued at \$5 or £10 an acre as far as the shire rate is concerned.

Mr. Power: What are you growling about?

Mr. SPARKES: The hon. gentleman would not know. It is no use my trying to tell him anything about the land. I am not talking about price fixing, so the hon. gentleman would not know anything about what I am saying. They would pay the same total shire rates irrespective of the valuation. The land-owners are penalised on account of the small allowance which the Government make. It is surprising when you compare the allowance granted by a southern Labour Government. Hon. members who know anything about land values will agree that they have reached the top and are now falling. Nobody can convince me that property sold six or eighth months ago would bring as high a price today.

Mr. Aikens: Wool properties will.

Mr. SPARKES: Wool properties might, but there is not the same amount of money about. We are mainly interested in those engaged in farming at the moment.

Mr. Power: Do you think they should come under price control?

Mr. SPARKES: It is a good thing they do not.

As a matter of fact, diverting for a moment, I cannot understand why the hon. gentleman did not try to fix the price of potatoes. He was not consistent in not doing that.

The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock knows that the prospect is not very bright for farm produce. Everything points to a further drop in prices.

Mr. Evans: World prices.

Mr. SPARKES: World prices show a tendency to fall.

I rose to speak because of the wild statements made by the Treasurer to prove something that does not exist. That is his usual practice.

Hon. P. J. R. HILTON (Carnarvon—Secretary for Public Lands and Irrigation) (5.6 p.m.): The remarks of the hon. member for Aubigny have brought me into this debate. My observations are made with the idea of correcting his mistakes and the false impression that he and other Opposition hon. members have given to many landholders about objections to valuations.

Mr. Sparkes: What is the false impression?

Mr. HILTON: Time and time again in this Chamber, on the public platform and in the Press, they have deliberately stated that landholders can obtain no redress or rectification of valuation anomalies unless they go to the Supreme Court.

Mr. Muller: That is the final place.

Mr. HILTON: It is entirely incorrect.

Mr. Muller: It is not incorrect.

Mr. HILTON: This afternoon the hon. member for Aubigny said he was the only one who went to the Supreme Court.

Mr. Sparkes: Absolutely.

Mr. HILTON: I interjected and he realised then that he could not get away with the stunt he was trying to pull.

Mr. Sparkes: I was not trying to pull any stunt.

Mr. HILTON: He realised, too, that his valuations were reduced.

Mr. Sparkes: Because he was prepared to go to the court.

Mr. HILTON: I do not know the figure. That does not matter. He knows that in accordance with the provisions of the Act he stated his objections to the Valuer-General. Those objections were heard. Once evidence is produced and logical argument is put before the Valuer-General, he makes a decision. The hon. member for Aubigny would have to be more logical in presenting his case to the Valuer-General than he was in this Chamber this afternoon.

Mr. Sparkes: Go on.

Mr. HILTON: If the Valuer-General or his senior officers think there is merit in an objection and that the valuer has put an excessive valuation on a property, an adjustment is made. That happened as a result of the objection by the hon. member for Aubigny. I ask the hon. member for Aubigny to admit that, and to admit also that he did not have to go to the Supreme Court.

Mr. Sparkes: The Valuer-General's Department refused it and said to me, "You have to go to the Supreme Court." Put that in your pipe and smoke it.

Mr. HILTON: The hon. member did not go there.

Mr. Sparkes: Because as soon as they knew I intended to go to the Supreme Court, they accepted my submissions.

Mr. HILTON: His objection had not been heard.

Mr. Sparkes: It had been heard. That is where you are wrong. I can show you that in black and white.

Mr. HILTON: The hon. member knows the law as well as I know it. I regret that lots of people because of false propaganda have that erroneous idea.

Mr. Sparkes: You tell the truth.

Mr. HILTON: That false propaganda on the procedure of making objections is spread by hon. members opposite. They know full well that, when the Act was amended some years ago, the Government accepted the amendment moved by the Opposition to increase the valuation exemption of objections that had to be taken to the Supreme Court. I ask hon. members to admit that that is so.

Mr. Sparkes: Your statement in regard to my case is not true.

Mr. HILTON: The procedure of valuation, of objection and of determination of objection either by the Valuer-General's Department, the Valuations Court, or the Supreme Court, is much simpler than in days gone by and is most satisfactory. The percentage of objections taken to the Valuations Court and the Supreme Court on highly-valued properties is very small.

Hon. members opposite know that. I was not here when the hon. member for Fassifern spoke. I am sorry I was absent. I was engaged with a Minister from New Zealand. Time and time again he, together with the hon. member for Aubigny, have made the most outrageous statements regarding the operations of the Valuer-General's Department.

Mr. Muller: All I said was true. I invite you to come out to the district and see for yourself.

Mr. Sparkes: If the Minister is as truthful on that as regards my statements, nobody would believe you.

Mr. HILTON: It amazes me to hear the propaganda put up by the Opposition. During the six years I was Minister in charge of this department there were repeated requests—and I presume there still are—by local authorities begging the Valuer-General to iron out the terrible anomalies that existed and put things on a sound basis.

The hon. member for Fassifern cannot deny that he introduced a deputation to me and enthusiastically supported the deputation in its request that the Valuer-General go into shires in his area.

Mr. Muller: Under exceptional circumstances.

Mr. HILTON: There is the excuse. He cannot deny it. In addition to introducing the deputation he was enthusiastic about the Valuer-General's work. We know very well that valuations for local authorities is going on apace. The only limiting factor to the completion of valuations is that there are not sufficient valuers available to do the work. Every competent valuer the Valuer-General can get has been co-opted to his staff, which has done an amazing job. Because of the provisions of the Act, which all hon. members agreed to, if the Valuer-General values a shire, a revaluation has to be made every five years to keep it up to date. That is why some shires have been valued twice. It would not be wise or advisable to alter the Act in that respect. The Valuer-General has no option but to revalue every five years.

Mr. Sparkes: Why doesn't your department accept the Valuer-General's value?

Mr. HILTON: The hon. member is confusing rentals of sheep land with valuations made by the Valuer-General's Department.

Mr. Sparkes: This is not sheep land.

Mr. HILTON: He is arguing about ringbarking improvements. He argued that because ringbarking had been carried out over a period of years that the value should not merge into the value of the land.

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

Mr. HILTON: I am going on what the hon. member said. His remarks were illogical.

Mr. Sparkes: If you can find the word "ringbarking" in the proof of my speech I will give you £500.

Mr. HILTON: The hon. member mentioned improvements that merged into the value of the land. He was talking about land rentals.

Mr. Sparkes: Not at all. Your improvements are on the unimproved value and so is the Valuer-General's.

Mr. HILTON: The Act provides that values be on the unimproved value of the land. The hon. member was drawing the long bow when he said that the House was informed on the passing of the Act that there would be no need for any other valuations. The Act provides for a valuation on the unimproved basis.

Mr. Sparkes: The Valuer-General's value is on an unimproved basis.

Mr. HILTON: It has to be.

Mr. Muller: The Treasurer said it was not.

Mr. HILTON: The Treasurer would not be so silly as to say that.

Mr. Sparkes: If, for example, the Valuer-General values a 640-acre block at £2 an acre, why does not your department accept that valuation?

Mr. HILTON: As a matter of fact, the valuations arrived at by the Valuer-General's Department and the Department of Public Lands on an unimproved basis are more or less identical. The hon. member for Aubigny knows quite well that the fixing of rentals is something altogether apart from this matter.

Mr. Sparkes: I am not talking about rentals at all. I am talking about valuations.

Mr. HILTON: The hon. member spoke about improvements such as ringbarking, and wanted to know why the Valuer-General should not make allowance for them. Of course he makes allowance for them. With land rentals, however, it is a different matter altogether.

Mr. Muller: Why was not the southern part of your electorate valued until this year?

Mr. HILTON: The Stanthorpe Shire Council made very strong representations to me shortly after I was appointed Secretary for Public Works and Housing to have its area valued, but I ascertained that other shires had made prior application and I would not do them an injustice by granting the Stanthorpe Shire Council's request. That is a candid and honest answer to the hon. member's question.

Mr. Walsh: Other areas have not been valued.

Mr. HILTON: That is so. It has been a gradual process, limited only by the number of valuers available for the work. However, the whole of Queensland should be valued by the early 1960's. The fact that local authorities are clamouring to have their areas valued speaks volumes for the equity and justice of the Valuer-General's valuations.

Mr. Sparkes: How is it that the Valuer-General places an unimproved value of £1,500 on a small selection, whilst your department values it at £2,560?

Mr. HILTON: I should like that case submitted to me before I make an answer. Of course, I would not argue that every valuer is infallible. Hundreds of objections are made to valuations, and the fact that so many of them are altered by the Valuer-General or his senior officers shows that some valuers either over-value or under-value. In fact, some shire councils have been concerned

about what they consider to be under-valuations. Only recently a local authority expressed to me the opinion that in my own area some properties had been under-valued. It was told that if it held that opinion it could object to the valuations. The Act was amended to provide for that. It is quite possible to have some disparity in valuations.

Mr. Sparkes: There is a very big disparity in the case I mentioned.

Mr. HILTON: If the hon. member will submit the case to me I shall have it examined. Of course, if the valuations of the Department of Public Lands are very much in excess of those of the Valuer-General, it would indicate that the Valuer-General may have substantially under-valued an area. That is in sharp contrast to the argument of the hon. member for Fassifern.

Mr. Sparkes: Why should you not have one valuation for everything?

Mr. HILTON: For probate purposes, it is necessary to value improvements and everything else. The Valuer-General is empowered to carry out valuations for probate and other purposes. However, his valuations for local authority purposes are on an unimproved basis.

Under the Act, the Valuer-General is not obliged to table a report to be printed for Parliament but, if it would help to educate some hon. members opposite and give them an idea of the work that has been done and the satisfaction given by and large by the operations of the department, it might be worth while to have an annual report from him, printed, published and circulated to them.

Mr. PLUNKETT (Darlington) (5.21 p.m.): It is very hard to convince people who have received assessments that land tax is equitable. Do not be misled into thinking that the tax is based on the unimproved value of land. It is based on the valuation of some improved properties within a given area.

Recently I tried to encourage one of my neighbours to go in for pasture improvement, as suggested by the Department of Agriculture and Stock. He replied, "No. I will not go in for it." I asked him, "Why not?" He said, "If I do, my valuation will be increased." For that reason he was afraid to improve his production.

What chance has the ordinary farmer with the present method of valuing land? I will tell hon. members what happened to me—and the same sort of thing happens to many others. In 1950 the Valuer-General's valuation of my land was about 100 per cent. above the shire council valuation. I do not say that the shire council valuation was correct but it was more equitable because everybody was on the same basis. Taxation is assessed on it and so are rates, but that is not relevant to this debate. Five years later the Valuer-General's valuation was

again increased by 100 per cent. Unfortunately, when objections were heard the Valuer-General was ill.

Thousands of appeals were lodged in the district. The procedure of appeal is that the farmer is called on to give his reasons for believing his land has been excessively valued. The Valuer-General says, "We will look into that." He takes the file away and six or eight or more months later the objector is notified of the reduction in valuation, if any.

The first time, I appealed to the Valuer-General himself and I was given a reduction of £240 on an unimproved valuation of about £3,260. The next time I appealed I said, "I was valued at £3,260 five years ago and I appealed and the valuation was reduced by £240. Can you tell me why it has been increased by 100 per cent. again, to £5,760 or something like that, when the value of production has decreased?" I was told that there had been land sales in the district. The sales were made on the improved value of the land. My land was valued on the amount of money paid by a man from Victoria for a property in the area. He paid £14,500 for a well-improved property. It was bought on a walk-in-walk-out basis, including stock and everything. He put a tractor on the farm and installed an irrigation plant. After a couple of years he sold the property, losing £500 on the deal. The property is on the market now. It is a very good farm and I am quite sure banks would advance money on it. I, and many people like me, have been valued on the high price paid at the time because of the high improvements on the land. The unimproved value does not matter twopence. It is too silly for words to tell me that the Government cannot get men to value the sales of all freehold land in Queensland over the last 12 years. For the past 10 years farmers in the southern part of the State have been paying increasing amounts in taxation to the Government and local authorities. Yet some farmers just a short distance away from them are still on the old shire council valuations. You cannot tell me that an Act of Parliament is anything like equitable when it pursues one man for two valuations in regard to the valuation of his land and allows another to go scot-free.

As an ordinary farmer, what redress have I? The valuation is more than £3,000 so I have virtually no right of appeal. Why not give the people an opportunity to appeal to the magistrates court in their own area?

Mr. Walsh: That was all debated. The Opposition accepted what was included in the Act.

Mr. PLUNKETT: The Minister said that the Act should be altered because certain land must be valued every five years. Why does not the Government alter the Act?

Mr. Walsh: Under the old method you did not go to the Supreme Court.

Mr. PLUNKETT: When the local authorities were making the valuations themselves property owners could go to the local court. They had the opportunity to produce evidence and the magistrate would decide whether they were paying too much or not enough. Why can we not have that today? Why say that I have to go to the Supreme Court when you know that I cannot afford to go there. We are not game to take the risk. We cannot fight the Government. If the Government contend that they are giving justice to landowners then set up a court that we can all go to. The only appeal I can make is to the Supreme Court. It means that I am just out of court and must grin and bear the taxation. Alter the Act as I suggest because if production drops many people will be in financial difficulties. Do not take away their asset. Do not impose too much taxation on them. Do not do it because somebody has been silly enough to pay more for a property than it was worth. Now that the matter has been exposed, for goodness sake do something to give these people the opportunity of stating their case where it should be stated.

Resolution 9—Department of Public Works, Housing and Immigration—agreed to.

Resolution 10—Department of Justice—

Mr. ROBERTS (Whitsunday) (5.31 p.m.): Usually I speak as the representative of slightly more than 9,000 electors of Whitsunday, but on this occasion I represent 60,000 members and 210 lodges of the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes and 1,500 Buffalo Club members in addition to my electors. I seek justice on behalf of a Buffalo club. Some years ago the Buffalo Grand Lodge, which was sponsoring this club until it became established, made application to the Licensing Commission for a license. The following reply was received on 15 September, 1954—

"I have to acknowledge receipt of your letter of 2nd instant making application for a liquor license for your premises. In reply, I wish to advise that consideration is presently being given to amending the Liquor Acts, but that there is no information in this regard which I could make available to you at the present time."

As we all know, the Liquor Acts were amended. This club made application for membership, and on 19th October last the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes received the following letter from the Licensing Commission:—

"With reference to the application lodged by you for a registered club license, I wish to advise that preliminary consideration has been given by the Commission to this matter. I am to say that there is no provision in the Liquor Acts whereby lodge organisations can be granted club licenses."

There is also no provision in the Liquor Acts whereby they may not.

The letter continues—

"It is also to be noted that Section 5 (3) of the Liquor Acts, 1912 to 1954, inserted by the amending legislation of 1954, exempts the Grand Lodge from the operation of the Acts in cases where, at any meeting of the lodge refreshments supplied to members and other guests at the expense of the lodge, included liquor, but this would be the only occasion within the knowledge of the Commission when the Grand Lodge would be in any way exempt from the operation of the provisions of the Liquor Acts of Queensland.

"The 1954 amendment made specific provision for the new classes of clubs eligible to be granted a club license. These are ex-servicemen's clubs, workers' clubs, and principal sporting clubs. Any lodge organisation cannot come under any of these headings."

The last paragraph of the letter refers to ex-servicemen's clubs, workers' clubs and principal sporting clubs. The section of the Act reads—

"Subject to this Part of this Act the Commission may grant club licenses of the following kinds, namely:—

- (a) A registered club license;
- (b) An ex-servicemen's club license;
- (c) A workers' club license;
- (d) A principal sporting club license;
- (e) A bowling club license; and
- (f) A golf club license."

Take the first, "A registered club license. What is a registered club? A club only becomes a registered club if its application for registration is accepted by the Licensing Commission. I do not know of any other method of registration.

I do not intend to be nasty or antagonistic, but I am quite satisfied that the Licensing Commission does not understand the position. That is the only way I can account for the statements in that letter. This is not an application for a license by a lodge. It is a Buffalo Memorial Club and is similar to the Masonic Club. Neither of those organisations is a benefit lodge. The Masonic Club in Creek Street and the Masonic Club in Cairns are registered, and that is all the Buffalo Memorial Club is seeking. I cannot understand why the Licensing Commission refuses to register it.

The Buffalo Memorial Club with assistance from the Order has almost completed the erection of club premises, and officers are already occupying the building. It is in Constance street, Fortitude Valley and cost £85,000. I sent down to the club and obtained a model of the building, for the information of hon. members.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! That model should not have been brought into the Chamber. It is not relevant to the debate. As

it has been brought in, it can be left there, but I do not want any interruption of the business of the House.

Mr. ROBERTS: The Deputy Premier recently brought models of houses into this Chamber.

Mr. SPEAKER: He was right in doing so. They were models of railway buildings the Government intend to build. The production of this model is not relevant to the debate. You are merely asking that a license be granted to this club.

Mr. ROBERTS: Club buildings must be in accordance with specifications. This is a four-storey concrete building, costing £85,000. On the ground floor there are bar, catering, cold-room and toilet facilities. The building has a roof garden. The top floor comprises residential accommodation. Members from different parts of the State can secure board and lodging at this club. The lodge meeting rooms are on the second floor and are up to standard. The building conforms in every way to the Act. Subclause (3) (a) says—

"A registered club license, an ex-servicemen's club license, or a workers' club license shall not be granted to, or continued to be held by, a club unless that club has a minimum membership (excluding honorary, temporary, and associate members)—

- (i) If situated within the Area of the City of Brisbane or within the Area of a Local Authority which is a City under and within the meaning of 'The Local Government Acts, 1936 to 1954' of five hundred members;"

This club has a membership of 1,500 members. I have a membership ticket here. I know that in this Assembly of 75 members there are approximately 15 to 20 who are members of the Buffalo Lodge. I do not know of any who are members of the Buffalo Club. I want to pass this certificate round. It states, "Buffalo Memorial Club, Brisbane. Mr. L. H. S. Roberts is a financial member to the date marked hereon—No. 223. Signed Ron B. Taylor, Secretary. This ticket is to be presented to club staff when required—Not Transferable. This certificate acknowledges payment of the annual fee" and across it are printed the words "Financial to 25 April 1957." Anzac Day is on 25 April each year. There is a plastic cover to the ticket and it has impressed on it, "Buffalo Memorial Club, Brisbane." There is no reference anywhere to a lodge. The fact that it was sponsored originally by the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes has nothing to do with it. There is a Masonic Club in Brisbane and one in Cairns, and other clubs round the place that have been sponsored by lodges. That is the justification for the appeal I make today.

Under the conditions as to registered club licenses we see—

“A registered club license shall not be granted to or continued to be held by a club unless all of the following conditions exist with respect to that club, namely:—

(a) As well as drink, meals and other prescribed amenities and facilities are provided for the members of the club upon premises of which the club is the bona fide occupier;

(b) The premises upon which the club is established are suitable for the purposes specified in paragraph (a) hereof; and

(c) The premises upon which the club is established are furnished, fitted, and equipped as prescribed or, in so far as not prescribed, deemed adequate by the Commission.”

I have told hon. members that we have a library, a billiard room, a snack bar, a buffet in addition to the bar, living accommodation, toilet accommodation. I go further and say that I have been in many clubs throughout this State, Australia and other parts of the world. I had the privilege of staying in the Et Gloria Lodge Club in Singapore and there is no club in Brisbane, Sydney or anywhere else that will come up to this club when it is completed. There is no reason whatever why the Licensing Commission should really refuse it a licence. It has complied in every possible way with requirements. It is a bona-fide club. It has up-to-date premises and fulfils all the requirements of the Act, yet the secretary of the Licensing Commission has written to it as follows—

“I am to say that there is no provision in the Liquor Acts whereby lodge organisations may be granted club licenses.”

The lodge organisation does not want a license. It is the Buffalo Memorial Club that wants the licence.

The letter continues—

“It is also to be noted that Section 5 (iii.) of ‘The Liquor Acts, 1912 to 1954.’ inserted by the amending legislation of 1954, exempts the Grand Lodge from the operation of the Acts in cases where, at the meeting of the lodge, refreshments supplied to members and other guests at the expense of the lodge included liquor, but this would be the only occasion within the knowledge of the Commission where the Grand Lodge would be in any way exempt from the operations of the provisions of the Liquor Acts of Queensland.”

The Grand Lodge does not want a licence for its meetings. This application has nothing to do with lodge meetings. They could be held in another place, but why should the lodge pay rent to hold its meetings somewhere else when it owns a very fine building? These people should be able to hold their lodge meetings on their own

premises in the same way as licensed R.S.L. clubs do. I have been to meetings of the P.O.W. Association, the R.S.S.A.I.L.A., and other associations at Anzac House. I have also been to meetings of the R.S.S.A.I.L.A. at Mackay. I am now merely trying to refute some excuse that might be offered for the Commission’s action. I cannot imagine any, but the Commission might say that you cannot hold a lodge meeting on club premises.

Mr. Aikens: Can anyone who is not a member of the Buffalo Lodge become a member of the Buffalo Memorial Club?

Mr. ROBERTS: I do not think so. Can any man who is not a member of a Masonic Lodge become a member of the Masonic Club?

The members of the Buffalo Memorial Club are the greatest crowd of people you could meet anywhere in the world. I suppose 95 per cent. of them are hard-working people. It is frequently referred to as a poor man’s club. There is no more loyal organisation in Australia than the Buffalo Lodge. I am not telling tales out of school when I say that the first question a candidate is asked when he wishes to join the lodge is, “Are you a true and loyal supporter of the British Crown and Constitution?” Any candidate who fails to answer that question on oath in the correct manner goes out of the door and never re-enters it. Further, every member who attends a lodge meeting must honour a toast to the Sovereign. That is the first toast of the evening. It is not honoured only on special occasions, but at every meeting. Anyone next door to the premises could hear the National Anthem being sung frequently during lodge meetings. There is not a more loyal organisation in the British Empire. I cannot see any justification for the objection.

We know that the present limit is 102. If this matter drags on long enough that number may be reached and that will be just too bad unless the limit is extended.

No-one may be admitted as a member unless he is over the age of 21, so there can be no infringement of the liquor laws in that respect.

I said earlier that I did not want to be nasty in any way and I will still try not to be. It has been contended that the Licensing Commission in their hearings are the greatest secret society about the place. The Press are not admitted.

I have read the letter. I have told hon. members everything there is to know about the organisation. I have been a member of it for 18 or 19 years. I have acted as trustee and auditor for many years and I know the workings of the Order as well as anybody. That is why I have no hesitation in seeking justice for it. The members of

the Buffalo Memorial Club do not want any more or less than what anybody else in the community has, that is, justice. I hope the Minister will see that they get it.

Hon. W. POWER (Baroona—Attorney-General) (5.53 p.m.): Apparently the hon. member for Whitsunday has not been able to understand the Liquor Act. There is no questioning of the loyalty or character of any member of the Buffalo Lodge. I know that a man must be of good character before he can join. From time to time people ask me for a reference for their admission. On more than one occasion I have given a reference and sometimes I have refused one because I thought the person consumed too much liquor and would not be a very good member. I had no desire to recommend a man when I thought that a recommendation could not be substantiated.

The hon. member referred to the provisions of the Act. They are quite clear. There is provision for a licence for a registered club, an ex-servicemen's club, a workers' club and others.

Mr. Roberts: What is the definition of a registered club?

Mr. POWER: This is not a club at all, as a matter of fact.

Mr. Roberts: It is a club.

Mr. POWER: It is not. I will put the hon. member right on that. I have very many good friends in the Buffalo Lodge. All I can say is that the Licensing Commission can only administer the Act in accordance with its terms.

Mr. Roberts: Is the Masonic Club a club?

Mr. POWER: Yes. I will deal with that as I progress, and I will tell the hon. member how the Masonic Club got its licence.

He said that an application was made on behalf of the club. The application addressed to the Secretary of the Licensing Commission, dated 2 September, 1954, reads—

“I am directed by my Executive to make application to the Queensland Licensing Commission for the issue of the full Club Licence to the Corporation of the Trustees of the Grand Lodge of Queensland—”

Mr. Roberts: That is only the name the name the deeds of the building are in.

Mr. POWER: Let us be fair. Listen to this—

“—for the issue of the full Club Licence to the Corporation of the Trustees of the Grand Lodge of Queensland, Grand Lodge of England, Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes.”

I will make the application available for perusal. I am prepared to read the whole of the letter for inclusion in “Hansard.”

The application is for a lodge.

Mr. Roberts: They are the trustees for the building.

Mr. POWER: I do not care who they are.

Mr. Roberts: I want to tell this—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. POWER: The hon. member has already made his speech. I am replying. I do not want anybody to get the idea that I am trying to stop the lodge from getting a licence. But there is no provision to give it a licence.

Mr. Roberts: Of course there is. It is in the book.

Mr. POWER: There is no provision to give it a licence.

Mr. Roberts: All that it has to be is a registered club.

Mr. POWER: I do not accept the hon. member as an authority on legal matters, nor do I pose myself as an authority on legal matters. I am advised by legal men on these things. One of the members of the Licensing Commission, Mr. O'Driscoll, is a legal man. The application is there for anybody to peruse. It is an application for a licence.

Mr. Aikens: All they have to do is make fresh application from the lodge?

Mr. POWER: No. As a matter of fact there is no provision for lodges to be granted liquor licences at all.

Let me deal with the Masonic Lodge. I have many good friends in the Masonic Lodge. The Masonic Lodge was granted a licence under certain conditions by a special Act of Parliament. It was not given a licence under the Liquor Act at all. Many other lodges were granted licences at the same time. This fact must be known to the hon. member.

Mr. Nicklin: Was provision made in the amended Liquor Act to deal with the case of the Masonic Lodge?

Mr. POWER: They had been granted licences before and special provision was made for them when the Act was amended. The Leader of the Opposition should be aware of that; he was in the Chamber at the time. I think it appropriate at this

stage to read the application from the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes Grand Lodge of Queensland to the Licensing Commission for a liquor licence. It reads as follows:—

“Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes,
“Grand Lodge of Queensland
“G.L.E.,

“P O. Box 50,
“Fortitude Valley,
“Brisbane.

“2nd September, 1954.

“The Secretary,

“The Licensing Commission,

“Brisbane.

“Dear Sir,

“I am instructed by my Executive, to make application to the Queensland Licensing Commission for the issue of a full Club Licence to the Corporation of the Trustees of the Grand Lodge of Queensland, Grand Lodge of England, Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes.

“In support of this Application, I have to advise that we are proceeding to erect a Temple and Club in Constance St., Fortitude Valley, with accommodation for country visitors and full Club conveniences, and the first portion of the work is now in the hands of the Architect, at an estimated cost of £32,000.

“The Order also has 20 acres of land outside Caboolture, on which it is intended to erect homes for aged Members and their wives, and it is anticipated that the returns from the Club, should a Licence be granted, will assist in the maintenance of these homes when erected.

“Yours faithfully,

“(sgd.) Ron B. Taylor,
“Grand Secretary.”

It is clear that the application was made by a lodge. The Licensing Commission is a judicial body and can only act under the powers conferred on it under the Liquor Act. It must interpret the law in accordance with the provisions of the Act. The Act makes no provision for liquor licences to be granted to lodges, but by a special Act of Parliament in 1941 a liquor licence was granted to the Masonic Club, the Burns Club, the Returned Sailors, Soldiers and Airmen's Imperial League of Australia, and the Labour Club. That was done by special Act of Parliament, not under the Liquor Act at all. At the time of the passing of the 1954 amendment of the Act there were 36 registered clubs for which provision of licences had to be made. The great majority of them have been granted licences, but some have not, and they have been given an extension of time because they were unable to obtain the requisite membership. Within a little time the balance of the clubs will be able to obtain sufficient membership. At the time of the passing of

that amendment I gave an assurance to the House that the Licensing Commission would give these people a reasonable time to qualify for a licence and they are being given a reasonable time. The Liquor Acts Amendment Act of 1954 provided that the following specific type of club should be given a licence—soldiers' clubs, sporting clubs and workers' clubs. What was the object of amending the Act at all? The Act was amended because many clubs were selling liquor without a licence. Some soldiers' organisations were very concerned about the position. They were anxious to have this position corrected. The Government decided that provision would be made for soldiers' clubs, principal sporting clubs and workers' clubs. No provision was made for lodge clubs.

I want to make it clear that I am not in any way opposed to the Buffalo Lodge. As a matter of fact two orders of the Buffalo lodge meet in my A.L.P. Hall two nights a week. The action of the Commission is in accordance with the law. There are 14 lodge orders. If permission had been given for the formation of lodge clubs, the result would have been chaotic. Those 14 orders have 500 branches. Those 500 branches, if their membership was sufficient, would have been entitled to apply for a licence. There would have been a club at every corner of the street.

After the Act was amended an attempt was made to form a club with headquarters in a private home on Gregory Terrace or Wickham Terrace to get a liquor licence. Liquor licences are not handed out indiscriminately. They have to be allocated in a responsible manner.

I am sure that various lodges would not want liquor licences, and no provision has been made for licences for lodge clubs.

The hon. member for Whitsunday was all at sea in some of his remarks. No injustice has been done to the Buffalo Lodge or any lodge. There is no provision in law for the granting of a licence to lodge clubs. The licence granted to the Masonic Club was not granted by the Licensing Commission; it was granted by a special Act of Parliament in 1941.

If it was intended that lodge clubs should be licensed the statutory maximum of 102 would not have been fixed. That limitation was placed on the number of clubs because we did not want clubs operating throughout the length and breadth of Queensland. The membership was set at 150 in the country and 500 in towns and cities.

All hon. members supported the legislation. They mentioned the position of the 36 established clubs, and I gave an assurance that those clubs would have an opportunity to get the requisite membership.

Mr. Morris: We did not support the legislation.

Mr. Munro: We pointed out many weaknesses in it.

Mr. POWER: Hon. members opposite disagreed with certain clauses, but they accepted the principle.

Mr. Munro: The principle of registration.

Mr. POWER: Hon. members opposite accepted the principle.

If in our opinion licences should have been given to all persons who wanted to form clubs, we would not have placed a restriction on the number of clubs. The hon. member for Whitsunday made some most remarkable statements. He said that the Liquor Act did not say that a lodge club should not be licensed. That is so. The Act does not name the clubs that should not be licensed. It lists those that shall be licensed. The hon. member did not gain anything by throwing that in as an argument. I cannot accept the hon. member for Whitsunday as being an authority on the interpretation of Acts of this State. His interpretation of the Liquor Act was entirely wrong. I am prepared to accept the opinions of qualified legal men. We had a legal man on the Licensing Commission and he was there to guide it on points of law. The opinion of the Commission is that there is no provision in the law to grant liquor licences to Buffalo Lodges or any other type of lodge. Suppose we extend the principle that far. We know how many branches of the Hibernian Lodge there are in Queensland. They are scattered all over the State, and every one of them could say, "We want a liquor licence, because we are going to establish a club." Let us be reasonable and sensible about the whole thing. The Act only provides what clubs shall be licensed and does not say what clubs shall not be licensed. We could not put that sort of thing in an Act of Parliament. How could we put something in an Act if the clubs were not in existence at the time? The only inference we can draw from the hon. member's remarks is that if clubs were formed after the introduction of the Act and their names were not included in the Bill when it was going through Parliament that it was intended that they should get licences. The intention of the Act was to prevent liquor being sold in clubs not licensed. It must be appreciated that clubs could set up anywhere and want liquor to be sold. I say that the Buffalo Lodge was not encouraged in the idea that a liquor licence would be granted to it. If this lodge has gone to the trouble of erecting something in the form of a beautiful building, a replica of which we saw in the House today, and made provision for a bar, it should have first of all ascertained whether a liquor licence would be granted. That was its responsibility. It is not my responsibility nor that of the Commission. The hon. member cannot advance the argument that because one body does something we should go outside the law and give it something.

Provision is made that liquor can be consumed at lodge meetings. There is no provision in the Act to say that any lodge cannot have liquor at any of its functions. I do not think it is the intention of a lodge to have a meeting just to consume liquor. I am a member of a Frinedly Societies' lodge which meets to discuss matters of mutual welfare and benefit to its members. Its desire is to do something for its fellow men. If a club wants to have a function occasionally round the festive board there is nothing to stop it having liquor. The law provides for it. There are not many licences left. There was the desire to extend workers' clubs in places where workers desired to have them. The hon. member for Bremer recently introduced to me two members from the Collinsville workers' club. That club has an application before the Licensing Commission. It has made application for a licence, has the requisite membership and has £8,500 to spend on the erection of a building. If the application complies in every respect with the requirements of the Licensing Commission, no doubt the Collinsville men will get their licence.

Again, the waterside workers in Brisbane have gone to the expense of erecting a beautiful building for their club, and no doubt they want a club licence. The waterside workers who are shift workers want a licence for their Club where they can visit when not picked for work, and also where they can go and obtain a meal. The purpose of the legislation is to provide amenities for workers, sporting bodies and soldier organisations. Only a few licences are left and many applications are being received. Some of the licences will have to be reserved for the principal sporting bodies. The Queensland Rugby League and the Brisbane Rugby League are spending about £250,000 on improving Lang Park. I believe also that the Queensland Cricket Association is seeking a club licence for the Brisbane Cricket Ground. Sporting bodies are entitled to club licences, some of which must be reserved until club buildings at present under construction are completed.

The hon. member for Whitsunday referred to the fact that the Licensing Commission holds its sittings in camera. This matter has been given a good deal of publicity through the Press and in other places. I remind the hon. member that the Licensing Commission differs from a court of law, where a person is charged with an offence or is a party to an action in civil jurisdiction. The Licensing Commission, however, deals among other things with the transfers of licensed victuallers' licences from one place to another. Some matters that come before it could be heard in public, but they would be few in number. Most of the matters dealt with by the Licensing Commission should not be made public. Every person who applies for a licensed victualler's licence is investigated by the police to ensure that he is a fit and proper person to hold a licence. I

could startle the House with some of the information we get from the police on the characters of people who want to become licensed victuallers. It would be very unfair to those people and their families if all that information was made public. That is one reason why the Licensing Commission should not hold public sittings.

Another very good reason why the Licensing Commission holds its sittings in camera is that the financial affairs of people who appear before it should not be disclosed to the public. Counsel appearing for litigants have given information to the Licensing Commission and said, "We do not want it disclosed to opposing counsel." I do not see why private business transactions should be made public property. When the Commissioner of Prices investigates the affairs of an organisation seeking a price for its commodity, he requires it to furnish certain information and he is bound by an oath of secrecy not to disclose it to the general public. That is only right, because if it were disclosed it would become available to that organisation's business competitors.

Those are two sound reasons why not all matters dealt with by the Licensing Commission should be made public. However, some matters might be dealt with in public. I am not going to direct the Licensing Commission what to do. It is a judicial body and I do not intend to direct it in any way.

Personally, I have every respect for the members of the Buffalo Lodge, or any other lodge, but it is unfair to blame the Licensing Commission because no licence has been granted it. It has not been granted because there is no provision in law for it. If the Act is amended to make provision, the position will have to be closely examined because a licence could not be given to one lodge or lodge club and withheld from other similar clubs, without laying the Government open to a charge of discrimination. Whatever they do, they must give all sections of the community the same rights. Every fair-minded hon. member will agree that that is a sound principle.

I emphasise that the Licensing Commission is charged with the serious responsibility of distributing the limited number of licences available. One hundred and two is the maximum under the Act. Thirty-six have either already been allotted or had provision made for them, leaving only 66 to be distributed. The 1954 amendment of the Liquor Act sets up three new classes of clubs to be given licences. Many clubs not actually formed are in the course of setting up their premises and licences must be reserved for them in accordance with the Act. Otherwise the Licensing Commission would not be carrying out the provisions and I would want to know why and so would the Government. If I found that the members of the Commission were not carrying out any provisions of the Act, I should not hesitate to recommend to the Government that they be replaced by somebody who would carry them out. However,

the Commission can administer the law only in accordance with the terms of the Act. That is why the Buffalo Lodge has been refused a licence. I repeat that it was the lodge that made the application. No provision for it is contained in the Act, and that applies to any other lodge than those brought in by special Act of Parliament in 1941. If the Government decide at a later stage to amend the Act it must be remembered that there are 14 principal lodges with 500 branches.

Mr. Pizzev: You would only give it to the Grand Lodge, the same way as you treat football clubs. It is only given to the headquarters.

Mr. POWER: That is a different thing altogether. The hon. member for Isis would be the first to complain because the headquarters would be in Brisbane and Brisbane would be the area to get it.

Mr. Coburn: That applies to all sporting bodies.

Mr. POWER: No, it does not.

Mr. Pizzev: Yes it does.

Mr. POWER: It does not apply at all.

Mr. Pizzev: Tell me one outside sporting club that has a licence.

Mr. POWER: I have no time to argue.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. POWER: If the Government decided to vary the Act to make provision for the granting of licences to lodges it must be remembered that there are 500 of them that could apply. Hotelkeepers have a responsibility to provide accommodation. The Commission have served notices on a number of hotels to bring their accommodation to the required standard. If an unlimited number of licences were granted it would impose a severe hardship on hotels.

Mr. Pizzev: Nobody is suggesting that.

Mr. POWER: The hon. member is quibbling as usual. He did not make a speech.

Mr. Sparkes: You jumped up ahead of him.

Mr. POWER: The hon. member for Aubigny was asleep.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. POWER: The hotels are being called upon to provide a better service, hot and cold water in bedrooms and generally improved accommodation. High pressure is being applied. From the reports of the Licensing Commission the boarding-house side of hotels does not pay and must be carried by the bar trade. If unlimited numbers of clubs throughout Queensland were granted liquor licences hotels would deteriorate.

The whole position of hotels in the State has been very closely examined by the Licensing Commission. Additional inspectors have been appointed. Notices are being served to carry out repairs and to provide additional accommodation. We called tenders for another hotel at Mt. Isa, one of the most prosperous towns in Queensland, but we did not receive any. Tenders were called for another hotel at Babinda but again none was received. We called tenders for a hotel of a certain size at Mirriwinni. We called tenders for a hotel on Magnetic Island. The owner of a guest house there said that he was prepared to build a place on the side of his guest house. Provision is made when calling tenders that they must provide a certain amount of accommodation in addition to the accommodation for the staff. We called tenders for a hotel on the South Coast. We were told it would be about £1,000,000 or £1,500,000. Curtailed plans have been submitted and the building will cost about £250,000. It is difficult to get hotels built. Accommodation must be provided and improvements must be carried out where necessary. Some common-sense principle must apply when dealing with these matters. If we were to have clubs with licences all over the State it would have a detrimental effect on the accommodation provided in the various hotels. We have sent out notices asking for certain things to be done, and an examination by the Licensing Commission disclosed that many hotels were not in a position to comply forthwith with the demands made on them, and we have had to allow them to do them in stages. Many members have had representations from hotelkeepers on these matters. They are entitled to make their submissions. I can assure the House that the Commission has done an excellent job. It has been subjected to a good deal of abuse and unfair and unwarranted criticism by many people. Mr. Byrne is a man whose integrity is beyond question. That applies to every other member of the Commission.

I say in conclusion that the Commission can only administer the law as it is.

Resolution 10—Department of Justice—agreed to.

Resolution 11—Department of the Treasurer—

Hon. E. J. WALSH (Bundaberg—Treasurer) (7.48 p.m.): I wish to make a few observations on this Resolution regarding the relationship between local authorities and the Treasury Department which comes under the jurisdiction of the Treasury. I shall refer to one or two instances regarding the valuation of lands for local authority purposes, but I shall not go over the field of valuations generally. There have been many requests from local authorities throughout the State for the services of an officer of the Valuer-General's Department to carry out valuations for the shire or the City Council in order that they may get, what I described earlier, as an equitable valuation in order to

bring about a more uniform value of properties within the local authority area. Many of the local authorities have frankly indicated that rather than employ private valuers they would sooner carry on under the difficulties that confront them today and wait till an officer of the Valuer-General's Department was available to carry out their valuations. In a few instances the Valuer-General to meet circumstances of emergency did agree to interrupt his programme in order that his officers could value areas within a particular local authority area.

I shall cite one or two examples to show the difficulties when local authorities employ private valuers. Subsequently they have approached the Valuer-General for the services of an officer to correct the anomalies in valuations of those private valuers.

Mr. Sparkes: What Estimates are you discussing now?

Mr. WALSH: The Treasurer's Estimates.

Mr. Sparkes: You ought to know you cannot talk about valuations.

Mr. WALSH: Mr. Speaker, I take it you will be the judge and will decide whether I am out of order. My statements now refer to valuation of lands for local-authority purposes and nothing else.

I shall have an opportunity later of dealing with the hon. member for Aubigny. He forgets that I have the last say tonight. He may not be too pleased about that.

In my opinion I am quite in order in making these statements and the Speaker will interrupt me if I am not. I refer only to local government matters.

In one case two valuations were made in successive years by independent valuers. These valuations resulted in widespread dissatisfaction with both the council and the ratepayers. The Valuer-General was called upon to make a third valuation, which he did, to the satisfaction of all concerned. I know that does not please the hon. member for Aubigny.

Mr. Sparkes: It does. That is what I suggested to the Secretary for Public Lands and Irrigation.

Mr. WALSH: Much the same thing happened in a large city. The Council engaged a valuer who increased the subsisting valuations by approximately 50 per cent. The Council rejected the valuation and caused a fresh one to be made by another valuer.

Mr. Plunkett: What year was that?

Mr. WALSH: He produced a valuation giving an increase over the subsisting valuation of less than 20 per cent. This valuation by law had to be accepted by the Council, but it was not long before the Council discovered it had certain rights when the valuation was less than half what it should have

been. They made application to the Valuer-General. Allotments valued at £30 and £40 were selling for upwards of £200.

Mr. Plunkett: How long ago was that?

Mr. WALSH: It could not properly function on the then statutory maximum rate in the £1.

Again the valuer was called in to do the right thing. He weathered a storm of abuse from all sides with conspicuous success.

The Valuer-General has many similar cases before him. The hon. member for Darlington persists in asking, "How long ago was that?"

Mr. Nicklin: Answer him.

Mr. WALSH: The case I am about to quote happened this year. Is that recent enough for the hon. member?

Mr. Plunkett: The shire council employed their own valuer?

Mr. WALSH: The shire council engaged a valuer in private practice to value this area. I have referred to this case in the Chamber on two previous occasions. The valuer submitted a total valuation for the area of £200,000 which exceeded the subsisting valuation made in 1948 by approximately £20,000. The 1948 valuation was made by resolution of the then council—a book valuation, whatever that may mean. The Council got the valuation of £200,000 and it requested the valuer to review his figures. This he did and within a few days he produced an amended valuation of nearly £600,000.

Mr. Nicklin: You told us this before the dinner adjournment.

Mr. WALSH: The increase was more than 200 per cent. Of course I mentioned it before the dinner adjournment, but I am now elaborating on my passing reference to it. It came to my notice as Minister in charge of the Local Government Department. I should like to assist the Council, but unfortunately I do not think I am able to do so.

Mr. Plunkett: 1948?

Mr. WALSH: No, this year. Ask the hon. member for Mirani. He would know where it is; it is not far away from his electorate.

Mr. Evans: Not Pioneer?

Mr. WALSH: It is not Pioneer. The mere fact that I made passing reference to this before does not prevent me from giving a full outline of the case now. I realise that when I give the full facts of the case the Leader of the Opposition will have a greater appreciation of the services rendered to local authorities by the Valuer-General. Proceeding with this case: the council adopted the amended valuation and

the aftermath was a flood of appeals. Twenty-two per cent. of the appellants compromised out of court. At the initial sittings of the court one appeal was heard and allowed. For the information of the hon. members for Aubigny and Fassifern might I tell them that the gentleman who was engaged to appear on behalf of the appellant was not a legal man. He was a man well versed in the principles of valuation. I am impressing that point in view of the cheap propaganda indulged in before the dinner adjournment that the ratepayer or the taxpayer would be engaged in so much legal expense in fighting these particular cases. I am stating that the valuer was a well-known man, Mr. Cecil Carmody. He went down to the particular shire area, understanding the principles of valuation. He is recognised as one of the most efficient valuers in the State. He appeared for the applicant. What happened? The council engaged another valuer and provided legal assistance to defend the valuations in a selected number of cases. Some three weeks before the court resumed the valuer withdrew and a third valuer was engaged. After two days of court hearing the council came to the conclusion that matters were not progressing favourably and the defence in the remaining cases was entrusted to the clerk of the shire. The appeals were resolved in favour of the appellants and the balance settled on the best terms the council was able to secure. The overall valuation of nearly £600,000 was cut by £120,000 and the council had to refund £7,000 in overpaid rates.

Mr. Plunkett: According to your Acts.

Mr. WALSH: I shall come back to the hon. member when I have outlined this case. Over 50 per cent. of the ratepayers who did not appeal got no reduction; 20 per cent. of the ratepayers who appealed had their valuations reduced by compromise up to 24 per cent.; 31 per cent. had their valuations almost halved. We see the most glaring anomalies which resulted in an inequitable distribution of the rate liability. That is the point I want to make. The hon. member for Aubigny talked about my capacity to twist words and figures.

Mr. Sparkes: You are happy if nobody can reply to you.

Mr. WALSH: I made it clear that the purpose of the Valuer-General's valuation was to see that the values were so adjusted as to provide for a more equitable distribution of rate charges.

Mr. Sparkes interjected.

Mr. WALSH: I am not accepting the hon. member's invitation to discuss matters not related to this Vote.

Mr. Sparkes: It does not suit you.

Mr. WALSH: The hon member knows I will not run away from him.

Mr. Sparkes: You are running away from me.

Mr. WALSH: Later on, when the Appropriation Bill is brought down, the hon. member will see whether I am running away. The day will never come when I "squib" on anything. He may have some of the dingo breed in him, but I have not.

Mr. Sparkes: I will be right on your heels.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. WALSH: The purpose of valuations by the Valuer-General is to ensure that rate charges are equitably distributed over the ratepayers of any area. I do not think anybody can quibble about that; it is fair and reasonable.

In reply to the point raised by the hon. member for Darlington that the refunds were made in accordance with the Act, all that has happened is that the law has been carried out. Has the hon. member any objection to that? He would probably urge the dairymen to go on strike, but he forbids the workers to do the same thing.

The local authority that I referred to previously got into difficulties because it engaged private valuers. Now it is seeking the help of the Valuer-General and the Government to get it out of the mess. It was no fault of the Valuer-General that the local authority appointed three different private valuers. If it got no satisfaction from them, the blame cannot be laid at the door of the Valuer-General. I realise the difficult financial position that the local authority is in, and I know it would be very happy if the Valuer-General could make available an officer to make a valuation and get it out of its present tragic position.

Reference has been made to the valuing of the vast tracts of country in the western areas. If the local authorities out there are not pressing for valuations, surely hon. members opposite will agree that valuers should not be sent out at considerable cost to the department. Most of the local-authority areas in the Aubigny electorate were valued by the Valuer-General at the request of the shire councils. I refer particularly to the Wambo, Jondaryan, Chinchilla, Crow's Nest, and other shire councils, which approached the Valuer-General to make an officer available.

Mr. Muller: What a shock they got!

Mr. WALSH: I have formed the opinion that no legislation could satisfy the hon. member for Fassifern. I have had enough experience of him to know that even if we allowed him to write an Act of Parliament, as soon as we gave effect to it he would start complaining about it.

It is good to know that on this Resolution, which covers a Vote of over £2,000,000, and which involves the administration of many

important sub-departments—I refer particularly to the Department of Local Government—hon. members of the Opposition seem to be generally satisfied, because they have failed to offer any criticism.

Mr. Sparkes: How funny you are!

Mr. WALSH: That is not funny.

Mr. Sparkes: It is really funny.

Mr. WALSH: It may be, of course, that hon. members desire to get on to the Vote for the Department of Agriculture and Stock and go into the cowyards for a while.

I shall content myself with placing those facts on record. They are striking evidence of the high standing of the Department of the Valuer-General and its relations with the local authorities, who recognise that in the department they have machinery that will give them fairer valuations than they can expect from private valuers.

Resolution 11—Department of the Treasurer—agreed to.

Resolution 12—Department of Public Lands and Irrigation—

Mr. SPARKES (Aubigny) (8.5 p.m.): I cannot speak on the estimate of the Valuer-General's Department now. I am restricted to the Department of Public Lands. Dingoes are a great trouble to stock and they are also a great trouble to hon. members in this House.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. SPARKES: We have people prepared to say things when they know they cannot be replied to. That is typical of the dingo.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is casting a reflection on members of Parliament and I ask him to withdraw the remark. I will not allow him to continue in that strain.

Mr. SPARKES: All right, I will withdraw it.

Mr. Walsh: You are looking for trouble.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member for Aubigny.

Mr. SPARKES: I will say this: One does not find many men who make an accusation and do not give a man a chance to reply to it. That is all I am going to say now. Perhaps you will want that withdrawn.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I warn the hon. member against casting a reflection on the Chair.

Mr. SPARKES: The Estimates of the Department of Public Lands is one of the most important Estimates that come before the House. If the Government have a successful lands policy, which means successful land settlement, most other matters fall into

place. When it is all boiled down, everything can be reduced to terms of what is produced from the good earth, in other words, land settlement.

We have heard much about land settlement. We on this side have always thought that a man should be given the right to own the piece of land his home is built on, his living area. I was amused to hear the Treasurer say just now how fair it was to all to have an equitable valuation of land giving everybody the same value and the same opportunity. The Secretary for Public Lands does not agree but lays down a different policy. He argues that we are dealing with the rental of land and not with the unimproved value at all. However, on a very small selection of about 640 acres—and that is very small in my district—the rental is fixed at 30s. per cent. I give that figure from memory. If it is a shilling or so out it does not matter because only the principle is important. The rental notice speaks only of the unimproved value of the land.

The notice sent to the selector by the Department of Public Lands is something along these lines:

“Portion 13, parish of Mahen, unimproved value of the parcel of land, so-and-so.”

Then it sets out that the unimproved value is what it would be if the whole of the improvements could be removed from the land. That is clear enough. There is no doubt about it; it is the unimproved value of that land. The Act then says that the rental shall be 30s. per cent. on that value. What do we find? You would think that all you would have to do was ring up the Shire Council and ask for the unimproved value of the particular portion of land. You do that and think the figure is right. But the Secretary for Public Lands will not accept this figure. He absolutely ignores it. How can we reconcile the Treasurer's assertion that it will be spread evenly over all, that there will be equity between all?

Mr. Walsh: You know the reason why.

Mr. SPARKES: The hon. gentleman spent quite a time on his feet but he did not give us any reason. If he could still tell me the reason, I have just quoted the case of a small block of land—

Mr. Walsh: What is the inference? That I was out of the House?

Mr. SPARKES: I do not make inferences. I say everything straight to the Treasurer's face.

Mr. Walsh: Why refer to that?

Mr. SPARKES: The Treasurer was out when I made this statement. Is there anything wrong with that? If I want to say he has been out of the House I say it quick and lively.

Mr. Walsh: I am always here.

Mr. SPARKES: The Treasurer was not here. I will tell him what I said. I am talking about a 640-acre block of land. You are asked by the Department of Public Lands to place a value on it. The notice asks you to place a valuation on portion so-and-so, saying that it must be the unimproved value. It explains that if you removed all the improvements that would be the unimproved value. Nobody takes any exception to that. There seems to be no doubt in anybody's mind that that is the unimproved value of that piece of land. You say to yourself, “This will be no trouble. I will ring up the Shire Council and get the value from them.” You do that and they give you the unimproved value. That is the only value that the shire knows. They do not know the improved value at all; they are not concerned. Having got the figure, you then get in touch with the Department of Public Lands. When you ask what value they place on the land you find that it is nearly twice as much as the valuation placed on it by the person you are lauding. It is nearly double the value. Why is that?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is talking about the Valuer-General's Department. There is nothing about the Valuer-General's Department or local authorities in this Resolution. We are dealing with the Department of Public Lands, and I ask the hon. member to confine his remarks to that department.

Mr. SPARKES: An unimproved value was placed on the land. The Minister says, “You know why.” I should like the Minister to tell me how they arrived at the different values. It seems ridiculous to me. People like to own their own home and the land that surrounds it. It is bred in us to want to own the land that we are developing. It is argued that if we sell a freehold right to the people we will tie up all the land and we will not have as much settlement. What is the position in New South Wales and Victoria—our closest neighbours? They have the greatest amount of settlement in the whole of the Commonwealth and it has nearly all taken place on freehold land. There is a much bigger settlement of soldiers in either of those States than in the State of Queensland. The Government should hang their heads in shame.

Mr. Power: They ought to hang you.

Mr. SPARKES: The Attorney-General would like to hang me, and no doubt he could get the Treasurer to pull the string. (Laughter.) But my health is so good that I have no intention of allowing myself to be hanged. Strangely enough, we find even the little amount of soldier settlement that did take place in Queensland was nearly all on freehold land that was made available.

Mr. Walsh: By whom?

Mr. SPARKES: By whom?

Mr. Walsh: You are not suggesting it was made available by the freeholders?

Mr. SPARKES: The hon. gentleman asked a very pertinent question. The best soldier settlement developed on land made available by a freeholder who owned the Jondaryan station. Settlers were producing there before this Government settled one soldier on the land. Put that in your pipe and smoke it! No doubt the hon. gentleman will reply to that later on when I cannot reply to him. That is typical of the hon. gentleman.

Mr. Walsh: I cannot help it if you make these rash statements.

Mr. SPARKES: The hon. gentleman cannot help it if he cannot hit back. The hon. gentleman's defence is very poor. There is a saying that quickness of the hand deceives the eye and sometimes blackens it. Comparison with the other States shows that there has been no tying up of the land. Some people sincerely believed that if they gave freehold tenure they would not have good settlement. The results in New South Wales and Victoria shows that that belief is not a sound one. I do not wish to reflect in any way on the country people of Queensland, but in the main in those two southern States the land is better developed, the improvements are better, the homes are better and the people are more contented than in our own State. If the Darling Downs and other areas where there is a big percentage of freehold land are not included, the difference is more noticeable. On the Darling Downs properties the position is similar to that in other States.

Mr. Skinner: Why do they participate in our land ballots?

Mr. SPARKES: The hon. member for Somerset comes in with the lamentable interjection, "Why do they participate in our land ballots?" Because they want to get some land. Perhaps the hon. member will be able to understand that.

If this was done—I am even getting a smile from the Treasurer—

Mr. Walsh: That is the most dangerous stage—when I am smiling at you.

Mr. SPARKES: I do not think there is anything very dangerous about the hon. gentleman.

If this right was given to the small landholders, and in saying that I include those who have what the Government call a living area, the financial position would be different. Hon. members could not suggest that I am speaking about tying up big areas. The landholders in bigger areas would not be interested in it. It is the small areas that men are interested in buying, on which they can put their own homes. My rough estimate is that the Treasurer would rake in some millions of pounds. He could even show a surplus this year when he is going to show

a ridiculous deficit. In doing that he would not injure one person. The landholder could be asked, "Do you desire to freehold your property or continue with your present occupation?" If he was given the right to freehold it, the Treasurer would receive the money for that land.

Dr. Noble: A living area?

Mr. SPARKES: Yes. I have stated that. The men on the big areas would not be interested in it. There are some areas of 2,000 and 3,000 square miles of country. The properties of 200 or 300 square miles, or even 1,000 square miles, are not big properties in those districts. Those people would not be interested. They are leaseholders and will be leaseholders until the expiry of their leases. The hon. member for Warrego will know why those people would not be interested. The owner is not on the property. He has very good employees.

A Government Member: They live at the Gold Coast.

Mr. SPARKES: I would not say that. Those men have invested their money in that part of the State and have done a wonderful job. The revenue of the State has been increased by £7,000,000 as a result of the development of this country. No-one knows better than the hon. member for Warrego the hardships suffered by those men and what they have done. That applies in particular to the men who have drawn a small selection and have taken their wives and families with them. Their work has been of great benefit to the State and the Commonwealth. Hon. members who have no knowledge of the subject are prone to say, "Look at the amount of money they make." The hon. member for Somerset asked, "Why do they go in for the ballots?" Why does he take a ticket in the Golden Casket? To get money.

Mr. Plunkett: To help the hospitals.

Mr. SPARKES: I forgot that. I am very much interested in the Far North-West. I would not for a moment be interested in freehold out there. I tried to get information from the Department of Public Lands as to how many people in Queensland held living areas and the amount of country held by them. Unfortunately I was not able to get it. I think the question was misunderstood and the reply I got was that the information was too difficult to get.

Mr. Dufficy: Would you agree with Amby Downs being freehold?

Mr. SPARKES: The hon. member is coming in a long way from the West. That property is situated a little bit west from Roma, and not in the country I am speaking about. It is in a totally different area. It is almost in the 20-inch rainfall belt and that is not the area I refer to.

Mr. Dufficy: Would you agree with it?

Mr. SPARKES: I know all about Amby Downs.

Mr. Dufficy: Do you agree with Amby Downs being freehold?

Mr. SPARKES: I do not think there is any leasehold left.

Mr. Dufficy: It is all freehold.

Mr. SPARKES: Yet the hon. member asked if I would agree.

Mr. Dufficy: Would you agree with it being freehold?

Mr. SPARKES: If the Government wanted to resume Amby Downs as they made out they would when they resumed 2,000,000 acres of much better land than Amby Downs—

Mr. Dufficy: What would be the compensation paid if the Government resumed it?

Mr. SPARKES: It would not be anything like the compensation on the 2,000,000 acres they resumed in the Dalby area. It would not be in the race with some of the places in New South Wales.

Mr. Dufficy: It would be substantial.

Mr. SPARKES: Of course it would be. The same people who have Amby Downs have a property near Goondiwindi and I should imagine they would give Amby Downs to retain that one. The hon. member has picked out one place but he could have picked another one which does not now exist but which was at one time one of the biggest freeholds in Queensland. Amby Downs is not what I am driving at. I am getting at the man on the small area who has been told that he has a living area. Let me ask the hon. member for Warrego a question.

Mr. Dufficy: You are not entitled to ask me a question.

Mr. SPARKES: Would not the hon. member be agreeable to the man on the small area having the right to freehold it? I believe the hon. member might say "Yes." He knows something of the hardships the small selectors have had in the West. I know, too, that he agrees that they have done a mighty job. I am putting up a case for these people to own their own land. That will give the Treasurer a fairly large sum and will save him from worrying about deficits. He has told us that things will get worse than they are, and most of us agree with him. I make no secret of the fact that I regard land tax as a rotten tax. The most unfair part of it is that it can be imposed on a man who has lost money during the year. Further, it has not brought about the cutting up of the large estates. If all the people for whom I am putting up a case were brought into the field of land taxation, however, the Treasurer would get more revenue. Further, the burden of land

taxation would be spread over more shoulders than it is today, and it would be lighter on each man for that reason.

I have given this matter a great deal of thought. It has been brought to my notice time and time again. I sell stud cattle, and consequently have many visitors buying stock. I am fortunate in being able to grow almost anything in my garden, frosts being my only worry. When these visitors come to my place the womenfolk invariably have a stroll round the garden. The first thing a woman says is, "What a lovely garden you have." We cannot grow these things where we are." Then the man says, "I can't afford to worry about a garden, because I do not know how long I will be on my property."

A Government Member: They are on perpetual lease.

Mr. SPARKES: They still have not a freehold title. From time immemorial Englishmen have said, "This is my home; this is my castle." People should be given the right to own their own properties. If you drive over the Darling Downs you see some very nice farms and homes with gardens, but if you veer to the south-west to Goondiwindi and cross the border into the fairly large sheep areas in New South Wales you find homes of a much better standard than those in Queensland. There must be a reason for that.

Mr. Power: Why don't you go there if you think it is so good? Do you think it is too good for you?

Mr. SPARKES: Much as the hon. gentleman would wish me to go somewhere else, and much as he would like to beat me in Aubigny, he just cannot do it.

Mr. Power: You are the best entertainer in the House.

Mr. Walsh: I know where you should be.

Mr. SPARKES: I know where the hon. gentleman would like me to be, but unfortunately neither he nor any of his colleagues can get me there.

Mr. Walsh: Half-way between here and Ipswich.

Mr. SPARKES: I know all about that. At least I am prepared to back up my statements and that is something the hon. gentleman could not do. All he can do is stand up when no-one else can reply and say what he likes, knowing that he cannot be contradicted. He knows my opinion about that sort of thing and I do not want to repeat it.

The argument cannot be refuted because settlement is greater down South than here.

Mr. Evans: More production.

Mr. SPARKES: Hon. members would be surprised to learn that there are more merino sheep in New South Wales and they produce more wool.

Mr. Walsh: You know they grow more beef in England than here.

Mr. SPARKES: No, they do not grow such a great deal more now. Take another look at the figures. Anyway, what does that mean? How many leasehold properties are there in England. They own their own land. That is why they grow more beef. I am thankful to the Treasurer for his information. That is one reason why we want the same thing here. We could have more beef for our people and we should not have the Attorney-General worried about price-fixing. There would be so much beef that he would have no trouble whatever about it.

There may be some hon. members opposite who favour it but for some reason or other not known to me the Government will not give the small man the right to own his own land. I want to know what the reason is. It seems that nobody is anxious to tell me.

Mr. Walsh: I will tell you later on.

Mr. SPARKES: Oh yes. See? "I will tell you later on when you cannot reply." Is not that typical of what I suggested in the first place?

Mr. Walsh: You will be able to reply.

Mr. SPARKES: He will give me the chance to reply, next session.

Mr. Skinner: Given the right, what percentage of them could buy it?

Mr. SPARKES: My friend with the squeaky voice interjects again. I do not know what he wants this time. If he goes around telling people in his electorate they cannot have freehold land, he will find many who do not agree with him. I am speaking only from my own thoughts when I say there are more people with freehold land in his electorate than with land under any other tenure.

Mr. Skinner: There is leasehold land there, too.

Mr. SPARKES: Oh yes.

Mr. Skinner: What about answering my question?

Mr. SPARKES: If the hon. member will tell me the question I will try to set him right, if possible. I do not say it will be possible because it is sometimes said that there are none so blind as those who will not see and none so deaf as those who will not hear, just as there as none so dense as those who cannot take it in even when they do hear it.

If all the hon. members opposite were given a piece of land, the first thing they would want would be a freehold title.

Mr. Dufficy: That is not so.

Mr. SPARKES: Oh, you are talking about away out West.

Mr. Dufficy: It is not true in my case.

Mr. SPARKES: I should hate to offer the hon. member 5,000 or 6,000 acres of freehold land in my area.

Mr. Dufficy: It does not include me and you will admit it; is that not true?

Mr. SPARKES: I said you were different.

Mr. Dufficy: You said all the hon. members opposite.

Mr. SPARKES: No.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. SPARKES: All right, we will omit the hon. member.

Mr. Dufficy: That is right.

Mr. Nicklin interjected.

Mr. SPARKES: My Leader interjects, and I have great respect for his authority and commonsense. He says, "You will find most of them have that freehold." Probably they have, and I do not blame them for that. If they think it is good for themselves they should give the ordinary person the same opportunity. Surely there is nothing unreasonable in that.

Mr. Dufficy: All my freehold is under my fingernails because that is all of Queensland I own. You cannot deny it.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. SPARKES: I am not trying to deny anything. The hon. member for Warrego tells us that he will not own a motor car and that sort of thing. I do not think he would say that because he does not own a motor car that Bill Smith or the hon. member for Barambah should not own one.

Mr. Dufficy: I admire your motor-car and I am glad you have it.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. SPARKES: I appreciate those sentiments. If only the Government would say, "We admire the nice freehold land you have and we do not mind your having a bit of freehold!"

Mr. Dufficy: The only thing I am annoyed about is that I cannot afford a car.

Mr. SPARKES: There are many things I should like to have but I cannot afford them.

Mr. Dufficy: Exactly.

Mr. SPARKES: I have not spoken on land matters before. This is my first opportunity to congratulate the Secretary for Public Lands on his taking over one of the most important portfolios in the Government. I am sure he will handle it in the way he thinks is to the best advantage of the people of Queensland.

I appeal to the Minister to give people this opportunity. If they do not want to take advantage of it, all right, but at least give them the opportunity. If he does, he will be able to give the Treasurer a big fat cheque and I am sure he would be glad to see some millions coming in.

Mr. Skinner: Why did they not make it freehold in 1929-1932 when they had the chance?

Mr. SPARKES: I was not here then so I could not answer that. My leader tells me that they did give them the opportunity and quite a number availed themselves of it. Give them an opportunity. If they do not take it you do not lose anything; if they do you gain plenty. Probably 75 per cent. would freehold their land.

Hon. E. J. WALSH (Bundaberg—Treasurer) (8.44 p.m.): The hon. member for Aubigny will have a chance to reply later on. He has tried to create the impression that I got to my feet, had the last say, and he could not reply. If he exercises his right he will have an opportunity later on to reply to what I have said on any of the Votes tonight. When I introduce the Appropriation Bill at a later stage he can mention anything he likes, as long as he is in order.

Mr. Sparkes: You would still have the last word.

Mr. WALSH: We have seen the spectacle of the hon. member getting up tonight as he usually does if there is a gallery.

Mr. Sparkes: I don't see any gallery.

Mr. WALSH: Most hon. members know so well the cheap propaganda he tries to put over, not for the consumption of hon. members but for the consumption of people who may be sitting in the galleries. He thinks he impresses them but the people listening in the gallery are too intelligent to take heed of the silly humbug put up by the hon. member tonight.

Mr. Sparkes: Why don't you let the Secretary for Public Lands speak?

Mr. WALSH: The Minister is going to have his say. He can look after himself like I can. We have had from the hon. member for Aubigny a sample of the policy that the hon. member would advocate if his party were returned to the Treasury benches of this State.

Mr. Sparkes: What is wrong with it?

Mr. WALSH: As one who has taken every opportunity to exploit the cheap land policy of the Labour Government in this State I realise what the hon. member would do.

Mr. Sparkes: Rats!

Mr. WALSH: The hon. member would want to come in and buy up large tracts of land that he could later sell to the Government at the inflated price.

Mr. Sparkes: Ah! Poor Government.

Mr. WALSH: The hon. member has had his say. He got away with a lot of cheap sneers. He said to me, "Take it," and I sat quietly and let the hon. member go on. Let the hon. member take it now. If there is one hon. member in this House who has exploited the cheap land policy of the Labour Government it is the hon. member for Aubigny.

Mr. Sparkes: You do not know what you are talking about.

Mr. WALSH: I do not know what I am talking about? I was not Secretary for Public Lands for four years without knowing of the transactions of the hon. member with the Department of Public Lands.

Mr. Sparkes: Was there anything wrong with them?

Mr. WALSH: Yes. The hon. member was amongst those who exploited the cheap land policy of the State. I say that very definitely.

Mr. Sparkes: What did I do wrong?

Mr. WALSH: The hon. member for Aubigny used to come crying on my doorstep.

Mr. Sparkes: Never.

Mr. WALSH: At that time the hon. member was paying a miserable 2½d. per acre. Do not deny it.

Mr. Sparkes: Rats! I do deny it.

Mr. WALSH: I invite the hon. member to look at the records in this House.

Mr. Sparkes: Furthermore, that is a lie.

Mr. WALSH: Those records will indicate that the hon. member for Aubigny, having got a communication from a member of his own party, the late Mr. Deacon, wanted to make out that it conveyed to him the right to another 21 years for his lease. Mr. Deacon never promised the hon. member any such thing.

Mr. Sparkes: What did you do?

Mr. WALSH: The hon. member got his 14 years, and he got an increase in the rent too, I can assure you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The rental was 2½d. per acre.

Mr. Sparkes: It was not. That is a lie.

Mr. WALSH: Can you imagine it.

Mr. Sparkes: That is a lie. Tell the truth and we do not mind.

Mr. WALSH: I do not know whether you took notice of the hon. member's interjections, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. member said that what I am saying is a lie.

Mr. Sparkes: Yes.

Mr. WALSH: I ask that that be withdrawn.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I ask the hon. member to withdraw it.

Mr. Sparkes: Typical of the hon. gentleman. I will withdraw. I still say it was untrue.

Mr. WALSH: I say it is true; and on another occasion I shall produce the records, just as I can produce the records of the sales of the properties that the hon. member was interested in in connection with other tenants.

Mr. Nicklin: Why should the private affairs of a member be brought in?

Mr. WALSH: The hon. member for Aubigny wants to get up and put over his cheap sneers and inferences. Why does not the Leader of the Opposition keep his own hon. members in order?

Mr. Nicklin: The hon. gentleman is quoting individual cases.

Mr. WALSH: It is not my custom to refer to these things, but if I am invited and driven into doing it do not blame me.

Mr. Sparkes: You do it.

I shall show you letters from the Department of Public Lands saying that I was one of the best tenants they had.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Interjections are permissible but interruptions are disorderly.

Mr. WALSH: I am not denying that the hon. member for Aubigny is a good Crown tenant. I can fairly say that it is my practice to speak the truth. I conceded that the hon. member for Aubigny was a good tenant, but he would want the lowest possible rate he could get from the department. He has had cheap land over the years and has been able to exploit that land to the fullest extent. Despite that, he comes in here with all his humbug and suggests this Government's land policy is not in the interests of settlement and development in Queensland.

Mr. Sparkes: I still say that.

Mr. WALSH: What will happen to the landholders of this State if the Country Party or Liberal Party takes over the reins of Government? There will be a tax on perpetual leases. Did I not get that inference this afternoon from the hon. member for Aubigny?

Mr. Sparkes: Who said that?

Mr. WALSH: He said that the Government were not taxing the perpetual lessee and were taxing the freeholder. In view of the policy he has advocated tonight, why has he not surrendered his property to the Government on a compensation basis to enable that land to be used for soldier settlement? He knew he had the protection of the Government. He is making the best use of his property for stud purposes and the Government acknowledge that. If he was so interested in soldier settlement, he could have made his property available for subdivision.

Mr. Sparkes: You would have taken it if you wanted it.

Mr. WALSH: The fact that he stated we should embark on a freehold policy instead of a leasehold policy suggests to me that he is prepared to attack the settlers of this country and exploit them, as he has done in the past, and get the best price he can for land.

Mr. Sparkes: Why not give them the opportunity?

Mr. WALSH: The Moore Government, his own party, gave them the opportunity in 1929-1932, but how many landholders availed themselves of the opportunity?

Mr. Sparkes: I do not know.

Mr. WALSH: The hon. member for Marodian has said that a large number availed themselves of it. Let him consult the figures. Less than 50 per cent. of returned soldiers during that period accepted the opportunity.

Mr. Bjelke-Petersen: They would if you gave them the opportunity now.

Mr. WALSH: That suggests to me that all the wingeing and whining of Opposition members about primary producers being on the rocks has to be taken with a grain of salt. How could the average perpetual leaseholder today embark on a capital expansion policy to buy his freehold and develop his property?

Mr. Bjelke-Petersen: I am still sure they would.

Mr. Sparkes: Why not give them the opportunity?

Mr. WALSH: I shall give some concrete examples. The hon. member for Mirani is not here, but these properties are in his electorate. The two properties had areas of 250 acres. One was sold on a freehold basis for £5 an acre. There was not a fence-post on it. That person started with a capital outlay of over £1,200 before he commenced to develop his property. The other property, a perpetual lease property of the same acreage and quality of land, involves a rental of £7 10s. a year. That is all the leaseholder pays. The balance of his capital is available for development of

his property. The perpetual leaseholder would pay in rent in six years the equivalent of the amount paid by the freeholder in interest on the money in one year. That is the Opposition's land settlement policy. How are they going to get people to settle on the land?

Mr. Sparkes: You would not give them the opportunity.

Mr. WALSH: They would be like dead carcasses during a drought.

Mr. Sparkes: How many dead carcasses are there in New South Wales?

Mr. WALSH: The hon. member mentioned better homes on New South Wales properties. Those properties have been settled longer than Queensland properties. Since men like the hon. member for Aubigny who have come in to exploit the Government's cheap land policy by buying and selling perpetual leases and other leases—

Mr. Sparkes: I have never sold a perpetual lease in my life. That shows what you know about it.

Mr. WALSH: I said other leases, too.

Mr. Sparkes: I have never sold any lease. Tell me one that I have sold. I have bought them but have not sold them.

Mr. WALSH: If the hon. member challenges my statement, I will bring down the records. I still have the records. They were taken out for obvious reasons.

Mr. Sparkes: I bought plenty of land but you will find I have not sold any.

Mr. WALSH: The hon. member individually, and otherwise. He knows what I am referring to. He is interested in companies.

Mr. Sparkes: You go on to companies now.

Mr. WALSH: The companies he is interested in are extracting hundreds of thousands of pounds out of the leases on account of the cheap land policy of the Government. The likes of the hon. member for Aubigny and the companies he is associated with are doing that.

Mr. Sparkes: Not one acre of land do they own in the whole of Queensland.

Mr. WALSH: He has done very well under the Labour Government's policy. He is one of the few who should have any cause for complaint with the Government's land settlement policy. I was proceeding to say that in my four years' experience in the Department of Public Lands I took a very active interest in sales and resales of property and I instructed my officers to get me particular records without names so that I could follow the transactions through. And did I see exploitation taking place in

Crown land in this State! When the Government set out to give them cheap land those dealing in the leases ended up with greater exploitation than ever took place with freehold land. There is evidence of it in the closely settled areas. The hon. member would be the first one to complain if the Government brought down legislation restricting the rights of the perpetual leaseholder to deal with land as he thought fit. The Secretary for Public Lands will have his say.

I gave my reasons why there are district valuations. Any hon. member who has applied himself intelligently to the various principles of valuation over the years will realise that under the old Local Government Act there was the provision for certain types of leases to be valued at 20 times the annual rental. That applied to miners' homestead leases too.

Mr. Sparkes: It has nothing to do with the piece of land I quoted.

Mr. WALSH: It has nothing to do with the unimproved value of the land. The hon. member does not like it when he is pinned down. I am making the point that there was a principle in the Local Government Act that the basis of valuation for rating purposes was 20 times the annual rental. It could not be related to the unimproved value. There was a different method again for perpetual leases and a different method for freehold. Finally the law was amended to provide that all this land for local authority purposes was accepted as being the value of the unimproved capital value. In the case of the hon. member for Aubigny so far as land ranger valuations are concerned, land has been valued for rental purposes as distinct from local authority rating purposes. It could be accepted in the case of the freehold land where you get a straight-out freehold value, but in the case of leasehold, the leaseholder does not own the land. I am talking about certain types of leasehold. The hon. member knows very well that only a small proportion of the State is held under perpetual lease for grazing purposes. Most of it is held under grazing farm leases, pastoral leases, developmental leases, and so on.

I cannot proceed any further with the matter, because I am sure the Minister will have something interesting to say. I merely wanted to refute the cheap propaganda of the hon. member for Aubigny.

Mr. MULLER (Fassifern) (9.1 p.m.): I should like to make a few practical suggestions on the Department of Irrigation and Water Supply. I notice that the Estimates provide for an expenditure of £682,706 on this department, but when one reads the Auditor-General's report one is particularly struck with the way in which so much of the money is misspent. I am not now criticising the administration.

However, an appropriation of £3,357 is being made for the Commissioner's salary. I am not suggesting, of course, that that is not warranted; I believe Mr. Haigh is a very capable engineer. However, provision is made in the Estimates for 348 employees, included in which are 136 engineers in the head office and 128 in district offices.

I realise what irrigation means to Queensland, but I realise still more the good it could do if the money made available for it was spent in a businesslike way. I have two or three suggestions to make on that matter. Water conservation is so important to the State that we should follow the lead of New South Wales and create a separate department for it. Queensland's rainfall is so erratic that we should use every drop of rain that falls. If we cannot use it when it falls, we should conserve it till we can.

Up to the present, the Department of Irrigation and Water Supply has been conducted in a very haphazard way. Very little Government money has been spent on irrigation in the areas that give us most of our irrigation products. I contrast that with the vast sums of money spent on irrigation in other parts of the State that so far have given us no return at all. Within 60 miles of Brisbane there are irrigated areas producing large crops. I refer particularly to the Brisbane Valley, the Lockyer Valley, the Fassifern Valley, the Logan Valley and the Albert Valley. Then there is the Redlands district, with a different type of irrigation. Virtually nothing has been spent by the Government during the past 20 years on irrigation in those areas. However, they have spent millions of pounds on large irrigation areas in other parts of the State that so far have returned nothing.

We must have a more practical approach to water conservation than has been the case so far. Instead of having an engineer as Commissioner of Irrigation and Water Supply, we should have a commission of at least three practical irrigation men.

Mr. Hilton: Practical in what?

Mr. MULLER: Men who understand the practical side of irrigation. If irrigation is to be a success, there must be suitable water, suitable land and accessibility to markets. What is the good of producing a product if it cannot be sold or if the marketing costs are so high as to absorb the price?

In my district we carry on a tremendous amount of irrigation without the help of the department. Practical men have to make it pay. I have complained again and again that we are spending money and getting no return.

Those irrigating in the districts I referred to a few moments ago have had almost no help from the Government. They do not do that work to waste money or simply to

spend it; they do it to make a living and they have to show returns or go out of business.

I know this is Loan money and that it has to be provided for under the Estimates of the Irrigation Department. The lead has to come from the Government.

The Auditor-General's report says this—

“At 30th June, 1956, the total expenditure charged on the Mareeba-Dimbulah Irrigation Area amounted to £5,540,502.” Perhaps I am not competent to say whether that money has been spent wisely or not. So far there has been no return. I do not know what will be produced there but I cannot see how the scheme will ever pay interest and redemption. Perhaps some hon. member will be able to tell me how it will pay.

The Auditor-General says this about the Dawson Valley Irrigation area—

“The operations for the year 1955-1956, resulted in a deficit of £13,093 compared with a deficit of £10,681 for 1954-1955. The normal charge per acre was made during 1955-1956 but will be subject to adjustment in accordance with a determination of the values of land within the Theodore Zone to be made by the Land Court as from 1st January, 1955. From that date land rentals within the Zone will be assessed under normal Crown Lands procedure and separate charges may be made for local authority rates, irrigation water and drainage. No such charges were made during 1955-1956. Expenditure on operations for 1955-1956 totalled £39,313 whilst revenue was £26,220. The accumulated loss on operations, which does not take into account interest on loan moneys or depreciation was £162,985 at 30th June, 1956.

The net advances made for the construction operation of the area totalled £1,301,115 at 30th June, 1956, an increase for the year of £188,009. Of these advances £872,557 was provided from Loan Fund, £283,728 from Irrigation and Water Supply Construction Fund (from moneys originally provided from Loan Fund)”.

The point I make is that there was an accumulated loss of £1,301,115. The Auditor-General goes on to say that this does not include interest. Even though that scheme has been carried on no provision has been made for interest. The Government are losing anything from £10,000 to £20,000 annually. The scheme was launched in 1929 and as far as we can see, taking into account the amount made available, the loss on operations, plus interest, they have lost £1,680,000. It has not paid working expenses in any one year since it began. That is the sort of thing Parliament has to look at very closely.

To my mind the Dawson Valley is one of the best districts in Queensland. By and large there is no district that impresses me more. It is a wonderful area of rich agricultural land.

Mr. Coburn: What is the reason for the loss?

Mr. MULLER: The scheme was laid down without any practical approach.

Mr. Foley: It was only an experimental proposal.

Mr. MULLER: It will be experimental as long as we live and for a long time after unless it is put on a business footing. It was always experimental and the people who lived on the properties were used in the experiment. The hon. member for Belyando was one of the men who lacked the practical approach. If he wants to come into this I will tell him that he is one of the men I have in mind.

The scheme was launched in 1929. Provision was made for 60 settlers. Most of the holdings were taken up. Many of them became deserted, but were later taken up by other settlers. I went through the settlement last year, but I did not see one contented settler in the area. None of them was doing any good. The scheme was launched without any practical approach. Theodore is approximately 140 miles from Rockhampton. Crops had to be railed to the limited market in Rockhampton. Freight charges on the carriage of crops from the area virtually absorbed the whole of their value. That went on for years. The Auditor-General's report cannot be disputed. Again and again the Auditor-General has reported that the scheme was showing a continuous loss in operations.

A couple of years ago, while the hon. member for Belyando was Secretary for Lands, it was decided to increase the area by another settlement on the other side of the river, known as the Gibber Gunyah scheme. If I were Minister I would not want to employ anyone who recommended that territory as suitable land for irrigation.

Mr. Foley: You said that about the Dawson when we started.

Mr. MULLER: I do not care what other people said. I am telling the House what I said. This property is on the Dawson River; Gibber Gunyah is on the opposite bank. It is not suitable for cultivation, let alone irrigation. The way money was spent on bulldozing timber and draining one would think it was the only piece of land left in the State. There were thousands of acres of rich agricultural land available elsewhere, so why should so much money be spent on experimentation? Wise men and practical men would not experiment with that rubbish. If the Government spent £1,000,000 in a sensible and businesslike approach to land settlement they would have something to show for it. They go on experimenting—the blind leading the blind—and creating tremendous debts which will have to be paid for at some time or other. I have mentioned what practical farmers have accomplished close to Brisbane. They approached the matter

in a practical way. They found out what they could grow and they knew where they could market it. They did not go on experimenting, as the hon. member interjected. I hate to think of the amount of money that will go down the drain before men like the hon. member who interjected will wake up. That is my reason for asking the Government to give serious consideration to the appointment of a practical man to guide this department. It is essential to do something about conserving water supplies. I do not care whether it is done in the north, central or southern area, but we should expect some return for our efforts. If we continue to spend this money in the way it is being spent no-one will live long enough to see some of the schemes established in North Queensland pay interest, let alone redemption. That is a tragic state of affairs. I ask anyone who has any knowledge of the land, in agriculture or grazing, to show me how some of these schemes can be successful. It is a tragic waste of public money. It is no use the Minister's looking to engineers and vested interests in a certain district to see that the money is spent properly. That will not get the hon. gentleman anywhere. The suggestion of an irrigation scheme in any district naturally has the support of the people living there. I have found that to be true in every case. The money spent on the scheme boosts the prosperity of the district temporarily and the people who live in the area get an immediate benefit. Why should it be necessary to carry out these experiments when we can get practical guidance. I recently inspected the Border River scheme. The money spent on the Dumaresq River, according to the Auditor-General's Report, was £346,000, and all we have to show for it is a broken-down weir. The approach walls of the Bonshaw Weir will never hold. It was a good job, but the banks which it is built into will not hold. When you get a weight of water the low banks composed of sandy gravelly material flanking the wall will wash away again. It is interesting to see what the people are growing with the aid of irrigation straight from the river. Experimentation is very costly and there is no reason why it should continue. Practical men have done these things. They have shown us what we can grow, and they have done it without any great cost. The Government go on looking to the Irrigation Commissioner, who is an engineer, for guidance in these projects. We give him full marks as an engineer, but he does not understand the problems of irrigation. This is not the first time I have spoken on the subject. I have warned the Government time and time again that this money must be spent wisely.

Hon. P. J. R. HILTON (Carnarvon—Secretary for Public Lands and Irrigation) (9.20 p.m.): I regret that time will not permit my dealing with many aspects of the department's work. I shall comment briefly on some of the points mentioned by hon. members.

The hon. member for Aubigny delivered an extraordinary attack on the settlers of this State. He decried their efforts and stated they did not build decent homes. He must have been bereft of any logical argument to trot out that hoary statement. He compared the position in New South Wales and Victoria with the position in Queensland. He overlooks the greater density of population in those States and the smaller area. I challenge him to prove that settlers in Queensland on perpetual lease selections and grazing lease selections do not make as good an effort on improvements and production as settlers in New South Wales and Victoria.

It was a lucky day for Queensland when a Labour Government introduced the leasehold system.

Mr. Sparkes: That was before you were born.

Mr. HILTON: Yes, but it safeguarded the land, and the policy was further extended by Labour Governments. That policy was a guarantee against the shocking conditions that arose in Great Britain, European countries and many other countries in farming and agricultural pursuits.

Mr. Sparkes: Why mention those countries? Take the position in New South Wales.

Mr. HILTON: I mention those countries. History reveals that as a result of rapacious landlordism agricultural workers and farmer tenants were ground down. There was great unrest, and in some countries revolution because of unjust land laws.

Mr. Sparkes: The Treasurer has stated that there are more cattle in Great Britain than in Queensland.

Mr. HILTON: That is so. To establish people on the land there must be wise land laws and the achievements in Queensland are without peer. The hon. member for Aubigny has said that by freeholding land a large amount of revenue would be received. It is significant that when the Moore Government provided that opportunity only a relatively small percentage of settlers took advantage of it. The freehold terms would be more or less like rental, but the time would arrive when repayments would cease. The Crown assets by that time would have disappeared.

Mr. Sparkes: How do they manage in New South Wales?

Mr. HILTON: There is leasehold land in New South Wales.

Mr. Sparkes: But not to the same extent as in Queensland.

Mr. HILTON: The position in New South Wales and Victoria became so unsatisfactory after World War II. that hordes of land-hungry people from those States came to Queensland to appease their land hunger.

The high price of land in those States was the direct result of the dissipation of the States' assets.

Mr. Sparkes: Who caused the high prices?

Mr. HILTON: The rapacious landholders. No-one can deny that. There has been a great exodus of people from the South to Queensland. They are very happy to take advantage of the wonderful terms for land settlement here.

Mr. Sparkes: Do you not think the owner would be the best judge?

Mr. HILTON: Each and every week I receive dozens of letters from Southern people seeking information about our leasehold system and the possibility of their participating in land ballots in this State. That demonstrates the great satisfaction with our leasehold system.

Mr. Sparkes: He said most of the buyers were from the Downs and only a few came up from New South Wales.

Mr. HILTON: I am sure a lot came up and bought our cheap land.

Mr. Sparkes: You cannot both be right.

Mr. HILTON: It is significant that our land settlement policy is growing apace. The department laid down a solid foundation.

I should like briefly to reply to the hon. member for Fassifern who talked about an irrigation scheme commenced in 1938, nearly 30 years ago. He spoke in condemnatory terms of the efforts of the Department of Irrigation and Water Supply and criticised the weirs built in his own electorate. I recall him introducing a deputation to the then Secretary for Public Lands to have a weir erected on Warrill Creek. Now he stands up and condemns the erection of weirs.

Mr. Muller: I never mentioned it.

Mr. HILTON: The hon. member mentioned weirs in his own area.

Mr. Muller: You have been asleep.

Mr. HILTON: I was listening to the hon. member.

Mr. Muller: The only weir that I mentioned was the Bonshaw Weir that had broken away.

Mr. HILTON: The hon. member mentioned weirs in his electorate. Nobody can be responsible for the extraordinary floods that took place and washed away weirs and bridges. He talks about practical men, implying that the Commissioner is not a practical man. He came here from an irrigation area in the South with a good deal of experience, and from my association with him since I have held my portfolio I say that he is a highly practical man. He is an engineer with a vast knowledge of agricultural practice.

Mr. Muller: He does not know the practical side.

Mr. HILTON: My word he does. There is no irrigation system in Australia or the world, for that matter, that in the first 50 or 100 years on a purely financial basis has shown a profit. Millions of pounds of capital expenditure were written off the great irrigation system on the Murray Basin. Time will prove the value of irrigation so also will the greater population. Greater use will be made of the land serviced by the various irrigation schemes. It is true that up to date, in some areas, land holders have not made full use of the water made available to them. The time will come when the Government will have to give consideration to that aspect to ensure that the land—a lot of it freehold—will be put to full utilisation. That will come about automatically with increased population. Some of the major schemes now under way are necessary as a prelude to greater development in those parts.

Mr. Plunkett: The increased population will not be on the land.

Mr. HILTON: Of course they will if they get the opportunity. The greater the population, the greater the home market and the greater the incentive for more intense use of the land.

Mr. Pizzev: What about your soldier settlements?

Mr. HILTON: The Commonwealth Government insisted on us being a principal State when we offered to be an agent State. They refused to grant us revenue. That is a very sorry story.

At 9.30 p.m.,

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Under the provisions of Standing Order No. 307 and Sessional Order agreed to by the House on 4 October, I shall now proceed to put the Resolution under discussion and all other Resolutions not already agreed to by the House.

Resolution 12—Department of Public Lands and Irrigation—agreed to.

Resolutions 13 to 21, both inclusive, agreed to.

WAYS AND MEANS.

OPENING OF COMMITTEE.

(The Chairman of Committees, Mr. Clark, Fitzroy, in the chair.)

Hon. E. J. WALSH (Bundaberg—Treasurer) I move—

“(a) That, towards making good the Supply granted to Her Majesty, for the service of the year 1956-1957, a further sum not exceeding £40,363,782 be granted out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund of Queensland exclusive of the moneys standing to the credit of the Loan Fund Account.

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“(b) That, towards making good the Supply granted to Her Majesty, for the service of the year 1956-1957, a further sum not exceeding £33,947,463 be granted from the Trust and Special Funds.

“(c) That, towards making good the Supply granted to Her Majesty, for the service of the year 1956-1957, a further sum not exceeding £11,500,000 be granted from the moneys standing to the credit of the Loan Fund Account.

“(d) That, towards making good the Supply granted to Her Majesty, for the service of the year 1955-1956, a supplementary sum not exceeding £1,650,531 10s. 1d. be granted out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund of Queensland exclusive of the moneys standing to the credit of the Loan Fund Account.

“(e) That, towards making good the Supply granted to Her Majesty, for the service of the year 1955-1956, a supplementary sum not exceeding £1,555,556 5s. 9d. be granted from the Trust and Special Funds.

“(f) That, towards making good the Supply granted to Her Majesty, for the service of the year 1955-1956, a supplementary sum not exceeding £457,651 5s. 0d. be granted from the moneys standing to the credit of the Loan Fund Account.

“(g) That, towards making good the Supply granted to Her Majesty, on account, for the service of the year 1957-1958, a sum not exceeding £14,000,000 be granted out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund of Queensland exclusive of the moneys standing to the credit of the Loan Fund Account.

“(h) That, towards making good the Supply granted to Her Majesty, on account, for the service of the year 1957-1958, a sum not exceeding £9,000,000 be granted from the Trust and Special Funds.

“(i) That, towards making good the Supply granted to Her Majesty, on account, for the service of the year 1957-1958, a sum not exceeding £3,500,000 be granted from the moneys standing to the credit of the Loan Fund Account.”

Resolutions reported, received and agreed to.

APPROPRIATION BILL No. 2.

FIRST READING.

A Bill, founded on the Resolutions reported from the Committee of Ways and Means, was introduced and read a first time.

SECOND READING.

Hon. E. J. WALSH (Bundaberg—Treasurer) (9.37 p.m.): I move—

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

The Committee of Supply has granted the separate sums necessary for the several public services of the State.

The Committee of Ways and Means has voted sufficient moneys out of the Consolidated Revenue, Trust and Special and Loan Funds to cover the grants made by the Committee of Supply. The Resolutions of the Committee of Ways and Means have been adopted. It is now necessary to pass an Appropriation Bill, founded on the Resolutions, in order to appropriate the supply which has been granted.

As hon. members are aware, this is the second and final Appropriation Bill for 1956-1957. It appropriates moneys to supplies granted in the last and present Sessions of Parliament and covers three years, namely:

(1) For the current year, 1956-1957, in accordance with the Estimates-in-Chief which were tabled when the Budget speech was delivered on 20 September.

(2) Unforeseen expenditure which was incurred during the preceding year, 1955-1956, under Executive authority, but without Parliamentary appropriation. This expenditure is in accordance with the supplementary Estimates tabled by me on Tuesday last.

(3) For a limited period of the forthcoming year, 1957-1958, in accordance with the message from His Excellency the Governor presented on Tuesday for the Vote on Account.

The Vote on Account for 1957-1958 will provide supply for a period of approximately two months during 1957-1958 until a further Appropriation Bill is passed by Parliament in August next to appropriate further supply to enable the Government to meet its financial obligations until the passing of the Estimates and the final Appropriation Bill for that year.

The amounts appropriated in the Bill are, of course, in addition to the amounts already specifically appropriated by certain Acts of Parliament. These total £12,400,025 and are detailed in Parts A, B, C, D and E of the schedule to the Bill.

The amounts granted for the current year, 1956-1957, are contained in Parts F, G and H and are as follows:—

	£
Consolidated Revenue Fund ..	72,363,782
Trust and Special Funds ..	57,947,463
Loan Fund	22,000,000

The supplementary estimates for the previous year 1955-1956 are incorporated in Parts I, J and K and comprise—

	£
Consolidated Revenue Fund ..	1,650,532
Trust and Special Funds ..	1,555,556
Loan Fund	457,651

Moneys sought on account of the year 1957-1958 are contained in Clause 2 and are—

	£
Consolidated Revenue Fund	14,000,000
Trust and Special Fund ..	9,000,000
Loan Fund	3,500,000

These are the estimated requirements from the three funds for July and August 1957, and represent an increase of £1,000,000—in the Consolidated Revenue Fund—over the amounts appropriated in the Appropriation Act No. 2 last year for the corresponding period of the current year.

Increasing costs, including higher salaries and wages, necessitate provisions being made for this extra expenditure from the Consolidated Revenue Fund.

The amounts being expended from the Loan Fund have remained fairly static during recent years. This is due to the restrictions placed on the amount of loan raisings by the Loan Council at the instigation of the Commonwealth Government.

Loan Fund expenditure on works during recent years has been—

	£
1951-1952	23,662,458
1952-1953	21,854,057
1953-1954	20,630,240
1954-1955	20,498,178
1955-1956	21,655,139
1956-1957	22,000,000

(proposed)

During the same period the balance available in the Loan Fund at the end of the financial year has decreased from £2,319,744 at 30 June 1952 to £1,237,846 at 30 June 1956. It will be appreciated that rising wages and costs during this period has necessitated a curtailment in the volume of work.

The basic wage increased from £8 6s. on 1 July 1951 to £11 13s. on 30 June 1956, an increase of 40 per cent. I think it is safe to say that the volume of works financed from the Loan Fund decreased during this period by at least 25 per cent.

Many people are telling us how to finance our commitments either from the Loan Fund or the Consolidated Revenue Fund. After all, all that the Government can do is expend the money available today in either the Consolidated Revenue Fund or the Loan Fund. Trust and Special Funds, of course, are also provided. As I pointed out, the amounts being expended from the Loan Fund have remained fairly static since 1951-1952. It will be seen that if the figure remains approximately the same, and costs have increased by 40 per cent., obviously there must be a decline in the volume of work to be undertaken. If you have only approximately the same funds, how then can you extend the volume of work? While we are limited in revenue or loan moneys, the higher costs go on, so there must obviously be a reduction in the volume of work. You can only advance the activities of the State, whether they are loan works or services provided from the Consolidated Revenue Fund, according to the funds available to the State. Too many people ignore the fact that the Government are faced with the position where they have to cut the amount of employment within the

Government service, on works particularly, if they are to keep within the limits of the money available. That, I think, should be given more serious consideration. It is not as though it could be shown that we have substantial funds at our disposal. If that were the case there would be every justification for a demand for an improvement here or there, but it is generally agreed by those who have examined the financial position that, far from improving, our position is deteriorating very rapidly; and I should say that next year, unless there is some adjustment of the relations between the Commonwealth and the States, the picture will be much blacker than it is this year. It is all very well to suggest that these prophecies are being made to frighten people—that in the back of our minds we have the thought of resisting demands, and at the same time we might be able to meet those additional costs. The figures which I have produced—this session particularly—clearly indicate that the Government have to take serious stock of the financial position. We have had to examine the position, so much so that we, more than anybody else, realise the difficulties that lie ahead of us.

I wish to make a few observations on some of the points made by the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha during a previous discussion. One would imagine from the remarks of the hon. member that our troubles could be overcome by applying to the Commonwealth Grants Commission for some relief on the grounds that we were a State that could not function as envisaged in the Act or the Constitution. There are limitations in regard to claims to the Commonwealth Grants Commission. The time is drawing very close when the Government will have no alternative but to apply to the Commonwealth Grants Commission. Again I say that is conditional on no adjustment being made in the financial relations between the Commonwealth and the State. That means that apart from any assistance that might be given through the Commonwealth Grants Commission there is sufficient scope for the Commonwealth to recognise the necessity for making funds available to this Government to enable us to develop the resources of Queensland and thereby contribute something worth while to the economy of the nation as a whole. I do not think that anybody would say that Queensland has not the resources, if the capital is available, to enable us to carry out those works associated with normal development.

Mr. Plunkett: Have the Commonwealth Government got the money?

Mr. WALSH: I think sufficient information has been produced in this House from time to time to convince any unprejudiced person who examines the matter that the Commonwealth over recent years have been going up as far as surpluses are concerned and that they have been able to finance all their own capital work out of revenue, and

in addition that they have surplus revenues which they lend to the States, charging full interest rates although the money represents taxation on which they pay no interest.

Mr. Nicklin: Do you suggest that the Commonwealth could have raised money by loan for their works without affecting State allocations?

Mr. WALSH: I suggest that the honest thing for the Commonwealth to do would be to come in with the States and share the loans raised on the public market. That would bring home to the Commonwealth the need to examine their financial relations with the States. They are entitled under the Agreement to take one-fifth of the total raisings by way of loans.

Mr. Nicklin: Do you suggest they do that?

Mr. WALSH: Yes. If they are going to retain the taxing powers, the honest thing to do would be to share, on a formula basis, with the States the surplus revenues from taxation. That would give each State a reasonable share of the surplus money. The Premier mentioned yesterday the next point. They are in a position to give a hand-out of £800,000 to South Australia and £2,000,000 to New South Wales for flood relief, while ignoring the claims of this State. If all States got a reasonable share of the surplus money, there could not be any complaint.

Mr. Plunkett: Are you prepared to subsidise £1 for £1 money given by the Commonwealth Government for that purpose?

Mr. WALSH: Of course. That question is a waste of time. If hon. members do not know it, I can tell them now that I can talk till 11 o'clock if I want to do so, and at that time I can stand up and reply to my own statements. Proof of my statement has been produced in this Chamber in the form of correspondence cited by the Premier. It has been published in the Press. Communications between the Prime Minister and the Premier have been read and the dates of those communications have been given. That information has been repeated on several occasions. By asking that question all the hon. member is doing is keeping me on my feet and denying other hon. members time to speak.

Hon. members opposite have raised the cry that there should be a reduction in governmental expenditure. I have produced figures to show that State Governments, semi-governmental bodies and local authorities are receiving a lesser proportion of the national income today for expenditure on works than was the case 20 years ago. It cannot be argued that State Governments, local authorities and semi-governmental bodies are responsible for what might be termed inflation in public expenditure. The Commonwealth met their commitments for capital works from revenue, not loans. This year their increased allocation from revenue is

£109,000,000, and they held the States down to the same figure as last year, £190,000,000, ignoring the fact that the overall increase in costs averages 10 per cent. throughout the Commonwealth. In effect, the allocation of £190,000,000 for works expenditure is reduced by 10 per cent. On the other hand, the Commonwealth Government allocated from revenue for their capital works an additional sum of £5,000,000. Does that not indicate to hon. members that the Commonwealth Government are in a very satisfactory position and are bleeding the States and local authorities? Last year they took £10,000,000 off the amount for local authorities. On their suggestion the amount was reduced from £90,000,000 to £80,000,000. State Governments are not responsible for the cut in semi-governmental expenditure. That was the suggestion of the Commonwealth Government. Take the overall allocation of moneys for works and housing. The determination and allocation of loan money for capital works and services is not one for the Grants Commission. It is a matter for the Commonwealth to determine. Figures reveal that Queensland received the lowest amount per capita of any State. The following are the figures for 1956-1957:—

	£
Tasmania	41
South Australia ..	31
Western Australia ..	29
Victoria	19
New South Wales ..	17
Queensland	16

Mr. Heading: They do not seem to be doing too good a job down there.

Mr. WALSH: There is a gang-up between the Liberal and Country Party Government in the Commonwealth against Queensland. There is abundant evidence brought here day after day which cannot be denied. Figures incorporated in the Financial Statement as they relate to the financial relationship between the Commonwealth and the States are taken from Commonwealth documents presented to the Federal Parliament. It cannot be said that the figures are rigged or manufactured in any department in this State. They show that Queensland is getting a pretty raw deal. I know that Mr. Menzies himself has admitted that there is some justification, if taxing powers were to come back to Queensland, for Queensland getting a special allocation because of peculiar difficulties. The Commonwealth Grants Commission said in its report—and hon. members can read it—that many of the factors operating in Queensland are similar to those operating in some of the States granted substantial help by the Grants Commission. The question of any reasonable reimbursement made to the States is a matter for the Commonwealth Government; it is not a matter for the Commonwealth Grants Commission. I have some interesting figures which show

that in 1938-1939 Commonwealth taxation receipts, less grants to the States, was equivalent to 7.4 per cent. of the national income. State and local government taxation, plus grants to the States was equal to 10.4 per cent. of the national income. In 1955-1956 the figures were respectively 17.8 per cent. and 9 per cent. Thus Commonwealth taxation receipts increased from 7.4 per cent. to 17.8 per cent. while State and local government taxation has decreased from 10.4 per cent. to 9 per cent. I say emphatically that the remedy lies in the hands of the Commonwealth Government and nobody else. They hold the taxation powers and the surplus revenue.

I remind hon. members once more to disprove the point I am making that this State is entitled to some substantial help from the Commonwealth. It must be remembered that it was the Commonwealth Government that provided from revenue £92,000,000 for the Snowy Mountains Project, £9,000,000 for the Bell Bay Aluminium project in Tasmania, £15,500,000 for railway standardisation and development in South Australia and £2,500,000 for a water supply scheme in Western Australia. It was the Commonwealth Government that assisted the other States by making an additional £2,000,000 of loan money available to Western Australia for 1956-1957. The per capita figure is now £29 for Western Australia as against £16 for Queensland. There was an additional £1,050,000 tax reimbursement grant to Victoria for 1956-1957. In addition, there was a grant of £800,000 to South Australia for flood relief, a £2,000,000 special grant to New South Wales in 1955-1956 following floods in that State, and there have been special tax reimbursement grants to Victoria and Tasmania in previous years. I am not complaining about that. Hon. members opposite might say that the Premiers agreed to additional amounts being given to Victoria and Western Australia. We do not oppose any other State's getting help. Our complaint is that the Commonwealth Government will not recognise Queensland's claims. It is no use saying we have not made an application to the Commonwealth Government. If we take to Canberra a programme involving an expenditure of £31,000,000 and we are told by the Commonwealth Government that the best they can do is to approve of an allocation of £19,000,000, it cannot be denied that we have asked for help.

Mr. Nicklin: Would it have been possible to carry out a £31,000,000 programme?

Mr. WALSH: As the Leader of the Opposition will have seen from the figures submitted, we are providing this year for a total programme of over £33,000,000.

Mr. Nicklin: But not out of Loan Funds.

Mr. WALSH: That is so, but the hon. member must realise that included in that amount are moneys taken from our own

resources. All we are asking is that this State should be allowed to use for developmental works money raised from its own taxation, and that the normal capital expenditure should come from Commonwealth funds in the same way as they are financing their own works. I mentioned the other day that we hoped the Commonwealth Government would recognise as worth while, developmental works in the Mt. Isa area.

Mr. Nicklin: We all do.

Mr. WALSH: Of course we do. I shall be very disappointed if the Commonwealth Government suggest that we should accept some special responsibility for financing that project when they are sinking so much of their revenue into capital works in other States. As the development of the Mt. Isa district is of vital importance not only to Queensland but the whole of Australia, we hope that the Commonwealth Government will treat us at least on the same basis as they have other States.

I do not want to deprive the Leader of the Opposition of his right to speak on the Bill, but earlier in the evening I referred to valuations by the Valuer-General. Hon. members might remember that I referred to this subject in 1952. If they refer to page 1436 of Vol. 202 of "Hansard," they will see that I drew attention to certain valuations by the Valuer-General. For example, I quoted a case in which the Valuer-General's valuation was £1,512, whilst the owner's valuation was £3,136. Then I quoted another property that was valued by the Valuer-General at £1,148, and by the owner at £3,093. Another property mentioned by me was valued by the Valuer-General at £2,308, and by the owner at £14,532. I then referred to a property that was valued by the Valuer-General at £4,794, and by the owner at £13,338. Another one was shown as being valued by the department at £2,440 and the owner's valuation was £15,610. The hon. member for Isis interjected that they must have undervalued their improvements. The fact remains that those were the valuations disclosed in the returns submitted by the owners themselves. They were not valuations of the Valuer-General or any other valuer.

Mr. Dewar interjected.

Mr. WALSH: The hon. member for Chermide may not know what it has to do with it.

Mr. Dewar: You have already given that speech. Why give it now?

Mr. WALSH: I am repeating it because challenges were issued this afternoon on these matters. I can go back as far 1951-1952 to show the same thing. I am doing this my way. The hon. member had better not provoke me because I want to leave the Leader of the Opposition some time, anyway.

The hon. member for Aubigny said something and I said I would go into his own area. There I found one property of 451 acres 2 roods 34 perches valued by the Valuer-General at £1,920. The total sale price was £13,500.

Mr. Sparkes: Would that be unimproved?

Mr. WALSH: The owner's valuation of the land was £13,275.

Mr. Sparkes: Very close.

Mr. WALSH: That meant the improvements were worth £225.

Going further into the Aubigny area we found a property valued by the Valuer-General at £1,917. The total sale price was £13,500.

Mr. Sparkes: That was with improvements.

Mr. WALSH: Quite true. And the owner's valuation was £13,175.

Those are the instances that hon. members refuse to recognise when they say the Valuer-General goes around putting on excessive values for taxation purposes. If they cared to advocate that the Government legislate for the acceptance of the owner's valuation for land tax purposes, I could increase the State's revenue considerably.

Mr. NICKLIN (Landsborough—Leader of the Opposition) (10.9 p.m.): I am sure it is very decent of the Treasurer to give somebody else an opportunity of saying something in the House tonight. Ever since the Resolutions began we have heard nothing but the Treasurer, the Treasurer, the Treasurer. He took over the job of every other Minister and hogged the time available for hon. members to speak on this very important final Appropriation Bill.

Mr. Walsh: You know, I could have spoken till 11 o'clock.

Mr. NICKLIN: It is a wonder the hon. gentleman did not and it is a wonder he did not take another 40 minutes to reply to himself.

Being reasonable we made an allocation of time whereby everybody would have an equal opportunity to speak on this very important question. The Treasurer likes to hear himself talk and he takes the whole of the time allowed under the Standing Orders. What is the use of the Standing Orders Committee meeting and framing Standing Orders for reasonable men when unreasonable men like the Treasurer hog the whole time and leave little time for other hon. members?

The final Appropriation Bill of the session should have the widest discussion, particularly in view of the serious position of the State's finances, and even more so because the Treasurer has said that there is going to be serious retrenchment amongst

those employed on Government works. Is it not right that somebody should have an opportunity to express their views on how we might be able to obviate retrenchments? If the Federal Liberal-Country Party suggested that there were going to be retrenchments in the State there would be howls to high heaven from every hon. member opposite. The State Treasurer says that there will be retrenchments, and no doubt there will be if there is not a different approach to the State's financial affairs by the State Government. Yet hon. members sit behind the Treasurer and say nothing. Half the time they have not enough interest to come into the House to listen.

Mr. Walsh: They want to give you a fair go.

Mr. NICKLIN: Oh yes! It is a wonder the Treasurer has given anybody a chance to say something for a few minutes.

Before I examine the finances of the State and make a few practical suggestions about how to obviate retrenchments let me refer to the attitude of the Treasurer towards everything financial in the State. He is always looking for an excuse. He always finds somebody to blame. When the Government had more money than they could spend he blamed the Federal Government; when they are short of cash he blames the Federal Government. All sorts of things are introduced so that he can blame somebody else.

Yesterday we had a Dorothy Dix question asked about flood relief, in an endeavour to cover up the shortcomings of the Government in this direction. Portion of a telegram from the Prime Minister to the Premier of South Australia reads—

“Commonwealth willing to make available to South Australia on a pound for pound basis which would take into account that you have already spent a grant of up to £800,000.”

Note those words, “on a pound for pound basis which would take into account what you have already spent.”

That is the difference between the attitude of the other States and the Queensland Government. The Queensland Government are not prepared to spend a brass farthing of their own money but expect the Commonwealth Government to rush in and help. South Australia is prepared to help itself. The Commonwealth Government are prepared to give good help.

Let us have a look at the constitutional position. It is not the constitutional responsibility of the Commonwealth to restore roads and bridges damaged by floods, cyclones or other natural phenomena. Under its sovereign rights the State, or its local authorities, alone has the responsibility of building roads and bridges, and therefore has the obligation of restoring them after they have been damaged by floods, etc. What

is the attitude of the Queensland Government to damage caused by flood? They are prepared to take advantage of disasters and the misery of the people so that they can play party politics. The Treasurer made a statement that a specific amount of £10,000 had been provided by the State for flood restoration work in the Inglewood-Yelarbon area, and then commented, “Not one brass farthing had come from the Commonwealth.” This is evidence of bad reasoning. The obligation to restore the flood damage at Inglewood and Yelarbon rests directly on the State and, as far as I am aware, no Government of any State other than this most peculiar Government here would dream of making a claim for such a paltry amount as £10,000. They should have been able to find the money from their own economic resources and they should have been pleased to do so instead of howling to high heaven to the Commonwealth Government to provide the money. They could have provided the money from the generous Federal Aid Roads Grant made available by the Commonwealth. Last financial year £5,009,361 was received by Queensland in Federal Aid Roads grant money, and for the first four months of the current financial year £1,923,952 has been received.

Mr. Hilton: That is not relief.

Mr. NICKLIN: Of course it is not. There is some money that is available to the State to restore this road damage if they desire to do so. They would sooner cry to the Commonwealth Government to give them some money and if they did not get it they would not do anything about it. The State Government assumes the responsibility to relieve personal distress which arises from floods, cyclones, or other similar causes. Only in the event of a disaster within a State does the Commonwealth assume responsibility under the Constitution, and then it is only after the State has paid out money to restore services and facilities that the Commonwealth give any on a £1 for £1 subsidy basis. The Treasurer knows that full well. That is what South Australia has been prepared to do. They spend £800,000 of their own money and the Commonwealth put up £800,000 of their money.

Mr. Gair: Read that telegram.

Mr. NICKLIN: The South Australian Government found more money. If the Government had been prepared to provide an amount of money the Commonwealth would have helped. (Government interjections.) Hon. members come here and say that the Commonwealth Government are pursuing a policy of vicious discrimination against this Government, but that is a figment of their imagination. The Premier and the Treasurer might explain to us where was the basis in their last Budget for Queensland's claim for flood damage made on the Commonwealth for £170,000 towards the repair of roads and

bridges. In the South Australian Budget £250,000 was made available for the repair of roads in that State and the Commonwealth Government covered it.

Mr. Gair: We subsidise every year. That does not happen in any other State.

Mr. NICKLIN: That is another red herring drawn across the track. What does it matter if the Government subsidises local authorities. They did that before the floods. If the Government had helped the local authorities in connection with the damage caused by floods the Commonwealth Government would have covered it. The Premier has complained about the £800,000 provided by the Commonwealth Government for flood damage in South Australia. This amount was shown by the South Australian Government in their current Budget. They proved their bona fides. They were prepared to help the people who suffered tremendous damage. The Queensland Government do not care two hoots about the damage suffered by the public and local authorities in this State. They prefer to play politics. I emphasise the point that the Commonwealth Government only subsidise money already spent by the State. Queensland has not been able to get any money because this Government have not been prepared to spend anything on which they could claim a subsidy. The Premier and Treasurer know only too well that that is the only basis on which constitutionally the Commonwealth Government can assist the State. If the Government had prepared an estimate of the damage and had spent money to repair that damage, the Commonwealth Government would have subsidised the expenditure £1 for £1 as in South Australia.

Mr. Gair: They refused to do that.

Mr. NICKLIN: They did not refuse to do it. They refused to give this Government money as money had not been spent by this Government. We have heard time and time again that so much money has been spent by the State for the purpose of relieving flood distress and that the Commonwealth Government have been asked to cover it. No money has been made available by this Government.

Mr. Hilton: The Federal Minister for Primary Industry in my electorate said that the Commonwealth Government would not subsidise local authority expenditure. He said they would only subsidise money expended for the relief of personal distress.

Mr. NICKLIN: The hon. gentleman may try to drown my statement, but he knows that no money has been spent by this State. The Commonwealth Government constitutionally cannot hand out money right, left and centre unless the State is prepared to spend something. The Queensland Government have fallen down on the job.

In regard to the damage in South Australia, I point out that the Murray River flood was responsible for nearly £6,000,000 worth of damage. That is not the full estimate of the damage, because thousands of acres of the most fertile land in South Australia cannot be brought back into production for at least four to five years. That was a disaster of more than sufficient magnitude to inspire Commonwealth aid. I point out that most of that money would have to be found by South Australia and the Commonwealth Government are only subsidising £800,000 worth of damage, damage that has already been paid for by that State with its own money. If this State had been prepared to adopt a similar attitude in regard to flood damage, the money could have been recovered from the Commonwealth Government. This Government were not prepared to do that, and are now crying to high heaven in an endeavour to confuse the issue and cover their own shortcomings.

The Commonwealth Government have met £1 for £1 every claim for damage due to flood and cyclone submitted by the State of Queensland. Can the Treasurer deny that?

Mr. Gair: Only for personal loss.

Mr. NICKLIN: They have covered £1 for £1 every claim that has been made by the State.

Mr. Walsh: That is not true.

Mr. NICKLIN: The fact that the total payment of subsidy by the Commonwealth Government amounts to only £8,000 is by no means the fault of the Commonwealth Government. It is due to the miserly expenditure by the Queensland Government in their approach to restoration. In short, if the Premier and Treasurer will pay more for restoration they will get more. It is their responsibility alone. It is the Government's own fault that Queensland is not getting more in regard to flood relief.

I have exposed the sham fight the Treasurer put up in an endeavour to cover up the shortcomings of his Government. The financial affairs of Queensland are not at all bright as the Premier said. When we look at the movements revealed by the latest Treasury figures this year and compare them with the similar period last year we find that financial position is slipping very badly.

Mr. Gair: You said a week or two ago that it was deliberately weak.

Mr. NICKLIN: I said nothing of the sort. Let me compare the four months ended 31 October, 1955 with the four months ended 31 October, 1956. The deficit in the former period was £877,421 but in the latter period it was £2,918,698. Taking the deficits for the four months to 31 October, 1955, and the four months to 31 October, 1956, there was an increase in the deficit of

£2,041,277. Queensland is not alone in this respect. When we look at the latest Treasury figures issued by the Commonwealth Government for the six States for the first six months they are similar to Queensland. The deficit was £4.4 million greater than in 1956, but the expenditure was £8.4 million higher. The finances of the other States are slipping and the position is undoubtedly serious.

As the Treasurer pointed out retrenchment in Queensland is likely. That is the prospect if something real is not done to better the finances of this State. What has been done? The Government introduced various measures to secure greater revenue. The Treasurer said that he had pruned departmental estimates to the bone. No doubt he has but will the saving be to the advantage of the State? By the way some of the pruning has been done it is going to affect the revenue of the State. To quote one instance, I refer to the Department of Agriculture and Stock, where there has been pruning in very essential services and so those services are denied to the primary industries of the State. Inevitably it must have an effect on the economy. Less revenue is going to come from the State because of the check to the development of our primary industries, and the furtherance of the scientific programme, particularly in pasture improvement and things of that nature. Savings are being effected in the services of the Department of Agriculture and Stock by cutting down on petrol supplies, thus making it impossible for the officers to get out among the farmers and help them to increase production. That is not the proper way to make cuts.

Mr. Walsh: What services are you referring to?

Mr. NICKLIN: The field services of the Department of Agriculture and Stock.

Let me compare the attitude of the Queensland Government towards bringing in more revenue with that of the South Australian Government. It would be well for me to quote portion of the Budget Speech of the Premier of South Australia, which is faced with the same difficulties as Queensland. It has tackled the problem in a different way, as hon. members will see when I quote the South Australian Premier's Budget Speech. This is what he said—

"In making a careful review of what revenues might properly be increased in order to meet the State's prospective cash difficulties and reduce the deficit to manageable proportions, I have endeavoured to avoid those increases which would raise costs and prices. Particularly have I avoided those which would affect the ordinary living costs of persons of modest means. Any steep increases in freights, fares, power, light, and gas charges would be quickly reflected in living costs with consequent demands for an increase in wages.

Some increases in charges have been absolutely unavoidable, but I feel sure that if one examines the measures which have already been taken or are now proposed it will be seen that none of the additional charges should be reflected in increased prices of commodities in common use."

That was a common-sense approach to the problem of imposing additional taxation to get further revenue without in any way affecting the economy of the State by causing an upsurge in costs.

Mr. Gair: The increase in costs in South Australia was greater than that in Queensland, and they did not have a quarterly adjustment either.

Mr. NICKLIN: Irrespective of what the Premier might say, no-one can accuse the Premier of South Australia of bringing down an unsound Budget. On the contrary, it was very sound. He went on to say that his Government were very reluctant to increase fares and freights on the railways, and there were no increases in fares and freights in that State. He said also that some States had introduced a new tax in the form of taxation on hire purchase. However, he refused to do that because it would have had an inevitable effect on costs. He avoided an entertainment tax for the same reason. Finally, he said—

"All these taxes and increased charges, however, which have latterly been imposed by other States will necessarily come within the consideration of the Commonwealth Grants Commission, and this State can expect to continue to avoid them only if it makes up the difference by other charges or by corresponding economies elsewhere."

It must be admitted that that is a sound and practical approach to achieving budgetary equilibrium.

Let us examine some of the things that we have to face up to in this State, and the possible economies that can be effected. Let us examine the effect the present financial position will have on Queensland's hospital system. Our revenue from taxation for 1955-1956 was £34,197,870. Subtracting the tax reimbursement grant and special assistance grant from the Commonwealth, £24,654,600, leaves the figure of taxation from State fields at £9,543,270. That includes land tax, succession and probate duty, stamp duty, totalisator and betting tax, State Transport Facilities Act, Traffic Act, and various other licence fees.

The Auditor-General's report shows that the total expenditure under the heading of hospitals for 1955-1956 was £9,049,450. So 19s. out of every £1 gathered by the State from its domestic levies, as I have enumerated them, now goes to maintain the State's free hospital system. The State Government's contribution to the Brisbane and South Coast Hospitals Board for 1955-1956 was £3,509,812 compared with £3,007,509 in 1954-1955. No doubt it will be more this year.

Mr. Gair: You promised to continue that policy if you were in power.

Mr. NICKLIN: I am not complaining. I am stating obvious facts and I will make practical suggestions that will enable Queensland to continue the free hospitalisation scheme. If they are not adopted, the scheme will be in grave jeopardy. Hon. members opposite do not seem to be worried, but the hard economic facts may force its abandonment.

My first suggestion is that more intermediate beds be provided for the medical benefits patients, of whom there are many thousands in the State wanting beds and prepared to pay for them. If they were made available, additional revenue would come to the hospitals without extra cost.

My second suggestion is that people who come from New South Wales to occupy hospital beds should be charged for them. They would then not have the same incentive to come here. If they did not come, more beds would be available and if they did come they would be a source of revenue. I asked the Minister to find out how many Southerners occupied beds here but he has not replied. I do not know why. Why should we treat them free? Let them pay and help to preserve our hospital system.

No doubt every hon. member knows that the Railway Department is the greatest single factor affecting the finances of the State. As the Treasurer said yesterday, if we could overcome the tremendous deficit of the railways each year Queensland would be in a sound financial position. When we look at what is happening in the Railway Department anyone who has any regard for the future financial stability of the State must be indeed concerned. This was the position for the four months ended 31 October, 1955—

			£
Revenue	..	..	11,342,564
Expenditure	..	..	10,137,107
Surplus	..	..	£1,205,457

For the same period ended 31 October, 1956, the position is—

			£
Revenue	..	..	12,222,429
Expenditure	..	..	12,020,153
Surplus	..	..	£202,276

If we subtract the surplus so far this year from the surplus shown in the corresponding period last year it indicates that there has been a decline in revenue of £1,003,181. In other words, the railways are going down the drain fast, notwithstanding the fact that they have had an increase in fares and freights. The figures are the answer to the No. 1 Quiz question

that has concerned so many hon. members. Who was right in their estimate of the losses suffered by the railways because of the hold-up during the wool strike? The Premier or the Minister for Transport? I have been backing the Premier all the time and I will give him the credit now by saying that I believe he was right. In considering these figures we must take into account the fact that increased fares and freights have been in operation since 1 August, 1956, three months of the period I quoted. The estimated additional revenue from this source to 30 June, 1957, is £5.8 million, so that for the period from 1 August, 1956, to 31 October, 1956, it can be estimated that £1.58 million has been collected by increased rates. Despite £1.58 million additional revenue, there has been, in comparison with the four months to 31 October, 1955, a decline of over £1,000,000. In other words, without the increases in fares and freights the decline would have been £2.58 million. Do not forget that the railways will be required to meet an additional £312,000 by the recent increase in the basic wage. We just cannot sit down and do nothing about the position. We should be very concerned about getting business back to the railways. Of course, we realise that they are meeting severe competition from road transport, largely due to the fact that the railways are not giving the necessary service. I quote the instance of fruit traffic from the Stanthorpe district. The railways lost 8,000 tons of fruit during the season from that area. Out of 20,000 odd tons 12,000 tons are carried by the railway and 8,000 tons by road, and the proportion carried by road will increase.

That business could be won back by giving to the fruitgrowers the good service that they used to get. The majority would like to send their fruit by rail, but the department cannot run the trains to suit the convenience of growers and the trains run late and the fruit misses the market. Under the circumstances, can the growers be blamed for not sending their fruit by rail? A suggestion was made to engage an efficiency expert to examine the workings of the Railway Department. I did not agree with that. I believe that we can overcome this problem if we tackle it in a common-sense way. An efficiency expert would cost a lot of money and it is 100 to 1 that there would be trouble with the railway men; they are so used to running the railways that they would resent the intrusion of an expert. We should adopt a system of co-operation with employees of the department. There are undoubtedly brainy people amongst them and if we get the co-operation and support of the entire staff we could improve the financial position considerably. During the last election we suggested the creation of a railway consultative committee which would confer with all sections of employees and departmental heads. The results of their

efforts would be supplied to the Commissioner and the Minister and probably many thousands of pounds would be saved and a more efficient service provided for the public and instead of losing freight the department would be gaining. If we continue to lose money on the railways at the present rate the finances of the State will be jeopardised.

Mr. Duggan: I appointed a consultative committee eight years ago.

Mr. NICKLIN: We have not had much evidence of its activity. The hon. member for Cunningham made a very good suggestion—that the Inventions Board should pay a much greater reward to employees who made worthwhile suggestions. You will not get very much for a lousy 10s. or £1. If somebody suggests something that results in an increase in revenue of £10,000 a year it is worth more than a 10s. reward, and a suggestion that would save an expenditure of £10,000 a year is worth more than 25s. There are many avenues in which the service and earning capacity of the department could be improved, but nothing is done about it. Is it any wonder that the disastrous financial position of the Railway Department is jeopardising the economy of the State? We will not overcome our difficulties by merely increasing taxation. That only adds to costs and accentuates the trouble.

I come now to land tax, a subject dealt with by the Treasurer in the brief comments he made today. The Treasurer is an ardent advocate of valuations by the Valuer-General's Department and the forcing up of values of lands, because he is the chief beneficiary. He gets extra revenue from land tax and probate and succession duties and in all other ways. Having in mind the sorry state of our finances, we realise why he must press for a continuance of the tax.

The Treasurer has on numerous occasions tried to tell us that people in the country pay only a tiny proportion of the total land tax, that most of it comes from Queen Street. Exemptions from land tax were increased in 1951 and 1952, and the Treasurer has never let us forget it. He is always quoting the relief he has allegedly given to people in the country. The figures reveal the true position. The general exemption, that is, the exemption applicable to city and urban land was increased from £300 to £700, or 133 per cent., but this Government which allegedly have such a high regard for country people increased the exemption on land used for agricultural, dairying and grazing purposes from £1,500 to £1,900, an increase of only 27 per cent.

In the case of land in towns and cities the increase in the exemption was about equal to the increase in valuations, 133 per cent. and 135 per cent. respectively. In regard to lands used mainly for agricultural purposes, the increase in the exemption was only 27 per cent. against an increase of about 154 per cent. in first valuations. Hon. members know what has happened as a result of second and subsequent valuations. Values have been increased on each occasion. If they were taken into account the disadvantage to country people would be even greater.

The result of this lopsided and unfair treatment of primary producers is disclosed by the startling contrast in figures taken from the reports of the Commissioner of Land Tax. I have analysed the report since 1951-1952. Surely the Treasurer will not deny these figures. No doubt he will try to twist them.

Mr. Walsh: If I quoted those figures, you would deny them.

Mr. NICKLIN: This is the table—

" Analysis of Land Taxation since 1951-1952.

—	1951-1952.	1952-1953.	1953-1954.	1954-1955.	1955-1956
Number of Taxpayers—					
Town Lands	9,661	9,809	9,762	10,754	12,658
Country Lands	5,778	6,330	7,964	9,248	11,032
	15,449	16,139	17,726	20,002	23,690 "

Yet the Treasurer has the colossal hide to tell us nobody pays land tax. From 1951-1952 to 1955-1956 the number increased from 15,449 to 23,690. The number of people who pay land tax on country lands rose from 5,778 in 1951-1952 to 11,032 in 1955-1956. The champion twister of figures, the Treasurer, comes in here and paints the picture that nobody in the country is paying land tax.

Now let us deal with the amounts they paid, and this is important. In 1951-1952 town land taxpayers paid £682,422 and

country land taxpayers £249,432 or a total of £931,854. In 1955-1956 those figures had increased in the case of town lands to £781,041 and in the case of country lands to £589,539 or a total of £1,370,580. Comparing 1951-1952 with 1955-1956 there was an increase in the number of taxpayers in respect of town lands of 2,997 and of country lands 5,254 or, expressed in terms of percentages, a 31 per cent increase for town lands and a 90.9 per cent increase for country lands. Therefore, almost 100 per cent. more people in the country paid land

tax last year compared with four years ago. The proportion of tax paid in 1951-1952 in respect of town lands was 73.2 per cent. and in respect of country lands 26.8 per cent., but those figures had risen to 57 per cent. and 43 per cent respectively for 1955-1956. And yet it is said that the country people are paying no land tax! The Treasurer is trying to get every penny he can out of country people. He is adding a further burden to the primary producers which will detrimentally affect the economic position and finances of Queensland.

At 11 p.m.,

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Under the provisions of Standing Order No. 307 the Sitting will be extended to enable the Treasurer to make his speech in reply, after which all questions necessary for the passage of the remaining stages of the Bill will be put without amendment or debate.

Hon. E. J. WALSH (Bundaberg—Treasurer (11 p.m.)), in reply: I do not know what has been irritating the Leader of the Opposition tonight. He got up in a frantic mood when he started his speech and he complained that I had taken up so much time that there was no time left for anyone else to speak. He knows the Standing Orders as well as I do.

Mr. Nicklin: I do not abuse them.

Mr. WALSH: He will see, if he checks the times, that I rose to move the second reading of the Bill at 38 minutes past 9.

Mr. Muller: How long will you go now?

Mr. WALSH: As long as the Standing Orders allow me. The Leader of the Opposition started his address at 9 minutes past ten p.m. That shows that I took approximately half-an-hour, a good deal of which time was occupied in outlining the general position. It was removed entirely from controversial politics. The Leader of the Opposition cannot deny that. I took about a quarter of an hour in outlining other aspects of the relationship between the Commonwealth and the States, apart from my general introduction. I took about half-an-hour in moving the second reading of the Bill, and now I am limited to 40 minutes, making 70 minutes in all. However, the Leader of the Opposition occupied the full 50 minutes allowed to him, and he would have gone for an hour had he been given the opportunity. He has the hide to talk about the time that I occupied, but I limited myself to a miserable quarter of an hour to speak on matters that should be put before the Committee.

Mr. Nicklin: Your apology is accepted.

Mr. WALSH: The hon. gentleman put up a sham fight. Anybody would think I was taking something from him. If I had continued to speak until 11 o'clock and had stopped him from addressing the Chamber, he would have had some ground for complaint. I left the field to him for almost an

hour. He occupied the full time and denied any other hon. member the right to contribute to the debate. He monopolised the whole of the time. He can check the times I have mentioned with the officers of Parliament to assure himself that what I have said is correct.

It is a pity that I have to say this, but if ever the Leader of the Opposition demonstrated that he was a "little" Queenslander—and many of us on this side suspect that he is—he did tonight. He took up much of his time showing how much he supports a Government of his own colour who are discriminating against this State. Regardless of what he might say, the Leader of the Opposition knows that the Menzies-Fadden Government have embarked deliberately on a plan to discriminate against Queensland.

Mr. Nicklin: Why should they?

Mr. WALSH: That is what we have been asking for a long time.

Mr. Nicklin: What political advantage would it be to them?

Mr. WALSH: They have to nurse States such as Victoria, New South Wales, and South Australia.

Mr. Nicklin: Why?

Mr. WALSH: It is very necessary that they should, and there is ample evidence that they are doing it very effectively. I have quoted the figures before, and I intend to quote them again.

The hon. member then proceeded to quote from the Commonwealth Constitution. Anyone who has been in this House for any time realises—and no doubt many people outside realise—that there is no constitutional obligation on the Commonwealth to make contributions to State revenues specifically to meet the cost of damage by floods, cyclones, and so on. There was no need for the hon. member to quote that because we agree that that is the position; but he will agree, too, that if what he says is correct the Commonwealth are breaking the Constitution by making substantial grants to other States. What is the explanation? I have previously shown that New South Wales was granted over £3,600,000 by the Commonwealth.

Mr. Nicklin: By the Loan Council.

Mr. WALSH: No.

Mr. Nicklin: With the approval of the Loan Council.

Mr. WALSH: Not with the approval of the Loan Council, either. Let the hon. gentleman not get mixed up on these matters. These allocations by the Commonwealth are made just as they wish.

Mr. Pizzey: With the concurrence of the States.

Mr. WALSH: Not with the concurrence of the State Governments.

Mr. Pizzey: With the concurrence of the Premiers.

Mr. WALSH: Not with the concurrence of the Premiers. I will show just what grants are made available with the concurrence of the Premiers. I have already said that, as to Western Australia, the Premiers agreed to leave the matter to the Commonwealth after an examination of the finances of that State to see what additional assistance should be given. I have already said that the Premiers agreed that £1,050,000 be granted to Victoria because of the special circumstances. I have already said, too, that the Queensland Government have never objected to the Commonwealth's making those sums available to the other States. But there is no reason why we should be denied our fair share of revenue.

I have given the figures several times and I shall give them once more, this time in round figures from memory. Since 1949-1950 £3,600,000 has been made available to New South Wales. £2,000,000 of that was made available, not on the £1 for £1 basis that the Leader of the Opposition would suggest the Commonwealth made grants available to the other States, but as a straightout grant without any conditions or any obligation on New South Wales to match it. The Premiers did not disagree.

Mr. Pizzey: Because of the enormity of the damage.

Mr. WALSH: We have admitted that Queensland had nothing like the disastrous floods in the Maitland and Murray areas; but must a line be drawn and must it be said that if the damage is between £500,000 and £2,000,000 the Commonwealth will make a grant and if it is less than £500,000 they will not? Is that to be the formula?

The Leader of the Opposition said that the assistance was being given the South Australian Government distinctly on the £1 for £1 basis and that the Commonwealth gave the grant to South Australia because it had spent a certain sum before the Commonwealth's decision was made known. As the Premier outlined yesterday, all that happened was that the Commonwealth inserted the condition to have retrospective application. In other words, South Australia would benefit by an additional amount by its expenditure up to the time that the Commonwealth made the decision to make a sum available. If the Commonwealth had said, "This shall apply from the date of the Commonwealth decision.", South Australia would have got so much less than the £800,000.

Mr. Pizzey: If you gave the local authorities £100,000 we would be right with you.

Mr. WALSH: It is a pity that the hon. member for Isis does not have some appreciation of what has been done.

The Premier can produce records to show quite clearly that the Government were prepared to meet £1 for £1 all assistance from the Commonwealth Government. Let me remind the Leader of the Opposition that the Rockhampton City Council sent a

deputation to the Premier and myself. The hon. member for Rockhampton was a member of that deputation. He outlined the position and the State backed the direct application of the Rockhampton City Council to the Commonwealth. Of course, the Commonwealth Government sheltered behind the constitutional position outlined by the Leader of the Opposition. They decided that there was no power to make any grant to the Council direct.

Mr. Pizzey: And you agree.

Mr. WALSH: Of course I agree, but it would not stop the Commonwealth Government from making a payment to the Queensland Government with the condition that it should be applied for the restoration of roads and bridges in the Rockhampton area. There was nothing to stop them from doing that, exactly the same as was done in New South Wales and what is done with the money paid to Queensland from the petrol tax for local authority aid.

Mr. Pizzey: Could you not have given the money to the local authorities without Federal aid?

Mr. WALSH: The hon. member comes from an area adjacent to Maryborough. Has he the hide to say that Maryborough did not suffer? Would he say that the fruitgrowers and other people in the Maryborough area did not suffer? Would he say that the roads, bridges and so on, were not damaged by the floods? We received no assistance from the Commonwealth Government to relieve the local authorities of their liabilities. The Leader of the Opposition suggested that all that has been expended in the Inglewood-Yelarbon area is the £10,000 made available by the State Government.

Mr. Nicklin: I was just quoting one specific instance mentioned by yourself.

Mr. WALSH: I mentioned that. There was a direct grant after an estimate had been formed by the Co-ordinator-General and the engineers associated with the local authorities in the area as to what was necessary to remove the debris from private property, and so on. The Government made the grant available for the area. In addition to that, let it be understood that within the limits of the finance available to the State, where we could make Treasury finance available it was made available to local authorities in the area. Subsidies are paid. Do not overlook the fact that for all works undertaken for the restoration of bridges, roads, etc., the Government meet the cost to the extent of 17½ per cent., 20 per cent. or 33½ per cent. according to the nature of the work. It is a direct grant to the local authority. Let the Commonwealth meet us even on that basis. Let them give the equal of what the State Government give in subsidy in these cases. Any sensible person in the House will agree that if there were no floods in the area the revenue at the disposal of the State would

have been considerably greater and we had not to make subsidies available for that specific class of work. In other words if the damage did not occur we would not have been called upon to pay a subsidy for that work. The amounts paid for flood damage in Rockhampton, Maryborough or Inglewood and Yelarbon would have been available to the Government for expenditure in other areas. The fact is that the Commonwealth Government are not prepared to come in. I cannot understand the attitude of the hon. member for Isis who is telling the Maryborough people that they had no claim. That is the only conclusion one can come to. The hon. member is not prepared as a member of this Parliament representing the adjoining area to back the claims and the applications of this Government and the local authorities to the Federal Government for assistance.

Mr. Nicklin: What about the local authorities?

Mr. WALSH: The subsidy would have been available to every local authority, but owing to the damage we were called upon to divert certain sums of money that would otherwise have been spent in those areas. A very substantial structure over Cattle Creek in the Mirani area was swept away and the Government will be involved in an expenditure of £180,000 to build a new bridge, and when we add to that the cost of the temporary structure the total expenditure may run into over £200,000. That charge is not on the local authority but a charge on the revenues of this State. If the same thing occurred in New South Wales, South Australia or Victoria the Commonwealth would have subsidised those Governments £1 for £1, but not one penny was available for Queensland. Let hon. members opposite try to explain that away.

The assistance rendered by the Government in providing roads is factually demonstrated by the following figures showing funds spent on roads, streets and bridges during the nine years to 30 June, last:—

	£	£
Main Roads Department—		
Borne by the Government ..	38,745,249	
Charged to Local Authorities ..	5,009,785	
		43,755,034
Treasury Loans		1,273,572
Government Subsidies		2,957,314
Commonwealth Aid, Local ..		
Authority Roads, Fund ..		4,317,718
Debenture Loans guaranteed by ..		
the Government		9,084,071
		<u>£61,387,709</u>

Out of a total of £61.4 million expended on roads, streets and bridges during that period £46.0 million or 75 per cent. was granted free of any encumbrance to local authorities, £6.3 million or 10 per cent. was made available to local authorities by way of loan, and £9.1 million or 15 per cent. was guaranteed by the Government. That is the answer to the hon. member for Isis as to whether we repay Commonwealth aid. Commonwealth

aid is shown separately from the figure of £38,745,249 which is borne by this Government.

An Opposition Member: Where did you get it?

Mr. WALSH: The hon. member wants me to disclose some secrets.

In the later stages of the session the Leader of the Opposition got a clearer picture of the financial situation. The Premier challenged his statement that the Financial Statement was rigged. He denied that. He followed that up with the suggestion that the Premier said it was rigged for the purpose of meeting this propaganda on three weeks' leave. He may deny that, but these are his remarks—

“One might think it was raised for consumption by the members of the unions whose leaders forced the Government to compromise on such matters as the three weeks' annual leave issue at Mackay and who have since, except for a short period during the election campaign, kept up a constant barrage on the Government for this, that, and the other concession.”

Mr. Nicklin: Where is the statement that it was rigged?

Mr. WALSH: The word is not used but the inference is clear. The Leader of the Opposition in effect said that it was rigged for the consumption of unions.

Mr. Nicklin: Another example of twisting the meaning.

Mr. WALSH: The Leader of the Opposition knows very well that in the early part of the session he made that statement.

He also made statements about payment for flood relief. He may not think I know the story, but I have already pointed out that New South Wales got £3,600,000, including £2,000,000 to which no conditions were attached, such as the £1 for £1 subsidy.

Victoria received over £50,000, South Australia approximately £50,000, and Western Australia, too, received a considerable sum. This State has received £8,000 over the same period, from 1949-1950. I hope it does not occur, but next year or the year after we may be faced with a drought. I hope when this Government are called on to provide drought relief, as they have done on previous occasions, that the Commonwealth Government will at least make additional finance available, if they are not prepared to make straightout grants. It will be interesting to see what they do if that situation arises.

I have already stated that the Commonwealth Government have expended from revenue £92,000,000 on the Snowy River project, £9,000,000 in Tasmania on the Bell Bay project, £15,500,000 on railway standardisation and development in South Australia, and £2,500,000 on a water supply scheme in Western Australia. That money spent on works in other States must create

employment in those States and must be reflected in the commercial activities there. I challenge the Leader of the Opposition or any other Opposition member to cite any capital expenditure of that nature in Queensland.

Mr. Nicklin: The reason being that this Labour Government have never started anything in Queensland.

Mr. Gair: We received a promise on the Burdekin scheme.

Mr. WALSH: The Tinaroo Dam is under way in North Queensland. It will enable another 1,400 to 1,600 farmers to be settled on the land. Is not that as important as the Snowy River scheme, although it may be a smaller venture? It will cost £20,000,000. I should think that the Commonwealth would make some contribution for that, or make the money available interest free to the Government, even if it had to be repaid.

Mr. Nicklin: What about the Eildon dam in Victoria? The Victorian Government did not hound the Commonwealth Government for money.

Mr. WALSH: They could not get to the stage to expend large sums on what is particularly a State project in a State claimed by the Leader of the Opposition to be so prosperous because of higher productivity.

I now want to deal with the deficits in the other States for 1955-1956. They are—

State.	Deficit. £
New South Wales ..	6,833,520
Victoria	4,582,307
Queensland	1,723,438
South Australia ..	1,429,855
Western Australia ..	1,830,831

Let me take the deficits so far in the various States for 1956-1957. New South Wales budgeted for a surplus of £36,935 and its deficit for the first three months was £1,761,140; Victoria budgeted for a deficit of £2,445,331 and its deficit for the first three months of this year was £4,770,400; Queensland budgeted for a surplus of £15,153 and its deficit for the first three months was £2,270,612; South Australia budgeted for a deficit of £853,000 and its deficit for the first three months was £1,978,000; Western Australia had a deficit of £1,810,120. That confirms what I said the other day, that unless there is some very substantial adjustment in the financial basis between the Commonwealth and the State none of the States, irrespective of the Government can hope to meet its financial commitments in the current financial year. It looks as if every State will have considerable deficits.

I now come to land tax. The Leader of the Opposition said that I made the statement that nobody in the country paid land tax. I put some figures on record the other day, and I thought he would have been

satisfied that land tax was not a great impost on primary industries. He took his figures from the report of the Commissioner of Land Tax tabled in this House and so did I. Where I have not used those figures I have mentioned it. The Leader of the Opposition would be particularly interested in the fruit industry. I said before that the gross value of production in that industry was £5,742,000, that there were 85 fruit-growers who received assessments, that the average assessment was £4 and they paid £325.

Mr. Nicklin: You would not expect it to be more.

Mr. WALSH: It is not a question of what I would expect. I am giving the factual position. For a value of production of £5,742,000 there was only £325 paid by way of land tax. Let me go to the 1,073 dairy farmers who paid land tax. I am not the one who nominates whether he is a dairy farmer or not. The dairy farmer nominates that himself in the return he submits. Those 1,073 dairy farmers paid a total of £22,101. Their average assessment was £21 and the total gross value of their production was £36,715,000. I have it on the word of the hon. member for Southport that there are 25,000 members of the Queensland Dairymen's Organisation, which would indicate that there are 25,000 dairy farmers in Queensland. However, with a production of nearly £36,750,000 only 1,073 paid land tax amounting to £22,101.

Mr. Plunkett: You are hardly fair in that.

Mr. WALSH: Hardly fair? I am merely taking figures from the report that the Leader of the Opposition has quoted.

I refer now to cane farmers, of whom there are approximately 8,000. Of that number 1,008 paid £18,004, the value of their production being £34,051,000. However, 13 companies out of the 1,008 farmers paid £8,819 of the £18,000, so that very little was paid by individual cane-growers.

Other farmers, totalling 6,553, paid £302,242 at an average assessment of £46. The gross value of their production was £35,538,000.

The pastoral industry is generally accepted by hon. members on both sides of the House as being very prosperous. Land tax amounting to £231,947 was paid by 1,646 people engaged in it. The average assessment was £141, and the gross value of production £93,899,000. Then 667 other primary producers paid £14,920, their average assessment being £22 and their gross value of production £35,311,000. If we take the total of all the primary producers, of whom there would be well over 50,000 in Queensland, 11,032 paid land tax amounting to £589,539. The average assessment was £53 and the total gross value of production £241,256,000. I have told the House previously about a conversation I had with a friend of mine in the

North-west, who was outlining to me his taxation problems with the Commonwealth Government. After I asked him a few questions on the number of sheep he had, the area of his land, its carrying capacity, and his rental per acre, I worked out that he was paying 1s. 3d. an acre to the State Government for the use of the land and 30s. an acre to the Commonwealth Government in income tax.

Mr. Sparkes: Which you in turn get back.

Mr. WALSH: We do not get it back. I quoted figures the other day showing the miserable proportion that the State is getting back. I have shown tonight that compared with the figures for 1938-1939, the State's revenue is about 1 per cent. lower whilst the Commonwealth's has increased from 7.4 per cent. to 17.8 per cent.

The most interesting part of the statistics I have here shows how the landholder in Victoria gets on. Land tax collections in that State in 1955-1956, under a Liberal-Country Party Government, amounted to £3,249,674. In Queensland it was £1,386,451. The estimate this year in Victoria is £4,500,000 and in Queensland it is £1,450,000.

Mr. Sparkes: What was it in New South Wales?

Mr. WALSH: The land tax on alienated land in Victoria in 1955-1956 was 2s. an acre and in Queensland it was 1s.

Mr. Sparkes: What was it in New South Wales?

Mr. WALSH: For 1956-1957 the land tax in Victoria will be 2s. 9d. an acre and in Queensland 1s. 1d. In other words, the increase in Victoria will be 9d. an acre compared with last year and in Queensland it will be 1d.

Mr. Sparkes: What is it in New South Wales?

Mr. WALSH: The hon. member for Aubigny wants to know what it is in New South Wales. Surely he knows—and if he does not, he is displaying his ignorance—that this is the first year of the application of land tax in New South Wales. Consequently the figure will not be known until the end of the financial year. I hope that satisfies him.

Much as I should like to discuss other matters, I have only a few minutes left in which to stress the points made tonight about the State's financial position. I think it can be said that the record of the Labour Government in Queensland shows that over the period they have been in office they have tried to finance their activities without imposing unduly heavy burdens on the community. It is to their credit that they have not increased taxation under the various headings for eight, nine, or perhaps ten years or more. The other night I challenged hon.

members to point to any measure introduced in that period providing for increased rates of taxation. On the other hand, I have introduced measures providing for a reduction in taxation, such as that increasing the amount of exemption from land tax and probate and succession duties. I am beginning to think we made a mistake in increasing that amount. Just think of how much revenue we might be getting today if we had not increased it from £1,200 to £1,500, and then to £1,900 in the case of rural land! It cannot be said that the Government have not given relief to the primary producer.

Motion (Mr. Walsh) agreed to.

COMMITTEE.

(The Chairman of Committees, Mr. Clark, Fitzroy, in the chair.)

Clauses 1 to 8, both inclusive, as read, agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

THIRD READING.

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

The House adjourned at 11.45 p.m.