

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 7 NOVEMBER 1957

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Queensland Parliamentary Debates.

Legislative Assembly.

FIRST SESSION OF THE THIRTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT.

Appointed to meet

AT BRISBANE ON THE TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY OF AUGUST, IN THE SIXTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II., IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 1957.

[VOLUME 2.]

THURSDAY, 7 NOVEMBER, 1957.

Mr. ACTING SPEAKER (The Chairman of Committees, Mr. Taylor, Clayfield) took the chair at 11 a.m.

QUESTIONS.

OPERATION OF QUEENSLAND-BRITISH FOOD CORPORATION, PEAK DOWNS.

Mr. HART (Mt. Gravatt) asked the Premier—

“(1) What was the date of commencement of the Queensland-British Food Corporation project at Peak Downs?”

“(2) When were agricultural operations discontinued on the project?”

“(3) When was the project finally wound up?”

“(4) When were the interests of the United Kingdom Government transferred to the Queensland Government?”

“(5) What was the total amount invested by the Queensland Government in the project?”

“(6) In each financial year during the period from the date of commencement of the project to the date of discontinuance of agricultural operations were losses incurred, and, if so, what was the extent of loss in any such financial year?”

“(7) What was the total loss on the project up to the date of discontinuance of agricultural operations?”

“(8) Was the project wound up on the recommendation of the Corporation itself? If so, what were the reasons given?”

Hon. G. F. R. NICKLIN (Landsborough) replied—

“(1) The operations of the Corporation comprised agricultural, pastoral and pig-raising activities. Ploughing commenced

on the Peak Downs property on May 22, 1948, and cattle fattening on a small scale in the year 1948-1949. Pig raising was commenced during 1949-1950.”

“(2) An area of 1,500 acres was sown to wheat in July, 1955, and harvested by November 4, 1955. Since then no further agriculture was undertaken. Piggeries were closed by November 30, 1955, and all cattle were sold by November 30, 1956.”

“(3 and 4) The Queensland-British Food Corporation ceased on September 30, 1952, when the Queensland Government purchased the interests of the United Kingdom Government therein. A corporation known as the Queensland Government Central Queensland Estates took over for the liquidation of the assets and in the meantime carried on agricultural, pastoral and pig-raising pursuits. The disposal of all assets was completed by November 30, 1956, and except for the receipt of moneys approximating £2,100, all proceeds due have been brought to account.”

“(5) The total amount invested by the Queensland Government in the Queensland-British Food Corporation was £A625,000. The United Kingdom Government's share was purchased for £A1,203,600 with interest at 3½ per cent. per annum. Inclusive of this interest charge, the total cost to the Queensland Government of its share in the original Corporation and for the purchase of the United Kingdom Government's interests was £A1,295,804.”

“(6) To September 30, 1952, when the Queensland Government took over the assets and liabilities, the accumulated loss was £826,161 as follows:—Year ended March 31, 1949, Loss, £15,226; year ended March 31, 1950, Loss, £336,455; Six months ended September 30, 1950, Profit, £138,439; Year ended September 30, 1951, Loss, £355,058; Year ended September 30,

1952, Loss, £257,861; Accumulated Loss: £826,161. For the period from inception to September, 1950, the accounts were not drawn on a basis which readily enables the results of the several activities to be obtained. The accumulated overall loss at this date was £213,242. For 1950-1951, the loss on grain production, without taking into account Head Office charges, was £245,077, and for 1951-1952 £204,033. Since September 30, 1952, overall trading profits of £223,856 were made, agricultural operations contributing £1,446.'

“(7) It will be seen from the answer given in No. 6 that the result of all operations conducted by the original Corporation to the date of disbandment, September 30, 1952, was a loss of £826,161 and that the overall trading result since that date was a profit of £223,856. The net result of agricultural, pastoral and pig-raising operations was therefore a loss of £602,305.”

“(8) Yes. Following the consideration of a report by an Advisory Body set up by the Corporation in 1952 to give an independent expert opinion on the future of the project, the Corporation prepared a memorandum for the information of the two governments. The Corporation stated it rejected the recommendation of the Advisory Body that some of the properties be sold and that the future emphasis be on sound long term developmental principles and agricultural and stock management techniques appropriate to the region rather than on the urgency of immediate food production. On the contrary, the Corporation advised that, in the light of losses which had occurred, the Board was anxious that no further unavoidable losses should be made and were driven to the conclusion that no further large scale sorghum growing commercial operation in the area is justified until the correct techniques and economics have been proved on the farm scale. This advice was accepted by the two governments. The Advisory Body which reported to the Corporation on its activities comprised:—Mr. A. F. Bell, M.Sc.Agric., Under Secretary, Queensland Department of Agriculture and Stock; Mr. D. N. Mathieson, Australian Manager of the Scottish Australian Company Ltd., Sydney; Mr. A. H. Savile, Regional Director of Agriculture, Tanganyika; Mr. T. H. Strong, M.Sc.Agric., Director of the Commonwealth Bureau of Agricultural Economics, Canberra. Secretary:—Dr. D. Williams, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, Canberra. The observations of that Advisory Board reveal that an alarming state of affairs existed, as will be seen from the following extracts from the report:—

‘The Committee finds that this urge to expand operations as quickly as

possible resulted in inadequate attention to appropriate agricultural principles and also increased unit costs of production. This is considered to be a major cause of the present difficulties of the Corporation.’

‘This same sense of urgency may also be in part the responsible factor in the lack of liaison between the Corporation and practical farmers and Government agencies responsible for experimental work. The failure of the Corporation to make full use of the experience and knowledge of scientific officers and technical authorities has resulted in at least some of these officers losing interest in the Corporation’s future activities. This is a most unfortunate position and must be corrected.’

‘There has been a lack of integration of sorghum growing and beef cattle husbandry in a combined land use programme. Accordingly, the efficient use of sorghum stubbles and surrounding pastures has not been achieved. The lack of adequate fencing of cropped areas together with inadequate development of watering facilities have prevented grazing of large areas of pasture lands. Furthermore, there have not been enough beef cattle carried to enable the Corporation to minimise losses by grazing sorghum crops which have not been harvested for grain. Continued lack of attention to subsoil moisture reserves at planting time to the need for fallowing and to water and soil conservation have all contributed to crop failures and to the scale of losses experienced by the Corporation. In many cases crops have been planted when there have been insufficient reserves of subsoil moisture.’

‘There does not appear to have been any rotational plan in the Corporation’s programme introducing stock husbandry as an integral part of farm operations. Consequently, there has been a lack of co-ordination between the stock and the cropping enterprises.’

‘The committee considers that centralised remote control is inappropriate to a venture of this nature. There is evidence that the Corporation resembles and is operated in many respects as a Government Department rather than as a business organisation.’

‘The composition of the Board made up in part by Government officers and of members with inadequate experience in technical and practical agriculture together with its methods of centralised remote administrative control are factors which have contributed to the lack of emphasis on sound agricultural principles.’

‘The most striking feature of the cost structure of the Corporation’s activities is the heavy cost of administration.’

'Many of the machinery units employed on the Corporation's properties are ill-matched. Some of the tractors are too light for certain implements, resulting in reduced output and undue wear and tear.'

'Another factor which has contributed to inefficiency has been the nature of power units. The tractors mostly in use do not deliver sufficient power under field conditions of the regions to enable cultural operations to be carried out with high efficiency.'

'The Corporation's investment in spare parts and stores was heavy at September 30, 1951, on the four main farming units. This policy of keeping such large stocks not only ties up funds unnecessarily but also encourages a tendency to requisition before full use is made of the part to be replaced and thus encourages waste.'

As the Honourable Member can see from such damning criticisms by such a competent board of enquiry, the project was doomed to failure from the date it commenced and it is just another example of the inability of Socialist State-controlled undertakings to measure up to the efficient methods employed by private enterprise and by the experienced practical farmer. It is apparent that the success of the project was the least of the worries of the then Labor Government. Their paramount concern was that the undertaking had to be conducted in accordance with the socialistic ideology of that Government. We well recall the report in the press and the fanatical outburst by the then Minister for Public Lands and Irrigation (the Honourable T. A. Foley) who was then a member of the Australian Labor Party but is now a member of the Queensland Labor Party. This report, in the Brisbane "Telegraph" of June 15, 1949, stated:—'... members of the party' (referring to the Government Labor Party) 'inspected Peak Downs with obvious relish and their enthusiasm knew no bounds... the sentiments of the party were crystallised by Mr. Foley when he said 'If this is socialism, then give us lots more of it.' The findings of the Advisory Board, some of which are mentioned above, are sufficient answer to the plea of the then Minister for Public Lands and Irrigation. I am quite sure that many Members of the present House have not had an opportunity of perusing the Report of the Advisory Board and the comments made by the Queensland-British Food Corporation thereon, and I therefore lay upon the Table of the House a copy thereof.'

Whereupon the hon. gentleman laid the report upon the table.

WORK DONE BY MR. HOUSTON, M.L.A., FOR EDUCATION DEPARTMENT.

Mr. GAIR (South Brisbane) asked the Premier—

"(1) Is he aware that Mr. J. W. Houston, M.L.A. for Bulimba, returned to his office of profit in the Education Department after his election to Parliament on August 3, 1957?"

"(2) Does he consider that Mr. Houston's action in so doing represents a breach of the provisions of Section 5 of the Officials in Parliament Acts, 1896 to 1953?"

"(3) If so, will he inform the House what action he proposes to take in the matter?"

Hon. G. F. R. NICKLIN (Landsborough) replied—

"(1, 2, and 3) This question seeks my opinion on a question of law and May on Parliamentary Practice, 14th Edition, at page 337, lists among inadmissible questions one, I quote, 'seeking an expression of opinion on a question of law.' As at present advised, I do not propose to take any action in the matter."

FRUIT CANNERY AT CAIRNS.

Mr. ADAIR (Cook) asked the Premier—

"As he was reported in 'The Cairns Post' of July 16 as saying that his Government would honour the agreement already made in relation to the building of a cannery at Cairns, and such agreement approved by the Gair Cabinet being that when the required tonnage of canning pineapples were grown, 4,000 tons, the Government would give a guarantee of £250,000 to assist in the building of a cannery and a further £250,000 to cover working expenses, will he please now state if this undertaking is to be fulfilled by his Government, should the required tonnage be produced?"

Hon. G. F. R. NICKLIN (Landsborough) replied—

"The Honourable Member can be assured that this Government is as concerned as he is in regard to the erection of a cannery at Cairns. However, unlike the Honourable Member, the Government has responsibilities to the State, as well as to those growers who may invest their money in a cannery, to see that any such undertaking is an economic proposition before it is proceeded with. Before carrying out any agreement to furnish guarantees for the erection of a cannery at Cairns, the Government has first to be satisfied that—(a) growers in the Cairns area would be prepared to accept their share of the financial responsibilities attached to the erection of a cannery in the same way as growers in other parts of the State have done; (b) whether sufficient fruit of a suitable

quality is available to warrant a cannery; (c) the economics of the proposal is sound, in view of the availability of markets. It is very evident that the Honourable Member has not attempted to make himself acquainted with these essential requirements, and to assist him in getting a correct appreciation of the question, I would as a matter of fact advise him that I have been reliably informed—(1) that the estimated quantity of pineapples available for canneries from the Cairns district for the coming summer crop is less than 50 tons; (2) that the prospects for the sale of canned pineapples overseas are far from bright; (3) that advice has just been received that South Africa, our principal competitor in the British market, has at present 500,000 cases of canned pineapple unsold in London, and in an endeavour to clear these stocks has cut prices by 4s. 6d. per dozen (30oz. cans) and 2s. 6d. per dozen (15 oz. cans) (4) South Africa has also announced that they will sell next year's crop at this reduced price. This price reduction is equivalent to a reduction of £15 per ton fresh fruit to the growers. Nevertheless, the people of North Queensland can rest assured that my Government, in accordance with its declared policy to do everything possible to populate and develop North Queensland, will give this matter their earnest consideration with a view to endeavouring to ascertain whether it is economically practicable to proceed with the establishment of this cannery at Cairns."

NUMBER PLATES ON MOTOR VEHICLES.

Mr. LLOYD (Kedron) asked the Minister for Development, Mines, and Main Roads—

"(1) Is he aware of the growing number of motor-vehicle owners who are taking undue advantage of the practice of allowing vehicles to be driven without number plates for a period of three days after registration?"

"(2) As this practice could make it difficult for members of the Police Force to carry out their traffic duties, particularly in the Metropolitan Area, will he give consideration to making it necessary that number plates shall be affixed to vehicles immediately on registration?"

Hon. O. O. MADSEN (Warwick—Minister for Agriculture and Stock), for **Hon. E. EVANS** (Mirani), replied—

"(1 and 2) I have already approved a submission by the Commissioner of Main Roads, whose Department registers motor vehicles, that a recommendation be made to the Governor in Council that 'one day' be substituted for 'three days' in the appropriate regulations."

VISIT OF MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND HOME AFFAIRS TO PALM ISLAND SETTLEMENT.

Mr. JESSON (Hinchinbrook) asked the Minister for Health and Home Affairs—

"(1) Did he make a recent inspection of or visit to Palm Island Settlement?"

"(2) If so, what was the reason for the visit or inspection?"

"(3) What were the names of the hon. members of Parliament who accompanied him?"

"(4) Did he extend an invitation to them?"

"(5) Did they travel by train or plane and, if by plane, who paid the fares?"

"(6) As Palm Island is in the Hinchinbrook Electorate, why was the hon. member for the Electoral District treated with gross discourtesy in not being notified or invited to be present?"

"(7) Is it his intention to advise the hon. member of any changes or improvements as a result of his visit?"

"(8) Is the above treatment to be expected in the future from him?"

Hon. H. W. NOBLE (Yeronga) replied—

"On my recent visit to North Queensland, I visited Palm Island. This visit was made, firstly, in accordance with my policy of obtaining first-hand knowledge by personal visits and inspections of the establishments under the control of my Department, and, secondly, to satisfy myself regarding complaints that had been received through some Unions and Trades and Labour Councils. In spite of the fact that the Police Magistrate at Townsville had made an investigation, and submitted a favourable report, those organisations continued to sponsor complaints by few coloured people whose records were such as to make them not very dependable sources of information. In order to remove any suggestion of Departmental bias, I decided to invite four Honourable Members to accompany me, and offered them the opportunity of making any inquiries they wished on the Settlement. The Honourable Members invited by me were the Honourable Member for Chermiside, the Honourable Member for Townsville, the Honourable Member for Mundingburra, and the Honourable Member for Tablelands. That is a Member each from the Liberal and Country Parties, a Member from the A.L.P., and an Independent Member. The Honourable Member for Tablelands was unable to accompany me, because of a previous official commitment; the Honourable Member for Townsville informed me that he could not take part because he was forbidden to do so by his Party's Whip. It is rather interesting to note that person is the very person who has asked this question. It is therefore very clear that the Honourable Member for Hinchinbrook was fully aware of the proposed visit some time before it was made,

and if he were sincere, he had every opportunity to approach me on the matter. As regards my alleged discourtesy in not extending an invitation to that Honourable Member, I would point out that no complaints regarding Palm Island had been received from his Electorate, nor had he made any representations to me. On the other hand, complaints had emanated from organisations in the Electorates of the Honourable Members for Townsville and Mundingburra. Further, all Honourable Members will agree, I think, that, as the Honourable Member for Hinchinbrook so rarely finds it possible to visit those sections of his electorate where the great density of his electors reside, it would be futile and a waste of time, to invite him to visit a very remote section of his electorate where so very few electors reside. The Honourable Member for Mundingburra, who lives in and looks after his electorate, was in Townsville attending to the needs of his electors, and, no doubt, to the needs of the electors of the Honourable Member who has asked this question, and his visit to Palm Island cost the Department nothing. The air fare of the Honourable Member for Chermiside was paid by the Department. This is customary in cases such as this. All Members of the House will, I feel sure, be pleased to learn that the Honourable Members who visited the island with me freely questioned the inhabitants, and advised me that they agreed with my own findings that the Settlement was being conducted efficiently and well in the interests of its native residents, and that the charges mentioned previously were unfounded."

FRUIT AND VEGETABLE CANNERY AT TOWNSVILLE.

Mr. KEYATTA (Townsville) asked the Minister for Labour and Industry—

"(1) How many applications have been lodged with the Government for assistance financially or otherwise in the establishment of a Fruit and Vegetable Cannery in Townsville?"

"(2) By whom were the applications made?"

"(3) On what basis will assistance be given or offered?"

"(4) In the alternative, will the Government give consideration to the establishment of a cannery at Townsville in accordance with the Williams Report?"

Hon. K. J. MORRIS (Mt. Coot-tha) replied—

"(1) Two."

"(2) Both submitted by North Queensland Growers' Association Ltd. (Mr. C. S. Hoffman)."

"(3) If the cannery at Cairns is successfully established, and provided that the markets warrant the establishment of

a further cannery at Townsville, consideration would be given to an application for assistance in such a project by any reputable organisation."

"(4) The Government does not propose to establish any State enterprises."

RETURN OF AGENT-GENERAL TO QUEENSLAND.

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) asked the Premier—

"(1) Is it proposed to return the Agent-General (Mr. Muir) to Queensland in the near future for re-briefing?"

"(2) If so, could it be arranged for Mr. Muir to spend some of the time in North Queensland, and discuss with representatives of public bodies and business organisations any and all matters that might enable him to give the fullest possible information on his return to London to firms and people who might be interested in the investing of capital or the establishing of industries in the North?"

Hon. G. F. R. NICKLIN (Landsborough) replied—

"(1) The Honourable Gentleman is failing in his duty in not keeping abreast of current events. My Government announced over a fortnight ago that arrangements had been made for the Agent-General to return to Queensland."

"(2) My Government has already decided that the Agent-General for Queensland, on his arrival in this State, will visit not only North Queensland but many other parts of the State. What else could the Honourable Member expect my Government to do, well knowing that it is an all-Queensland Government which has the interests of the whole of the State at heart and not only particular sections of it?"

ENROLMENT AT CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC.

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

"How many pupils are at present enrolled at the Conservatorium of Music, and how many of these have their homes in North Queensland?"

Hon. J. A. HEADING (Marodian—Minister for Public Works and Local Government), for **Hon. J. C. A. PIZZEY** (Isis), replied—

"Two hundred and twenty-seven pupils are at present enrolled in the Conservatorium. One pupil has her home in North Queensland."

C.G. MOTOR SERVICES, ROCKHAMPTON, AND MR. H. R. GARDNER, M.L.A.

Mr. MANN (Brisbane): I desire to ask the Premier whether he has answers to the following questions, which I addressed to him on 31 October:—

"In view of the information supplied by the Minister for Development, Mines,

and Main Roads to the House on 24 September and 23 October, 1957—

“1. Is he aware that Mr. H. R. Gardner, M.L.A., is and has been for some years a member of the firm of C.G. Motor Services, Rockhampton, as shown in the Register of Firms?”

“2. Will he make enquiries as to the contractual relationship existing between C.G. Motor Services and any person acting for or on account of the Public Service of Queensland?”

“3. Will he give early consideration to the provisions of Section 6 of the Constitution Act of 1867 and Section 7 of the Legislative Assembly Act of 1867 in relation to the foregoing matters?”

Hon. G. F. R. NICKLIN (Landsborough) replied—

“It is competent for any public-spirited citizen to sue in the Supreme Court for the penalties prescribed by section 7 of the Constitution Act of 1867, for the offence suggested by this question. As I presume that the Honourable Member was motivated by public interest in asking it, I suggest that he take this course.”

PAPERS.

The following papers were laid on the table, and ordered to be printed:—

Report of the Advisory Board and the Comments made by the Queensland-British Food Corporation thereon.

Report of the Queensland Meat Industry Board for the year 1956-1957.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) (11.21 a.m.), by leave: I desire to make a personal explanation. During my employment by the Education Department, as a teacher of electrical trade subjects at the Technical Correspondence School I not only carried out my duties as required by the department but also took an active interest in the welfare of apprentices. As a result I was elected by the Apprenticeship Group Committee to investigate the possibility of having a new course of training for electrical apprentices brought into being. As a result of my report, an employers' representative and myself were elected by the Group Committee to compile a new course of instruction. After considerable effort a new course of instruction was arranged and subsequently approved by the Government. I believe that all hon. members will realise that this effort required a lot of my own time for which I required no thanks but I had the satisfaction of knowing that my work was appreciated by the Group Apprenticeship Committee and my superiors in the Education Department. I mention these facts because they have a direct bearing on my later actions.

To continue the events as they occurred—due to this new course of instruction a complete new set of instruction papers had to

be written for correspondence students. My senior instructor was given that task and I, as next senior and due to my knowledge of the requirements of the new course, was required to check all instruction papers written before they were printed for distribution to apprentices. By late 1956 the first, second and third-year papers were written and in use. In 1957 fourth-year papers were being written and used. This year was a particularly important one from my point of view as it included a subject which contained subject matter never previously taught. I refer to the teaching of more advanced electronics. This year my programme included the checking of these papers and the teaching of this subject to the fourth-year apprentices. I can assure members that this meant considerable research by my senior instructor and myself. It should also be clear that at this stage only the two of us were in a position to teach the correspondence apprentices in this subject, and as the senior instructor was fully engaged writing the papers, the correcting of the test answers was left in my hands.

This was the position at 12 July when I went off on leave of absence without pay to conduct my election campaign against the Q.L.P. sitting member.

As my absence meant a complete stopping of the checking of the new written papers and a complete stopping of the correcting of the apprentices test answers in the subject containing advanced electronics, I voluntarily without claim or pay corrected many tests at home during the period 15 July to 2 August, as I believed it was not in the best interests of the apprentices to stop their corrections.

On 5 August, although I was in the lead and confident of victory, as there was still a considerable number of votes to be counted I did not consider I should take on the duties of the Member, so with time on my hands and desirous of putting my affairs at the school in order I went back to the correspondence school. On the morning of 5 August Mr. Turner, the supervisor, mentioned the position of pay if I was elected and I told him I was not worried but would carry on as I wanted to leave the school feeling I had not let it down; incidentally I was working as part of a team which I consider is not bettered anywhere.

In further discussion with Mr. Turner I signed the attendance book to establish that I did return to the school on 5 August. This was thought necessary for in the event of my finally being defeated I would have been without pay not only for the week, 5 August to 9 August, but for the following two weeks when the teaching staff were on their Exhibition vacation.

On 7 August, Mr. Meaney, accountant of the Education Department, asked me to see him and suggested I stop going to the school as it may cause embarrassment to myself as I was considered to be the Member. Not

being conversant with the legal position as to when a candidate becomes a member, although still under the impression it was on the return of the writs I decided to leave the school as I did not wish to involve my own position as the elected representative of the people of Bulimba.

During the two days I was back at the school I spent the time checking the completed instruction papers which completed the subject and instructed my successor in some of the pitfalls associated with this subject so that he could carry on for the remainder of the year.

On the return of the writs and my swearing-in I officially notified the Education Department of my resignation to take effect from 2 August. This resignation was duly accepted in the following reply, which I shall table—

“Department of Education,
“Brisbane, 29th August, 1957.

“Sir,

“I have to inform you that His Excellency the Administrator of the Government, acting by and with the advice of the Executive Council and upon the recommendation of the Public Service Commissioner, has approved—

(a) That your resignation as Teacher of Trade Subjects, Division I. (Engineering), Technical Correspondence School, Brisbane, be accepted as from 2nd August, 1957, as tendered.

(b) That you be paid the sum of £193 8s. 2d. being the cash equivalent of 8 weeks 2 days' long service leave for which you are eligible. A cheque for this amount is enclosed herewith.

“Yours faithfully,

“H. G. Watkin,
“Director-General of Education.”

At this stage let me state that I received no pay for the apprenticeship papers I corrected during the campaign nor for anything considered work carried out on 5, 6, or 7 August. My main desire then and now is to have the Technical Education Branch operating efficiently and harmoniously in the interests of the apprentices. I believe my speeches in the House bear this out.

I am surprised at the member for South Brisbane bringing this before the House at this late stage as his associates in Bulimba and the Liberal candidate and his friends knew my movements on 5 August, because I made no secret of my going to the school as I considered then as I do now, that it was my duty to put my affairs at the correspondence school in order so as to cause as little inconvenience to the department as possible and above all not to penalise the apprentices who had an annual examination to pass.

Whereupon the hon. member laid the document on the table.

SCREENING OF FILMS.

Mr. ACTING SPEAKER: Hon. members, I have to announce that at 6.30 p.m. tonight there will be a screening of films to which all hon. members are invited. One film is the opening of Parliament and the other is a documentary film prepared by the Government Ichthyologist. The Committee will adjourn at 5.45 p.m. for the evening meal.

SUPPLY.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE—ESTIMATES— SIXTH AND SEVENTH ALLOTTED DAYS.

(Mr. Nicholson, Murrumba, in the chair.)

ESTIMATES-IN-CHIEF, 1957-1958.

DEPARTMENT OF RAILWAYS.

GENERAL ESTABLISHMENT.

Debate resumed from 5 November (see p. 864) on Mr. Chalk's motion—

“That £1,053,170 be granted for ‘Department of Railways—General Establishment.’”

Hon. G. W. W. CHALK (Lockyer—Minister for Transport) (11.36 a.m.): I shall not speak at length, because I want to give hon. members who may desire it an opportunity to offer further constructive criticism.

However, I want to draw attention to the wool traffic of the department. The feeling is prevalent that the department has lost a considerable amount of the wool trade from the Far West. I have had figures taken out for October this year and October last year. In the month just concluded, at Newstead, approximately 60,000 bales of wool were handled, compared with a little over 20,000 bales in October, 1956. I have not been able to get comparative figures for the other months but it is interesting to note that at Newstead approximately three times the amount was handled this year.

Mr. Davies: Are you telling the Committee that 60,000 bales of wool came by rail?

Mr. CHALK: Yes, those are rail figures. I have not the figures for road transport, because those who operate under the guise of Section 92 of the Commonwealth Constitution do not make returns. Consequently, without the co-operation and assistance of the wool houses those figures are not available.

Mr. Lloyd: Have you the figures for October, 1955?

Mr. CHALK: No.

Mr. Davies: Do you intend to convey that the railways have recaptured the wool trade?

Mr. CHALK: In recent months the railways have captured a considerable amount of the trade which it was thought early in the year would go to road hauliers.

Mr. Aikens: Another inch of rain in the West and you will get the lot.

Mr. CHALK: We are hoping for rain.

There was some criticism about the curtailment of orders to private companies since I have been Minister for Transport. In the past they did a considerable amount of work for the department, and I want it to be clearly understood, that the department and the public generally appreciate the help of private enterprise in the repair of locomotives and rollingstock. However, it is my duty to see that adequate work is retained for railway employees. I subscribe to the belief that no Government must particularly favour any employees whether Government employees or in private industry. It is the responsibility of the Government to see that they receive a fair return of work from their employees. If they do that they are doing the correct thing in maintaining full employment for men associated with the department for years.

Because of dieselisation and the improvement in normal operations and rolling stock it is necessary this financial year to reduce the work for private industry. I was a little perturbed when it was said that the curtailment was a direct blow against private industry. I refer to a published statement headed "Direct Blow at Dalby" which was attributed to Mr. L. F. Diplock, Q.L.P. candidate for Condamine. It appeared in the Toowoomba Press and is as follows—

"Speaking during the Budget debate Mr. Diplock said, 'This is a direct blow at the economic stability of Dalby.' The Government said it believed in decentralisation yet 40 men representing annual pay of £30,000 now had no chance of finding employment in the rural areas."

I have the hon. member's statement in this Chamber that Napier's had 190 men, 140 on railway work representing £180,000. He said that in view of the answer by the Premier to a question during the election campaign regarding employment there was no justification for the sacking of the men Napier's had to put off. This Government are not responsible for the sacking of the men at Napier's. They have rendered to the department a very good service in the past. Let me point out that the amount of work allocated to them over the years has been in accordance with the demand and the availability of work. In 1948-1949 the money paid to Napier's for work performed was £4,821.

Mr. Walsh: Their works were hardly established then.

Mr. CHALK: I know that. In 1952-1953 when they were established the amount of work was valued at £89,147 and in 1956-1957 Napier's received a payment of £179,817. That was when the establishment was at its peak.

Mr. Walsh: And when you take rising costs into consideration.

Mr. CHALK: I am not attempting to suggest what was responsible for the rise. I am merely pointing out the amount of work given to Napier's over the period. The Government were faced with a curtailment of work and they had to treat Napier's accordingly. I think the public should be told. Furthermore, the previous Government reduced the allocation to £144,000. Whether the previous Government are to blame or not, I do not say, but if there was any blame, the hon. member for Condamine placed it at the door of his own Government. If he wants to put the blame onto the Q.L.P., let him do so. The present Government are adhering to a programme. We believe that Napier's are getting a fair allocation of the work available to private enterprise.

Mr. Aikens: If you did it in your own workshops there would be no need to send it outside.

Mr. CHALK: I agree with the hon. member for Mundingburra. I believe that it is the duty of the Government to keep the men that they have engaged over the years fully employed.

Mr. Aikens: In their own workshops.

Mr. CHALK: In their own workshops, as long as they are giving good service to the department and are capable of doing the work.

Mr. Davies: They are doing it.

Mr. CHALK: So far as I know they are.

I shall give hon. members the programme for this year. Whether it was decided by the previous Government or this Government, or whether the figures have been altered slightly since the present Government took office is immaterial. For 1956-1957 an amount of £1,755,365 was allocated to outside concerns, and for this year it is £1,379,000. That is an indication that the Railway Department is playing its part in endeavouring to keep men employed in outside organisations whose business has grown. During the period following the war, the department could not handle all its own repair work.

Mr. Diplock: My criticism was not of you. It resulted from a promise by the Premier.

Mr. CHALK: I am prepared to defend the Premier. He said that he believed in decentralisation and that we should help private industry to the utmost. That is exactly what we are doing. Surely the hon. member for Condamine does not want us to do something to retain 30 men at Napier's and at the same time dismiss 30 railway-men.

Mr. Diplock: I do not mean that at all. You are hedging.

Mr. CHALK: That is exactly what the hon. member is advocating. Only a limited amount of work is available, and it is for the Government to say whether they will keep their own men in employment or dismiss them to help private industry to keep its men. Any large business organisation such as Walkers Ltd., at Maryborough, the Bundaberg Foundry and Evans Deakin, realises only too well that there has been, and will continue to be, a tapering off of railway repair work available to private enterprise. Because of that, outside organisations are trying to do all they can for their own employees. Similarly, the Government are doing the best they can for theirs.

I have raised this matter because I believe that there may be an attempt to condemn the Government. We are simply following what was done by our predecessors. At the same time, we are trying to keep the men who for years have given the Government loyal service.

I shall deal with one or two other matters after other hon. members have spoken.

Mr. GARDNER (Rockhampton) (11.50 a.m.): At the outset, I join with other hon. members in congratulating the Minister on his elevation to Cabinet rank. I hope he will be as good a Minister as he was a critic last year when I was an hon. member of Parliament for the first time. The Minister sought to justify assistance to private enterprise but he admitted the many difficulties of the Labour Government in carrying out their policy over the years. He said that the Government would try to follow in the footsteps of their predecessors, that they did not desire to make any very great alteration in policy. If they apply commonsense and we all work to make the railways pay, perhaps at the end of 12 months I may be able to say that the Minister has done a very good job. A very real effort has been made in the last 10 years to cope with changing world conditions by modernising the railways generally, by making changes in equipment, in introducing diesel traction, new-type carriages and air-conditioned vehicles. The State-owned railway system in Queensland and in the other States, has some very active competitors. Evolutionary changes have taken place in air and road transport, aided by Section 92 of the Commonwealth Constitution. Today people are air-minded and the competition by airlines for passenger traffic makes the task of the Commissioner for Railways even greater. To that must be added the competition for goods traffic by intrastate road transport and by interstate hauliers again aided by Section 92.

Another important consideration is that more motor vehicles are owned by the citizens of the State. Never before have we had so many private motor cars in the community. In my district the figure is 4.7 per 100 of the population. Furthermore, the ordinary man uses his vehicle a great deal and that

militates against railway revenue. All these matters have a direct bearing on the difficulty of making State-owned railways pay.

I join forces with the Minister, the Commissioner and others who are trying to conduct the service efficiently. I realise the great problem confronting them. Had it not been for the goods traffic we would be deeper in the mire. The department would have been further in the red. The Railway Department in Queensland is no different from railway departments in the other States of the Commonwealth. That is why I will not join the calamity howls of the people who are always criticising deficits. The Government have the great responsibility to provide an adequate service for the people. That is the Government's responsibility but if the people do not use the services it is incumbent upon the Commissioner to organise rail services according to the business available. Labour Governments have had to face up to these problems. Labour representatives can feel justifiably proud of their advances made over the past 10 years.

The capital value of the service throughout the State is £86,000,000. What a colossal figure! In all there are 6,387 miles of railway line open throughout the State, which means an average population of 217 per mile of line. Some hon. members would be very critical of the Commissioner but I compliment him. I believe that the present Commissioner is second to none. He has devoted his time and energy in the best interests of the department. I congratulate him on a job well done. It is very easy to be a critic but not so easy to be a Commissioner and to carry out the multitudinous jobs associated with that responsible office. There is no business undertaking in the State so big. No industry can compare with the railway service in volume of traffic and work. The figure of 28,956 railway employees gives an indication of the volume of work in the department. Improvements in the department have not been revolutionary but evolutionary. Year by year they have been gradual. Railway deficits have prevented quicker improvements. The Government have had to cut their garment according to their cloth, which in this instance is hard cash.

The rate of modernisation in the last 10 years has been exceptionally good. Old out-of-date locomotives have been scrapped and 213 new ones and 44 diesels purchased. This marked improvement has reduced running costs considerably, and I look forward to further improvements. I look forward to the day when more diesel air-conditioned trains will operate throughout the State. There is much room for improvement in the modernisation of carriages. Our air-conditioned trains compare favourably with those in any other State in Australia. I hope the Commissioner and the Minister will approve of air-conditioned trains on the service from Rockhampton to Brisbane. The

service is warranted and it would be greatly appreciated by the people of Central Queensland.

The Minister and other speakers have referred to co-operation with the unions. I think a consultative committee consisting of representatives of the Railway Unions and the Minister would be productive of much good. It is not a novel idea; it is a practical one. Such a consultative committee imbued with the idea of improving the service of the department, getting more custom, and ensuring full-time employment for the employees must bring good results. Let us forget the past; let us resolve to work on an efficient basis in the future.

The Minister and the Government should seek to improve the staffing system in the service. Sometimes an officer appointed to the position of general manager has almost reached retiring age. That does not stimulate initiative. There are many factors to be considered besides seniority. I have always recognised the basis of seniority, but it should not be mandatory in regard to top positions if we are to get the most suitable and efficient officers. The basis of seniority for promotion is all right for lower classifications.

I now come to a matter of local interest.

Mr. Chalk: A new railway station.

Mr. GARDNER: The Minister has anticipated my request. He said yesterday that Rockhampton was in the same position as Ipswich. I remind him that the foundation stone and the foundations generally of the Rockhampton railway station were laid in 1928. At that time it was thought that a new railway station would be commenced in the near future. Many Governments have been in office since then, but nothing has been done. The Press has published a statement on many occasions that the railway station at Rockhampton was next on the list to Cairns. The Rockhampton people were promised it in so many election campaigns that they now regard it as a political football and a laughing stock.

I remind the Minister that when he was in Rockhampton in 1956 his Party issued a pamphlet about the station entitled, "The Chinese Pagoda." Labour promises were ridiculed in that pamphlet. I hope that during the Minister's term of office this so-called Chinese Pagoda will be removed and that Central Queensland will get a station in keeping with the importance of the district. The removal of ripple iron outside the railway station would be approved by everybody. If the department are unable to undertake the whole job, I ask that sections of the work be undertaken, so that the station may conform to 1957 standards.

It is a big project which would include accommodation for the general manager and the administrative section.

A Rockhampton firm mentioned the small amount of wagon repair work given to it but I explained that railway workshops had the first call on this work. On occasions, however, holdups could be avoided if trucks and wagons were repaired by a local firm instead of being sent to southern centres. I disagree with those who contend that it is more economic to drag strings of hoppers and wagons to Brisbane and elsewhere for repair than have them done locally. Orders for local firms would be in keeping with a policy of decentralisation—they would provide work in the Central District.

I am rather disappointed that we have drawn such a bad alley, as it were, in respect of Parkhurst railway workshops. Some two years ago there was a fair allocation of money—£15,000—but owing to financial stringency last year it was cut to £10,000 and this year there has been really a cessation altogether. Whilst the financial position might be such that the Government have to make curtailments, the efficiency of the service at the Rockhampton workshops is not what the Commissioner desires. Everybody knows that. For 20 years we have been struggling in the Rockhampton area for a new workshops. The present shops were wrongly designed and will never mean efficient working in the department. That is well known to officialdom in the area. I hope that the Parkhurst workshops will not be relegated to the scrap-heap and just fade out of the picture altogether.

In his report the Commissioner extends his compliments to the Railway Ambulance Corps for their great voluntary work over the last 12 months. For many years railway ambulance men have devoted a lot of their spare time in the interests of humanity. I am proud to say the department is encouraging it. Let us not deviate from this noble work. There is no greater satisfaction than the ability to alleviate the suffering of mankind. In many instances a knowledge of ambulance work means the saving of a life.

Mr. LLOYD (Kedron) (12.13 p.m.): It is somewhat refreshing that the Minister should be in a constructive frame of mind on Railway Estimates. He was generally known as a political propagandist whilst in Opposition, but on this occasion he has paid tributes to the previous administration. I am reminded of the black marketeer who, having made his "pile", turns honest and sets himself up as a man of great integrity. But the temptation is always there to revert to the true type. In a few instances he has reverted to his old habits of destructive criticism, and in some cases he was not fair. One example is his reference to railway carriages. He attempted to tell the Committee by implication that the carriages had not been kept up to date by the previous Government. He said that seven metropolitan railway carriages were more than 70 years old, 24 were more than 60 years old, 45 were more than 50 years, 154 were more than 40, and 234 were more than 30 years. In many of the other States the

position is even worse. Victoria in particular is in a bad way so far as replacements are concerned. An examination of the report of the Commissioner for Railways indicates that there have been numerous replacements of rolling-stock and the Minister cannot deny that the maximum amount of capital has been spent in the post-war years.

I was very interested to read in the Commissioner's annual report that 58 refrigerator wagons were purchased last year. They should be of great help to industries in the remote parts of the State. For example, they will be of invaluable aid to the new abattoirs at Winton, and they should help the growth of many other industries.

The introduction of new rolling stock and other equipment has cost the department a good deal of money, and has been responsible for a great part of the losses that have been sustained.

The Minister is faced with the same problem as his counterparts in the other States, that of making the railways pay. If he can succeed in doing that, the Queensland railways will be the only railway system in the world to pay its way. Last year the total losses incurred by the railway systems of Australia, excluding the Commonwealth system, amounted to £32,900,000. The figure has been increasing steadily over the years. In 1954-1955 it was £25,900,000.

According to a committee that was appointed by the Commonwealth Government to investigate Australia's transport systems, road transport has spent more than any other system of transport. It has spent approximately 80 per cent. of the money spent in Australia on transportation. Railway systems have spent only 18 per cent. of the total. That gives some idea of the competition that the railway systems are meeting from road transport operators. Although the Commonwealth railway system made a profit last year, we must not forget that this would accrue from the line it controls from Port Augusta to Kalgoorlie.

The Minister said something this morning about the carriage of wool, but I do not think he gave us accurate information. I am not saying that he attempted deliberately to mislead the Committee, but he should be accurate in every statement he makes. Every member of the Committee, including the Minister, knows that the railways are losing a considerable amount of wool traffic. The Minister said that in October last year the railways carried 20,000 bales compared with 60,000 bales in October this year. I intend to quote an article from "Country Life", written on 17 October of this year by Horace Flower of Toowoomba, erstwhile assistant manager of Primary Producers Co-operative Association Ltd., and a member of the Queensland Country Party. He says—

"Living beside the highway that serves the folk of the watersheds of our western rivers, and our great wool areas, I daily and nightly watch and hear great loads of

wool thundering down from places as far away as Corfield and Winton, plus the intermediate areas, bound for the coastal wool-stores.

"Behind these great loads of wool that tear our highways apart lies the urge of graziers to catch earlier wool-selling dates and prompter cash returns, even though transport costs are higher on the road truck than upon the railway truck.

"However, glimpsing many of the brands on the wool bales, I am able to identify clips belonging to some old friends, and of graziers who are amongst the keenest supporters of our Queensland Country Party.

"If keen graziers, supporters and well-wishers of the Country Party bypass the railways with their wool clips, the job of the party is intensified."

I think the Minister would agree with that. It would be very much intensified. It would also intensify his effort to make the railways pay. He goes on—

"I wonder (in the event of drought conditions intensifying, and leading to a call upon the railways for sheep trucks to move starving sheep), if these same folk who are using road trucks for their wool transport will ask Mr. Nicklin's Government to supply sheep trucks for their flocks at 'drought relief rates'?

"In posing that possibility I do so, not as a reproach to the graziers concerned with road trucking of wool, but as a query as to their practical support of a Government dominated by their Country Party, which Government will need to produce evidence of reforms and economies effected if it is to be again returned to power in 1960."

That is a very subtle statement about the Country Party, obviously written by a very ardent supporter of it. I believe the Minister was out in the Gregory electorate at the time of the by-election.

Mr. Chalk: No, I did not go.

Mr. LLOYD: I think he should have gone.

Mr. Chalk: The majority gained by the hon. member for Gregory would have been higher.

Mr. LLOYD: I sympathise with the hon. member for Gregory in his efforts to keep the Minister away, when we consider his statement about the transportation of wool in the western areas. I think the hon. member for Gregory will agree that, while the election campaign was on in October, road trains consistently operated in western areas transporting the wool to Brisbane. Whether they paid transport fees may be a different matter.

The railways are still losing a great deal of revenue by their failure to get back the business that they previously had. If the

Minister is sincerely trying to make a profit for the railways he will not seek to mislead the Committee by saying that they have got the business back but will try to attract it by approaching those men, many of whom no doubt are members of the Country Party. He has a hard enough task without losing their support.

Mr. Chalk: You are making heavy weather of it.

Mr. LLOYD: The hon. gentleman can make his own approaches to those men if he wants to.

He criticised the last Government for the alleged projected dismissal of some 750 men. Immediately after the election campaign I understood him to say that it would be necessary to dismiss them unless the contract for steel carriages was carried out and by that means he was able to prevent their dismissal. I have not been able to understand it completely. He said it would cost the Railway Department about £1,000,000 to keep 700-odd men in employment. I agree with him on that, basing it on an average of £15 a week. It would probably cost £600,000 in wages to keep them in employment and the balance for goods and materials to keep them working. However, he said it would be possible through a saving in the Stores Suspense Account. That may be, but it would be necessary to purchase more stores to keep the men in employment. He said, too, that in the first few months of this year stores purchased under the heading of Stores Suspense cost £300,000 more than those purchased in the corresponding period last year. Where is there sincerity in that approach? I do not think any approach about the dismissals was ever made to the previous Government and I absolve the Queensland Labour Party from having any intention to dismiss the men. I agree with the Minister that every attempt should be made to keep them in full employment at all times. If such a recommendation were made, it would not be a very great tribute to the officers of the department themselves.

They could surely have maintained their financial responsibility and eased the strain, where necessary, without dismissing men. It is an unfortunate feature of the Public Service during the last two years that whilst men have been sacked from one department, possibly the Housing Commission or the railway Department, similar tradesmen have been put on in another department. I understand that approximately 500 men were dismissed from the Railway Department last financial year and while they were being dismissed other sections of the department were employing men through the Commonwealth Employment Bureau and I refer particularly to bridge carpenters. At one time last year 15 were dismissed and within a week the Railway Department was putting on carpenters in another section through the Commonwealth Employment Bureau.

Mr. Chalk: You are only criticising your own administration.

Mr. LLOYD: I do not know who I am criticising. I am offering a word of advice, if the Minister will listen to it. If men are to be put off it might be possible to re-employ them in some other Government Department instead of engaging others through the Commonwealth Employment Bureau.

Mr. Gilmore: Do you say that was bad management?

Mr. LLOYD: Very bad management.

When men were being put off by the Queensland Housing Commission the union was asking whether there was any other Government Department in which they could be employed. I understand that 10 painters were put off at the same times as painters were being put on by the Department of Public Works.

Mr. Chalk: You are like a man standing in front of a mirror.

Mr. LLOYD: I am bringing these things to the Minister's notice. Is he not the Minister in charge of the department? Does he not want to know these things?

Mr. Chalk: I know them.

Mr. LLOYD: If the Minister wants to improve the administration of the department let him take heed. I intend to refer to Table 5 on page 27 of the Commissioner's Report. It must be a matter of concern to all hon. members to see how much of the loss last year was incurred in the Southern Division. The Central Division and the Great Northern railway showed considerable profits. It is necessary to analyse the figures to make a comparison between earnings and expenses in the various divisions. In the Southern Division the cost per train-mile increased by 8s. 8½d. in the five-year period whereas the earnings per train-mile increased only by 6s. 3d. In the Central Division where profits were made the cost per train-mile increased by 6s. 11½d. and earnings increased by 11s. 1½d.—a considerable increase over the actual cost. For the Great Northern railway costs increased by 5s. 1d. for the five-year period and the earnings increased by 12s. 1½d. On the Cairns railway costs per train-mile increased by 7s. 5½d. but earnings increased by only 5s. 5½d. In other words, in the two areas where substantial losses were made, the increase in costs was greater than the increase in earnings. At the same time in the Southern Division there was a reduction of 167,227 in the number of passengers carried during the 12 months. There was also a reduction of 88,597 in the tonnage carried for the same period, whilst the train-miles over the same length of line increased by 213,353.

That clearly indicates that the railways in the Southern Division were either operating on a cheaper scale or were in actual

fact running empty. I think it is obvious that the effective competition from road transport in the Southern Division was such that many wagons and carriages were running empty and causing further losses. The figures support my contention. There is a reduction in passenger traffic and tonnage carried and an increase in the number of train miles covered. It may be said that the suburban railways were causing these losses. The actual earnings in the suburban area, however, were £840,000 whereas the losses in the Southern Division were approximately £3,000,000. The Central and Northern Divisions have been operating at a profit. It is a question of the Central and Northern Divisions subsidising the Southern Division or increasing the efficiency in the Southern Division and in the Cairns section of the Northern Division.

Mr. Walsh: There is the competition of road transport in the Southern Division.

Mr. LLOYD: I have already said that. The figures indicate that there has been heavy competition from road transport in the Southern Division and Cairns section of the Northern Division. Nevertheless, the train miles covered in the Southern Division increased by 213,353 miles during the last year. The question is, why should there be an increase in the number of miles covered at the same time as there was a decrease in passenger and goods traffic? I am only trying to be helpful. If there is any indication of negligence it should be investigated.

I wish to thank the department for the increased service made available to the people living on the Ferny Grove line. In the past few years the population has increased so much that the demands on the railway service have been very heavy. The department conferred with representatives of local bodies on train schedules and time tables, and the people have been given a very efficient service. I commend the department on the construction of the new railway station at Keperra. I commend the officers of the department, and thank them for their attention to the requests made by me.

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN (Barambah) (12.34 p.m.): I wish to suggest to the Minister ways and means whereby his department may help secondary industries in various country towns throughout the State. I commend the Minister on the brisk and businesslike way in which he has faced up to his responsibilities. I believe that he has inspired the officers of his department with an enthusiasm and a determination to play a more important part than they have in the past.

I was pleased to learn that the amount of wool transported has greatly increased. When the people realise that the railways are there to do the work efficiently and quickly, as they are doing it today, not only

the graziers, but other sections of the community will use the railways as they did in the past. All hon. members are pleased at the present trend.

I agree with the Minister's remarks about the Commissioner. I have come in contact with him from time to time and I have always found him to be exceedingly helpful. He has worked hard and enthusiastically to make the railways a big success. With many others, I believe he would have achieved more if he had had greater scope, and encouragement and support from the former Government. In making that statement I am thinking particularly of the carriage of wool during the shearers' strike. I endorse the remarks of the Minister and other hon. members about the work of the Commissioner.

Mr. Walsh: You should confer with the hon. member for Tablelands. He has a bit of a grudge.

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: That may be his view, but I speak as one who has had personal and direct dealings with Mr. Moriarty.

Mr. Walsh: I agree with what you say.

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: I am sure you do.

The Railway Department could have given much greater encouragement in the past to secondary industries in country towns. Take the position in Kingaroy, the main centre of the peanut industry. Various interests and organisations have wanted to start a secondary industry for the processing of peanuts, but that was impossible because of railway freight rates on manufactured articles including processed food. It is impossible to compete with Brisbane and Sydney firms where the peanuts are sent from Kingaroy.

I give another example to indicate the present unsatisfactory situation. Mr. McSparran started an engineering works in a small way in Kingaroy. After some years the business grew to such an extent that he was able to send equipment such as bulldozers and fork lifts all over the State but he found it impossible to compete with Brisbane manufacturers because of the high freight rate on manufactured articles. I took Mr. McSparran to the then Minister, Mr. Duggan, and pointed out to him that further expansion was contemplated in the manufacture of mouldings, castings, and so on. Mr. Duggan said it was not the policy of his Government to give concessional freight rates for manufactured articles. This big industry that meant so much to Kingaroy had to close. The only credit I give the previous Government was that they gave Mr. McSparran a concessional rate on the carriage of his big lathes and equipment to Redbank.

That is the position generally in inland towns. If the Minister could say that special freight rates would be given on articles manufactured in country towns, it would greatly encourage the establishment of secondary industries throughout the State.

Mr. BAXTER (Norman) (12.40 p.m.): After listening to some of the speeches made by Government members it was refreshing to hear the statements made by a Country Party member, the hon. member for Barambah. On previous occasions he, like all his associate members, was all moans and groans, but today he spoke with appreciation of the work of Labour Governments in the past in their endeavours to build up the railways of the State. The subject of freights has exercised the minds of many hon. members and I often wonder if Country Party members who speak of sacking the Commissioner and running the railways as a business concern are really honest in their expressions or is it an act on their part so that when they return to their electorate they can say to their supporters that they have spoken in favour of the railways being run on business lines—a form of appeasement to their Committees in their conference rooms. How do they react in their conference rooms when their colleagues of the Liberal Party are present and special freight concessions are sought for the primary producer—two parties with two different approaches to the subject. In the first place the railways are an institution to encourage the closer settlement of the State, to provide a means of access and to carry the products of the land to markets and ports. The size of the railway organisation and the area that it embraces do not seem to concern hon. members opposite. Freight concessions are given to primary producers. Country Party members who seek freight concessions for the persons they represent, the primary producer, are the only ones to stress that we should do away with our present system of administration, that we should put the railways in the hands of a business man to be run on business lines. That it would be imperative if we are to show a profit. Country Party members are simply playing to the gallery, giving expression to the thoughts of their party members. I see hon. members opposite who have been successful in private enterprise. I can see one who has been a great success, but how did he make a success of his business?

Mr. Aikens: Spinging on the railways.

Mr. Dewar: By using our brains.

Mr. BAXTER: I accept the statement of the hon. member for Mundingburra. The hon. member for Cherside works out his costs, adds the profit and then a little for himself. If hon. members opposite followed his principles with the railways how would they be able to give concessions in freight rates to the producers represented by Country Party members?

It is the primary producers who are getting most of the benefit from the Queensland railways. During the election campaign last year, the hon. member for Roma made a vitriolic attack on Labour's policy on rail freights from the Roma broadcasting station. In the Chamber only the other day, however,

he advocated the granting of some concessions. Although he was getting a high price for his wool, the railways were carting it to Brisbane at approximately half the freight cost to the department because of concession rates granted by a Labour Government. And then he says that the railways should help the primary producer! Are they not doing that? How would he get on if the railways were run on the same lines as a private undertaking? Would he get freight concessions? I venture to say that the freight on his wool would be almost equivalent to the first-class rate. I do not know what it is from western areas, but from Clapham to the border it is about 92s. a ton, or approximately twice the existing rate.

Members of the Country Party, who consistently condemn the administration of the Railway Department, should not forget the advantages that they get. If the railways had to make a profit, many industries on which Country Party members depend would die.

We hear a good deal about the losses on the Queensland railways as against the success of those in other States. Some very interesting figures appear on page 102 of the Commissioner's annual report.

Government Members interjected.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! There is far too much noise in the Chamber. I ask hon. members to allow the hon. member for Norman to continue his speech without interruption.

Mr. BAXTER: In any consideration of losses by the railways, regard must be had to the great area of the State and its sparse settlement. Compare its vast area of 670,500 sq. miles, with that of New South Wales, 309,432 square miles, or only about half the size. Queensland is about seven times the size of Victoria, with its 87,884 sq. miles, which is not as big as the Federal electorate of Maranoa. Take the population figures—

Queensland	1,383,535
New South Wales	3,544,135
Victoria	2,605,088

The miles of railway open in each of the States are—

Queensland	6,387
New South Wales	6,103
Victoria	4,445

The average cost per mile is— £

Queensland	12,535
New South Wales	41,001
Victoria	22,857
South Australia	18,967

Take the population per mile of railway—

Queensland	217
New South Wales	581
Victoria	585
South Australia	331

Take working expenses—

	£
Queensland	36,949,761
New South Wales ..	74,904,373
Victoria	38,025,775

Taking all those factors into consideration, the operation of the Queensland railways compares more than favourably with that in any other State. The "Review" published by the Institute of Public Affairs, Victoria, sets out the following financial results of State Railways for 1956-1957—

	Revenues from Users. £million.	Expen- ditures. £million.	Deficits. £million.
Queensland ..	35.5	39.7	4.2
New South Wales	77.0	86.3	9.3
Victoria ..	37.4	45.6	8.2

When people criticise the railway system in Queensland they should consider the railway systems in the other States. The difference in deficit between New South Wales and Queensland is £5.1 million and between Victoria and Queensland £4.0 million. New South Wales and Victorian railways have not such a vast area to serve, there are more people in those States to use the services, yet we are doing much better in Queensland. Can there be any suggestion that a public utility like the railway does not pull its weight? If it does not pay its way is it because it is not producing enough revenue or is it because of the killing interest? As the railways operate to-day they are a success. Interest is the killer. When the Minister sat in a corner on this side of the Chamber he was very caustic in his condemnation of everything the Labour Government did. His condemnation of the ex-member for Toowoomba was—put it mildly—very severe. Despite all his previous criticisms and condemnations he jumped up the other day to say serenely that certain things were not of his doing, that he endorsed the most progressive actions of his predecessor. I congratulate the hon. gentleman for that, because his predecessor was indeed a man of ability and vision. Next year we will see how the Minister has reaped the benefit. Nobody can give more force to my words than the officers who act in an advisory capacity to the Minister for Transport. They realise that it is because of the farsightedness of the ex-Minister that the railways are on the up-grade.

I ask the Minister to remember his criticisms and to take note of the improvements made by the previous Government. I challenge him to make greater improvements. Although the department showed a loss last financial year there was an improvement on the previous year's operations. The previous Minister inaugurated a locomotive modernisation policy in the department and during the past 10 years no fewer than 213 new locomotives were purchased. I wish to draw the Minister's attention to the loss of passenger traffic in the Brisbane area. To use the Minister's own words, it is something that

will have to be chased and brought back. I suggest to the Minister that in order to regain this traffic we must go ahead immediately with quadruplication and electrification. During the peak period between 4.15 and 5.15 p.m., 23 passenger trains are dispatched, and this is about handling capacity, which is about a train every three minutes. When quadruplication and electrification have been carried out we can handle 40 trains in that period. It takes 45 minutes to travel from the Valley to South Brisbane, a distance of about four or five miles, in a tram, but one can travel from Brisbane to Sandgate by train in the same time. The railways will be able to speed up passenger traffic and thus help the City Council to solve its traffic bottleneck problems. I urge the Minister to carry out the work of quadruplication and electrification of our railways as early as possible. When these projects are brought to fruition we will have achieved a great success.

The hon. member for Mulgrave suggested the removal of railway fences. I do not know what the object of his suggestion was. It is necessary to have a boundary fence between private land and railway land to eliminate the danger from straying stock. They are to be found in all areas, even in sugar districts, and it is sometimes impossible for the driver of a train to avoid running into them. I draw the Minister's attention to the different freight rates on goods to and from Mackay. By way of interjection I asked the hon. member for Burdekin if he would mention a specific article, but he ignored me.

Freight concessions are granted to primary producers for the transport of their produce to a port, but the same concession is not extended to goods taken beyond that port to a further destination, say, Brisbane or Rockhampton. That may have been the point of the hon. member for Burdekin. If it is, I suggest the Minister clarify the position by explaining the operation of freight rate concessions.

I congratulate the Commissioner and officers of the department on the extremely good job they have done.

Mr. GILMORE (Tablelands) (2.21 p.m.): I congratulate the Minister on the presentation of the Estimates. It must be a very happy occasion for him, judging by the comments on his constructive criticism of the department when he was in opposition. I am sure he will be happy in his job.

The Railway Department has a very important part to play in the developmental programme of the Country-Liberal Government. I look forward with pleasure to the progress that will be made.

Up to a certain time the railways had a monopoly of transport in this State, but now there is a challenge from two quarters. When it had a monopoly of transport, the service was inadequate. The Leader of the Opposition referred to train 90. He said no

train could be dirtier, slower or more uncomfortable. That is typical of the service given by the department over the years.

Mr. Davies: Who is to blame for that?

Mr. GILMORE: There is no secret about the blame for it. Even the hon. member would not have to marshal his full wits to work out the answer to that question. Road and air transport have made inroads into the available traffic. If the Railway Department does not match the service given by those forms of transport, it will be in danger of losing even more trade. It is gratifying to know that the Minister is a young and intelligent man, ready to accept the challenge and give better service. It is quite evident that when other methods of transport are available, the public refuse to travel by rail. It is not a matter of how much is lost or gained but what service is given to the people. The Labour Party was responsible for a long time for this mismanagement. Every member of the Labour Party who has spoken has said that there is some fault with railway administration.

Mr. Hanlon: Nothing is perfect.

Mr. GILMORE: Every speaker has challenged the management. When you sum up the remarks of the various speakers it is found that they all condemn the management.

Mr. Wood: No.

Mr. GILMORE: They continued to condemn the management throughout the debate.

Mr. Lloyd: Quote them.

Mr. GILMORE: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition said he thought it was bad management that the Commissioner should have taken it unto himself to sack 750 men. I asked him if there was any bad management. Thanks to the change of Government these men have been kept on. The hon. member for Cook made a classic statement when he condemned the workers in the railway workshops at Cairns. He said that Napier Brothers had outclassed the workmen in Cairns.

Mr. Adair: They never had the equipment.

Mr. GILMORE: The workers in the workshops at Cairns will be very proud to know that Napier Brothers have done a better job than they have done. I challenge that statement because I think the Cairns men do as good as job as anyone in Australia.

Mr. Adair: You never visited the workshops in Cairns and you would not know any of the workmen there.

Mr. Lloyd: Nobody was sacked.

Mr. GILMORE: Only because of the intervention of the Minister. He saved those men from being put on the unemployed market. The Leader of the Opposition said

that repairs to engines have been lagging for years. That was his own statement in this Chamber.

Mr. A. J. Smith: It was the statement of the hon. member for Roma.

Mr. GILMORE: I have it here.

Mr. Wood: I asked the Minister could he say how the lag in repairs was being overtaken.

Mr. GILMORE: The hon. member said that they had been lagging over the years. He also said that we should have a better goods service. I agree with him and have advocated it since I became a member of this Parliament. Why was it not done by the previous Government?

The hon. member for Mackay said that the railways were in a bad state, that conditions were ridiculous, but I think the word "ridiculous" is inadequate. He admitted that rolling stock and locomotives were utterly unservicable and said that the railway refreshment rooms should give better service. He went on to say that the people running the refreshment rooms were bad managers, that the service was not good at all.

The hon. member for Cook has suddenly discovered that the Etheridge line needs attention. I am glad that he is waking up at last.

The hon. member for Rockhampton supports my contention that promotion in the Railway Department should be on merit and ability.

Mr. Walsh: That is how the Commissioner got his job.

Mr. GILMORE: I will let that interjection pass without comment.

I was astounded to hear that the Labour Party had laid the foundation stone for a new station at Rockhampton in 1928. Obviously Labour members have long memories but very poor vision. The hon. member said also that £15,000 worth of material for the Parkhurst workshops has been lying in grass for two years. Is that good management?

Mr. Walsh: Didn't you tell me that Bundaberg could do with a new station?

Mr. GILMORE: It could, and I am very surprised that the hon. member for Bundaberg did nothing about it.

The railway system is the largest business undertaking in the State, and it should be run as a business. It is not there for the benefit of one section. The Minister has pointed out that the city-dweller gets cheap rail transport, but the people of the outback have to carry the losses of the metropolitan service. Although country people appreciate the concessions that they get in rail freights, it is the country railway systems that show a profit. In the metropolitan area, where hon.

members opposite say there are no concessions, shocking losses are incurred by the department.

Mr. Aikens: Are you still of the opinion that the Commissioner should be dismissed?

Mr. GILMORE: Did not the hon. member hear what I said on that? If it is good enough for a business undertaking to be managed by a board of directors, the State's largest industry should be taken from the control of one man; it should be run on a businesslike basis by a board of directors.

Mr. Hanlon: The present Minister suggested that two years ago.

Mr. GILMORE: A good thing is worth repeating.

I feel confident that the people of Queensland can look forward to an era when the railways will be run for the benefit of the State as a whole and will give good service with clean, comfortable trains.

Mr. WINDSOR (Fortitude Valley) (2.35 p.m.): I congratulate the Minister on his being given such an important portfolio. The energy and brightness of his presentation of the Railways Estimates inspires confidence and enthusiasm. He has made a fine start in his drive to correct anomalies. He did well to find employment for those men who received notice. All on this side of the Chamber will support him.

No business can afford at any stage to become run down. If it seeks to rest on its laurels even for only 12 months and makes no attempt to keep up to date, its competitors will pass it and that may mean the end of it. For many years the railways have not kept pace and reinvested revenue in their business. I cannot say just where a start should be made. It was all I could do to keep work up to 50 men and how the Minister is going to do it with 30,000 spread over such a great area is beyond me. Admittedly, he has much more money to spend than I had but at the same time his task is tremendous.

He spoke of one saving that could be made by the simple expedient of using ball bearings on carriages and other rolling stock. I can give him a simple illustration of the value of ball bearings. About 20 years ago we had an order to build two big turntables for garage use. The device resembled the wheel of a wagon with a centre bearing and, on each arm, a wheel running round on a steel track. When I quoted for the job I said to the customer, "It will be no good without ball bearings." He said to me, "Oh, you have a thrust race in the middle." I said, "That does not mean a thing." He insisted that it would be all right so I said, "If we do the job, the responsibility will be yours." He said, "It will be all right." Anyway, when the job was assembled and the hardwood decking put on, a small tourer car was run onto it. The man sent for me, and when I got there, he had a rope on each side and he said, "Put

that over your shoulder and pull." I leaned forward and he leaned forward and we pulled and pulled. I will guarantee that I could pull 125 lb. When he let the rope go it flew back and I laughed. He said, "The track must be crook." I said, "I told you at the beginning." He asked, "How much will it cost to fix it?" After we had put ball races into the bearings of the small wheels and the job had been re-assembled, he sent for me again. This time he had a big truck on it. He said, "Righto, push it now." I gave about a 20-lb. push and it ran right around on its own. That meant the friction had been reduced about 200 times. Another example is that a 2-h.p. drive on a bearing-lined shaft costs more to run than 10 h.p. on ball bearings.

Although it concerns only a small item the Minister's suggestion could achieve a huge saving. Bronze bearings have a tendency to generate friction and so cause a drag on the motor power. Huge quantities of grease run through uselessly, and even with containers to catch it, there is still an awful mess.

We import fuels to run engines yet we have the greatest potential of any country in the world for coal production. Why not offer a prize to a firm to develop suitable steam generating turbines? Forty years ago I travelled from Bristol to London, a distance of 117½ miles, in 1¼ hours. It was a 4ft. 8½in. track laid on what are known as steel chairs. Under this system there is no chance of the lines shifting. The wide spread gives greater stability and much bigger driving wheels can be used on the motors. I can remember a driving-wheel 9ft. in diameter on that train. We could not use a 9ft. wheel on our tracks because trains would go off the line on curves. By the use of turbines we could reduce the size of the wheel and at the same time have greater traction power on the present track. Things would be at a standstill in war-time if we could not get imported fuel because of closed sea lanes. Indeed, all our eggs are in one basket. We hear about unemployed miners, so why not mechanise the mines to give us cheap fuel? I do not see why we should not be able to produce the best and cheapest coal in the world. It is right at our door. It is completely beyond me why we should ignore it only to send money out of the country for imported fuel.

The introduction of a system of door-to-door delivery by a co-ordinated rail-road service would add greatly to the revenue of the department and satisfy a great need. A big disadvantage at present is the department's limited capacity for handling stores and goods at stations. Too much traffic has to be handled at Roma Street Station. Because of insufficient tracks and loading facilities trains are kept waiting for hours. Roma Street is a bottleneck. No doubt under the new and efficient management we can expect an improvement. Before I resume my seat, I wish to refer to an incident that occurred when the hon. member for Bulimba was

speaking on the subject of three weeks' leave. I interjected, "What do you want three weeks for, you have five now" The hon. member said, "You get five weeks." My friends at the back said, "He is the richest man in Brisbane." In regard to the five weeks, I said, "We get two weeks' annual holiday, two weeks' statutory holiday, and a week's sick pay."

Mr. HANLON (Ithaca) (2.46 p.m.): I commend the Minister on the energy and drive that he has brought to his new portfolio, which is undoubtedly the most difficult in the Cabinet. That was recognised by Labour Governments who for 10 years had their most vigorous and most able Minister, John Duggan, in charge of it. I was disappointed in the way that the Minister brushed off irresponsibly some of the suggestions put forward by members on this side. When the hon. member for Keppel was speaking the Minister seemed to be so anxious—apparently he had been stung by some of the remarks of the hon. member—to score off the hon. member that he ignored a couple of genuine complaints that had been voiced by him. One related to the time of arrival of trains at Rockhampton, and the time of departure of the connecting train to Longreach and Winton. That was not an idle complaint. As I interjected at the time, when I was out there recently I found many people who were beating the ears of politicians on the matter. It is possible that because of factors relating to the servicing of the Midlander the delay cannot be avoided but it is a great inconvenience to the people who have to wait at Rockhampton. Women and young children have to wait round the station where the amenities are not good, for six hours. I do not think that the Minister should have brushed that matter off as he did. It is not our place to get up and make representations that should come from the hon. member for Gregory. I know that the hon. member has not been here long, but he is probably aware of the situation, and if he has not already brought it to the attention of the Minister, no doubt he will.

I appreciate the difficulty that new Ministers have in dealing with their Estimates, particularly those who, like the Minister, have been harsh critics of the departments over many years. They now have to reconcile their previous attitude with the factual position. I do not think we will hear in these Estimates anything like the fits and starts speeches we had from the Minister. If he were running in the Melbourne Cup, you would say he ran his race in patches. He would throw his chest out and take credit for improvements, and the next minute he would drop back behind the front bench and shyly tell us that much of the credit must go to the previous administration and the former Minister. The Minister made a song about the reduction in overtime and referred to the saving of something like a quarter of a million this year compared with previous years. It is obvious,

as the Minister more or less admits, that has only been a continuation of the trend from the post-war reconstruction programme of Labour Governments when Mr. Duggan was in charge. The Treasurer in his Statement some weeks ago said that dieselisation in particular would mean a great saving in overtime this financial year. "The Courier-Mail" who was anxious to laud the Minister as a great saviour of finance, said—

"Mr. Chalk has made a start to put the railways on a 'business basis.' He has banned unnecessary overtime and week-end penalty work and thus saved an estimated £223,000 in the first three months of this year."

If the Minister wants to take any credit for that, he can take credit only for one and a-half months because the fill-in Minister, Mr. Moores, had the portfolio for the other part of the period. Obviously neither had anything to do with it.

The Minister expressed some disappointment at the attitude of railway unions on the reduction of overtime. If the basic pay is sufficient workmen are only too happy not to work overtime if it is not required, but unfortunately in this country over the last 10 years, despite the prosperity of the country in post-war years, the value of money has decreased, and workers have come to regard overtime as part of the basic wage and a method of bolstering their income so that they can enjoy a reasonable standard of living. That applies in all industries. There was an instance in the Police Force some time ago when overtime was reduced by a rearrangement of police duties. Resentment has also been expressed by officers in other departments. I agree that overtime should be reduced as much as possible, and it has been made possible in this instance by the progressive dieselisation policy of Labour Governments, but while the real value of the basic wage remains low people will resent the loss of overtime.

The Minister told the Committee that he hopes to equate revenue and expenditure this financial year. Surely he does not suggest that the previous Minister did not try to do the same thing!

Mr. Chalk: He did not succeed.

Mr. HANLON: It is doubtful whether the new Minister will be able to do any better. If he does we will congratulate him.

Mr. Chalk: Time will tell.

Mr. HANLON: Time will tell. For the financial year ended 30 June, 1957, working expenses exceeded earnings by £1,138,906, but award variations, referred to by the Commissioner as "uncontrollable cost factors," increased the wages bill by £348,866.

Mr. Chalk: The previous Minister increased freight rates. You cannot have it both ways. That blows out your argument.

Mr. HANLON: Those increased freight rates still operate, and the Minister and the

department will receive the benefit of them this year. If the Government are going to pursue their policies, the Minister may have to impose much heavier freight rates. The Commissioner states in his report, "The increased cost of stores issues and fuel during the year was responsible for a rise in working expenses of £662,530." It is likely that the Minister will have to face a further increase in these uncontrollable cost factors this year, because of the policy of his Government.

In the last financial year earnings per train mile increased by 4s. 1½d., while working expenses increased by only 2s. 7d., an improvement of 1s. 6d. per train mile. If the Minister in this financial year can bring about a similar improvement, I shall be only too happy to admit that he has done as good a job as the previous Minister.

Mr. Chalk: To what year are you referring?

Mr. HANLON: The last one.

The hon. member for Tablelands was not quite fair in his criticism of the department and his personal criticism of the Commissioner. The Minister has found the position to be different from the state of affairs that he suggested when he was in Opposition. Some of the criticism voiced by the hon. member for Tablelands was heard from the present Minister when he was a member of the Opposition. In his speeches in 1955, which can be read in "Hansard", he suggested, as the hon. member for Tablelands did a few minutes ago, a Commission of three to inquire into the department. Many of the other suggestions of the hon. member for Tablelands were put forward by the Minister when he was in Opposition, but he has had to discard those ideas since he discovered the facts.

Over a 10-year period there has not been a programme of construction of such dimensions as that put into operation between 1947 and 1957. It is rather idle for any hon. member on the Government side to imply that the state of the railways was the responsibility of the former Government. Nothing of a serious nature can be held against the former Labour Government which showed nothing but attention and foresight for the railways. The hon. member for Norman said that in a 10-year period 200 odd new locomotives had been placed in traffic and 147 obsolete locomotives written off. The introduction of dieselisation meant a great impetus to tractive power. To 30 June, 1957, out of 845 locomotives, 213 had been in service for 10 years or less. That number compares more than favourably with those in operation in other railway systems. Either today or yesterday, the Minister for Transport in New South Wales, released a report by E.B.A.S.C.O., a firm of business consultants that had conducted an investigation into the railways of that State. Great emphasis was given in the report to the need for greater speed towards dieselisation of the railways and it mentioned the spending of £60,000,000 in the next five years for the

improvement of locomotive stock. We can take pride in Queensland on the efforts made to improve our tractive power in the last 10 years under a Labour Government.

The Minister pointed out that by March next year we could expect to see the complete dieselisation of the service to Rockhampton and approximately 60 per cent. of the service from Rockhampton to Townsville. But the Minister has not told us of anything new. As the Leader of the Opposition said happenings in the future will come from the post-war reconstruction plan laid down by a Labour Government and Mr. Duggan in association with a former Commissioner and the present Commissioner. The Minister will receive many benefits from the foresight of Labour Governments. I refer as an instance to the opening of the Burdekin Bridge. Hon. members might say that it took a long time to build, but whether that is so or not it has to be remembered that there were many difficulties associated with it. The opening of this bridge has meant a big thing to the department and an advantage to the new Minister.

I join with the hon. member for Norman in urging the Minister—and I know he will do it—to carry out electrification and quadruplication as soon as possible. Most of our forward plans are laid round the scheme. The Auditor-General points out in his report the amount of unproductive capital involved in the electrification scheme, and I am fearful of what might happen under the present Government if certain pressure from within delays attention to it, because the greater the delay the worse the position will become. I agree with the hon. member for Norman that electrification will mean much to the improvement of railway finance and transport generally. A lot of the planning of the previous Government was centred round the electrification scheme. It was planned to shift the goods sheds to Mayne and the marshalling yards from Mayne to Zillmere. Those are the things that flow from the development of electrification and I hope the Minister will see that the work is speeded up. I hope it will also be possible to allocate funds for the completion of the air-conditioned train now being constructed at the Ipswich railway workshops.

Mr. Chalk: How long have they been building it?

Mr. HANLON: I know they have been building it for a long time, and the Minister has said that funds cannot be allocated for it this year. The Minister spoke about attracting customers to the railways and of having to compete with other means of transport. However, if passengers cannot get on the "crack" trains unless they book about a month ahead they will naturally patronise the airways, where it is possible to get a seat within a couple of days at the most. Therefore, I hope that before very

long the air-conditioned trains now in use will be supplemented by the one that is being built at Ipswich.

I support the hon. member for Mulgrave in his plea on behalf of students travelling during vacation. I know nothing about the cases he mentioned or about the types of carriages that students from the North have to travel in, but I urge the Minister to allow students on vacation to use the main trains. Although I have just said that it is hard to get on the air-conditioned trains, many parents are not too happy about having their children travel on second-class trains. Frequently, undesirable types of people travel on them. I hope that the Minister will give serious consideration to the remarks of the hon. member for Mulgrave about the conditions under which students from the North have to travel during vacation, and that he will allow students travelling on vacation concessions to travel on first-class trains.

Mr. A. J. SMITH (Carpentaria) (3.2 p.m.): The Railway Department is doing an excellent job in my area in conveying to the coast the products of the Mt. Isa Mines and the cattle and wool grown in the area. I commend the employees of the department, from the Commissioner and the general manager for the district, down to the running staff.

The North-west is on the verge of a great era of railway construction. I refer to the rebuilding and strengthening of the section from Townsville to Mount Isa, a distance of 604 miles. I was very concerned, however, to hear the Minister say that the World Bank had become more interested in the proposal following the change of Government in Queensland. Is the World Bank a political institution? In effect, it gets at least some of its money from the Australian taxpayer and it should have no part in politics. Are we to understand that it waited till the Gair Government was attacked by the Communists before it would consider making finance available for the rebuilding of the Townsville-Mt. Isa section? I should like the Minister to deny that. If that is not so, it should be contradicted as soon as possible.

I now turn to the growing menace of the Commonwealth railways in Central Australia to the North Queensland railway trade. There is much cause for concern if we are to spend £30,000,000 on the reconstruction of the Townsville-Mt. Isa line only to meet with unfair competition from the Central Australian railway system because of rebates and concessions on freights to encourage trade from South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales. I have it in correspondence that Commonwealth railways are inviting those States to send goods by their system to a loading place called Mile End in Adelaide, much the same as the Roma Street railway yards. They give a rebate of 25 per cent. on freight from Mile End to Alice Springs. We do not have much of that trade at the

moment but the rebate will attract it, and there is a co-ordinated road service. Figures to the end of August indicate that only about 85 tons of freight a week comes through that way. Territory Transport Association Ltd. co-ordinated service has 15 vehicles, two a week running into Mt. Isa from Alice Springs, and the average load is 25 tons a week. Hauber & Lust have two vehicles, one a week running into Mt. Isa from Alice Springs, and the average load is 15 tons a week. E. J. Styles, Outback Transport, has six vehicles. The firm does one trip a week from Mt. Isa to Darwin and the average load is 20 tons a week. About 85 tons a week come in from the Northern Territory rail head, Alice Springs.

In the report of the Commonwealth Railways for the year 1955-1956, this appears—

“The canvass for additional traffic for the railway has been successful. Goods for Darwin and many places previously served by sea to Darwin, and for distribution inland from there are now carried by rail to Alice Springs, thence by the co-ordinated rail-road service to Larrimah, the southern terminal of the North Australia Railway, for further rail carriage to destination.”

They have almost closed the port of Darwin. Remember that the Commonwealth railways—

Mr. Chalk: Are run at a profit.

Mr. A. J. SMITH: They are running at a profit now but from 1945 to 1954 they were losing on the average £100,000 a year. In 1955-1956 they made a profit of £125,000 on 771 miles of railway line. Only a month ago I was in the Northern Territory and I was told that the Commonwealth railways are talking of closing the northern section from Darwin to Larrimah and handing it over to a co-ordinated road service from Alice Springs to the Northern Territory.

Let me give an instance of the freight charges of the Commonwealth railways to the Northern Territory. I have with me a letter from the Minister for Shipping and Transport, through Senator Condon Byrne. Remember that from Mile End in Adelaide to Alice Springs is about the same distance as from Brisbane to Mt. Isa. Remember, too, that furniture, groceries and machinery are three of the most important items in the Northern Territory and in Western Queensland. The charge for furniture in van from Mile End to Alice Springs is £30 17s. a ton and that carries a 25 per cent. rebate. Freight on the same furniture in vans from Roma St. to Mt. Isa is £62 a ton. From Townsville to Mt. Isa, half the distance, the cost is £28 a ton. I got these figures from the Railway office in Brisbane yesterday. From Mile End to Alice Springs the freight on furniture, loose, is £44 0s. 9d. a ton.

Mr. Hart: Labour Government!

Mr. A. J. SMITH: It is not. It is the infiltration of the Commonwealth Government who have been spending the taxpayers' money on their own railways. The Commonwealth Railways are going to assist the trade of South Australia, Victoria and N.S.W. to the detriment of Queensland's trade. The hon. member for Mt. Gravatt should remember that the Commonwealth Government are closing the port of Darwin to shipping. Queensland merchants would be shipping goods by boat for distribution in the Northern Territory. It is not a matter to be taken lightly. It is another instance of Commonwealth Government infiltration to make their railway pay. If we are to spend millions of pounds in the North-West, it is a matter which we must seriously consider. It is not that Queensland Railways cannot carry the goods or are inefficient, it is not a matter of any government being in power, but infiltration by the Commonwealth Government to boost its own system of 771 miles.

Freight rates on general groceries from Mile End to Alice Springs are £37 15s. 2d., from Roma Street to Mt. Isa £62., and from Townsville to Mt. Isa £28 a ton. Let me remind all hon. members about the 25 per cent. rebate reduction. From Mile End to Alice Springs the freight rate on machinery bagged is £24 11s. 6d. a ton, from Brisbane to Mt. Isa £38 a ton, and from Townsville to Mt. Isa £18 a ton.

I wish I had more time to deal with the Commonwealth Railway's report. I have been reading the 1955-1956 report but I am sure that the 1956-57 report would be more alarming. The report further states—

“The co-ordinated freight service was extended during the year to include transport of goods and equipment to the Mt. Isa (Q.) area, where there is considerable mining development in progress, and to places in the Northern Territory, away from the direct Alice Springs-Larrimah route.”

In 1946-1947 the total carried on the Central Railway to Alice Springs was 235,087 tons and in 1955-1956, 610,603 tons. Reading from the report again—

“The result on the Central Australia Railway was also favourable. Revenue earned amounted to £1,852,406, an increase of 12 per cent. Working expenses totalled £1,216,167, a fall of £99,483, or 7.5 per cent. as compared with the previous year. The net result for 1955-1956, was a surplus of revenue over working expenditure of £636,239, an increase of 87.5 per cent. over the surplus in 1954-55.”

In one year they showed an increase of 87.5 per cent.

In conjunction with what has been done by the Commonwealth Government with their railway, South Australian business men are starting to function. I have a letter here written by a business firm in Adelaide on 3 July, 1957. They are going to land sugar from Adelaide in Mount Isa at 110s. 11d. a

ton or £3 9s. 1d. a bag. Bagged sugar which comes from the Millaquin refinery at Bundaberg costs £2 19s. 6d., and 12s. 6d. added to that at Mount Isa brings it to £3 12s. What are the merchants doing? They are taking advantage of the Commonwealth system of refunds and they are building big warehouses in Alice Springs and Tennants Creek and stocking them up to the hilt. Not only should the railways take a serious view of it, but also the merchants at Townsville who will have to compete with infiltration from New South Wales and Victoria and South Australia. Big business will have to build warehouses in Mount Isa and other districts. One hon. member on the Government side had the audacity to talk about the non-building of the Dajarra-Cameroonal railway. It was not built because the Commonwealth Government would not give us any money. They had this scheme in mind for guaranteeing road and rail transport in the Northern Territory. These business people state on their form, “Stamped envelopes addressed to Adelaide are included with this list.” That is the type of business that is going on. It is not only the business people in Townsville who will have to guard against it. The people in this State will have to pay their share for the losses the Commonwealth incur in the Northern Territory, just as they are paying for the Snowy River scheme and the Leigh Creek railway in South Australia. The whole thing is so serious that it needs immediate investigation. The freight from Alice Springs to Mount Isa, 750 miles, is £16 a ton by road transport, on which no rebate is given. The merchants in Townsville add the cost of the freight of goods from Brisbane. There is a huge growth of industry in the North-West. If the Commonwealth Government do loan the State Government £30,000,000 for the construction of the railway the taxpayers will have to pay it back, and at the same time the Commonwealth Government are encroaching on the trade that should come to Queensland. The losses incurred by the Commonwealth Government on the central railway system will have to be met by the taxpayers. The Commonwealth have lost heavily in the Northern Territory where they have 300-odd miles of line. Let us not forget that the Commonwealth railway is competing with us and they are enormously increasing the trade for South Australia and the other States. On 30 September, I received the following letter which was addressed to Senator Byrne, through whom I made representations. The letter reads—

“In reply to your letter of 10th September, 1957, the Commonwealth Railways Commissioner advises that since 1st November, 1953, a co-ordinated road-rail service has operated for the conveyance of freight between Alice Springs and Darwin, and intermediate destinations on the North Australia Railways. A special flat rate of £24 18s. applies between Alice Springs

and Darwin, including delivery or pick-up at Darwin. Proportionately lower rates apply on goods to and from intermediate stations on the North Australia Railway. In addition to the co-ordinated service a number of road operators handle freight between Alice Springs and Darwin at various fluctuating rates in competition with the Commonwealth Railway Department.

By co-operation with the State Railway Systems concerned, arrangements have been made for the through booking of goods from certain New South Wales, Victorian and South Australian stations to Darwin, ordinary freight charges applying on both the State Systems and the Central Australia Railway.

Traffic for Tennant Creek and Mount Isa, however, is carried beyond Alice Springs by various road operators.

So far as Tennant Creek traffic is concerned, it is advised that for some time past a long distance rebate of 25 per cent. has been allowed on the Central Australia Railway proportion of the freight charges paid. This concession was introduced to assist settlers in the Northern Territory who live long distances from the nearest railway station, and applies on the same lines as a similar arrangement which has been in operation on the Queensland Railways for many years.

Goods for Mount Isa are carried at a reduction of 25 per cent. off the ordinary freight rates on the Central Australia Railway, subject to a minimum charge of £6 per ton, unless classified rates are cheaper. This reduction applies irrespective of the road operator engaged for the conveyance of the goods beyond Alice Springs."

The position is very serious not only for the department but also for railway-men. By granting concessional rates the Commonwealth railway is competing on an unfair basis. The problem will have to be seriously considered by the Minister and the Commissioner. At the end of August, 1957, only 85 tons of goods a week were coming into Mt. Isa from Alice Springs or the Northern Territory. The freight concessions given to Mt. Isa Mines Ltd. have been criticised. If those concessions had not been given by the department, the company would have availed itself of the concessional rates of the Commonwealth co-ordinated road and rail service. Much material is being sent by rail to Mary Kathleen, mainly because of shipping delays. The machinery is urgently required for the production of uranium oxide.

The concessional rates of the Commonwealth railway for the cartage of groceries, furniture and machinery have resulted in increased revenue. The loss on that section of 771 miles in years gone by has been as much as £200,000 a year. The year before the commencement of concession rates the loss amounted to £90,000. In 1955-56 the

profit was £125,000. The figure for 1956-57 is not available. The matter is so serious that it must be investigated.

Hon. G. W. W. CHALK (Lockyer—Minister for Transport) (3.24 p.m.): The statements of the hon. member for Carpentaria are substantially correct. I am rather concerned about the position. It is not something new.

Mr. Jesson: I brought it up last year.

Mr. CHALK: I give the hon. member for Carpentaria credit for bringing it up 12 months ago on behalf of the area he represents. The hon. member for Hinchinbrook claims that he raised it too. I have not checked to see whether he did or not.

Mr. Jesson: It is in "Hansard".

Mr. CHALK: In the last 12 months this serious state of affairs has been allowed to continue. There is no evidence anywhere that the then Government in power during that time took steps to prevent its continuance. I am aware of what has been happening. The matter has been discussed by the Commissioner and myself. It is one that is on the agenda paper for the meeting of all Railway Commissioners of the Commonwealth and New Zealand to be held in the South later this month. During the short time we have been responsible for the administration of the Railway Department we have realised the inroads being made into the freight traffic in this way. We are prepared to discuss it on a Commonwealth level at the forthcoming conference. It affects not only Queensland; it affects the other States too. Goods are being sent by road under Section 92 of the Commonwealth Constitution without the payment of a tax, right across New South Wales and loaded at Port Augusta. It has been proved that it is cheaper by that method with the concessions granted to it to which the hon. member for Carpentaria referred. As Minister for Transport in Queensland I think that competition is the essence of trade. Where the competition is fair I say that we as a State must do all we can to compete with it. What I am not happy about, and I make the statement openly, is the rebate that is being granted. That is where I differ with the Commonwealth administration. If the Commonwealth can compete against us on a fair basis with this trade, and if we cannot meet it it must go on. Queenslanders are paying taxation into the Commonwealth pool, and I think the Commonwealth is wrong in granting these concessions, because after all they are granted with our money. The Commissioner knows the case and he has been briefed to put forward the argument as the Government see it. I think we will find that there will be considerable discussion at the conference, but I am hoping that as a result of the representations by the States the competition between the Commonwealth line and the Queensland Railways will be on a fair basis.

Mr. Walsh: I ask you to have a look at the section of the Commonwealth Constitution regarding discrimination in railway freights.

Mr. CHALK: The hon. member for Bundaberg has had considerable experience of Commonwealth Constitution matters and if he can advance any constructive argument to present to this conference in the interests of the State I shall welcome it. His interests are apparently the same as mine—the development of Queensland, the protection of our employees, and the continual employment of our railway employees.

Before the debate finishes, I must touch on a few of the matters raised by previous speakers. The hon. member for Rockhampton said he hoped that his city could get an air-conditioned train service. I doubt whether it is possible at the present time to allocate money for that purpose. A number of air-conditioned trains are operating and they are giving a service to the community. My main immediate concern is with the transport of goods, livestock and other lines from which the railways derive a good deal of revenue. Representatives of the Australian Meat Board told me at a deputation of the probable turn-off of cattle during the next season and expressed the view that it was highly unlikely that we would be able to handle them. As I say, a good deal of money has been spent in the past on air-conditioned trains and the next move is to see that more wagons are provided and that engine power is increased. Of course, I do not want to disappoint the hon. member. We are mindful of the need for developing Central and North Queensland and we will play our part.

The hon. member referred also to the Rockhampton station. Every hon. member is aware of the condition of the present station. I agree that it has been made a political football over the years. It was used by the previous Government to attract attention to Rockhampton. I took part in election campaigns at Rockhampton, and I used it as a political football. Rockhampton is entitled to a better station, but it is a matter of finance. I assure the hon. member that in preparing our programme for the future, Rockhampton will be given every consideration.

The hon. member referred also to Parkhurst. It has been on the programme for the decentralisation of the Rockhampton workshops for some time. His own Government were not able to make money available for Parkhurst, and nothing has been allocated for it this year. It has been alleged that a good deal of money has been spent on the project, but I cannot say what material is there. I have not visited the Rockhampton railway workshops, but I have spoken to railwaymen in Rockhampton on many occasions and the things they have told me almost made my hair stand on end. I propose to visit every workshops in the State before the end of this session. Since taking

office as Minister I have tried to acquire a knowledge of the administrative side of the department, and my next move is to see the conditions that exist outside and to institute any changes that I regard as necessary.

The hon. member for Kedron tried to make capital out of a statement I made about the number of men who were to be dismissed. He said I had contended that the money that was saved from the cancelling of the order given to the Commonwealth Engineering Coy. for steel carriages would be used to keep the men in employment. If he checks my statement he will find that what he said is not correct. I said that if we proceeded with the order there would be less money to keep the men in employment.

I also said earlier that we hoped to make a careful check of the amount of money tied up in stores and to make a saving in Stores Suspense. Many ordering methods are based on war-time conditions. It was necessary then to order well ahead so that parts would be in stock when required, so large quantities were ordered.

Mr. Hanlon: It went on for a while after the war.

Mr. CHALK: I do not deny that, but the hon. member would not suggest that the shortages exist 10 or 11 years after the war. In many cases the ordering rate can be reduced. We will be able to postpone the buying of many stores and transfer the money from the Suspense Account to keep men in employment. Hon. members of both parties opposite will agree that it will be sensible in the long run because it will enable us to get over some of our difficulties.

Mr. Walsh: The previous Treasurer drew attention to that three years ago. The amount was reduced and it has since been increased.

Mr. CHALK: I do not know who was responsible for it. If the hon. member is casting reflections on the previous Minister for Transport, I will not enter into the argument. The fact is that it happened. We are trying to act in the best interests of the State.

The hon. member for Kedron tried to make political capital out of the quantity of wool railed. Earlier I was able to give the Committee the wool railings only for October this year and last year but, as the hon. member seemed to doubt some of my statements, I hurriedly arranged to get the figures for wool handled in the last three months and they should give a better indication of what is happening.

The comparison of the number of bales that arrived by rail at Newstead is as follows:—

	1956.	1957.
July	19,358	46,647
August	36,993	64,773
September	35,013	70,144

In round figures the number for October this year was 60,000 compared with 20,000 in October, 1956. For the last four months we have handled more than twice the amount of wool handled in the same four months last year. That is a fair answer to our critics, including Mr. Flower who wrote the letter mentioned by the hon. member for Kedron.

Mr. Wood: Would you have comparable figures for October, 1955, the year before the shearers' strike?

Mr. CHALK: The Leader of the Opposition knows that I have not. The figures would be available to him. In any case I am prepared to make them available to him at the conclusion of the debate.

Mr. Hanlon: The year 1956 would be a bad year as a basis for comparison.

Mr. CHALK: No.

Mr. Hanlon: Surely you do not hope that the same conditions will apply in future years as prevailed last year!

Mr. CHALK: The hon. member for Ithaca can somersault or do what he likes. The figures are there and I believe they give a fair comparison. I have not the time to debate the matter further. It is an indication of what we have achieved. We are winning back to the railways a considerable amount of the wool lost last year, wool lost because of the way the hon. member's Government handled the shearers' strike.

The hon. member for Barambah said that secondary industry should be assisted in the country. It is the desire of the Government to assist as much as possible in decentralisation. It is nothing new but something that was done by the previous Government. When a new industry is to be established in the country, we shall give every consideration to it. If an approach is made to the Commissioner consideration will be given to a special freight rate if it is warranted to enable the industry to become established. Only a few weeks ago I was approached by an industry operating between Brisbane and Ipswich, outside the 15-mile limit. It is an industry we want to encourage because it will help the State to develop. Because the industry has a good case I believe it should receive every consideration. We mean to get business back to the railways and we are prepared to play our part in helping industry to decentralise. If the hon. member for Barambah has any similar problems in the future I ask him to submit them to me as Minister for Transport and I shall see that they receive every consideration.

The hon. member for Norman made a few suggestions. Most of them had been advanced previously in the Chamber either by himself or by hon. members on this side when they were in Opposition. Most of his suggestions were difficult to give effect to but he has done the right thing by placing them before the Chamber. They will be included in

"Hansard" as a permanent record and a permanent reminder to the department that there is a need for changes in certain directions. "Hansard" debates are dissected by my departmental officers and already quite a number of matters have been placed before me. Through the debate quite a deal of good can accrue to the department. The hon. member for Fortitude Valley made reference to the fitting of roller-bearings on a lot of our rollingstock. We are fitting roller-bearings on the wagons and rollingstock. Previously it was done with locomotives and in some instances with passenger carriages.

Mr. Jesson: Was that not brought up by the hon. member for Keppel?

Mr. CHALK: I raised this matter during my introductory remarks, and the hon. member for Fortitude Valley, realising the importance of it took the opportunity to refer to it. So that the hon. member will not be under any misapprehension I point out that we are fitting roller-bearings to the wagons. By doing so we can improve the speed of our trains and ultimately carry a greater tonnage of goods, and overall it will be to the advantage of the State generally.

The hon. member for Tablelands made reference to some matters of interest to the department. I shall consider his views to see whether their implementation is in the best interests of the State as a whole.

I was interested in the remarks of the hon. member for Ithaca. He commenced by saying that nothing that had been raised so far had been of a constructive nature. I do not think he said anything of a constructive nature himself.

Mr. Hanlon: I said that you had not advanced anything new. I did not say that there had been nothing constructive.

Mr. CHALK: Nothing very constructive.

Mr. Hanlon: "Nothing new from the Minister," I said.

Mr. CHALK: I am prepared to accept the hon. member's explanation. During the period I have been Minister a number of problems have arisen and a number of decisions have been made, which, I believe, events show have been in the best interests of the department. As I said in my opening remarks, so far we do not claim to have attempted anything of a spectacular nature. I believe that when a board of directors take over a business they should first endeavour to acquaint themselves with all the activities of the business, that they should spend some time in what I might term "settling in," and that after they have got a complete grasp of the operations of the business they are then in a better position to implement any policy they have in mind.

One hon. member referred to the policy speech of the Country-Liberal Party in reference to a consultative committee. It was mentioned in the policy speech, and it is

something to which the Government have given much thought. After we became the Government, Mr. Nolan, on behalf of the Railway Unions, offered their services, and I believe he was quite sincere. We have not abandoned the idea; we have not overlooked it.

I prefer to go along steadily in acquiring a full knowledge of my department and its operations. After I have made my investigations I shall submit the proposal about a consultative committee to Cabinet. I am not going to be stampeded into appointing the committee. The committee will not take over the administration of the department. The members of the committee will offer helpful advice based on practical experience. The matter is still being considered, and in due course the suggestion will be implemented.

The hon. member for Ithaca referred to students travelling during vacation. That was raised by the hon. member for Mulgrave, and I have had correspondence on the subject with the hon. members for Cook and Cairns. A similar request has been made by people living in the Far West. The solution of the problem is not as easy as it would appear. As I told the hon. member for Mulgrave, if an air-conditioned train is the only train available, the department will do all it can to provide accommodation for students on that train, but care must be exercised because, if we fill the train with students travelling on concessional rates, the public will protest. If we do not give them accommodation on the train, parents of the students raise a protest. Unfortunately the vacation of students coincides with that of most other people.

I was particularly concerned about the circumstances mentioned by the hon. member, who said that one female and 23 male students travelled during the last vacation from Cairns to Townsville to catch the red train, as it is called, or the second division, in what he described as a dog box. If it is correct that one female had to travel that distance with 23 male students, it is a deplorable state of affairs. This morning I issued instructions to prevent a recurrence of it. If the air-conditioned train is the only one available, I do not agree that students should be herded into a carriage attached to that train. It will not occur again. I shall do my best to see that students all over Queensland receive the best the department has to offer. The problems cannot be overcome immediately, but departmental officers will benefit from the points raised by hon. members.

Mr. Davies: When you are making your tour of the workshops, will you include Maryborough?

Mr. CHALK: Yes. I intend to inspect all workshops and I shall advise the hon. member representing the electorate of my visit so that he will have an opportunity of placing before me the case for his constituents.

Several other points call for a reply. The statement of the hon. member for Cooroora caused me some concern. He said a rail motor was operating in his area without brakes. Late last night I asked the Commissioner to make inquiries. I am now informed that the rail motor is of old design, but it is mechanically sound. The brakes have been tested and are in good condition. The hon. member said that the door was tied up with rope. Something more effective than rope may have been used, but the fact is that the door is twisted. It is not a matter of rectifying the catch. The repair of the door is a major job. It was hoped that at an appropriate time the rail motor could be completely overhauled and the door repaired. As the matter has been raised and as I thought something should be done, the Commissioner has asked the locomotive engineer in Brisbane to see if some better arrangement cannot be arrived at.

The hon. member for Burdekin mentioned on Tuesday the dismantling of the old wooden railway bridge over the Burdekin at Carstairs. This matter was discussed with the Commissioner and he pointed out that steps are being taken to have the old bridge demolished and as much of the serviceable material as possible salvaged. The work of removing this bridge has not been commenced because the bridge gang required for the work had to be retained on urgent bridge maintenance and structures for other traffic. The matter has been noted and I advise the hon. member that it will be attended to.

The hon. member for Chermide mentioned that a lady had been charged for travelling without a railway ticket. The circumstances as he explained are by and large correct. During that particular week the department was aware that quite a number of people were travelling between the two points he mentioned without purchasing weekly tickets. Most of the people travelling between Eagle Junction and Bindha do so on weekly tickets. It was decided to have a check taken on this particular morning when this lady and 13 other passengers were apprehended. They were travelling without tickets. Some offered to pay their fares—and I know the hon. member will agree with me—but because of the circumstances the department did not let them go without taking action. If one person had been let off a lot could have been made out of it. As there were 13 apprehended at the same time the hon. member will perhaps realise what did happen.

The hon. member for Kedron made reference this morning to the loss suffered by the department in the metropolitan area. It is correct that it was in the metropolitan area that certain losses occurred. In that area returns are arrived at over the distance that is credited to the particular location. In the metropolitan area credit is only given for 72 miles between Brisbane and Helidon and 106 between Brisbane and Gympie. The Brisbane area has to stand the whole of the costs involved, the whole of the staffing and

loading facilities for all goods going to all parts of Queensland and the Brisbane or metropolitan area is only credited in the case of Townsville with $\frac{10.6}{33.2}$. It gets credit for that portion of the freight which represents 106 miles; the balance of the freight is credited to the Northern Division, but the major loading costs occurred in the South and so have to be borne by the Southern Division.

At 4 p.m.,

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dewar): Order! Under the provisions of the Sessional Order agreed to by the House on 29 October, I shall now put the questions necessary for the Vote under consideration and for the balance remaining unvoted for the Department of Railways.

The questions for the following Votes were put, and agreed to—

Department of Railways—	£
General Establishment ..	1,053,170
Balance of Department, Consolidated Revenue and Loan Fund ..	40,022,410

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE.

CHIEF OFFICE.

Hon. A. W. MUNRO (Toowong—Minister for Justice) (4.1 p.m.): I move—

“That £150,334 be granted for ‘Department of Justice—Chief Office.’”

I do not propose to speak at length. I regard the debate primarily as an opportunity for hon. members generally to express their views on matters connected with the administration of the department and to criticise where criticism is merited. The debate will be helpful to me, to the Government, and to the people, and I look forward with interest to hearing the views of hon. members.

Mr. Jesson: Haven't you heard enough during the last few months?

Mr. MUNRO: I like to hear everything.

It may be appropriate at this stage to draw attention to the very wide ramifications of the Department of Justice. Although it has not very much glamour, it provides a number of very useful services to the State. From what I have seen in the short time that I have had the responsibility of administering the department, those services are given at a moderate cost.

Apart from the Chief Office, the Vote covers the sub-departments of Courts of Petty Sessions, Commissioner of Prices, Electoral Registration, Fair Rents Office, Friendly Societies, Licensing Commission, Prisons, Public Curator, Registrar-General, Sheriff and Supreme Court, and Titles Office. That is a wide range of subjects for discussion.

The Chief Office Vote shows an increase of £9,826 on last year's expenditure, the increase being apportioned as £7,034 to salaries and £2,792 to contingencies. The salaries

in this department come under the class of expenditure that accountants refer to as uncontrollable; that is to say, it is expenditure incurred in carrying on necessary services. Provision has been made for one additional officer and for the payment of award increases.

The item mainly responsible for the increase in contingencies is cash equivalent of long service leave. Owing to the proposed retirement of two officers, an increase of £2,030 in expenditure is expected.

Mr. WOOD (North Toowoomba—Leader of the Opposition) (4.5 p.m.): From a perusal of the Estimates hon. members will realise the importance of the sub-departments of the Department of Justice. Obviously in discussing the Chief Office Vote we cannot do more than touch on the fringe of them.

In the past week or two members of the Opposition have been forthright in their remarks on some of the activities of one branch, and I assure the Minister that I shall have very little to say on it today. However, I speak for all members of Parliament when I say that at no time is our criticism personally directed against the Minister. I do not think there is one hon. member who has not a sincere regard for him, for his probity, his capacity and his energy, and that is not mere idle flattery. We all recognise that he is gifted with those attributes. At the same time, he will agree that we should be falling in our responsibilities if we did not point out the dangers that lie ahead of him in the discharge of his heavy duties. They were heavy in the time of his predecessor, too.

Mr. Sparkes interjected.

Mr. WOOD: I do not suggest that the previous Minister did not apply himself to his job with energy. I am not afraid to say that. The Minister will find himself faced with problems just as heavy and I ask him to accept as sincere our assurance that if occasionally we offer criticism we do so because we believe there are dangers inherent in some of the principles that have been laid down by the previous Government. I refer mainly to the move, as we see it, to abolish price control.

Mr. Sparkes: We have had all the sugar, now let us have some of the vinegar.

Mr. WOOD: The hon. member for Aubigny will have the opportunity to give his own views on the department in his own brilliant way and in his own time. To quote one of the expressions of a Liberal speaker on the other side, I have no doubt that he will do it with succinct lucidity. He can use his 25 minutes and I will listen to him with the greatest of interest, as I advise him to listen to me.

I pay a tribute, as I have done in previous years, to the high standard of efficiency in the Department of Justice. I have always

had a high regard for the public servants of the State but I know of no department with higher standards than the Department of Justice. My summing up of a public servant is not based on the way he reacts to people in authority but on the attention he gives to the humblest. Judged by the real standards of service to the public, no department in the Public Service surpasses the Department of Justice in efficiency. I have said that on the Estimates in previous years. I see no reason why I should depart from those views on this occasion just because I am in Opposition. The hon. member for Mount Gravatt is one hon. member who, I thought, would have been in the Chamber when the Estimates were presented.

Government Members interjected.

Mr. WOOD: Yes, he will be sent for, I know! In spite of the views of the hon. member for Mount Gravatt, I have a very high regard for the standard of efficiency of Queensland magistrates. I believe that they are competent and well-informed, that they exercise their functions impartially. Allow me in the most kindly way to address a minor complaint to the Minister. I believe that he could better serve the magistrates of the State by publicly stating his unswerving confidence in them rather than by trying to protect the hon. member for Mount Gravatt as he undoubtedly did when I directed a question to him about the remarks of the hon. member for Mount Gravatt.

Before coming to the main point of my speech I wish to refer to the work done by all electoral officers throughout the State. I advise the Minister to go into the position very carefully before he makes any alteration in the present system of rolls or adopts the suggestion of having uniform Commonwealth-State rolls. I have been associated with election campaigns in Queensland for at least 30 years. I have had very close association with both Commonwealth and State rolls. I am quite safe in asserting that in no way are State rolls inferior to Commonwealth rolls.

Mr. Watson: That is only your opinion.

Mr. WOOD: And the opinion of thousands of others.

Mr. Watson: It is not mine.

Mr. WOOD: On this particular matter I do not know that I value the opinion of the hon. member for Mulgrave. I would place a great deal of weight on his opinion on sugar and other matters, but not on this subject.

I draw attention to an essential difference in the compilation of Commonwealth and State rolls. In many instances through an over-strict enforcement of the law Commonwealth authorities deprive people of enrolment. On the other hand the Queensland election system is aimed at ensuring that as many as possible who are entitled to the

franchise are enrolled and able to claim their vote. I am quite sure that there is a greater percentage of people enrolled on State rolls who are justly entitled to vote than there is on the corresponding Commonwealth rolls. I ask the Minister to disregard the loose nonsense talked over the years by hon. members of the Liberal and Country Parties about ghost voters and the stuffing of rolls. I believe he will be fair-minded enough to admit that an examination by him would show that such practices exist only in the fertile imagination of critics of the Australian Labour Party. In actual practice these things just do not happen. It is like all the nonsense which has been talked about the numbering of ballot papers. The average man in the street would believe from what has been said by hon. members opposite that the numbering of ballot papers is a system to enable anybody associated with the Government to look at the roll, turn up the number on the ballot paper and find out how a person voted. Anyone with the slightest knowledge of our electoral system knows that such a statement is so much nonsense.

Mr. Knox: What if it became unstuck?

Mr. WOOD: Even if it became unstuck. The number on the ballot paper is inserted opposite the voter's name on the roll. That roll is nowhere in evidence when the votes are being counted. Hon. members know that the count is carried out under the closest scrutiny, not only of the presiding officer and the poll clerk but of the scrutineer or scrutineers appointed by any political party or parties. I take it the only person who could give an order that the ballot paper be ungunmed would be the Elections Tribunal judge. I ask hon. members opposite to give cases where such an illegal scrutiny has taken place and give practical examples of how it could take place under our system of counting votes. When an election is completed the official rolls do not leave the custody of the returning officer. I ask hon. members opposite to tell this Committee, first if they believe the system of numbering ballot papers has been illegally used, and secondly under what circumstances it could be done. Hon. members cannot get away from this fact: were it not for such a system it would be almost impossible to detect a case of fraud as was found in regard to the Bulimba election.

Mr. Power: It would be impossible.

Mr. WOOD: It would be impossible to detect a case of fraud such as that disclosed by the Elections Tribunal in connection with the Bulimba election. I do not know of any person who was ever associated with an election who found himself in a position in which he could use to his advantage the system of numbering ballot papers. I certainly do not know of anybody who has attempted to take advantage of it.

Mr. Knox: Do you support the numbering of ballot papers?

Mr. WOOD: I cannot see that it does any practical harm. I cannot see that it in any way destroys the secrecy of the ballot; but I can certainly see an advantage where it could be used to disclose fraud. The hon. member can explain to this Committee and quote any case that he knows where it was used fraudulently. I throw that challenge to the hon. member. Give us any examples where it has been used fraudulently, or cite cases where the circumstances were such that it could be used. When the count is taking place the roll is nowhere near. The roll is the only evidence that is retained of the number marked on the ballot paper. Does the hon. member suggest that during any scrutiny the roll is kept open? That would be a fantastic statement to make. I shall be interested to hear the hon. member's statement in this regard.

We have heard much about the Licensing Commission. I have some criticism to offer, but I shall first of all make a general statement. The personnel of the Licensing Commission has been doubled and the cost nearly trebled over the past five years. This instrumentality has been severely criticised mainly on the basis of its closed hearings. Reasons are given for hearings in camera, but there are more cogent reasons in favour of public hearings. In the opinion of a not inconsiderable number of the public, proceedings should be open to the Press and public, and not subject to the reservations recently stated by the Minister. It is said that proceedings are heard in camera so that the business standing of the parties will not be revealed. The most important reason given is the protection of the character of the parties against hearsay testimony. The taking of such testimony cuts across all ideas of justice and real evidence. It is a poor state of affairs if testimony which cannot be made in public and is heard in camera can affect the result. If the evidence cannot be presented in open court it should not be heard in camera.

In New South Wales and Victoria licensing courts hear evidence in open court. Consideration should be given to the system operating in those States.

Late in September the Minister for Justice announced that the Licensing Commission was to be reconstituted and that the Liquor Acts would be amended for that purpose. Both the Minister for Justice and the Minister for Local Government, when the proposed reconstitution was announced, stated that the officers of their departments who were members of the Commission had full-time jobs apart from the work of the Commission. Hon. members will recall that statement. The statement about reconstitution followed a concentrated Press campaign against closed hearings by the Commission.

Although the Minister for Local Government thanked the members of the Commission for their work, the hon. member for Kurilpa during the Supply debate criticised the Commission on its recent annual report. He

directed his attack particularly against the tied house system. He said that the Labour-in-Politics Convention from time to time had strong views on the matter, and that is true. He said he believed the Liberal Party genuinely thought it was an undesirable system, under which hotels were held by breweries. Within days of that statement, however, the man who was President of the Liberal Party in Queensland a little more than a year ago and who is now President of the Associated Chambers of Commerce of Australia gave an entirely different view. I refer to Mr. Leon Trout, who when Liberal Party President made a pontifical assertion that the 40-hour week was a luxury we simply could not afford. Mr. Trout came to the defence of both the Licensing Commission and the breweries. He defended the Commission and the right of the breweries to own their own hotels.

Mr. Trout said he could not see any objection to breweries owning and operating their own hotels to protect their assets and he claimed that they were the only people who had the capacity and the inclination to provide accommodation for tourists. The poor quality and paucity of accommodation in Queensland for tourists should be sufficient answer to that. Overseas visitors have so frequently condemned the quality of hotel accommodation in this State. We are so used to it and accept it as true, that an outburst of that kind today hardly rates a line in our news columns. Where breweries have had control of hotels they have concentrated on providing drinking space and not accommodation. Doubtless Mr. Trout is right when he says that breweries can be trusted to look after their assets, but their assets are not tourists. They are firstly in business to brew beer and sell it. If they go into the hotel end of the liquor trade it is merely to push the sales of their product. They tie down the licensees to selling their product. If a licensee in a brewery hotel works up the trade his reward is a big increase in rental by the brewery owner. I hope that later on members of the Opposition will develop this particular matter which I have so sketchily outlined. We believe that the time is now for a most searching investigation into the degree in which breweries control hotels. I am satisfied that if the accurate position was presented to the public we would have very grave reason for disquiet.

There is only one other matter that I have time to deal with. It is the important one of the Legal Aid Bureau. Reference was made in the policy speech of the A.L.P. to this important matter. The policy speech outlined the defects. I read the promise given—

“As a start, we propose establishing such a Bureau to provide legal advice and assistance to wives with dependent children who have inadequate means, and who have been deserted by their husbands.”

Frankly, that is a modest beginning, but a modest beginning is something that can

develop into a worthwhile service to the State and its indigent people. Our aim is to set up a service in this State to assist deserving cases, particularly where the denial of such a form of assistance could contribute substantially to a miscarriage of justice. We of the Opposition urge the Government to make a move in the direction of providing not only legal advice but actual representation in courts for deserving people who are in necessitous circumstances and cannot afford to retain legal practitioners. Under existing legislation, which does not go very far in this direction, the office of the Public Curator is doing helpful and worthwhile work. It gives advice freely to the public but has no authority to undertake court actions. The only representation afforded is in criminal jurisdiction where, in the cases of accused persons having insufficient means to provide for their defence, the Public Defender undertakes the defence free of charge. It is an extension of this practice into some departments of the civil courts which we seek on behalf of those people who would be practically immobilised in certain civil actions merely because of lack of funds. This is a proposition that I should like to develop at some length. It is an important principle. I know that the Minister, as a humane man, will recognise the suggestion as a worth while one. If it is not given immediate consideration, I appeal to him to see if a long-range policy can be developed to provide legal aid to the indigent. I realise that such a system could not be established at short notice, but on behalf of the Opposition I ask the Minister to take the first step in introducing the system outlined in our policy speech.

(Time expired.)

Mr. P. R. SMITH (Windsor) (4.31 p.m.): Starting at the point where the Leader of the Opposition left off, I shall continue the remarks that have been addressed to the subject of legal aid. Before doing that, however, I compliment the Minister on his very conservative Estimates, which no doubt in time will cause the previous speaker to refer to him again as a man who devotes himself to his task with energy.

Hon. members may remember that during the Address-in-Reply debate I referred to the practice in England. It is far more satisfactory than any system that the Public Curator or any other public instrumentality could devise. For example, it is not beyond probability that both litigants in an action are without means. The Public Curator could not possibly act in such a case. If one litigant went to him, he would be prohibited from acting for the other party. But under a system such as I outlined earlier—a system run by the profession for the benefit of indigent and needy people—no matter how many parties are involved in the action they can have independent and adequate representation. They could not get that from a Government instrumentality.

Mr. Lloyd: Could not such a system be brought under the Public Curator's office?

Mr. P. R. SMITH: Once a Government department administers it there is representation of one party, either the plaintiff or the defendant. Under the English system, however, although all the practitioners work within it, they are not combined in one unit. In other words, there are more representatives than there could be parties to an action.

Mr. Lloyd: What about payment?

Mr. P. R. SMITH: Payment is arranged by the profession. In some cases there is none. The work is done by the profession with the realisation that it has an obligation to serve the community. Of course, where a person has some means, payment may be sought. But it is not demanded. It is a notorious fact that barristers cannot sue for their fees. If they are not paid, they are irrecoverable.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr. P. R. SMITH: Judging by the comments of the Opposition, I am thankful indeed that they have never been my clients. If they had, I might have been whistling for my fees.

Mr. Power: If we wanted a legal man we would get a "fair dinkum" one. I would get Dan Casey, not you.

Mr. P. R. SMITH: That would not distress me one bit.

On the subject of legal aid, I urge the Minister to be very guarded in reposing the responsibility for such a function in the Public Curator or any other Government department. Far better that it should be done by the profession—by men who are aware of the need.

Mr. Lloyd: Don't you think it could be controlled through the Public Curator even if the service were given by the legal profession?

Mr. P. R. SMITH: No, the best ones to control it are the practitioners in that kind of work in the profession.

Mr. Lloyd: I think you people are a bit jealous of your rights.

Mr. P. R. SMITH: If anyone can be jealous of work he does for nothing, he is entitled to be. The amount of work we do for nothing is considerable at present and a little more would not make much difference.

The previous Government deserved criticism for their treatment not only of judges and magistrates but also of litigants. A litigant is entitled to just as much consideration as anybody else but in many cases undue consideration has been given to those whose voting power counts in elections or who belong to great pressure groups. Litigants are citizens of the State and are entitled to

just as much consideration as those who want free drugs, free hospitalisation, or other treatment.

It would do hon. members the world of good to inspect the court buildings and facilities offered litigants over the years by the previous administration. I refer particularly to the lower court, which deals with smaller actions in the petty sessions jurisdiction where a man seeks to enforce his right against his neighbour on a small scale. I do not speak of the large-scale actions by those whom hon. members opposite say we represent, but I go into the camp that they allegedly represent and speak of the small litigant with his £10 or £15 claim. He needs a guide to find his way round the old railway building housing the Magistrates Courts at the top of Adelaide Street.

Mr. Power: Buildings come under the Department of Public Works.

Mr. P. R. SMITH: It is not the buildings; it is the way the courts have been allotted round them. Some Supreme Court litigants have to traipse all the way down from George Street to William Street and that means inconvenience and loss to them. Litigants are entitled to far more respect and consideration than that. The Summons Courts are in an old building with three flights of stairs. Not all litigants are sound of wind and limb; many are old and infirm. One has only to be at the Summons Court at 10 o'clock in the morning to see the picture—of human tragedy winding its way up three flights of stairs, only to face at the end of the climb the ordeal of going to court for the first time. Those in the profession become inured to the experience but it is a shock when encountered for the first time. In a Chamber like this we should take stock and consider these people. Having gone into the ramshackle court, litigants are compelled to give evidence which is taken down on a typewriter. If a man is nimble-witted he can take advantage of the brief space of time required to type the question of cross-examining counsel before replying. It gives the nimble-witted man an opportunity to frame an answer which suits him. That does not happen when reporters are taking down evidence in shorthand. When a question is asked the demeanour of the witness can be observed and his answer heard without the interruption of a typewriter's tapping or perhaps the typist calling for silence while he finishes typing a question. There are no interruptions which assist the dishonest litigant. There is also a great saving in time. By using reporters to take the evidence down in shorthand cases could be heard in a third to half the time. Matters which now run into the second day would never go beyond the first day. Time and money are interchangeable terms today.

Mr. Lloyd: You are talking about the lower court?

Mr. P. R. SMITH: Yes.

Mr. Lloyd: It might be difficult to get the required number of shorthand writers.

Mr. P. R. SMITH: It may be difficult but the litigant is entitled to every consideration. It is done in the Fair Rents court. If it can be done there there is no reason why it cannot be done in other courts. There is no need for legislation. The Act has been on the Statute Book for many years. The Shorthand Reporters in Courts of Summary Jurisdiction Act was passed in 1915. It defined the Small Debts Court, the Court of Petty Sessions, the Licensing Court and the Warden's Court as courts which were entitled and empowered to have shorthand reporters.

In the lower court evidence is taken down on a typewriter, read back to a witness who signs it as being correct. In the Criminal Court a man may be on trial for his very freedom on a charge of murder but evidence is taken down in shorthand and not read back. Evidence an accused gives on his own behalf is not read back to him but on the strength of that evidence which is not read back to the jury or to the judge he is either acquitted or condemned. His condemnation can have far more serious consequences than any of the consequences envisaged as the result of an action in the lower court. I can speak from considerable experience. I have appeared in murder trials in the Supreme Court and in the lower court. It is farcical to come out of the Criminal Court where you have appeared for a man on a murder charge only to go into the lower court to resist an assault charge in which maybe only minor injuries have been sustained. Evidence is typed and read back to witnesses and a maximum fine of £20 inclusive of costs is involved.

By their neglect and distinterest the previous Government allowed unsatisfactory conditions to obtain in the courts which were not only a bugbear to people who practise in the courts and preside, but more important to all those people who have to go to the courts. The man in the street, more than anyone else is the person who is inconvenienced. Members of the profession become acclimatised but it is very seldom that a litigant goes to court more than once. There is the man who becomes keen on litigation but he is a rarity.

The raising of the jurisdiction of the magistrates court has meant that many litigants have gone to the magistrates court for an increased quantum. The magistrates are handicapped, without a proper library, in regard to the argument addressed to them. In the Supreme Court counsel has the advantage of a large library, and he also has the advantage of an instructing solicitor who, if a matter is raised, can be sent to the library to get the report relevant to the argument. In the magistrates court when the jurisdiction was £200 such a lack was not so bad,

but £600 is a fair sum of anybody's money. When it is a matter of advancing an argument on behalf of one party or the other, counsel is handicapped by the lack of a library, and he knows the position will be difficult because the man hearing the case has no ready reference at hand. It is time the Government took some steps to see that the magistrates are provided with tools of trade which, if they can use them, they can use to advantage. It is very important to see that the litigant is not the loser on this account. That is what happens under the present system. He comes along, a case is started and it goes on for days and days. If they were provided with shorthand writers the case would be over in a day. If a man loses after one day it is bad enough, but if he loses after three days his loss is much greater.

Mr. Lloyd: Would you say in all cases or in serious cases?

Mr. P. R. SMITH: At the present time in any case up to £75 in the magistrates court the depositions can be waived. Up to £25 the magistrate has the discretion and between £25 and £75 the parties may waive the depositions. That is done in many cases.

Mr. Gair: They do that to keep down costs.

Mr. P. R. SMITH: If it was done to keep down costs, it is rather a long way round. The best way to keep down costs is to have the case heard adjudicated speedily. That can be accomplished if the whole of the evidence is heard in one day.

An Opposition Member: It would increase the cost.

Mr. P. R. SMITH: It would not. At the present time a great deal of time is lost in reading over the depositions. After a day's hearing the case is adjourned, but not until next day, it may be three or four weeks' time before the magistrate will be able to hear it again. Having continued a second day it is then adjourned to a third day, which may be many weeks later. A considerable amount of time is wasted by both parties in refreshing their minds in regard to what was said during the previous hearings.

Mr. Lloyd: You have a transcript of the evidence.

Mr. P. R. SMITH: No. Only one copy is made and the parties have to rely on their memories. If a litigant is without representation he is in a terrible plight. He generally comes to court with a 1d. scribbler, and after an adjournment of four or five weeks he has to try to refresh his memory. He has no way of keeping a record and he is gravely disadvantaged. If you get the case heard in a day the man is not put to any great inconvenience or disadvantage. We must have regard to these people and see that they are not disadvantaged. They are as entitled to justice just as anybody else is.

In the Supreme Court the position is not really a great deal better. No facilities are provided for people who have to wait for cases to be called on. Members of the profession and their clients wait over there from 10 o'clock until their case is called. If there was some way of overcoming that long delay, it would be appreciated. The position is particularly bad in the lower court. On a rainy day the only verandas available to those waiting for cases are on the easterly and southerly sides. Hon. members will realise that those are the most undesirable aspects. Those on the second floor have to go downstairs to shelter from rain. That may be all right for young people, but it is a distinct disadvantage to old people. Those people may miss their case when it is called. In winter the verandas are bitterly cold. Litigants at least have some shelter in the Supreme Court, although it is not attractive enough to encourage people to go there frequently. The conditions I have described in the lower court apply equally to the police court, the magistrates' court, and the summons court. The time is long since past when something should have been done. When some of the more pressing or urgent matters are attended to, I trust the Government will take action to improve the set-up. It is an unfair heritage left by our predecessors. Discomfort is being experienced by practitioners and particularly by litigants.

I trust that the Leader of the Opposition on the next occasion he refers to the Minister of Justice will be able to speak as glowingly of his energy and his work as he spoke of the previous Minister.

Mr. COBURN (Burdekin) (4.52 p.m.): I think that companies registered as medical benefits funds come within the ambit of this department. Unfortunately it seems that no authority has any power to deal with medical benefits funds that are bogus and dishonest and that fleh from the public money to which they are not entitled.

Mr. Power: Thorough scoundrels.

Mr. COBURN: The ex-Attorney-General spoke very scathingly about a company which at that time operated under a different name. It had canvassers in the Home Hill and Ayr districts and they enrolled many members. When claims were submitted, either no reply was sent by the company or the people were not recognised as members of the society and entitled to payment. Not one of them has received the compensation to which he is entitled.

These medical benefits funds usually appoint as canvassers a member of a well-known and highly-respected family in the district. In Ayr they selected a young man from a well-respected family. He was regarded as honest, and indeed he was honest, and the people thought the fund would be all right as he was associated with it, and they freely enrolled.

I shall not expose the name of the person whose case I shall mention, but will give him the pseudonym of Mr. Black. After an eye operation in the Townsville General Hospital he submitted a claim on this company in the vicinity of £84—and a further claim for hospital fees of £46 4s. He did not receive any satisfaction. He did not get a reply to his letters, nor did he receive any payment under the contract he had entered into with the company. He put the matter in the hands of his solicitors, Groves & Clark of Ayr, and they got in touch with the Commonwealth department. The company was called Commercial Hospital and Medical Benefits Ltd. I mention it so that the public will be forewarned and so avoid it. It operated under another name when the hon. member for Baroona was Attorney-General, but it is comprised of the same personnel still. This one is just as crooked as the other one was. This reply was received—

“Dear Sir,

We refer to our letter of 19 September. A reply has now been received from the Commonwealth Attorney-General who informed us as follows—

‘It should be appreciated that the Commonwealth has no general control over companies carrying on hospital and medical insurance business. Companies which satisfy certain requirements may be registered under the National Health Act. If they fail to comply with certain requirements their registration may be suspended or cancelled, but that at the moment is the extent of Commonwealth control. The Commercial Hospital and Medical Benefits Pty. Limited, is not a registered organisation and consequently the Commonwealth has no control over its activities. As the Department of Health has mentioned to you the affairs of this company have been investigated. However, the investigation was not carried out under the National Health Act, but by an inspector appointed under the Companies Ordinance, 1954, of the Australian Capital Territory.

‘The inspector has made a report to me but, it would of course, not be proper to disclose the contents of the report to you at this stage. However, I doubt very much whether anything in the report would assist you to any extent. There is nothing, of course, which the Commonwealth can do to force this company to pay your client’s claim and I suggest you give consideration to using the ordinary processes of law. As far as is known the company is still carrying on business at the new address given to you by the Department of Health.’

‘It appears we have done all possible except to take proceedings against the company, and this we are prepared to do although we do not feel confident of the outcome of such action. You have already sent to the company the evidence which

you had of your membership of the company and most of the documents which give evidence of the particulars of your claim and it may be difficult for you to provide the necessary information.’”

That was the information they got from the Commonwealth authority. They claim it is not registered as a health organisation but registered as a company.

Mr. Power: It was registered in Canberra.

Mr. COBURN: As the hon. member for Baroona has said, it was registered in Canberra. If they had had previous experience of the people associated with this company they should have refused registration of the company at Canberra.

Mr. Power: It is the same crowd. There is an action pending and we are waiting for a judgment of the Full Court.

Mr. COBURN: It would appear that where companies are defrauding the public as this one seems to be doing all processes available to us should be put into operation to protect the public from the operations of such a company. I wrote to the Queensland Attorney-General and he told me that this was not a matter on which he could assist me and that complaints of this nature should be referred to the Commonwealth authority. The Attorney-General of Queensland can do nothing and the Commonwealth authorities claim they can do nothing. It would seem that people who do not have any knowledge of the nature of this company are going to be fleeced. Surely some action should be taken to deregister the company and if necessary an application should be made to the Commonwealth authority by our Attorney-General. We want the Queensland Government to take that action. It is suggested that this man to whom I gave the pseudonym of Black should use the processes of law. He is only an ordinary working man. Hon. members have probably heard a story that I heard in my youthful days concerning two cats who had a piece of cheese. When they came to share it, they could not agree on the division being equal. And so they called in a very wise monkey to act as arbitrator. They told him that they wanted him to divide the cheese into two parts of equal weight. The monkey got a pair of scales and cut the cheese so that one piece was much larger than the other. He placed the cheese on the scales and naturally the larger piece outweighed the other. He then took a big bite out of it, making sure that it would be lighter than the other. Then he took a large bite out of the other piece, and continued the process till no cheese was left. He got all the cheese and the two litigants—the cats—got none. Mr. “Black” knows very well that if he takes legal action, he will be one litigant and Commercial Hospital and Medical Benefits Ltd. will be the other, and the legal men will get all the money.

This is a very serious matter. The Government have been urging members of the public to join medical benefits societies; they have been extolling their virtues and urging the people to join them to lighten their expense if they fall ill. However, the people who have joined funds such as Commercial Hospital and Medical Benefits Limited find now that they have "done their money cold." The premiums amount to £19 5s. a year. Mr. "Black" has been a member of the fund for at least four years, because I saw a receipt dated four years ago. I have here a notification from the company setting out his card number as 12,222, his subscription at £19 5s. and the due date 3 October, 1957. It is signed "Commercial Hospital and Medical Benefits Limited, per W. Tilley."

I do not know whether the Minister is prepared to make overtures to the Federal authorities to have this company de-registered. I have been informed that if it is de-registered, we can stop it from operating in Queensland and fleeing people.

An Opposition Member: Who are the promoters of the company? Who registered it?

Mr. COBURN: I do not know. It is registered under the name "Commercial Hospital and Medical Benefits Limited" and the former Attorney-General says that a Mr. Brunskill is connected with it. He was connected with another medical benefits fund.

Dr. Noble: It is a new company. It was registered in Canberra. They should stop registration in Canberra.

Mr. COBURN: Why do they continue to register people who they know have previously filched money from people?

Mr. Power: We closed down on them in Queensland, and a civil action is being taken against Brunskill.

Mr. COBURN: Did the former Attorney-General close down the previous company?

Mr. Power: Yes.

Mr. COBURN: Why cannot the Government close this one?

Mr. Power: Because it is registered in Canberra.

Mr. COBURN: Representations should be made to the Canberra authorities on the highest level to de-register forthwith Commercial Hospital and Medical Benefits Ltd. If it is not de-registered, it will continue to take premiums from people who think it is a genuine concern rather than bogus. I hope that the Minister will bring pressure to bear on the authorities in Canberra to de-register the company so that his Government can deal with it and stop it from fleecing any more people. There are many good medical benefits funds they could join but they have no means of knowing which are good and which

are bad. The bogus concern very cunningly appoints as canvasser a member of a well-known and highly respected family and the people, thinking that he is associated with the company, willingly become members and pay premiums fully expecting to be paid the benefits if they require hospitalisation or treatment. The matter should be dealt with promptly so that others may not fall victim to such companies.

Mr. LLOYD (Kedron) (5.7 p.m.): The hon. member for Windsor, no doubt like all members of the legal profession, wants the services referred to by my Leader to be controlled by the profession. Perhaps that would have some advantages. But the Commonwealth Legal Aid Bureau seems to have been operating satisfactorily and the State could give a similar service. The argument against control by the Public Curator cannot be sustained because, though controlled by his office, the service could be separate altogether from any other representation in actions. Following the hon. member's line of argument, it might be said that the Public Curator should not instruct the Public Defender, who represents a man charged with a serious offence, just because the Crown prosecute. My Leader's suggestion merits serious consideration. The scheme might be instituted in a small way by helping deserted wives in their actions against their husbands.

Mr. Power: The Crown defend only in the metropolitan area. In country centres an outside barrister is engaged as Public Defender.

Mr. LLOYD: The same principle could apply.

The hon. member said that shorthand writers should be used in the lower courts to facilitate the hearing of cases and to reduce costs. I do not know whether he knows much about the duties and responsibilities of shorthand writers. Theirs is a very important profession because the ultimate finding of guilt or innocence of an accused person may hinge on the evidence as taken down by the shorthand writers and later transcribed by them. If there were an extension of the activities of the State Reporting Bureau so that shorthand writers would take down the evidence in the lower court, I am very much afraid that costs would be increased. In many instances the magistrate is not highly skilled and the depositions clerk takes down notes and assists him. If shorthand writers were doing it, in most cases they would have to make a transcript of the shorthand notes. A large staff would be needed. We know that many more cases are heard in the lower court than in the Supreme Court. I think if we were to give these additional duties to the State Reporting Bureau it would eventually increase the costs of court to a litigant. However, it might be an advantage to extend the activities of the State Reporting Bureau in particular cases.

In the past the Liberal Party have attempted to make a great deal of political propaganda out of many features of the State electoral Acts. Unfortunately on many occasions their inaccurate statements have been given great publicity by the Press. I cast my mind back to the 1950 State elections when the present Deputy Premier and the Liberal Party were very much concerned about many features of the rolls. They endeavoured to make a canvass and in fact rolls were compiled including the names of people who they alleged were not actually living in the electorates for which they were enrolled. Let us remember that the responsibility is on the elector himself to see that he is correctly enrolled on the right electoral roll, whether State or Commonwealth. On many occasions we have found at Commonwealth elections that a great number of people have been disfranchised by haphazard enrolment methods. Because people temporarily have not been residing in an electorate they have had their names wrongly removed from the rolls. The police have done an excellent job in carrying out a canvass of State rolls. In 1950 many mistakes were made by the Liberal Party in their so-called canvass. When they got to the polling booths many people were intimidated and told by Liberal Party scrutineers that they were not entitled to vote. Although they were correctly included on rolls they were disfranchised because they were temporarily living away from their homes. I remember an incident between the hon. member for Baroona, the hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha and myself in 1951 when the Deputy Premier was very wrong.

The redistribution of State electoral boundaries is a matter that must seriously concern the Government when we consider that some city electorates have two-and-a-half times the population they should have.

Mr. Sparkes interjected.

Mr. LLOYD: The hon. member for Aubigny is very much concerned with this redistribution because we have on one side the Liberal Party with a minority which controls the Government, not the Country Party, which has the majority. The Country Party will not sacrifice its majority. The Liberal Party would like the Country Party to lose several seats so that it could have a majority. We can understand why there is no haste on the part of the Government to undertake a redistribution. For many years hon. members opposite, particularly members of the Country Party, claimed that the country areas did not have adequate representation, yet when the law was amended to give greater representation to country areas, hon. members opposite said it was gerrymandering. Hon. members opposite did not take into consideration the fact that the people in the country areas were being given greater representation so that they could have a greater voice in this Parliament.

Hon. members only have to go to South Australia to see the extreme of this matter. A Government which polled a minority of the votes has been in power there for many years. The Labour Party in that State polled approximately 55. per cent of the votes at every election but they never secured sufficient members to form a Government. If we need any proof of the fairness of this State's electoral laws let us remember that this is a minority Government in Queensland. The parties in Opposition polled a greater proportion of the votes than the two parties who form the Government.

Regarding electoral distribution, the Minister has been concerned with the position in many metropolitan electorates in the past. If the Government intend to have a re-distribution in metropolitan areas where the numbers of voters are very unequal, we will give them the support they require. If they intend to use Commonwealth rolls, I warn them to give the matter close scrutiny and make sure that the canvass is carried out by people who are responsible to the Government only, and not by people, as is the case under the Commonwealth scheme, upon whom not much reliance can be placed.

The hotels throughout the State have been mentioned by hon. members on this side, and reference has been made to the disgraceful conditions of some of them. The Deputy Premier is attempting to attract tourists to Queensland, but we cannot hope to attract them in great numbers unless there is an immediate and effective attempt to bring about a big improvement in the condition of hotels in tourist areas. In many towns there are only one or two first-class hotels. Many western hotels are fire hazards. They are in bad condition and do not provide the accommodation required by the public. The hon. member for Gregory will confirm my statement that the working people who go to town for the week-end have to accept accommodation that would not be tolerated in Brisbane. It usually consists of iron beds with sub-standard mattresses on the veranda, for which top prices are charged.

There are many privately-owned hotels in the State and these owners as well as breweries should be forced to provide good accommodation. In the post-war years they made big profits and should be compelled to spend some of it on proper accommodation. The excuse in the immediate post-war years was restriction of building. Some hotels are merely swill troughs. The licensees concentrate on the beer trade from which they get high profits and neglect accommodation.

The Australian Labour Party has a very definite policy on the subject. As was stated by the hon. member for Kurilpa, resolutions have been passed at Labour-in-Politics Conventions on brewery ownership of hotels. No

industry should be allowed to control the production and marketing of its product to the detriment of the community.

As some hotels are owned by breweries at the present time, let that position remain, but take from them the right to control licensees. A common practice is to give short-term leases, for example, 12 months. In some instances the licensees have a monthly tenancy. Under those circumstances a licensee is not in a position to give service. He is reluctant to re-invest profit in better accommodation, as he knows he may have his tenancy terminated at five minutes' notice. He should be answerable for service in the hotel not to the owner but to the Licensing Commission, from which he gets his license.

In hotels owned by them breweries insist on the sale of only their brand of liquor. A private owner is subject to the Liquor Acts. Section 47A (2) makes obligatory the sale of all brands of liquor in popular demand in privately-owned hotels. The same section applies to ordinary business under the Profiteering Prevention Act. In that particular section, where the hotel is owned by a brewery, the brewery is exempt from the provisions of the Act. The Act gives the brewery more or less complete monopoly throughout the whole of the business he owns and he can insist that the licensee sell only the brands that he himself is agent for. It does not apply only to beer but to wines and spirits too. A brewery which is the agent for a southern producer can insist that the licensee sell only those brands of wines and spirits for which it is the agent. This matter will be dealt with more extensively in the debate but at this stage I want to mention one other serious problem in the hotel trade. If the Government force hotel-owners to provide better buildings, better accommodation, and better service, we must be responsible for allowing some compensation to the licensee of the hotel. There are many wine and spirit merchants in Brisbane who have a complete monopoly of the country trade. If we are to expect hotel proprietors or licensees in country areas to provide a better service we must give them an incentive. Thos. Brown and Dalgetys and many wine and spirit merchants distribute to the country products for which they are agents. They are taking potential trade away from the licensee. If there is a grocery store in a country town in Queensland, it is the distributing agency for grocery lines; if there is a chemist's business in the town it is the distributing agency. If we deny to the licensee some potential business to be gained by selling wines and spirits how can we expect him to give a greater degree of efficiency and service? This is a matter that should concern the Minister and the Licensing Commission. The shop with a liquor license is only supposed to sell so much of the commodity whether beer, wine or spirits; but because of the issue of its licence it sells any amount by giving a

docket to the purchaser marked "For Goods." It can by this device sell as much of the commodity as it likes. In many cases graziers and other big people purchase direct through Australian Estates, New Zealand Loan, Thos. Browns, and other firms. If people are expected to spend large sums of money to give a better services they should be able to have the extra trade. Licensees should be under the control of the Licensing Commission and they should be required to supply the amenities that the public desire. I trust that the Minister will consider my observations.

Hon. A. W. MUNRO (Toowong—Minister for Justice) (5.30 p.m.): I should like to express my appreciation of the spirit in which the submission of the Vote has been received by hon. members, particularly the Leader of the Opposition. At times feelings in the Chamber run high, and it is very pleasant occasionally to have an objective consideration of a subject such as we had this afternoon by the Leader of the Opposition. I do not know, of course, whether that will continue for the remainder of the debate. Probably it will not.

I do not agree completely with some of the things that he said. For example, he said that Queensland's electoral rolls were in no way inferior to those of the Commonwealth. I am afraid that my opinion differs from his. However, it is a problem that I must tackle. It is unsatisfactory to have separate rolls for Commonwealth and State purposes. It means a duplication of work and there are always many discrepancies. The experience of the other States has shown that the problem can be overcome. Most of them have a uniform roll, which in the main, is controlled by the Commonwealth authorities and is used by the States subject to the making of provision for differing boundaries. From what I have learned from the other States, the system works satisfactorily and is at least worthy of investigation.

Mr. Walsh: Do not forget that in the other States the bulk of the population is centred in the cities.

Mr. MUNRO: They may differ from Queensland in that respect, but that does not affect the principle.

The Leader of the Opposition referred also to the very contentious subject of the numbering of ballot papers. There is much to be said both for and against it. I am quite satisfied that under the present electoral administration there is no opportunity for any person to open a ballot paper and find out how someone has voted.

Mr. Coburn: Sometimes the glue is so bad that the corner of the ballot paper does not stick down.

Mr. MUNRO: That is so, but I am quite satisfied with the arrangements for the custody of ballot papers. I am satisfied, too, that the numbers are never referred to and that the ballot is secret.

Mr. Wood: The secrecy of the ballot is not destroyed.

Mr. MUNRO: I agree with the Leader of the Opposition. I agree also that in unusual circumstances the numbering of ballot papers may be of value in disclosing a fraud that could not be brought to light in any other way.

Mr. Walsh: It was brought in only because frauds were committed long before the time of Labour Governments.

Mr. MUNRO: I realise that. Nevertheless, the feeling is fairly widespread among people in Queensland that because the number is on the ballot paper and because the corner is turned down the secrecy of the ballot may be violated.

Mr. Wood: Has not that been fanned unfairly?

Mr. MUNRO: It may have been fanned unfairly, possibly by representatives of a Government who would feel that, if the feeling were fanned, some timid people would be inclined to vote for the representative of the Government. The real kernel of the problem is not whether the secrecy of the ballot is in fact violated but whether some people feel it may be violated and therefore may be induced to vote for a particular candidate rather than another who may be a member of the Opposition.

Mr. Wood: I think you will agree that no member of a Labour Government in Queensland ever fanned that feeling.

Mr. MUNRO: I would not make any charge that anybody has fanned it. An Opposition member said that the feeling may have been fanned and, merely commenting on the interjection, I say it is perfectly obvious that the feeling would not be fanned by the Opposition.

Mr. Hilton: It has been referred to in policy speeches by the Opposition of the time.

Mr. MUNRO: No. What has been referred to in policy speeches, and what I have sometimes referred to is that there is a weakness in the law if something in it can give rise to that feeling. Therefore the matter must be examined to see if we can find a way to give reasonable security for the honest handling of ballot papers and conduct of an election and at the same time remove that feeling. To show that that can be done it is hardly necessary for me to remind hon. members of the elections that are quite well conducted by the Commonwealth without numbered ballot papers. Furthermore, I had investigations made and I cannot be dogmatic because I am speaking from memory, but either all the other States or four out of the five have elections without numbered ballot papers. I am satisfied that,

on the whole, by the removal of that fear they have better provisions than Queensland has.

The second matter raised by the Leader of the Opposition and commented on by other hon. members concerned the Licensing Commission and covered two or three main points. The first dealt with open hearings. The matter has already been discussed a great deal publicly but I think it is desirable to clear it up. It was dealt with fully in the Twenty-first Annual Report of the Licensing Commission, for the year ended 30 June, 1957. It is there pointed out that early in its history the Commission was presided over by a member of the Industrial Court with the status of a Supreme Court judge. At that time it was ruled that the hearings generally would not be open to the public. The grounds for the decision were that the contents of police reports on applicants, their financial affairs and domestic relationships, were not matters which should be made available to the public, bearing in mind that every applicant was entitled to be represented by a solicitor or agent, permitted to give evidence, call witnesses and take notes of proceedings. However, in the light of experience it was felt by the Commission, and by me on taking over the political responsibility of the administration of the Department of Justice, that it would be desirable for the hearings generally to be open to the public. I discussed it with the Chairman of the Licensing Commission, Mr. Byrne, Under-Secretary of the Department of Justice, and received the fullest co-operation from him. While the decision has been one for the Licensing Commission, not for me, new procedures have been adopted. Recently virtually all the hearings have been open to the public. There are cases where a public hearing would militate against submissions to the Commission of relevant evidence and consequently would make its functions less effective.

Mr. Walsh: Many of the reports and documents submitted are not necessarily privileged.

Mr. MUNRO: For that reason I was hesitant to make any recommendation to Cabinet that we should make an absolutely fixed and inflexible rule that all hearings be open to the public. I could see that some harm could come.

The Leader of the Opposition, referring to the tied-house system, said, "The time is now for a most searching investigation." I wonder why the time is now and why perhaps it was not six or 12 months ago, when the Australian Labour Party was in control of the Government. If the time is now, surely it was also some time during the 25 years that the hon. member's party was in power.

Mr. Jesson: Better late than never.

Mr. MUNRO: That may be so. I do not agree that there is a great need for

investigation, or that an investigation would be likely to give considerable results. As hon. members know, the control of the liquor trade is a world-wide problem, and it is by no means easy to get a completely satisfactory solution of it. I have given it a good deal of thought over the past few years and I have been interested in what has happened in other States, particularly New South Wales, where without doubt the tied-house system operates to a much greater extent than in Queensland.

Some years ago—on 23 July, 1951, to be precise—the New South Wales Government appointed Mr. Justice Maxwell a Commissioner to inquire into the liquor laws of that State. Hon. members will remember the numerous newspaper reports on the Commission in 1951, 1952 and 1953, and all that Mr. Justice Maxwell was going to do about the tied-house system.

Mr. Dufficy: He got a trip overseas, did he not?

Mr. MUNRO: That is so. He went overseas to get the latest information. After exhaustive inquiries in Australia and elsewhere he submitted his report on 25 March, 1954, almost three years after his appointment. In his report on the tied-house system and the liquor trade in New South Wales, he summed up as follows:—

“In my opinion, the evidence does not warrant any attempt to abolish the tied-house system. Even if it were so, and I am satisfied that the public interest does not require it, I have no doubt that its abolition would be economically impracticable, a view held in other places for more than 100 years.”

In the light of that conclusion after such an exhaustive investigation, I wonder whether the time for a searching investigation really is now, or whether the matter is of such grave urgency and importance as one might have gathered from what has been said.

In his report, Mr. Justice Maxwell continued that, in his opinion—

“The public interest is best served by ensuring not that there is that form of competition described by one brewery witness as ‘unbridled and nonsensical,’ but an active and healthy competition so as to ensure against possible evils from a monopoly. One of the valid claims made in the United Kingdom was that the existence of a large number of strong breweries produced that competition which required the breweries at least in their own interests to cater for the needs of the public; * * * in this way my observation prompts me to express the view that real competition will work to the benefit of the public.”

Mr. Mann: Do you think that is true?

Mr. MUNRO: I am just going to deal with that. I have not had the opportunity of considering the matter nearly as exhaustively as Mr. Justice Maxwell did but, in view of his extensive investigations, we must pay great respect to his conclusions. After reading his lengthy report some years ago I decided that, generally, he did his job very conscientiously and effectively, and I pay considerable regard to his conclusions.

As to tied-houses, in my view Queensland's legislation and the functioning of the Licensing Commission are far more satisfactory than conditions in New South Wales. Our Liquor Acts require every licensee to stock and supply all classes of liquor available and usually called for.

Mr. Dufficy: Is that carried out?

Mr. MUNRO: If I remember rightly the hon. member was a member of the Government Party for seven years before the last elections, so I ask him if it is carried out.

Mr. Dufficy: It is not.

Mr. MUNRO: Does he think the newly-appointed Government are responsible for that or were those who were in office for the past 25 years responsible for it?

Mr. Hanlon: Your responsibilities are your own for anything that is done now.

Mr. MUNRO: But if in Queensland over the past 25 years there has grown up a state of affairs by which certain laws—

Mr. Hanlon: You mean you are not going to do anything because we did not do it in the last 25 years?

Mr. MUNRO: I am just at the exploratory stage, and I am using the word “if.” If a practice has grown up of disregarding certain laws, who is responsible?

Mr. Power: The Commission.

Mr. MUNRO: Does the hon. member hold the Commission responsible?

Mr. Power: Yes.

Mr. MUNRO: But he was the Minister in charge of the department.

Mr. Power: The Commission was not subject to any ministerial direction.

Mr. MUNRO: The hon. member says that if there has been anything wrong with the administration of the liquor laws of Queensland it has not been his responsibility but that of the Licensing Commission.

Mr. Power: That is so.

Mr. MUNRO: I do not agree. I continue to use the word “if” because I am not in a position to say whether the particular requirements referred to are carried out or not.

Mr. Power: The Commission could act only if somebody made a complaint.

Mr. MUNRO: I am afraid the hon. member has changed his ground. First he said it was not the responsibility of the Labour Government but of the Commission and now he defends the Commission. His second ground might be better than his first, but he cannot have it both ways.

Mr. Power: The Commission cannot be directed, but its decisions can be vetoed and the Government have not long had the power to veto them.

Mr. MUNRO: On the whole I take it that the Licensing Commission is doing a good job.

Mr. Power: If a matter was brought to the notice of the Minister he would refer it to the Commission for action. There was no written complaint made to me by any hon. member at any time about anyone not being able to get various brands of liquor.

Mr. MUNRO: The hon. member can make an explanation later if he wishes.

I was going on to say that the only exemption to the requirements I mentioned is that a brewery-owned hotel licensee is not required to sell beer of an opposition brewery. That is reasonable enough. I understand that that exception does not extend to wines or spirits. The main point I wish to make is that conditions in New South Wales are much worse than they are in Queensland. Even though New South Wales went to all that expense of so much investigation over a period of years it achieved but little result.

Mr. Dufficy: In what way is it worse in New South Wales?

Mr. MUNRO: Mainly in the number of tied houses.

Mr. Dufficy: Are they tied to the same extent as they are here? There are degrees you know.

Mr. MUNRO: As to the tied houses system I would say generally the position in Queensland is very much better than it is in New South Wales.

Mr. Dufficy: You really believe that?

Mr. MUNRO: Yes. Does not the hon. member?

Mr. Dufficy: No.

Mr. MUNRO: The hon. member must know much more about the law breaking that took place in Queensland under the Australian Labour Party Government than I do. I am dealing with the matter on the basis of available reports. I am basing my opinion on my knowledge of the enforcement of liquor laws generally under the tied-house system. I express the view that the position in Queensland is much better than

the position in New South Wales under the tied-house system despite the fact that New South Wales had an expensive inquiry. I do not want to take time on it but the enforcement of liquor laws generally is just one more legacy of trouble left us by the previous Government.

There is another problem which has caused the Minister for Labour and Industry and myself much concern. In some way we have to narrow the gap between the requirements of the law and the carrying out of the law in Queensland because the present position is not satisfactory. The gap is not something for which this Government are responsible but something that has widened under the previous Government.

Mr. Hilton: In other words you are saying that the Commission has not carried out its functions?

Mr. MUNRO: No.

Mr. Hilton: That is what your remarks amount to.

Mr. MUNRO: No. I am afraid the thinking of the hon. member is not quite clear.

Mr. Hilton: It is the construction to be placed on your remarks.

Mr. MUNRO: No. The enforcement of the liquor laws generally is a matter for the police, not the Licensing Commission. The Licensing Commission does not run the Police Force of the State as I thought the ex-Minister would have known. The enforcement of the law generally is not the responsibility of the Licensing Commission.

Mr. Hilton: You are referring to the aspect that comes under the Police Department?

Mr. MUNRO: In my remarks I was referring to the general enforcement of the law.

A rather interesting point was raised by the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for Windsor about legal aid to people in necessitous circumstances. As the former Attorney-General knows, through the services of the Justice Department something is already being done along those lines. From time to time applications are made for poor prisoners' defence. In certain types of cases free legal advice is given through the Public Curator.

Mr. Wood: Criminal or civil?

Mr. MUNRO: Free legal advice covers either criminal or civil cases. It is not very extensive. Speaking in a personal way I would like to express myself as being sympathetic to the views put forward by the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for Windsor. But there are difficulties which are mainly financial. Again I say at this stage

that we are carrying on with the limited financial resources that were taken over from the previous Government.

Mr. Power: And insufficient legal men to do your work. You have to send briefs outside.

Mr. MUNRO: It ultimately gets down to the question of money. We are not limited by the number of men on our staff; many solicitors and barristers are available; the real limiting factor is money. With the limited finance available to us the fund is meagre, but as the Government remain in office and as a result of better government the finance of the State will improve and we will be able to do something more.

Mr. Mann: We are pleased to have your assurance on that.

Mr. MUNRO: I am sure that the people of Queensland will not only be glad to have that assurance but also to enjoy the benefits of it. Keeping this away from the party political viewpoint, I say that I am particularly sympathetic to the approach of the Leader of the Opposition to this question. I have given the matter a good deal of thought. The difficulty is that unless you place a definite limitation on it, it is likely to encourage litigation and the cost of it may become extremely high and beyond the financial resources available. The suggestion made by the Leader of the Opposition that we should make a commencement, when we get to the stage of being able to do something, with the most deserving types of cases was a good one. If I remember rightly the hon. gentleman mentioned deserted wives and the children of broken marriages who may be left without support. I know from my own experience over a long term of years and from the many cases which have been submitted to me in the last two months, and which have caused me no end of worry trying to find a satisfactory solution, that those are the types of cases where the greatest injustice and hardship is suffered. I certainly propose to examine those cases to see if we can do something about them.

The hon. member for Windsor raised another interesting subject, the outmoded method of recording proceedings in Magistrates' Courts. The typing of the depositions as the evidence is given results in a considerable waste of time and, as the hon. member pointed out, there may be disabilities in other directions. I agree with the substance of his submissions, and have already taken some action to overcome the problem. Arrangements have been made to commence shorthand reporting in a section of the lower courts. Because of financial limitations, for a start it will be in a small way. I hope ultimately we will be able to put that system into operation in the Magistrates' Courts in the capital city, and later again we may be able to do something in larger outside cities. With the great number of Magistrates' Courts throughout the State, some in very remote localities, it

obviously would be beyond our financial capacity at the moment to apply it fully. It would be wasteful expenditure at the moment.

Mr. Jesson: Do you think it would be a good idea to have shorthand reporters in various police districts such as Woolloomgatta and so on?

Mr. MUNRO: It might be possible. We have arranged a start; further extension of the system will have to be considered. My view on reporting, and this could apply not only to Magistrates' Courts but to higher courts and even Parliament, is that development ultimately will be along the lines of wire recorders rather than shorthand writing or longhand writing.

Mr. Lloyd: That has been tried in many courts in the world. The transcript is not accepted, particularly in the higher courts, when a man's life may depend on the evidence.

Mr. MUNRO: I realise that there are difficulties, but this is a changing world. There are continuous scientific advances and new methods to overcome problems which seemed at one time to be incapable of solution. That is the general trend.

Mr. Power: A tape recorder was tried in the Railway Appeal Court. It was tested by the magistrate. His report was that it was quite unsatisfactory.

Mr. MUNRO: That may be so, but I point out that these mechanical devices are being improved from year to year and the methods of using them are being improved. I do not suggest that I contemplate any alteration on those lines at present, but it is something worthy of investigation. It is possible that in that way we will be able to provide a more satisfactory method of reporting in remote centres.

The hon. member for Windsor referred to conditions in the Magistrates' Court and Supreme Court. Structurally, of course, both buildings are outmoded. The buildings have been up for 60 or 70 years, but I am sympathetic with the view expressed by the hon. member that something should be done in the interests of litigants and members of the legal profession. Again I refer to the available finances left to us. We can only take over what was left and there is nothing available for this particular work.

Finally, I come to what the hon. member for Burdekin referred to as the activities of a company which I understand is registered in Canberra and which, according to his report, is carrying on its activities in a way that appears to be illegal. In the circumstances as outlined by the hon. member it is not something that comes within the ambit of my department. I shall look into the matter and if the facts are as stated and there is justification, I will bring the matter to the notice of the Commonwealth authorities to see if they can do something about it.

Mr. CONNOLLY (Kurilpa) (7.42 p.m.): The question of legal aid has been raised by a number of hon. members. As the Minister very justly observed, the principal problem is finance. England has had a system in operation for some years and it seems to be working reasonably well. Broadly stated, there is first of all a means test and the extent or proportion of legal aid that one gets depends upon one's circumstances. If a person is completely without reasonable resources no doubt he would get a complete legal aid certificate. On the other hand, a person may get a two-thirds certificate, or a one-third certificate.

Mr. Jesson: A sort of coupon.

Mr. CONNOLLY: Something like that, excepting that the coupon is not available for any commodity. One has to make out a case for a coupon every time. The allocation of certificates is done by a committee composed of members of both branches of the legal profession. One of the things concerning the Minister is that if you had unrestricted legal aid it might result in an undue amount of litigation. The only thing I can say is that before a certificate is granted the person must be in need of financial assistance and have a reasonable case. That does not mean a watertight case, because there is no such thing.

Mr. Jesson: That is what the hon. member for Kedron said—people cannot afford to pay.

Mr. CONNOLLY: That is right.

The other point I should mention is that a reasonable case must be made out, not a prima facie case but a case worthy of being conducted in a court—not a scatterbrain or hair-brained case, but one worthy of spending public money on. The system that operates in England has been working for at least 10 years and seems to be working reasonably well. In view of the reception of the suggestions made both in this Committee and in the House during the Address-in-Reply debate by the Leader of the Opposition or some other member, it may be that the Minister will give consideration to ascertaining the facts on the subject.

Information on the English system is readily accessible. It is so widespread now that textbooks on the subject are available. I understand that to a limited extent there is a system of legal aid in New South Wales. However, there the people have to pay their own costs of the first hearing. But their troubles are not over then. If they are fighting a wealthy corporation or a trade union with unlimited funds, there is a big probability that if they win they will have to face an appeal. A litigant in impecunious circumstances, having taken a risk in the original action, is helped in meeting the costs of an appeal.

I suppose we could all work out possible variations in a scheme of legal aid. If the Minister has time during the term of this

Parliament, he may be able to get his department to investigate the various systems.

I am sure hon. members will be pleased to hear that from what I know my professions have been watching the system carefully, because their own good name is involved. I should not like any hon. member to suggest even facetiously that a barrister would certify wrongly that an intending litigant had a reasonable case merely to provide more "fat fees for lawyers." That is not the way the system works. Our professions have been jealous of their good name. The first thing to find out is whether we can do anything about it, and the Minister can ascertain how systems in other parts of the British Commonwealth are working.

I have been enjoined by hon. members opposite to be careful on the subject of tied houses. I have been extremely interested in this matter for some time. I recently returned from Bundaberg, where I learned of a method of tying houses that I did not know before. A great deal of the tying of houses is done not by the breweries themselves, but by their agents. It might be said that a brewery neither owns the freehold of a hotel nor has a lease or a mortgage over it, but through its agents it still has the house tied to its commodities. No-one can answer criticisms of the tying of houses by quoting statistics about what the breweries own directly or the extent of the instruments under which they exercise direct control over the outlets for their commodities. It is necessary to delve much deeper than that. I repeat that the facts have not been put before us in any paper that has been tabled in the House. I am referring now to the real facts on the control, both direct and indirect, that is exercised by the wholesaler over the retailer.

The hon. member for Barooka spoke of the insufficiency of legal staff in the department. I am anxious to be helpful to the general administration of the law in the State. It may be that we are trying to do too much in Queensland through the professional legal officers employed by the State. It is not the practice everywhere in the common law world, to have all prosecutions, for example, done by professional Crown Law officers. In England it is quite the reverse—briefs are delivered to outside counsel to prosecute. It may well be that it would be easier in many cases and cheaper to deliver a brief to some counsel, who is going on the circuit anyway, to conduct a prosecution for the State instead of spending time and money on sending a Crown Law officer. The time is the more important consideration of the two. The Government are very miserable about the travelling facilities for prosecuting officers. We send them by train, which wastes their time and also wastes the time of the people. I am not complaining about that because some of the prosecuting

officers are friends of mine. But it is wasteful to have highly-paid officers travelling backwards and forwards on circuit by train. Take the case of a criminal prosecution out at Hughenden. It may be a one-day case, a manslaughter charge. Perhaps a man is alleged to have driven his car at too high a speed or to have been under the influence of liquor and knocked someone down. A Crown prosecutor may go out from Townsville or even from Brisbane and it may well be that members of the legal profession are already going out for the civil side of the circuit. Why not deliver a brief reasonably marked for them to handle? Believe me, hon. members need not think that some of the fees they have been hearing about in answers to questions asked in the Chamber represents the general run of fees paid to members of the Bar; they are not. If the brief, reasonably marked, were given to an outside barrister, it would save not only expense but, more important, time within the Justice Department. The practice of briefing counsel outside the department has not been widespread, even under the previous administration.

An Honourable Member: Necessarily so.

Mr. CONNOLLY: Quite so. I was not being critical.

Mr. Jesson: It should have been shared round a bit more.

Mr. CONNOLLY: It might have been. I do not want to be drawn into that too far. The English practice with farming out small work is to circulate it all round the members of the Bar, especially among those who are just starting out but who are competent to do the work. It is not desirable to have the impression spread among members of the community that some who are regarded with favour by the Government are given the briefs.

Mr. Jesson: More right than wrong.

Mr. Munro: That has been changed since 12 August, 1957.

Mr. CONNOLLY: That is a further example of the speed with which the present Ministry has stepped in to right those little administrative vices that have crept in over the years.

The Minister raised the subject of the use of wire recorders or similar mechanical instruments for the recording of evidence and I note that experiments have been conducted and that they have not all been successful. Some have been conducted even in the High Court. With all respect to the observations of the hon. member for Baroona—and here again I am not in any sense being critical of anything he said—I suggest that they be tried out on the proceedings of some tribunal a little more competent to test them out than the Railway Appeal Board. I leave it at that. It is an interesting experiment as long as there is not too

much cross-fire at the Bar table and from the Bench. It is possible to do it and it would be worth a try.

Mr. Lloyd: Would you be competent to say whether it would be possible to do it or not?

Mr. CONNOLLY: It is worth testing much more than it has been in Queensland.

Mr. Lloyd: Legal argument is used in the High Court.

Mr. CONNOLLY: The high Court is a very good instance. Counsel is addressing himself to five judges. The problem is to know who is having his two shillings' worth at the particular moment when you take a transcript from a tape-recorder. It would be like making a tape-recording of proceedings in the Chamber. You would know the voice of the hon. member who was making the speech but it would be very difficult to pick up every interjector. One judge may speak in a quiet voice and the person making the transcript from the recorder might not be quite sure who it is.

Mr. Lloyd: You know that you cannot afford to have a mistake made in the Supreme Court hearing of a very serious case.

Mr. CONNOLLY: I would agree with the hon. member. The difficulty is not with the Supreme Court. The shorthand system in the Supreme Court is very good. Obviously mistakes are made even by shorthand-writers, but broadly speaking the shorthand reporting system in the Supreme Court is excellent. I have never heard any general criticism of the shorthand reporting system. The system of taking it down on a typewriter in the lower court is very good, but there are limitations to it. The men doing it are extraordinarily good at their job, but this much is certain: you cannot get anything like an accurate record of exactly what is said either by the person asking the questions or by the person answering them, which can have a tremendous bearing on the outcome of a case.

Let me give the Committee one instance of where a tape-recording would be of the utmost value in the Court of Criminal Appeal. I am talking very generally, but offering this as something which has quite often occurred to me and other members of the profession. When a judge is summing up to the jury there is no interruption. There could be no doubt about hearing what he was saying because he could speak directly into the microphone on the bench. The tone of his remarks can be very important. There are certain hallowed phrases used by judges in summing up on questions of fact. The judge says to the jury, and so it appears in the transcript, "Well, gentlemen, the prisoner said, 'X.Y.Z.' That may be true. That is a matter for you." That is one way of reading it. But the judge may say, "Gentlemen, the prisoner says, 'X.Y.Z.' You may believe that. That is a matter for you."

It depends entirely on the tone of voice used. When the matter comes before the Court of Criminal Appeal counsel might say to the court, "The learned judge got carried away and did not really give the prisoner a very fair summing up." The judges blandly say, "Well, Mr. So-and-so, it says here——" and he reads the transcript in the first sense that I indicated to the Committee. How can counsel complain about that? Counsel says that it all depends upon the tone in which it has been said, but the judges say, "How are we to know the tone in which it was said? We can only look at the transcript." There are advantages and disadvantages in the use of tape-recorders. A summing up is one occasion when I think it might be advantageous to use a tape-recorder to record the actual tone in which things are said.

Mr. Lloyd: It would still need to be used in conjunction with a shorthand writer.

Mr. CONNOLLY: Yes. There is the difficulty that if you want to turn up the record in a hurry while addressing the Court of Criminal Appeal you cannot turn a tape-recorder backwards and forwards all the time. You must have a transcript. If you have it recorded and there is no appeal within the time limit you can wipe the tape clean and forget all about it. If an appeal is lodged the tape recording could be transcribed. I completely endorse what the hon. member for Kedron has said. It is a fact that tape recordings of proceedings have not been particularly successful. So far it has had to be used in conjunction with the shorthand system. I feel confident that the time must come when we will have such efficient types of recording systems that it will be possible in many cases to use them in substitution for the transcription of the shorthand record, and at least in those cases where there is no appeal.

My last observation is on the question of the no true bill. In case some hon. members are not familiar regarding the matter of criminal prosecutions, indictable offences first come before a magistrate. There is an exception in the case of ex officio indictments, but in 99 per cent. of the cases they first come before the magistrate, who hears the evidence and determines whether there is a prima facie case, which means whether there is evidence which, if the jury believed it, would be sufficient to warrant a conviction. As I understand it, the Attorney-General has under the Criminal Code the function of determining further whether a true bill should or should not be filed. This is my understanding of the law, and it does not accord entirely with the views of the Crown Law Office. The Attorney-General is entitled to file a no true bill even though there may be a prima facie case. Although there may be a shred of evidence which the magistrate feels is sufficient to prevent his throwing the case out, the Minister may say, "It is obvious that no jury would convict on that evidence."

Mr. Mann: The Minister would be advised by his legal men.

Mr. CONNOLLY: As I understand the position—and if I am wrong the Minister will correct me and say, "Connolly is wrong again"—the advice of the Crown Law officers is that if there is a prima facie case it is unwise to enter a no true Bill.

Mr. Coburn: Isn't it?

Mr. CONNOLLY: I do not think so. A person familiar with the workings of the court may be quite sure that the jury would not convict. This happens every week: after the prosecutor has explained the case the judge says, "Do you really think the jury would possibly convict on this evidence?" and the prosecutor replies, "If that is Your Honour's view I shall enter a nolle prosequi." They wait for the judge's intimation.

Mr. Mann: Having studied the brief they advise the Attorney-General whether he should go on.

Mr. CONNOLLY: That is the way it should happen, and no doubt it does. I think the number of cases in which the judge quietly tells the Crown Prosecutor that he should enter a nolle prosequi is so high as to indicate that the responsibility for entering a no true bill is not taken in a sufficient number of cases. I know it is easier to let the case go to trial, but that costs the State and the prisoner a lot of money. It is easy to say that we are not concerned about the prisoner, but if he is held on a prima facie case even though there is on chance of conviction, he does not get his costs. Accused persons do not get costs against the Crown. They put it down to experience. My suggestion is not radical or novel, but I think the question whether or not to file a no true bill should perhaps be examined a little more liberally. The advice tendered to the Minister should be based more on whether a reasonable jury is likely to convict than on whether there is a shred of evidence.

Mr. Jesson: Do you think it would be wise to make the Crown pay costs in cases of that description?

Mr. CONNOLLY: The Crown has never paid costs in those cases, and frankly I have not given sufficient consideration to it to make any recommendation to the Committee. I do not think costs should be awarded against the Crown. I think the criminal law has stood the test of time and provided it is wisely administered, and I am confident it will be wisely administered, I do not recommend any alteration.

Mr. POWER (Baroona) (8.8 p.m.): From the way in which hon. members have spoken on the Vote, apparently they have not much criticism to offer of the previous administration.

The hon. member for Kurilpa mentioned the filing of a no true bill. I shall explain the procedure during the five years I held

this portfolio. After committal proceedings the Crown Prosecutor would go through the facts and determine whether a no true bill should be filed. He would then submit his recommendation to the Solicitor-General who would endorse the file to that effect if he agreed. The file would then be handed to the Attorney-General. I did not at any time accept the recommendation without first submitting it to Cabinet and getting Cabinet approval. In all cases Cabinet accepted the recommendation of the Crown Prosecutor supported by the endorsement of the Solicitor-General. I took the precaution of submitting the Crown Prosecutor's recommendation to Cabinet as a protection for myself.

By way of illustration I mention the case of a person charged with carnal knowledge of a girl under the age of 17 years. In the period between committal for trial and the date of actual hearing the couple may marry. The law is that a wife cannot be compelled to give evidence against her husband. There may be no doubt as to the offence, but in many cases of that type that were referred to me when I was Attorney-General, the Crown Prosecutor recommended that no action be taken, and no action was taken. It would be unwise to proceed in those cases as no good purpose would be served.

The Minister would be wise to continue my practice of accepting the recommendation of the Crown Prosecutor endorsed by the Solicitor-General only after he had submitted each case to Cabinet and obtained Cabinet's approval.

The hon. member for Kurilpa also referred to prosecutions in country areas. During my period of office I found there were insufficient Crown Prosecutors and more had to be appointed. It would be difficult to hand out criminal prosecutions to outside legal men.

Mr. P. R. Smith: The Crown Prosecutor only works on the depositions.

Mr. POWER: That is so, but there would be some difficulties.

I have nothing but praise and commendation for the great majority of the Law Society and Bar Association. Those are excellent organisations, but there are certain people in the profession to whom I would not be prepared to give any case. The hon. member would know some of them without my mentioning their names.

Mr. P. R. Smith: You told me some time ago I was one.

Mr. POWER: I cast no reflection on the hon. member or any other legal gentleman in the house. Prior to the hon. member for Mt. Gravatt coming into this Chamber the Solicitor-General recommended that Mr. Hart be given briefs. It is to be remembered that I had nothing to do with the handing out of briefs, it being a matter for the Crown Law office. I do know that that office endeavoured to distribute them as evenly as possible to the most competent men.

The Public Curator provides free legal aid in certain cases. I have given directions that advice be given on various matters.

Mr. P. R. Smith: It is a terrible thing, after having given representation to a prisoner in the Criminal Court free legal aid is not given in the Appeal Court if it is recommended.

Mr. POWER: I do not know of any case where the poor prisoner's defence has been provided, and where it was refused in the Appeal Court except in connection with an appeal on sentence. Such an instance is the only one I know where aid was refused and it was only refused on advice tendered. I suggest to the Minister for Justice that he be guided by his legal officers who have knowledge of these matters.

Mr. P. R. Smith: You cannot point to one appeal taken by the Public Defender as a result of an appearance he made in the Criminal Court in the first instance.

Mr. POWER: I cannot recollect any case where an appeal was lodged against a conviction and legal aid was refused after it was recommended by the Crown Law Office that there were grounds for appeal.

Mr. P. R. Smith: They would not draw up the notice of appeal for the man convicted. They let him draw up his own notice after having appeared for him in the Criminal Court.

Mr. POWER: The matter was not brought under my notice.

Mr. P. R. Smith: I brought it up myself.

Mr. POWER: Not under my notice.

Mr. P. R. Smith: It was brought to the notice of the Public Curator.

Mr. POWER: It was not brought under my notice. If what the hon. member has said is true, and I have no reason to disbelieve it, the action was highly improper. I recall an instance where it was decided that a man in the country should receive public defence but on the morning of the case there was nobody there to appear for the man and he finished up by getting 12 months. We do not send men away from Brisbane. In country areas, if there is a legal man prepared to take a case we ask him to defend the prisoner. That is only common sense.

Mr. Jesson: Was the person in Toowoomba given free legal aid?

Mr. POWER: The hon. member for Hinchinbrook has no chance of dragging me off the track. I know the case that he refers to. Mr. Seaman prosecuted and he must have been engaged by the Crown Law Office. Frequently the police are not prepared to conduct a prosecution and request the Crown to make a legal man available.

Reference has been made to the use of tape recorders in courts. They have already been tried because of the shortage of depositions clerks in the Railway Appeal Court. When I was Attorney-General I asked for a report on them, and I was told that they were very unsatisfactory. Of course, if the difficulties associated with the use of tape recorders can be overcome, I can see nothing wrong with them. Anything that will shorten the length of hearing of court cases should be supported. If the Minister can get enough shorthand writers to man the lower courts, he should get them. As I say, he should give serious consideration to anything that will shorten the length of hearing.

I point out that the Attorney-General files a no true bill only after receiving a recommendation to that effect. One thing that it was my intention to remove from the law was the right of the Attorney-General to grant bail even after a judge had decided that it should not be granted. That is a dangerous power to give anyone other than a court.

The hon. member for Burdekin referred to medical benefits funds. That matter received a good deal of attention during my period as Attorney-General. When the hon. member for Yeronga was in Opposition he handed me papers dealing with a certain medical benefits firm, and the Government of the day closed it down because its clients were getting no benefit from it. A writ was taken out against a man named Brunskill and an endeavour was made to arrive at a settlement. The terms of settlement, however, were not acceptable to the Crown Law office. I would not interfere with the recommendation that was made to me and we endeavoured to have a date of hearing set down. The firm was closed down because it was not registered in Queensland. However, it is now registered in Canberra and can operate in any State. It has collected a good deal of money from its clients, but they have no chance of getting any benefit from it. Two men employed by the firm were charged and tried in Cairns after much investigation by the Criminal Investigation Branch. A Mrs. Claffey, who was connected with the firm, told the court that the men had authority to use the money they collected to meet their expenses, and the case collapsed. The firm is still operating in Queensland. At my request the previous Premier wrote to the Commonwealth Government asking that action be taken by the Commonwealth Government to deal with these people. However, all that the Commonwealth Government can do is to refuse registration. Once that is done, the firm can be prosecuted for operating in Queensland. In fact, the people associated with these firms are unconvicted criminals; they are collecting money from subscribers under false pretences. Their acts are similar to those of a builder who accepts deposits on homes and has no intention of building them. It should be made a criminal offence for these people to collect money from unsuspecting

subscribers, who can never get any benefit. The Commonwealth Government have some responsibility in the matter.

The electoral rolls and the numbering of ballot papers were discussed. The removal of the numbers from ballot papers would open the way for all sorts of malpractices. If ballot papers had not been numbered the Elections Tribunal could never have checked the fraud that took place in Bulimba. The number on the ballot paper can be opened only on the order of a judge. In that case when the numbers were opened and the name of the voters discovered they gave evidence that they had not voted the way the ballot paper indicated. If the numbers are removed there will be no chance in the world of checking on fraud.

It has been suggested that the secrecy of the ballot has been destroyed because the papers are numbered. I have had a great deal of experience in this matter. The scrutineer has no way of knowing how a person votes. His only concern is to see that the voter's name is on the roll and he is given a ballot paper and to see when the count is going on that the votes are allocated correctly. It is foolish to suggest that the ballot is not secret.

The Licensing Commission has been discussed. I do not condemn the Commission; I do not think it has done anything deserving of condemnation. It is true that some hotels are owned by breweries and some by merchants. The percentages have been given by the Chairman in his Report. It is unfair to suggest that the Report does not disclose the true position. I do not hold any brief for the Chairman of the Commission or anyone else for that matter. It is the Commission's responsibility; the Crown appointed it for the purpose. But I am sure the Chairman of the Licensing Commission would not in any way mislead the Committee or present a report that did not disclose the true position. I hope the Minister will confer with him and clear the matter up. I know he would not make an untrue statement. It is unfair to cast a reflection on a man who holds such an important post as well as being Under Secretary of the Department of Justice.

Mr. Munro: I do not think the hon. member intended to cast that reflection at all. His point merely was that there might be some other facts which, under the law, are not required to be brought forward.

Mr. POWER: The hon. member was more modest tonight than he has been for some time in the Chamber. Previously he has come in trailing his coat and I have taken him to task. I hope the Minister will give hon. members an assurance that he does not believe that the Chairman of the Commission would mislead the Committee. The Minister has a sense of fairness and he would not think that of him.

Mr. Munro: I will give you that assurance now, but as I say, I feel sure that the hon. mem—

Mr. POWER: On the assurance given by the Minister I do not propose to discuss the matter any further. All I wanted was his assurance that the chairman of the Licensing Commission would not supply information which was likely to mislead the Chamber.

Mr. Munro: Let us clear up the point. The point made by the hon. member for Kurilpa was that there might be other facts not known to the Licensing Commission.

Mr. Mann: He said he was advised to that effect. He was not attacking the chairman.

Mr. POWER: I may be wrong. I hope I am. If I am, I am quite willing to accept the statement. I will not stand idly by if any public servant whom I believe has done a good job is unjustifiably attacked. I am not saying that the Licensing Commission has been infallible. We have all made mistakes in our time. The man who never made a mistake never made anything. The important thing is that having made a mistake be big enough to admit it and try to correct it. I said that if certain things were happening it was the responsibility of the Commission. The Commission was a judicial body not subject to any direction by the Minister. During the last few years the Governor-in-Council had power to veto its decisions. Prior to that it was a law unto itself. I do not know of any big mistakes that have been made. I know that many requests were made from time to time when the Commission ordered the carrying out of certain work. I am not blaming any hon. member for making representations that certain consideration be given to an extension of time to carry out the directions of the Commission. I realise that in the early stages the Commission gave directions for the carrying out of work in a certain hotel, but had the work been done it would have been an economic loss to the people concerned. At the time liquor was being sold on the quota system. Had this hotel received and sold the full quota of beer sent into the town there would still have been insufficient return to meet interest and redemption repayments. Representations were made to me and I forwarded them on to the Commission. Every hon. member has the right to make representations. The Commission's action on that occasion in granting an extension of time was justified. I remember that when I arrived at a hotel in Bell—I had never seen such an awful place—I wanted to know why there was no water in the bedrooms. I found out that water was not laid on in the town. It is all very well to say that hotels must do this, that and the other. I do not hold a brief for any hotel proprietor, nor do I hold a special brief for the Licensing Commission, but I cannot allow unjustified statements to be made that will cast a reflection on any member of the Commission or the

department. So far the debate has revealed very few grounds for criticism of the department. Indeed, I think the officers have done a very good job,

Mr. Mann: You misunderstood the hon. member for Kurilpa.

Mr. POWER: I hope I did. I should hate to think that a reflection was being cast. However, having the Minister's assurance that he is satisfied that the Licensing Commission did not submit an incorrect report I am happy to leave the matter at that.

Mr. DUFFICY (Warrego) (8.29 p.m.): There is not very much I wish to say, but a question was directed to me by the Minister as to what I thought of tied houses and one or two other matters. It is true that I have taken some interest in breweries and the part they played in the liquor trade in Queensland in recent years. It is true that at the last Labour-in-Politics Convention at Mackay a resolution moved by myself that a complete investigation into the liquor trade in Queensland be carried out was carried. Subsequently a committee from members of the Australian Labour Party was selected to carry out the investigation, and at a later date I was selected as chairman and my colleague the hon. member for Kedron was selected as secretary. The uncertainties of political life made it impossible for that committee to carry out its investigation. I suggest that the responsibility now devolves on the Government in office to carry out the investigation. I do not think it is any answer to say, "Why didn't you do it during the years you were in office?" There are many things that we did. Of course we have not reached Utopia yet; many things still remain to be done in this State, in Australia and throughout the world. I sincerely hope that the Minister and the Government are not going to rest on the work and the laurels earned by their predecessors in office and decide to do nothing at all, and to answer any criticism by members on this side simply by saying, "Why didn't you do it?" That is a very weak answer, to say the least of it. The Minister and hon. members opposite must know that had we remained in office a complete investigation of the whole of the ramifications of the liquor trade in Queensland would have been carried out. I have in my hand what I think is the same brief as the Minister had when he addressed the Committee. There are very lengthy extracts in this brief from the Maxwell report and it contains many suggestions on what should and should not be done in the interests of the liquor trade. I think the brief the Minister has is substantially the same as mine, but I do not think members of the Committee generally would have been quite as innocent as the Minister was in accepting the brief as gospel. As a matter of fact I would not, anyhow. I am not saying that the following words are in the

Minister's brief, but they are in the one presented to us by the Licensing Commission—

“It has often been stated that breweries take both the wholesale and retail profits from their freehold hotels. This is not so.”

If they own the freehold of the hotel they are obviously getting the revenue from that hotel. Take the case of the Australian Hotel, where they have a manager. Would it be true to suggest that the brewery that owns the hotel is not obtaining the benefit both from the retail and wholesale of their product? That is told to us in all seriousness. That was in the brief we received from the Licensing Commission. My brief contains many other outstanding statements. I have no doubt they are also in the brief of the Minister. I do not know whether he believes them, but I certainly do not.

In the liquor trade every retailer, whether it be a bowling club, hotel or licensee must have a licence. Wine and spirit merchants must have a licence to sell that commodity, but the sources of the liquor supply, the breweries, require no licence. What measure of control have we of the six breweries in this State? To say the least it is extremely limited. The control that can be exercised over retailers or licensed victuallers is considerable. The most remote, obscure bowling club in the Far North must have a licence before it can serve liquor to members of the club. Every person engaged in the distribution of liquor must be licensed, and to that extent they are subject to some jurisdiction and some law. It would appear that the six breweries are a law unto themselves. I do not care whether the licence fee for breweries was fixed at £5 or £5,000 a year. The real point is that with a licence some control could be exercised.

Mr. Knox: Why were they not licensed?

Mr. DUFFICY: I am asking the Minister to consider licensing them. I am not dealing with why they are not licensed. My suggestion is that they should be licensed.

I have raised the subject at party meetings and at the Labour-in-Politics Convention. I think the previous speaker referred to it as a pious resolution. There was nothing pious about my attitude when I moved it and nothing pious in the passing of it. A committee was set up to inquire into the liquor trade. The reason why the job was not done is known to all hon. members.

We know the number of hotels owned in this State by breweries but we do not know the number of hotels over which the breweries exercise indirect control through merchants and brewery agents. I have no knowledge of that information if it has been disclosed. If it was I am sure it would reveal that breweries control much more than 15 or 16 per cent. of hotels as indicated in the report of the Licensing Commission. In my opinion the breweries have now and

for some years had a stranglehold on the liquor industry in Queensland. We endeavour to compel the licensed victualler to supply decent and reasonable accommodation. It is only right that he should but unfortunately because of the stranglehold by the breweries in many cases, it is beyond his financial means. We speak about building up our tourist trade. We know that that is really impossible whilst the standard of accommodation remains as it is in our hotels. When I speak about the standard of accommodation I am not attacking or blaming the hotel keepers, because I think they are strangled by the source from which the industry flows, the breweries. However, it must be admitted that hotel accommodation in Queensland falls very far short of world standards. I had the privilege as a representative of this Parliament of visiting Africa and travelling extensively there. I stayed at very many hotels in East Africa, Rhodesia, Uganda and other places. As hon. members know Africa is a country no more developed than Queensland. It has wide open spaces that compare with ours, but in hotel accommodation it is ahead of us. I stayed in small towns where there were probably only two or three hotels. I can bring places to mind where there were only two, but the standard of accommodation in them was infinitely better than that provided in Queensland. I did not stay in one hotel in the whole of Africa that did not provide the visitor with his own bathroom and septic facilities. And that applied in the small towns where there were only two or three hotels. How many hotels in the metropolitan area provide those facilities?

Mr. Tooth: Was not that the result, basically, of the existence of cheap labour?

Mr. DUFFICY: It does not flow from that at all. The only difference would be that the hotel service would be better because of cheap coolie labour. I am talking about the type of building and the accommodation provided. The hon. member can state his case later.

Mr. Tooth: I am only seeking information.

Mr. DUFFICY: I suggest that the hon. member meet me later when, if I have a few minutes to spare, I might be able to improve his knowledge. I have no intention of doing it at the present time. The brewery stranglehold on the industry has made it impossible for us to have the standard of accommodation the travelling public are entitled to. The Licensing Commission has given us information such as I have mentioned to the effect that even where the breweries own the freehold of hotels they do not reap the wholesale and retail profits from those hotels and that if any person says they do he is not telling the truth. I cannot see logic in that, and if the Minister's brief is similar to mine and the members of the committee I hope he will not take it too seriously. I have no desire to attack

the Chairman of the Licensing Commission, but on one occasion when I asked him whether the licensing of breweries was desirable or practicable, he assured me that it was not practicable because it would conflict with Section 92 of the Commonwealth Constitution. I then asked him whether breweries were licensed in other State—a very simple question—and he said he did not know. I said, "Will you find out?" He did not find out, but I made it my business to. As many hon. members know, in a number of other States the breweries are licensed. I do not know whether the licensing of breweries conflicts with Section 92 of the Commonwealth Constitution in Queensland and not in the other States, but that was my information. I got a copy of the Liquor Act of every other State as well as the Commonwealth and I know that many of them contain provision for the licensing of breweries, although I was told by the Chairman of the Licensing Commission in Queensland that it could not be done. I warn the Minister to be very careful of his brief.

Hon. A. W. MUNRO (Toowong—Minister for Justice) (8.47 p.m.): I did not intend to speak at this stage because I think it is a bad thing in a debate on Estimates for the Minister to take up too much time. However, I rise now for a couple of minutes to clear up one point.

The hon. member for Warrego was very persistent in his implication. Time after time he waved his brief in the air and said, "The Minister has the same brief." Apparently he endeavoured to convey the impression that I have some kind of brief. I point out to the hon. member that the present Government's methods are very different from those of the previous Government. I assure the hon. member that I have no brief from the Licensing Commission.

Mr. Duffey: I accept your assurance.

Mr. MUNRO: It is true that I quoted from the report of Mr. Justice Maxwell. When I was a member of the Opposition I made it my business to get a copy of it. I have it at home. I had a short extract from it, which I quoted earlier tonight. Normally these matters can be cleared up by interjection, but the hon. member for Warrego was so keen on making his point that he would not even accept an interjection from the hon. member for Kelvin Grove.

Mr. Duffey: I am not compelled to accept an interjection.

Mr. MUNRO: That is so, but this has been a very informative debate. It is sometimes helpful if, while an hon. member is speaking, he will let another hon. member say something by interjection to correct a wrong impression.

I do not propose to take any further time at this stage. Unlike the hon. member for Warrego, I am not speaking from a brief.

Mr. WALSH (Bundaberg) (8.50 p.m.): I was not interested in the debate until I heard what the hon. member for Warrego said. A good deal has been said about the necessity for improved accommodation in hotels in this State. That has been said for many years. When the late Hon. E. M. Hanlon, the Minister in charge at the time, introduced the consolidated Liquor Acts, there was ample scope for any who wished to complain about the legislation to do so. The Labour Party approved of all that and of the establishment of the Commission on the basis that has been accepted for so many years. I do not know that previously there has been any violent complaint, since 1935, along the lines of the faults that have been found within the last 12 or 18 months. There may be a reason for that. I do not say there has not been some justification for the criticism that has been levelled at some of the hotels in the State, but it is stretching it a bit far for any hon. member who has been able to go to South Africa at the State's expense to come into the Chamber and compare the standards of accommodation that he was able to avail himself of there with the standards required for the shearer, the cane-cutter or the navy in outlying areas of the State. The hon. member for Gregory is not in the Chamber, but let a few of the critics go through the Gregory electorate, particularly the place frequented by those who were out backing the A.L.P. candidate.

Mr. Ewan: You and I stayed at the same hotel.

Mr. WALSH: Yes, we stayed at the Commercial Hotel. It was quite a respectable place. We were well catered for. It was no Lemmons or Belle Vue but I was satisfied.

Mr. Ewan: Me, too.

Mr. WALSH: At the same time, why should any member of the A.L.P. complain about the general standard of any hotel when the standard of the hotel being frequented by those people in another part of the area was probably applauded? They did not condemn that licensee. That would go for the hon. member for Hinchinbrook, too.

Mr. Jesson: Oh, go on!

Mr. WALSH: He has a freehold hotel.

Mr. Jesson: I have not got as many shares in the West Burleigh picture theatre as you have.

Mr. WALSH: I challenge the hon. member to produce any evidence that I have had more than a 3s. 2d. dividend from any company in the State. He is at liberty to do it if he can.

Mr. Jesson: I should like to see your income tax.

Mr. WALSH: He can have my income tax. I would not be in all the rackets he has been in, particularly the Green Parrot.

Mr. Jesson: I would like to have a look at the list of your Commonwealth bonds.

Mr. WALSH: As a matter of fact, the hon. member can have a look at that too. My book is an open book.

Mr. Jesson: You had better read it.

Mr. WALSH: If he wants me to discuss the Green Parrot on this Estimate—

Mr. Jesson: I don't think the Chairman will let you.

Mr. Ewan: You have got him frightened now.

Mr. Jesson: Well, go on and discuss it. Discuss it outside the House with me, you great big sook!

Mr. WALSH: Perhaps I would be allowed to discuss it because anything affecting the operation of the Auctioneers and Commission Agents' Act comes under the jurisdiction of the Justice Department.

Mr. Jesson: All right, discuss it outside the House. You are not game to. You are a big dill; that's all. You are a big mug. You are a big louse. Discuss it outside the House!

Mr. WALSH: That is the type of person who is going round demanding that others should improve their standards.

Mr. Jesson: I am not going around. I have never yet opened my mouth but I will.

Mr. WALSH: I am not stopping the hon. member from opening it. It will be too bad for him if I open mine.

Mr. Jesson: You open it. I challenge you to open it.

Mr. Ewan: You have got him frightened now.

Mr. Sparkes: I think the parrot is out.

Mr. Jesson: Go on, and I will open mine on you.

Mr. WALSH: The hon. member can do whatever he likes.

Mr. Hanlon interjected.

Mr. WALSH: I am trying to help the Minister. For some reason or other hon. members of the Australian Labour Party are condemning legislation introduced by the ex-Premier. Although they supported the legislation at the time they are condemning it today.

If the Licensing Commission has served a request on the hon. member for Hinchinbrook to effect a certain standard of accommodation, why should he complain here?

Mr. Jesson: They did it as soon as I bought the place.

Mr. WALSH: If that is the case, the hon. member should complain to the Licensing Commission. The fact remains that there is scope to improve the general standard of conditions.

Mr. Jesson interjected.

Mr. WALSH: I have threatened to hit the hon. member on the chin before.

Mr. Jesson: I challenge you to do that.

Mr. WALSH: The hon. member wanted to do a poor unfortunate out of the price of a few beers in the bar.

Mr. Jesson: I challenge you to do that.

Mr. WALSH: The fact remains that all this talk about licensing breweries is not going to get the hon. gentleman one step further forward to solving the liquor problem of the State. It is true that under the Commonwealth Constitution there is a special provision that still allows the State to legislate for the control and distribution of liquor within the State even though it may be manufactured in some other State. Section 92 of the Commonwealth Constitution does not go into the matter of the distribution of liquor irrespective of where it may be manufactured. The manufacture of liquor is an entirely different question. It is only the Commonwealth that can give authority to manufacture spirituous or other liquors within this country. The Minister might say, "We will license the breweries", he might say that the fee will be £100 or £1,000, but what would be the effect of it? The Minister may get legal advice that it would be competent for the Government to lay down certain conditions to attach to licences, but how much further would that get him towards solving the accommodation problem? I do not think the breweries would be interested in hotels. They manufacture liquor, the hotel or the club is there to sell their product. What does it matter to the brewery if they have not got one hotel? It must be said that at least the Commission has been able to enforce better standards in brewery hotels. In 1941 a new hotel was built in St. George at a cost of £30,000 or £40,000. Where would you find a private freeholder who would be prepared to build a modern hotel in a place like St. George at a cost of £30,000 or £40,000? Amenities equal to anything in first-class Brisbane hotels were provided in the St. George hotel. You could not expect anybody to sink £40,000 or £50,000 as a private freeholder in a place like St. George. Any sensible man knows that.

Mr. Beardmore: There is nothing wrong with St. George.

Mr. WALSH: The hon. member will agree that the Australian Hotel at St. George as far back as 1941 was just as modern as any hotel in Brisbane. What is all this rubbish about brewery control over hotels? If the breweries did not do any financing of hotels—and I do not know to what extent

they were in that—where would they go? To the banks, of course. All you do is to pass them from one monopoly to another. What would be wrong with the breweries forming their own subsidiary and finding their own finance to cover the financing of leases of hotels, just the same as there are numerous trusts being formed in Queensland for the investment of moneys. It is no different. It could be that any section of the liquor interests could form a trust to enable them to have the same interests that the breweries might have today. The manufacturers of beer or other products, as long as they can sell it through any hotel or club, or for that matter through any sly grog shop, are still getting their profits. It is all just political agitation that somewhere the breweries have a hold on the hotel interests. If anybody doubts the figures given by the Licensing Commission he is at liberty to go out and check them. There is only one hotel in Bundaberg which is owned by a brewery. All the rest are freehold hotels and conducted on that basis. If you go north from Bundaberg, I doubt if you will find one hotel that is owned by any one of the breweries in Brisbane. It is all political eyewash that somebody wants to manufacture. It is drawing a red herring across the track to say that the breweries have some influence over the conduct of the liquor trade generally in this State. You had the example of the brewery started at Grafton. It had an open go. What was to stop it coming here and selling its grog to the hotels who were prepared to take it? Some of the hotels did take it, but it was not long before they found it was not profitable to do so. When we talk of the limitations imposed on the breweries, do not forget that it was the previous Government's policy, and one that can be thoroughly justified, that held the breweries back from expanding the manufacture of beer in this State. The Government rightly decided that the bricks and timber and skilled workmen could be used in building homes and that the breweries would not get a permit to extend their buildings. Many hon. members opposite were blaming the breweries, but it was the Government's action that was responsible. That action was justified, and it would be justified today in similar circumstances. I would make no apologies. Let us get rid of this eyewash. If some of the critics of the liquor interests honoured their obligations it would enable some of the hotel-keepers to provide a better standard of accommodation. These things should not be overlooked. The hon. member for Warrego was comparing the standard of hotel accommodation in this State with that in South Africa, where cheap labour is available. It is too ridiculous to attempt such a comparison. It would be just as ridiculous to attempt to compare our railway system with their railway system in view of the cheap labour and poor conditions in that country and the wages paid under our decent White Australia conditions.

Vote (Chief Office) agreed to.

COURTS OF PETTY SESSIONS.

Hon. A. W. MUNRO (Toowong—Minister for Justice) (9.5 p.m.): I move—

“That £414,953 be granted for ‘Courts of Petty Sessions’.”

This Vote represents an increase of £28,971 on the expenditure for last year, £20,688 for salaries and £8,283 for contingencies.

The increase in salaries is for 15 additional officers and payment of award increases. Under contingencies the increased provision for the cash equivalent of long-service leave is £2,762. Provision has been made for the purchase of a replacement accounting machine in Brisbane, while the transfer of officers following the reclassification of the Petty Sessions Service is expected to cost £3,302 more than last year.

The last item is the only one calling for special comment. The rearrangement of those positions has taken some months. Broadly speaking, the object is to lessen the great need experienced on occasions over the years for transfers of Clerks of Petty Sessions from one town to another. The reclassification has reduced the number of grades. It will enable a fair balance to be maintained. It meets the convenience of officers. They are not required to do as much travelling from town to town as previously. It not only means their convenience but also meets the convenience of the department.

Mr. LLOYD (Kedron) (9.8 p.m.): There is not a great deal to be said on the Vote, but it is unfortunate that the hon. member for Mt. Gravatt is not here this evening. He made many statements about magistrate's lack of knowledge of law, and said that the reintroduction of the old system of district courts was imperative.

There may be some ground for his complaint about their lack of sufficient knowledge to deal with some points, but I think the majority of our stipendiary magistrates cope well with the many problems they encounter. They serve a good purpose, and are capable and efficient.

Clerks of Petty Sessions throughout the State play an important part in governmental administration. They have to deal with many matters and make decisions on other matters that are not generally handled by men in the profession. That was the practice under the previous Government, and I am sure the same position will obtain under this Government.

I should like to mention the re-employment of a person who prior to his election to Parliament was in a C.P.S. office in this State. Apparently the Government have seen fit to re-employ him. I agree that having carried out the duties of his position satisfactorily prior to his election to Parliament the former member for Nash should be given the opportunity of securing re-employment in the Government service. I cannot see how

it can be made an excuse on the Government's part that he be allowed to defer his reappointment for some months because in the interim he is employed by another political organisation. He virtually dictated his own terms as to when his re-employment should commence. This is a matter of some concern particularly as clerks of petty sessions have been asking for transfers and in some case the deferment of transfers. In the case to which I refer the re-appointment was permitted to be carried over for some months; he was singled out for favoured treatment. Whilst the position concerned was not available to other officers desiring promotion I think that he should have accepted his responsibility to the Government which after all was extending a favour to him. He should have accepted re-employment or allowed some other person to accept the promotion offered to him.

Mr. POWER (Baroona) (9.12 p.m.): The hon. member for Kedron has raised the case of a former member of this House. I commend the Government for their fairness in the appointment of Mr. Kehoe and the generous treatment they gave with respect to another former member who was found employment because of his qualifications. The policy of a good Labour man is that there should be no victimisation. I have had some knowledge of industrial matters and without patting myself on the back I take second place to none with my knowledge. My industrial record is as good as that of anyone. I regret that the hon. member for Kedron should single out Mr. Kehoe—

Mr. LLOYD: I rise to a point of order. I complimented the Government on the re-employment of the former member for Nash. I was only objecting to the method by which he was employed.

Mr. POWER: I accept the hon. member's explanation but it would have been better had he made no comment at all. There might be some good reason why the former member was not in a position to take up his re-employment immediately. This was not the first time that a defeated member has been re-employed in the Government service. No good Labour man would suggest victimisation of any individual. I regret that the matter was raised. It was suggested that the former member dictated his own terms to the Government, but with my knowledge of the Minister and the Public Service Commissioner I do not think the former member could dictate his terms. Mr. Fraser would recommend on his re-employment in the service. I hope that such generous treatment will be extended to other members of this Parliament who were defeated. I congratulate the Government on their action.

The Estimates disclose the number of magistrates in Queensland. Some time ago, following a reclassification of the department, the number of grades of clerks of petty sessions was reduced. That action by the previous

administration will save the Government a good deal of money. Clerks of petty sessions travel round the State in much the same way as a satellite travels round the world. And as they travel round, their classifications improve.

There is merit in the suggestion of the hon. member for Kurilpa and the hon. member for Mt. Gravatt that consideration should be given to having qualified legal men as stipendiary magistrates. It must not be forgotten, however, that the only advancement that clerks of petty sessions have is to the position of magistrate. I understand that following the reclassification of clerks of petty sessions, their transfers will not be as frequent as they were previously. The previous Government had under consideration a further reduction in the number of grades, and I hope it will be kept in mind by the Minister. It will lead to greater stability in that branch of the Public Service and will probably save the Government a good deal of money in transfer expenses.

I point out, too, that many clerks of petty sessions have had to refuse transfers because of the lack of accommodation in many country centres. If a man is transferred to a country centre where there is no accommodation for his family he should be paid an allowance until he can get it. At present the allowance is paid only for a very short period.

Mr. LLOYD (Kedron) (9.19 p.m.): Although I do not resent the attack that the hon. member for Baroona made on me by innuendo, it is necessary for me to bring to the notice of the Committee a telegram bearing on the matter that I raised previously. I think it will be generally admitted that I raised no objection to the re-employment of Mr. Kehoe; in fact, I said he was entitled to be re-employed in his previous position in the Justice Department. However, I pointed out that he should not be allowed to dictate his own terms.

Mr. Walsh: What evidence have you that he did?

Mr. LLOYD: I shall be quoting something in a minute. I have it in my hand, not in my pocket. I have not got a black book. If he is going to dictate his own terms and get favoured treatment, I do not think it is in the best interests of the officers of the Justice Department who have been continuously employed there and whose own promotion may be detrimentally affected pending his taking up his duties as the senior clerk. I did not intend to read the telegram, but I think it is necessary now for me to do so. It says—

“Kehoe advertised address political meeting Innisfail, Friday, South Johnstone, Saturday. Can you ascertain object.”

What is Mr. Kehoe doing in the interim, while he is not accepting his employment, other than organising for a political party

pending taking up his duties in the department in his own time? That is the point I intended to make and that I think I have made.

Mr. WALSH (Bundaberg) (9.21 p.m.): I think the attitude of the hon. member for Kedron is rather remarkable. The nigger in the woodpile has come out. It is that Mr. Kehoe is at present employed by the Queensland Labour Party as an organiser and has asked the Public Service Commissioner to be allowed to take up his duties as from a certain date. What is wrong with that? That goes on every day in the business world and in administrative life. It goes on in Government administration. When transfers are made the Public Service Commissioner or the departmental head, according to the jurisdiction, tries to arrange them to fit in with the domestic requirements of appointees.

Mr. Lloyd: No other public servant is allowed to accept outside employment.

Mr. WALSH: If the reappointment of Mr. Kehoe to the public service has been decided on as from a specific date, what has it got to do with anybody in the Chamber what he does between now and that date?

Mr. Lloyd: He has two jobs.

Mr. WALSH: He has not got two jobs. He is being paid for only one.

Mr. Lloyd: But he is holding another.

Mr. WALSH: He is obviously not interfering with anybody else's promotion, and the hon. member for Kedron knows that. The Public Service Commissioner would not allow it any more than the Minister would if it were brought to his notice.

Mr. Lloyd: Would not anybody else be entitled to the position of senior clerk.

Mr. WALSH: The only thing about it is the little bit of hate because a defeated member of Parliament has been reappointed by the Government of the day to his position in the public service and, no doubt by arrangement with the Commissioner, it has been decided that he will take up duty on a certain date. That is all that is in it. Yet we have this sort of thing from men who are supposed to represent the Labour Party. It does not matter what a man's political or religious views may be, there is no reason why any member of the committee should chase him in his employment. After all, when the Labour Government came back into power in 1932 men who had been private secretaries to previous Ministers were reappointed to their positions in the public service.

Mr. Hanlon: Did they let them go out organising for the Country Party?

Mr. WALSH: They talk about civil rights and union liberty and so on. Because a man has a particular political belief they want to hunt him and hound him throughout his career.

Mr. Lloyd: You can't take it.

Mr. WALSH: The hon. member knows that I can take it all right. If they want to ladle it out I will take it.

Mr. Lloyd: You love giving it.

Mr. WALSH: I love giving it, too.

If the matter had not been raised by the hon. member it would not have been debated in any circumstances. The Minister was commended in the first place for the Government's reappointment of Kehoe to his position in the public service, and now they want to find some other fault with him. It is quite obvious that the arrangement was made for him to take up his duties as from a certain date. I cannot see that the department or the Government have done the wrong thing.

(Time expired.)

Hon. A. W. MUNRO (Toowong—Minister for Justice) (9.26 p.m.): There have been two rather interesting points raised by the hon. member for Kedron. The first reference was to district courts and the second was to the appointment of the former hon. member for Nash. It may be more convenient to deal with the second point first.

I dealt with this on the administrative affairs of the department this morning but without the knowledge I now have of the political background. At the same time I say that the decision would be quite the same whether I had that knowledge or not. This point has been made clear on previous occasions in the Chamber: in considering the appointment of any person to an office in the Public Service there is not going to be at any time any victimisation by the Government.

Mr. Lloyd: Would you mind telling us exactly the date of the appointment?

Mr. MUNRO: In due course.

Mr. Lloyd: Just make that point particularly clear.

Mr. MUNRO: I make the point that there will be no victimisation.

Mr. Lloyd: And no favouritism either?

Mr. MUNRO: If I remember rightly, the former hon. member for Nash was appointed to the position of C.P.S., Cairns. While I have made the point that there will be no victimisation of any person because of his former political associations I also agree with the hon. member for Kedron that no such person is to be singled out for any favoured treatment merely because he was formerly a member of Parliament. Again I would agree that no person who accepts an appointment in the Public Service should be allowed to dictate his own terms. So far as I am able to remember them, the facts in this case are that the former member for Nash was appointed to the position. As I have previously explained, the filling of

offices in various parts of the State involves the convenience of many others besides the person directly concerned. Each time you consider the transfer of an officer from one town to another or the filling of an office in one town, you have to consider a number of consequential vacancies.

Mr. Power: Quite a large batch.

Mr. MUNRO: Yes, that is a very important point. Therefore I have to make this further explanation: after accepting the appointment the former hon. member for Nash communicated with my department and in broad terms asked that he should not be required to take up his appointment until some time in January. I did not regard it as a reasonable request in the circumstances, although I did not know the political background. The matter was considered this morning and we decided that the former member should be advised that if it was his final decision to defer commencement of duty as C.P.S., Cairns until January, consideration must be given to cancellation of his appointment. We further decided that his right to re-apply for employment would be preserved. In other words, the former member for Nash, after agreeing to take a position was not prepared to go on with his side of the contract.

Mr. Lloyd: In other words other employees who might be entitled to promotion will not be victimised.

Mr. MUNRO: That is right. This matter has been dealt with perfectly fairly, just as it would be dealt with if the person concerned had no political background at all.

The hon. member for Kedron raised the matter of whether we might reconstitute district courts in Queensland. That is a very interesting question. As members of the Committee will remember it was raised on one or two occasions by members on this side of the Chamber, the hon. member for Mount Gravatt and the hon. member for Kurilpa. I would not tie myself down to the particular term "district courts." This question is being given very close consideration, not only by myself. I have been fortunate in having the co-operation of the representatives of the Bar Association and the Law Society, and of consultations with members of the judiciary. The purpose is to find a solution of this problem. Among other things it is a problem of more rational spheres of jurisdiction for the Supreme Court and the magistrates court which necessarily involves consideration of matters of procedure and whether it would be wise to set up something in the way of an intermediate court. The matter is at present subject to very careful investigation and it would be unwise for me to attempt to give any indication of what the conclusions are likely to be. I assure the hon. member for Kedron that the matter is being considered.

Progress reported.

The House adjourned at 9.36 p.m.