

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 19 NOVEMBER 1957

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TUESDAY, 19 NOVEMBER, 1957.

Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. A. R. Fletcher, Cunningham) took the chair at 11 a.m.

QUESTIONS.

SURCHARGE ON MEAT SHIPPED FROM
NORTHERN PORTS.

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) asked the Minister for Labour and Industry—

“(1) Has his attention been drawn to an article in the *Courier-Mail* of Friday, November 15, in which it was stated that shipowners were considering the imposition of a surcharge on all meat shipped from Northern ports?”

“(2) If so, and if there is any factual basis for the report, will he do all he can to deter the shipowners from imposing such surcharge, which will be a crippling blow to one of North Queensland's major industries?”

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

“(1 and 2) On Wednesday last November 13, a deputation from Queensland Exporters Oversea Transport Committee saw me on this matter, following which I have taken certain steps with regard to it. The Honourable Member may rest assured that this Government will do everything within its power to protect, maintain and extend Queensland industries.”

REQUEST TO COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT
FOR SUBSIDY FOR EGG INDUSTRY.

Mr. DAVIES (Maryborough) asked the Minister for Agriculture and Stock—

“In view of the statement by the Under Secretary of his Department in regard to the prosperity of the egg industry in Queensland, that because the Commonwealth Government has refused to give temporary relief in the form of subsidy there can be no doubt that the egg industry faces an unpromising future, (a) when was an application made to the Commonwealth Government for a subsidy; (b) by whom was the application made; (c) what was the extent of the subsidy requested; (d) on what date was the subsidy refused by the Commonwealth Government; and (e) what reasons were given for the refusal?”

Hon. O. O. MADSEN (Warwick) replied—

“(a) and (b) My Under Secretary did not state that the egg industry in Queensland faces an unpromising future because the Commonwealth Government refused to give temporary relief in the form of subsidy. The Queensland Egg Marketing Board joined with other State Egg Marketing Boards in the request for subsidy to the Commonwealth Government. The request was presented by the Egg Producers’

Council on behalf of the constituent Boards on April 9, 1957. (c) A specific amount was not requested. (d) and (e) The reasons given by the Minister for Primary Industry are embodied in a Press release dated July 19, 1957, a copy of which was forwarded to my Department after reference to it in a telegram dated July 19, 1957. The reasons there given are as follows:—

(1) The Government does not agree with export subsidies in principle and is continuously opposing the export of Government subsidised surplus primary products by other countries. (2) The Australian Agricultural Council itself supports the view that subsidies do not provide a permanent solution to the problem which can only be overcome by the industry itself making adjustments. (3) An interim subsidy on eggs in anticipation of what might happen during the current year would create an intolerable precedent for the Government in respect of other primary industries which might also be anticipating marketing difficulties. (4) It is felt that a subsidy at this stage would only delay the inevitable adjustment which the Agricultural Council points out the industry must make.”

PAPER.

The following paper was laid on the table:—
Report of Dumaresq-Barwon Border Rivers Commission for the year 1956-1957.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES, 1956-1957.

Mr. SPEAKER read a message from the Administrator of the Government transmitting the Supplementary Estimates for the year 1956-1957.

Estimates ordered to be printed, and referred to Committee of Supply.

VOTE ON ACCOUNT, 1958-1959.

MESSAGE FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE GOVERNMENT.

Mr. SPEAKER read a message from His Excellency the Administrator of the Government recommending that the following provision be made on account of the services of the year ending 30 June, 1959:—

From the Consolidated Revenue Fund of Queensland, (exclusive of the moneys standing to the credit of the Loan Fund Account), the sum of fifteen million pounds;

From the Trust and Special Funds, the sum of ten million pounds;

From the moneys standing to the credit of the Loan Fund Account, the sum of three million five hundred thousand pounds.
Message referred to Committee of Supply.

LANDLORD AND TENANT ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION.

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

“That the House will, at its present sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirableness of introducing a Bill to amend the Landlord and Tenant Acts, 1948 to 1954, in certain particulars.”

Motion agreed to.

JUDGES' PENSIONS BILL.

INITIATION.

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

“That the House will, at its present sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirableness of introducing a Bill to provide pensions for Judges of the Supreme Court of Queensland and their widows, and to make certain consequential provisions.”

Motion agreed to.

PROFITEERING PREVENTION ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE.

(The Chairman of Committees, Mr. Taylor, Clayfield, in the chair.)

Debate resumed from 15 November (see page 1082) on Clause 3—Repeal of and new s. 8; Prices Advisory Board—on which Mr. Baxter had moved the following amendment—

“On page 1, line 23, omit the word—
‘three’

and insert in lieu thereof the word—
‘four’.”

Mr. COBURN (Burdekin) (11.18 a.m.): An attempt seems to have been made during the debate to mislead people into believing that if there is not a representative of the National Council of Women or the trade unions on the proposed Prices Advisory Board the opinions of those bodies on the prevention of profiteering will be ignored. It appears to me that it will be competent for anybody in the community, or any organisation, to make suggestions or submit information to the Board. If that happens, I feel certain that the Board will accept such suggestions or information and give them full consideration. Through that medium, it will be able to arrive at a conclusion in conformity with the opinions expressed. Although the previous Attorney-General does not think that will happen, it applies in the administration of many State bodies. For example, judgments issued by the Industrial Court are not formed on the personal opinions of members of the Bench, but on

the evidence submitted to the court by parties to a dispute. I feel sure that a similar attitude will be adopted by members of the Prices Advisory Board. Opinions of competent members of the community will be taken into consideration, and conclusions arrived at accordingly.

The Leader of the Queensland Labour Party has proved himself in this matter to be a better tactician than the Leader of the official Opposition. He waited until the amendment was proposed by the official Opposition for the appointment of a representative of the National Council of Women, and then he came forward with his amendment that a representative of the trade union movement be appointed.

Mr. Power: You cannot discuss that amendment. It is not before the Committee.

Mr. COBURN: But it will have a big bearing on the vote that is to be taken.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member for Burdekin must not anticipate an amendment. The Committee is now discussing whether the proposed Board shall consist of four members or three.

Mr. COBURN: What is to come before the Committee later has a direct bearing on the vote that will be recorded on this amendment. If it is carried, the official Opposition will face a dilemma in that they will have to decide between having on the Board a representative of the National Council of Women or a representative of the trade union movement.

I am of the opinion that secretly a good many of the official Opposition would welcome the defeat of the amendment. It would extricate them from the dilemma in which they will be placed if it is passed. They will be blamed for making a decision against the trade-union movement, the very backbone of the party. If it were not for the need to save face, many of them would be over on this side voting against the amendment if they thought it was likely to be carried.

I am satisfied that the Prices Advisory Board will be able to get the opinions of the National Council of Women, of the trade unions and of any other people interested. Every section of the community will be able to put forward its view and the Board will be a research body to sift the information and pass it on to the Minister, so that a policy might be determined.

Mr. LLOYD (Kedron) (11.22 a.m.): The remarks of the hon. member for Burdekin are rather amusing. In 1952 he was one of those who supported an amendment moved by the hon. member for Murrumba to enable a representative of the National Council of Women to be appointed to the Milk Board as a consumer's representative. The hon. member for Mundingburra has missed so

much because of his frequent absence from the Chamber that he did not know of the existence of the National Council of Women. He said he had never heard of it. He would have heard of it if he had been present when the amendment to the Milk Bill was moved in 1952. Hon. members will find it interesting to cast their minds back to that time and compare the attitude of some hon. members then with their attitude today. The Premier himself, at page 1108 of the 1952 "Hansard," speaking on the Milk Bill had this to say—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I think the hon. member has made his point. The question before the Committee is whether the Board should consist of three or four members. I will allow him to speak about the National Council of Women if the matter is raised in a subsequent amendment.

Mr. LLOYD: I thank you for your advice, Mr. Taylor. I shall now deal with the Minister's reply to the case presented by the Opposition. I remind him that he has said from time to time that it is very desirable to have women on boards created by the Government. In his reply last week he said he would like to accept the amendment, that the case for an additional member of the Board had been very capably put forward.

Mr. Munro: I did not say it was a good case.

Mr. LLOYD: I took down the hon. gentleman's remarks in shorthand.

Mr. Munro: I am pointing out what I did say.

Mr. LLOYD: He said the case would have convinced him if he had been listening to it as in a court of law. It seems to me that he is to some extent convinced that an additional member to represent the consumers of Queensland, should be appointed to the Board.

I appeal to the Minister to cast his mind back to other statements that he has made in the Chamber from time to time and then decide whether it is desirable to appoint an additional member to the board. He has said that this is not an appropriate case for the appointment of a female member. If it was an appropriate case to appoint a woman to a board dealing with one commodity only, milk, surely it is even more appropriate and important that a woman be appointed as a consumers' representative on a board which is dealing with fruit, vegetables, fish and all the other household commodities needed by the consumer.

The Minister said that under the original legislation a consumers' representative was not appointed to the board. There is a great difference in the two boards. The original tribunal was purely and simply a consultative and advisory body. It was there for the convenience of the Commissioner of Prices. The

new board is not purely and simply a consultative and advisory body but on the advice of the Minister it shall sit and hear any matters which he may refer to it. On matters of control, de-control and re-control it will make recommendations to the Minister. It is imperative that an additional member be appointed as a consumers' representative who can present to the Minister the opinions of the consumers themselves. If the Minister were to adopt a practical attitude towards the amendment he would recognise the great benefits and advantages to be gained from the appointment of a fourth member. He would realise that it would be of great service to him in securing the opinion of all consumers in Queensland.

The board is comprised of all public servants. He has said that because its members are all public servants this is not an appropriate case for the appointment of a consumers' representative. Because the board is comprised of all public servants it is even more essential that a consumers' representative should be appointed to advise not only the Minister but also the public servants on the board. It does not matter very much to me who the consumers' representative is so long as the consumers' representative is a person who is capable of advising the Minister and the board about controlling, de-controlling and re-controlling prices and all matters related to price fixing administration in Queensland.

Mr. HANLON (Ithaca) (11.29 a.m.): The further the Minister goes in this matter the more befuddled he seems to become. In the earlier part of the debate I think the hon. member for Hinchinbrook and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition chided the Minister because he did not have the Commissioner of Prices in the Chamber to advise him. When price fixing was being debated under the Department of Justice Estimates he said that he did not have the Commissioner of Prices in the Chamber when the Profiteering Prevention Acts Amendment Bill was being debated because it was not a matter relating to administration. He said he did not consider it necessary to bring Mr. Fullagar down here as the Bill had very little to do with administration, he did not want to waste Mr. Fullagar's time. I invite hon. members to have a look at "Hansard" proofs for Friday last. In the course of the debate on this Bill I interjected and asked whether the Bill dealt with administration. The Minister had said that it was not an appropriate board on which to have a consumers' representative because it was a matter of streamlining administration in the Prices Branch by the appointment of representatives from the Department of Labour and Industry and the Department of Agriculture and Stock.

I said, "This Bill is more a matter of administration", and the Minister said, "Yes, that is right." That was completely the opposite to what the hon. gentleman said earlier that he did not bring Mr. Fullagar

down because it was not on matters of administration at all. The arguments advanced by the Minister do not carry weight because they have differed so much during the week. We think that the public believe in price control wherever there is a chance of exploitation. On the Minister's case, if there is a consumers' representative possibly the Government will not be able to destroy price control so easily. I do not rely on Gallup polls to a great extent but every Gallup poll that has been taken has shown that the people have an overwhelming preference for the retention of price control, particularly of commodities that affect the working-man, many of which are not on the C Series Index. I hope the Minister will advance a sound argument for saying that there should not be a consumers' representative on the Board, whether from the trade union movement or elsewhere. We think there should be a consumers' representative on the Board and if one is not to be appointed we want to know why.

Hon. A. W. MUNRO (Toowong—Minister for Justice) (11.32 a.m.): As we have already devoted far more time to this small Bill than is justified, particularly when the Government have a large programme of legislation to get through, I propose to make my remarks very brief. Dealing first very briefly with the remarks of the hon. member for Ithaca, obviously he is not able to distinguish between administration and matters of legislation. I shall refer to the hon. member's point about a consumers' representative. I stress the fact that in the Commissioner of Prices we already have on the Board the most effective consumers' representative. That is an answer to that point. The whole of the activities of the Prices Branch is designed to protect the interests of the consumers. You could have no more effective consumers' representative than the Commissioner of Prices.

Mr. Power: What if the Board recommended decontrol? Where would the protection come in then?

Mr. MUNRO: The Commissioner of Prices is still a member of the Board.

Mr. Davies: He is a Government official.

Mr. MUNRO: All the members of the Board are Government officials. I have made that clear already. I have already replied to the points raised this morning, apart from the interesting one by the hon. member for Burdekin. I indicated when I spoke at length on the previous occasion when the matter was under discussion that I had weighed the case very carefully. I have already stated the reasons why it is quite impossible to accept the amendment without putting the Board completely out of balance. In adhering to what I said previously I am happy to know, as the hon. member for Burdekin pointed out, that by not accepting the amendment we

remove the members of the A.L.P. from the dilemma and the very embarrassing position in which they would place themselves if the amendment were accepted. I too am glad that I shall not be in an embarrassing position. The A.L.P. would be in the embarrassing position of having to decide between a representative of the National Council of Women and a representative of the trade unions, whereas I would be in the embarrassing position of having to decide whether the fourth member should be a representative of the National Council of Women, a representative of the trade unions, a representative of the Chamber of Commerce, a representative of the Queensland Chamber of Manufactures, or a representative of the great primary industries.

That point was very well put by the hon. member for Burdekin. Although hon. members may vote on party lines for or against the amendment, I think all hon. members will be relieved to know that such an unbalanced proposal is not being accepted.

Mr. GAIR (South Brisbane) (11.37 a.m.): I cannot agree with the Minister that the Committee has devoted far too much time to the subject or more time than it merits. This is an important measure. Anything associated with price control has an undeniable influence and effect on the living standard of the people. It is therefore important that hon. members should examine very carefully the provisions of this small and innocent Bill, as it was described by the Minister.

Mr. Munro: I hope you will give at least equal consideration to the many important measures still to come forward.

Mr. GAIR: I assure the Minister of that. I can understand the embarrassment of the Government and their desire to rush through legislation in the first session of their existence. I realise the great pressure being brought to bear by those the Government represent for such legislation as this, to destroy the achievements of former Labour Governments. This is most unfortunate for Labour's achievements have been of great value and benefit to all sections of the community and particularly the section most in need of governmental protection and care.

The clause that it is proposed to amend covers the composition of the Prices Advisory Board. It says that the Under Secretary, Department of Labour and Industry shall ex officio be a member and chairman of the Board. The Under Secretary is a good public servant and quite efficient in the department he administers. I have been associated with the occupant of that position for many years, but, without taking any credit from him, I should say he would know little or nothing about price control or matters pertaining to it. I am sure he would be the first to admit his lack of knowledge of the ramifications of price control or associated subjects. It is true that the Commissioner of

Prices will be a member of the board. He has been associated with price control since the State resumed control of it following the defeat of the Federal Government's referendum on the subject. I think Mr. Fullagar was appointed to this position in 1948, and notwithstanding the statements of those who want to write their own tickets on prices, Mr. Fullagar has done a very sound and just job. I repeat my previous statement that he has never submitted to the pressure of any group, for or against control of prices, or for or against price variations. His work has been beyond reproach and he has discharged his duty as he saw fit. The third member is to be an officer of the Department of Agriculture and Stock and it was suggested by speakers on the Opposition side that it was to be Mr. Hunter, one who has already declared himself against price control or, should I say, has declared himself in favour of lifting price control in many industries. He therefore comes to the Board with a prejudiced mind on this very important question. And so I say there is room for a fourth member, but I shall not say just now whether he should be a representative of the National Council of Women or the trade union movement. That can be debated later. There is room for a consumers' representative—call him what you will—who can make direct representations in the interests of the working-class people of the community. The argument advanced by the hon. member for Burdekin was that all sections of the people will have access to the Board, that they can submit a case in writing, if necessary, as to why a certain course should be taken. He said that it is not denied that they can act individually or as a body. That may be so, but surely the hon. member is not so infantile as to believe that that form of representation is as effective as having a man or woman on the Board who would be able to present a case in person. Nobody would argue that the indirect approach is as influential or as forceful as having a representative on the Board to argue and contest all propositions or suggestions considered by the Board from time to time.

Mr. Coburn: With intelligent people it is not the approach that counts, but the facts submitted.

Mr. GAIR: The facts could be given greater force by personal representation. Counsel in a court extracts evidence from witnesses and if he is forceful in his work as counsel and in his advocacy does not his client have a greater chance of success than if he merely hands up written submissions to the judge saying, "Here is what we think.", and leaves it at that?

Mr. Coburn: Have you any guarantee that the representative to be appointed would have power to do that?

Mr. GAIR: Members of the board would have equal rights. The Minister has led us to believe that the board will be

consultative and advisory and will discuss all questions indissolubly associated with prices.

Mr. Munro: Will you give me a fair answer to a fair question?

Mr. GAIR: That has always been my custom.

Mr. Munro: When you were the Government and constituted a similar board under the Profiteering Prevention Act of 1948, did you put on a fourth member?

Mr. GAIR: No. It does not say that because my Government erred that the Minister should continue to err.

Mr. Munro: I was trying to follow your argument.

Mr. GAIR: That is history. Let us keep abreast of the times and not look back to 1948 when the State Government resumed control of prices. The Minister, from his remarks in the debate, is conscious of the necessity for having a fourth member. The Bill provides for three members and he adheres stubbornly to that, knowing full well that the appointment of a fourth member must be productive of good.

Mr. Aikens: He is following in your footsteps.

Mr. GAIR: There is no reason why he should. When he was in Opposition he accused us frequently of standing stubbornly against amendments to legislation. I am sure the records will prove that my Government accepted amendments to legislation more readily than any other Government. On present indications I am sure that this Government will not beat the record set by my Government, in the matter of accepting amendments to legislation submitted by the Opposition.

(Time expired.)

Mr. WOOD (North Toowoomba—Leader of the Opposition) (11.46 a.m.): I, too, cannot accept the statement that more time than is justified has been spent on the measure. Each day we see more and more evidence to support our contention that progressively steps are being taken to destroy prices legislation and the Prices Branch. If our opposition is to be effective, it must be voiced from the beginning. It was said years ago that a thousand years scarce serve to form a State; an hour can lay it in the dust.

If the Government are successful at the beginning of their campaign to enforce their desires on the people, it will be too late for us to protest later on.

The Minister has said that a broad programme of legislation is to come before Parliament, but as Leader of the Opposition I tell him that we shall be prepared to discuss that legislation equally as fully as the Bill now before us, no matter how long it

takes. I deplore the attitude that was often apparent in members of the Government when they were in Opposition, of showing a frenzied anxiety to get back to their own businesses in late November or early December, and allowing important legislation to go through the Chamber without giving it due consideration. I say quite definitely that the Opposition are prepared to give all legislation the consideration that is its due.

It is the responsibility of the Government to present legislation to the Chamber. It may be purely coincidental, but the more important and contentious legislation seems to have been left till the closing stages of the session. It is the responsibility of the Opposition to see that all legislation is fully debated.

The Bill now before the Chamber is part of an important framework of legislation designed to protect the consumer against the exploiter. If we fear that it will take some protection from the consumer, we should be recreant to our duty if we allowed it to go through without voicing our opinions on it very firmly.

It is very significant that the Minister, after presenting an extremely weak answer to the case put from this side of the Chamber, relied for support of his case on the arguments of an hon. member who is now looked upon as an ultra-conservative supporter of the Country Party, the hon. member for Burdekin. He relied more on the hon. member's arguments than on his own submissions. Most fair-minded members of the Committee will agree that they have seldom heard a weaker answer to our plea for a fourth representative on the Board than that given on this occasion by the Minister for Justice. I listened to him with great patience the other day, though he will no doubt admit that he was becoming rather petulant about interjections. I asked him only one question and that was if he would give me his argument against a fourth representative. He had said that if he were an unbiassed man who just sat and listened to the argument he would agree wholeheartedly with it.

Mr. Munro: On the basis of what you said.

Mr. WOOD: I do not care what the basis was—on the basis of what we said.

Mr. Munro: Yes, and I gave you the further facts that absolutely destroyed your argument.

Mr. WOOD: He did not give us one valid reason why it should not be done. He said it was not an appropriate body but he did not say why. He said it could destroy the balance. At the moment the board is unbalanced because its only balance is that of the viewpoint of administration. The one person who could give it true balance would be a consumer's representative.

The Minister went to the ridiculous extreme of pointing out that a woman could quite easily be the Under Secretary of the Department. That is so, but, frankly, what prospect does he give any woman in the State of becoming in the foreseeable future Under Secretary of a department? While it is theoretically true, it is an undoubted practical impossibility.

What perturbs us is that, in spite of the statement of the Commonwealth Statistician that there has been no rise in the cost of living in Queensland, prices are rising. He may restrict himself to the commodities included in the "C" series index.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I trust that the hon. member is not about to enter into a general discussion on price-fixing. The question before the Committee is whether there should be three members on the board or four.

Mr. WOOD: I accept your ruling and I say it is vital that there should be a fourth member on the board to represent the consumers. Whether it is a woman or a trade union representative is beside the point. We must have the fourth member to put an end to the general rise in the cost of living that disturbs everyone in spite of the statement of the Government Statistician.

Mr. Aikens: I am glad you said that because I was beginning to think you were against the amendment.

Mr. WOOD: I cannot concede the point that we have been wasting time. This is important legislation—a minor measure in itself but a part of a very vital phase of the programme that has been built up. If we want to see that the structure is not destroyed, this is the time to do it, not after these steps have been taken. I cannot see one reason for the Minister's obstinate refusal to accept the amendment. Its acceptance would not in any way affect the working of the Bill. It would make it more efficient and would guarantee that there was someone on the board to look at questions not departmentally, but from the commonsense point of view of the consumer, who is after all the one most affected and the one for whose wellbeing the legislation was designed by the Australian Labour Party.

Hon. A. W. MUNRO (Toowong—Minister for Justice) (11.55 a.m.): I personally have shown some restraint and other hon. members on this side have shown commendable restraint because we as a new Government have very important legislation to introduce this session. It is of vital importance to the State that some of the legislation should be passed this session. It would be quite clear to any unbiassed person that hon. members opposite in their opposition to the Bill are wasting the time of this Parliament by tedious repetition.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr. MUNRO: No, we do not wish to apply the gag. I make it clear again that all the tedious repetition is nothing but the implementation of a policy of stonewalling. If hon. members opposite want it that way I am prepared to stay here just as long as they are. If they are going to stonewall for a fortnight on this small clause of an unimportant Bill that is all right with me.

Within the few available minutes let me point out that a reference to "Hansard" will show that on the last occasion we devoted an hour to this discussion I gave very fully the reasons why the amendment would make the Board unbalanced. The hon. member for South Brisbane was forced to concede the point I made by interjection that all we are doing is to reconstitute a departmental board. There was already a departmental board in terms of the Profiteering Prevention Acts, but due to the previous Government's lack of attention to their responsibilities it was allowed to go out of existence. All we are doing is to reconstitute this departmental board—

Mr. Wood: On a different basis.

Mr. MUNRO:—On substantially the same basis but with changes to make it more effective in the present circumstances.

It is a departmental board and at least every hon. member opposite who has had ministerial experience would know that it would make it completely unbalanced if a woman or a trade union representative were appointed to a board whose purpose is to create and carry on a better liaison between three important Government departments. Such an appointment would hamstring the board; it would make it ineffective.

As most hon. members know, I am fairly broadminded about these matters. I should like to be able to accept the amendment. If hon. members opposite would like the Government to accept an amendment let them move an amendment that is administratively workable. Let them move an amendment that could operate, an amendment that would work in conformity with the general objectives of the Act of which it would form part. If they did that we might be prepared to accept it.

Progress reported.

At 12 noon, in accordance with Standing Order 307, the House went into Committee of Supply.

SUPPLY.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE—ESTIMATES—FOURTEENTH AND FIFTEENTH ALLOTTED DAYS.

(The Chairman of Committees, Mr. Taylor, Clayfield, in the chair.)

ESTIMATES-IN-CHIEF, 1957-1958.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND STOCK.

Debate resumed from 15 November (see p. 1099) on Mr. Madsen's motion—

"That £1,083,783 be granted for 'Department of Agriculture and Stock'."

Mr. ADAIR (Cook) (12.1 p.m.): I wish to congratulate the Minister on his elevation to his very important portfolio. I am confident that he will carry out his duties very efficiently. I also wish to refer to the great work of his predecessor, Mr. Harold Collins, who rendered great service to the State during the many years that he was a member of this Parliament and Minister for Agriculture and Stock. His ability was known right throughout the State. I am sure all hon. members agree that he did great work for Queensland.

Mr. Walsh: He was a mighty good officer to the State and to primary industry.

Mr. ADAIR: Much credit is due to Mr. Collins for his excellent work for the sugar industry. The advancement of this industry is a monument to him. I am confident that the present Minister, who has a practical knowledge of agriculture, will also do an excellent job and I wish him every success.

I also pay a tribute to the officers of the Department of Agriculture and Stock. The officer in charge in Cairns, Mr. Stephens, is a very courteous officer who is doing an excellent job. I also refer to the stock inspector, Mr. Copeman, who gives advice to graziers in the remote area in the Cape York Peninsula. He is doing very good work and the landholders in that area are grateful for his assistance. The sugar industry is the most stable one in the State. There is no drought problem in the Far North because of the heavy rainfall. Many years ago thousands were employed in scarifying and chipping in the sugar industry, but with mechanisation two men can look after a farm producing 6,000 tons of cane. The only other labour needed is men to cut the cane. Mechanisation has eliminated chippers and horse-drawn scarifiers. Lift loaders load a 3-ton truck of cane in 10 minutes on most farms. Cane-cutters cut the cane and loaders take care of the loading, the most strenuous part of the work.

Queenslanders can thank successive Labour Governments for the general prosperity and the stable position of the sugar industry. The Queensland sugar industry is very efficient and compares more than favourably with the industry in other countries of the world. Despite the high labour costs in Australia compared with other countries, it is able to compete on an open market. The efficiency is in no small way due to the wise administration of successive Labour Governments.

I shall not deal at length with my next point, bulk handling of sugar, in case I transgress. The Cairns Harbour Board is unanimously in favour of it, as sugar represents between 70 and 80 per cent. of exports through that port. Arguments have been advanced in favour of the installation of bulk handling at Mourilyan rather than at Cairns, but Cairns is to be preferred to Mourilyan, and even Townsville, as more sugar is handled at Cairns than at Townsville. I ask the

Government to give the preference to Cairns. I shall not deal with the point at any greater length.

A pineapple cannery or fruit cannery is needed at Cairns. When bulk handling is installed at Mourilyan or Cairns, there will be unemployment on the wharf and in other industries. A cannery would absorb many of the employees. If bulk handling is installed at Mourilyan, much of the sugar now being exported through Cairns, including probably the Babinda and the lightered sugar, will be sent to Mourilyan. Even if bulk handling is installed at Cairns, work will be available for only half the present number of wharf employees. A cannery at Cairns would be of vital importance to the economy of the area.

The Gair Government reached an agreement with the C.O.D. that when 4,000 tons of pineapples were produced in the area, that is, Cairns, Mossman, Daintree, and as far as Tully, the Government would give a guarantee for the building of a cannery at Cairns. An amount of £250,000 was to be found for the building of the cannery and a similar sum for the running of the cannery.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I want to point out to the hon. member for Cook that he is in order in discussing the bulk handling of sugar because at page 95 of the Estimates there is provision for £800,000 for this purpose.

Mr. ADAIR: I thank you, Mr. Taylor. The Premier promised a deputation of fruit and vegetable growers at Cairns that he would make a Press statement on his Government's intention to honour the agreement made by the previous Government but so far he has not done so. It is an important matter because the pineapple-growers in the North are indebted to the banks. The matter has been under consideration for a long time and if the Premier would say even now he would honour the agreement between the previous Government and the C.O.D., the farmers would have more heart to carry on with pineapple-growing and the banks would be more lenient in granting overdrafts to them. I appeal to the Premier to make his Press announcement. He made a statement in Cairns before the election but the growers now want him to say that he will carry out the agreement made with the previous Government. There is no doubt about the production of 4,000 tons of pineapples in the area. The Premier said the other day that his information was that the growers of the Far North would send less than 50 tons of pineapples from the summer crop to canneries whether at Koondal or Northgate. I know that statement is wrong.

Mr. Madsen: It is your own statement.

Mr. ADAIR: I cannot see how it can be true.

Mr. Madsen: Your northern representative made the statement.

Mr. Coburn: You are only 3,950 tons short of your statement.

Mr. ADAIR: It says very little for the officers of the C.O.D. and the Department of Agriculture and Stock who went through the area only three months ago and inspected all the farms. Their estimate was 2,000 tons of pineapples.

Mr. Madsen: It is the figure they said would be available for canning this year.

Mr. ADAIR: Whether available for the canneries or not does not make much difference. That was the estimate of the production of pineapples in the area this year, and it does not matter whether they go to the canneries or the fresh food market. I feel confident that the crop I saw on one farm alone would produce over 100 tons of pineapples, and that the Far North's estimated tonnage will be reached.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I have been looking through the Estimates to see if the establishment of a pineapple cannery in North Queensland bears any relation to the Department of Agriculture and Stock. I can find no evidence that it does. The growing of pineapples is a matter for the department, but the establishment of a cannery bears little relationship to it. Now that the hon. member for Cook has made his point, I think he might return to the Estimates under discussion.

Mr. ADAIR: Am I allowed to speak on the growing of pineapples in the Far North?

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member can speak on anything relating to the Department of Agriculture and Stock.

Mr. ADAIR: Thousands of acres of land in the Far North are suitable for pineapple-growing. As a matter of fact, that part of the State is more suitable for pineapple-growing than any area in the southern part of the State. The farmers there are definite that the cost of producing pineapples varies from £15 to £17 a ton, whereas I have been told that the cost in the southern part of the State is up to £25 a ton. In addition, more fertiliser has to be used in the South than in the North, and the pineapples grown in the South are more susceptible to disease, such as black heart, than are those grown in the North. It would be a terrible thing if the pineapple-growers in the North were frustrated in their efforts by the failure of the Government to establish a cannery in that part of the State. Everyone knows the difficulty of transporting pineapples long distances; they have to be expertly packed. I ask the Minister and the Government to do everything possible to look after the interests of the Far North in the canning of pineapples.

Mr. Coburn: Why did the previous cannery fail?

Mr. ADAIR: The people who started the cannery in Cairns created an industry for

the Far North. Whether it failed or succeeded, it created a good industry in the Far North. It was only because of inexperience that the cannery failed. The pineapples are far superior to those grown in the Brisbane district. Had the cannery been controlled by experienced men it would have succeeded and another excellent secondary industry would have been created in the Far North. It is the duty of the Government to see that a cannery is established there. The C.O.D. hopes that the cannery will never be built in the Far North and will put whatever obstacles it can in its way.

The cattle raised on the Cape York Peninsula have to be driven 600 to 700 miles from York and Maluna stations and other stations in the Peninsula to the saleyards in Mareeba. The drive takes seven to eight weeks and, because of the poor conditions, watering facilities, and so on, they lose up to a hundredweight a beast. I have been told by Mr. Pegg, manager of the Queerah meatworks that the cattle compare more than favourably with any others in Queensland for canning. If that is so—and I believe it is—2,000 tons of beef could be canned in conjunction with the fruit cannery in Cairns. Moreover, it would be delivered to the cannery boned and ready for canning and the cost to the Government of installing machinery, etc. would be slight. The containers would be supplied. That would be a big boon to the graziers of the Peninsula because, after driving the stags and boners from the top of the Peninsula, all they get at the sales is from £14 to £18 a beast. The increase of 4d. a lb. in the price of beef has made little difference to them. Graziers in remote parts of the State need all the encouragement they can get. The previous Government helped them a great deal by subsidising the water transport of cattle by the "Wewak" from Cape York Peninsula to Cairns. Before that, they were unable to get bloodstock into the Peninsula. Within 10 or 12 years their beef will be equal to that produced anywhere else in the State. Mr. Copeman, the stock inspector in Cairns, informs me that the grazing areas round Weipa and along the west coast of the Peninsula are equal to any in the State and I know he is right. All credit for enabling them to improve the stock must go to the Government and to Marine Transport Contractors, who have reduced the time taken for the trip to 36 hours.

(Time expired.)

Mr. GILMORE (Tablelands) (12.25 p.m.): I congratulate the Minister on his appointment to his very important portfolio. Undoubtedly Queensland is a very big primary-producing State. The wealth earned and the employment provided by primary industries are very big factors in the stabilisation of the State's economy.

Over the years I have had close personal contact with the Department of Agriculture and Stock. I pay tribute to the great

courtesy, consideration and assistance I have received from departmental officers. They do everything humanly possible to help the producer solve his many and varied problems. We could not hope for a more courteous and able body of men.

Mr. Davies: You admit that the Department of Agriculture and Stock has done a very good job in recent years?

Mr. GILMORE: A splendid job. I have nothing but the highest praise for the department, although I have not had much to do with the stock section.

Mr. Walsh: The ex-Minister did a grand job.

Mr. GILMORE: I agree. I pay a tribute to him for his splendid services to the primary producers.

Mr. Davies: You will admit that if a department is well administered it is an indication of good government?

Mr. GILMORE: It probably is good management. I do not want to take anything away from any government when they do a good job, particularly in a matter of such economic value to the nation.

However, I am perturbed that we have not sufficient agricultural officers. It is well known that there is a disproportionate number of agricultural students compared with students in other faculties at the universities. It may be because the remuneration is insufficient to entice young men to follow agriculture. Perhaps the Minister could increase the salaries of these men after they graduate. I should like to see the diploma men in the field offered greater remuneration and incentive. I suggest that more money be made available for their experiments because very often the experiments provide the answers to many problems. I have nothing but the highest praise for these men.

The tobacco industry offers a great potential for Queensland and indeed Australia, but unfortunately it has many complex problems of production and marketing. Only recently it became necessary for growers, manufacturers, the Commonwealth Government and the State Government to combine to set up a research organisation to solve the many problems that face the industry. One of the greatest problems is blue mould, a fungus disease that attacks the leaf and destroys it to a very large extent.

We have complete control in the seed beds but when the plants are placed in the field there is very little control.

Mr. Davies: Are the experimental stations on the Burdekin examining it?

Mr. GILMORE: I do not know but the C.S.I.R.O. certainly is and it is being studied at Mareeba, where a special organisation was set up to deal with blue mould, and at Parada. Because of the very attractive price for potatoes many tobacco growers were

induced to grow potatoes. Tobacco and potatoes belong to the same plant family and are subject to the same insect pests. This year when the tobacco-growers planted tobacco the potato-growers had not completed their harvest and the potato moth infested the tobacco leaf with serious consequences. The question is now asked, has D.D.T. lost its potency over the years or has the insect an immunity to it? It is a big question, the solution of which is very important to the tobacco industry. Only scientists can solve it. I hope eventually they will be able to say to us, "Here is the cause of the trouble; do this and you will control it."

Mr. Davies: Has the quality of the D.D.T. declined?

Mr. GILMORE: I am not qualified to give an opinion on that. The hon. member for Port Curtis told us of how the buffalo fly was becoming immune to D.D.T. in the dip mixture, and I wondered if D.D.T. had deteriorated in any way. Only the industrial chemist or the scientist can determine that.

Mr. Davies: What about the white oil that is used in the citrus industry?

Mr. GILMORE: That is another matter that the department will have to look into. I do not say for a moment that the firms that supply D.D.T. are unscrupulous. I think they are doing their utmost to turn out a product of a uniform standard. Only the trained officers of the department can determine the matter. In Mareeba the more advanced treatment such with Endrien and Dieltrin was tried, but they were not suitable. The growers tried them too at great expense to themselves but, I am sorry to say, without much success.

There are many problems in growing tobacco, but more in marketing it. Under a Commonwealth Act the manufacturers are induced by a rebate of duty to blend a percentage of Australian tobacco with imported leaf, but manufacturers must conduct their business for profit and it would be doing an injustice to their shareholders if they encouraged greater Australian production than their requirements, as the growers would then clamour for an increased percentage of Australian tobacco to be blended with the manufactured product. The earning power of the industry and the import duty must be considered together. Let me illustrate my point by example. The duty on tobacco is 6s. 6d. a lb. If manufacturers incorporate 10 per cent. of the Australian leaf in the manufactured product, the duty is reduced to 5s. a lb., and therefore the earning power of the 10 per cent. is ninety times 1s. 6d., and if the percentage is increased to 20 per cent. the earning power is eighty times 1s. 6d. The manufacturers have set out deliberately to keep down production; in fact, it is the same now as it was when the scheme came into operation 20 years ago.

Australia consumes about 50,000,000 lb. of tobacco a year; the annual increase being a little more than 1,000,000 lb. Australian production is between 7,000,000 and 8,000,000 lb. I understand the value of sugar produced last year was £54,000,000. The tobacco industry is capable of making a substantial contribution to the economy of the State. Queensland has the area, the soil and the climate for tobacco growing and the leaf is superior in quality to that of any other country. If Australia produced all her tobacco needs the contribution to the economy would be £25,000,000 a year, taking consumption at 50,000,000 lb. and the price at 10s. lb. The economy of virtually every coastal town as far north as Mossman depends to a large extent on the prosperity of the sugar industry. Therefore it would be a great benefit to Queensland and to the national economy if the tobacco industry was worth £25,000,000 a year. We should do everything possible by scientific methods and in building up markets to improve the tobacco industry in the interests of the people and the economy of this country. It would save dollar expenditure in the importation of tobacco from America. We can produce the finest tobacco in the world. The great Tinaroo Dam scheme, now in course of completion, will make water available for tobacco growing, but we have no assured market for all that could be grown.

Mr. Davies: Apart from the marketing angle, do you think the scheme is sound?

Mr. GILMORE: We have the soil, the water and the people, but we must be sure the produce can be sold. We can produce up to £7,000,000 of tobacco a year in that area and that is not the only crop that can be grown. The Department of Agriculture and Stock could, with advantage, carry out experiments and so be able to advise farmers what produce can be marketed. The success of primary production and for that matter all manufacture depends upon markets—if we cannot market what we produce it is not much good producing it. The department could determine the markets for commodities that can be grown there now. The Parada experimental station and its skilled men could advise farmers what to plant. They would be doing a big job for Queensland.

The area will produce pineapples. The irrigated land produces a pineapple of a beautiful golden colour, most attractive in appearance.

Mr. Adair: They have produced good pineapples.

Mr. GILMORE: I have produced them myself. I support the hon. member for Cook in his efforts to have a cannery built in North Queensland. The whole matter should be dealt with by a committee of inquiry. We have the soil, the water and the people and we can produce the pineapples, but the question is, can we sell them. When we can do that we can give an assurance to the growers,

whether on the coast or in the highlands. It does not matter where they are grown so long as there is a market for them.

We should be done with all this bickering and squabbling over the establishment of a cannery at Cairns. We should have an inquiry by competent authorities who can say with certainty that the markets of the world can absorb so many pineapples, whether it be 4,000 tons or 40,000 tons. I know enough about North Queensland to be able to assure the Committee that it could supply 40,000 tons of pineapples. I want to have the matter placed on a firm foundation. If the production of a cannery can be marketed—

Mr. Davies: Would you say that at present the production of pineapples is not sufficient to warrant the establishment of a cannery at Cairns?

Mr. GILMORE: It is a matter of—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I remind the hon. member for Tablelands that the establishment of a cannery does not come within the scope of the Vote under discussion.

Mr. GILMORE: The area that I represent will some day take its place in the national economy as a cotton-producing district. There is a great opportunity for the department's officers to prove that there are some varieties of cotton suited to the area. Varieties that are successful in other areas do not seem to grow well in the Mareeba and adjacent areas. Action should now be taken to look after the future.

Cattle produced on the Etheridge line are in the main transported to the nearest market by rail. However, the last section of the railway line cannot be used by steam trains. The loading yards have deteriorated and although they have been patched up they no longer provide facilities for loading stock.

Mr. Davies: Would you say that is the fault of the Commissioner for Railways?

Mr. GILMORE: This is a discussion on the Department of Agriculture and Stock, not the Railway Department.

The department's officers should inquire into the handling of stock on the Etheridge line, and give the help that I know they are capable of. A rail motor transports two truckloads of cattle to the point where a steam train picks them up. That method of transporting the cattle results in long delays and a good deal of inconvenience to the producers. If the present raiiling facilities could be improved, many more cattle would come out of the district. It is a vast area and produces not only cattle but other wealth along the banks of the Gilbert River, where the department has an experimental station.

(Time expired.)

Mr. BYRNE (Mourilyan) (12.50 p.m.): I congratulate the Minister on his appointment to his high and important office. Agriculture

plays a vital part in the economy of the State. From my association with him over nearly eight years, I know he is well suited to the office. He has a ton of good sense and is fair in all matters.

I desire to bring to his notice opportunities that should not be overlooked for contributing to the progress and development of the State, especially in the sugar industry. I stress that industries must be dealt with on the economic plane. As I wish to speak of Mourilyan Harbour and its long-delayed development, I think it would be opportune for me to quote some of the statements made by Ministers of the Crown in the previous Labour Government. At page 1367 of the 1955 "Hansard" the then Treasurer, now the hon. member for Bundaberg, said—

"It is a question of costs or economics and there is no sense in arguing about it. If it can be shown that sugar can be transported at lower cost to a nearer port, that fact has to be accepted. It is not a matter for the Government. The Sugar Board has authority to handle the matter as it sees fit."

So we should consider the development of Mourilyan Harbour from an economic point of view and Cairns's application for Mourilyan sugar really should not be considered at all.

The hon. member for Landsborough, now the Premier, is reported at page 1359 of the 1955 "Hansard" as saying—

"The Treasurer referred to the battle of the ports. There is no need to have any battle of the ports in this State. All the existing ports serve a purpose and there should not be any parochial jealousies between them. I believe there is need for all of them and they can be developed in such a way that one will not encroach on the other. That will benefit the whole State. The attitude of the Cairns Harbour Board in endeavouring to prevent the development of another harbour is not a proper one. After all Mourilyan has an excellent harbour which handles much traffic. The financial standing of this port shows that it could, with advantage, be given favourable consideration in future development, possibly with the establishment of a harbour board."

Further on, he said—

"It is economically unsound to transport sugar produced in the Mourilyan area at a cost of £3 15s. a ton when it could be bulk loaded at that port."

At p. 1282 of the same volume of "Hansard" the present Minister for Development, Mines, and Main Roads said—

"When we realise that there is a charge of £3 2s. on every ton of sugar that goes through Mourilyan Harbour, we get a line on the saving. I say definitely that Mourilyan bulk installation is the most important of the remaining harbours."

At p. 1357 the then Treasurer said—

"The members of the Cairns Harbour Board, of course, take the view that if quantities of sugar now shipped through Cairns are to be shipped from Mourilyan Harbour, the capacity of the Cairns Harbour Board to meet its liabilities will be proportionately reduced."

A little further on he said—

"However, one harbour board should not be given the right to decide whether another harbour shall be developed. The whole matter has to be viewed in the light of all the economic factors."

So from the economic point of view, only one harbour should be developed and that is Mourilyan. The tremendous cost entailed in lightering sugar from Innisfail to Cairns should not be tolerated. To pay £3 15s. a ton to transport sugar grown on lands adjoining Mourilyan Harbour to Cairns seems too preposterous and silly for words. The continuance of the practice is not desirable, and in the interests of the cane-growers it should be stopped. I am saying this in the hope that the Minister will not continue with such an uneconomical idea. It is no use saying that we should continue to prop up a port for sentimental reasons when it has already been propped up to a sufficiently high degree. It should not be continued at the expense of another particularly fine natural port that could be used more economically. With only a limited amount of expenditure Mourilyan Harbour would perhaps be one of the finest ports in Queensland, but unfortunately it has been neglected over the years by the Labour Government of which I was a member. Its development has been put off year after year. I believe that certain ministers of the Labour Government were insincere in their promises for its development. Indeed a huge volume of material covering the development of the harbour must have been collected over the many years these promises have been made.

Mr. Aikens: Do you consider that Tully and Babinda sugar should also go to Mourilyan?

Mr. BYRNE: I believe that Tully sugar should go to Mourilyan. Tully people are very anxious for it. If time allows I shall quote figures to show that its transport to Townsville at the present time is uneconomic and should be stopped.

Mr. Windsor: How much would you save if it were bulk handled?

Mr. BYRNE: It would run into millions of pounds. A tremendous amount of money is saved by bulk handling in Mackay. At the present time the cost of transporting Innisfail sugar to Cairns probably runs into hundreds of thousands of pounds.

Mr. Aikens: What about Babinda sugar? Do you think that should go to Mourilyan too?

Mr. BYRNE: If the economic position is such that Babinda sugar should go to Mourilyan, then it should go there. It would probably be about the same distance either way.

I should like to draw attention to the development of the Mackay harbour which became necessary on the grounds of economy. All hon. members have heard of the wonderful results from the development of that harbour. A new port at Bundaberg is also being developed to effect a saving in the transport of sugar. The same result could be achieved at Mourilyan if the harbour was developed to take the sugar that is grown in the vicinity of that port. The lightering of sugar to Cairns is uneconomic and should be discontinued. It would mean a loss of revenue to the Cairns Harbour Board but that could not be helped; we should not continue this uneconomic system. The improvement at Mourilyan harbour has been too long delayed. I ask for a harbour board at Mourilyan. It is necessary and worthwhile and I commend my suggestion to the Minister for his consideration. The Sugar Board has power to market sugar at the lowest possible cost. One cannot visualise the continuance of a policy of marketing sugar by other than the most economic means. Industry has incurred enough loss over the years and it should not continue.

I wish to draw attention to another economic problem that should be remedied. Tully sugar is transported to Townsville at 47s. 9d. a ton. The railway shunt at Townsville is 4s. 9d., making a total of 52s. 6d., which with other charges makes a total of 53s. 10d. We get a rebate of 11s. 7d., making the average cost of every ton from Tully to Townsville 42s. 3d. The transport costs of the Tully sugar mill are over £100,000 a year, which indicates the tremendous burden borne by the people of the Tully district. By contrast, it does not cost the C.S.R. sugar mill at Goondi one penny because their sugar is lightered into the ships at the mill site. It is costly having to send sugar from Tully to Townsville. We could have it transported by road for 33s. 5½d. a ton. If we take as a comparison the charge from Mossman to Cairns, a distance of 46 miles, as against 36½ miles, our rate of tax should be 1s. 8½d., making a total of 35s. 2d. to transport sugar to Mourilyan harbour from Tully. Therefore we think there would be a considerable saving to the industry if Tully sugar were sent to Mourilyan. Tully sugar could be sent to Mourilyan Harbour for 35s. 2d. a ton compared with the present cost of 42s. 3d., a difference of 7s. 1d. The Sugar Board should give consideration to a further rebate of that amount. Tully growers consider they are entitled to it.

The Minister for Development knows the position in the sugar industry. He must realise that that uneconomic state of affairs cannot be tolerated. Hon. members from time to time seek improvements on the basis

of economy, and that is all I am seeking, some improvement that would obviate the lightering of sugar from Innisfail to Cairns.

There are three sugar mills around Mourilyan Harbour, Goondi South Johnstone and Mourilyan. Cane is grown right up to the seashore. It is only a few miles from Mourilyan Harbour. Good roads and tramlines are available. Tully is only 35 miles from Mourilyan Harbour. The harbour there should be developed in the interests of the sugar industry and the State generally.

Statistics reveal that world sugar consumption increased by 30 per cent. between 1951 and 1956. There is a great demand for sugar and only comparatively small stocks to meet that demand. The restrictions placed on Australia by the International Sugar Agreement have been suspended temporarily thus permitting Australia to export about 9,000 tons a year above her international quota.

The sugar crop last year was worth £54,000,000.

Mr. Windsor: For the whole of Queensland?

Mr. BYRNE: Yes. In 1950 it was worth £24,000,000. On these figures it is clear that the industry should be protected and encouraged to expand when that is possible.

Tully is the Cinderella of the industry. This is one of the findings of the 1950 Royal Commission into the sugar industry—

“It is practicable and expedient to increase the crushing capacity of Tully Sugar Mill by the installation thereof of an additional ‘train of mills’ and such other works, plant, machinery and equipment as may be necessary to effect such increased crushing capacity to provide for the manufacture thereof of an additional thirty thousand tons, more or less, of 94 net titre sugar per annum.”

The recommendation of that Royal Commission, comprising industry experts and advisers to the Government, was not implemented and Tully did not get an additional 30,000 tons of sugar.

In 1950 the industry produced 920,000 tons, in 1956 1,171,000 tons, and in 1954 1,327,000 tons of sugar. There is a difference of about 400,000 tons between the 1950 and 1954 figures, which the Royal Commission did not take into account.

There is need for further expansion of the industry, although the Royal Commission recommended that no further expansion should be contemplated until 1962.

The Commission in its Summary of Findings said—

“(a) That Australia’s exportable surplus of sugar be deemed to be a maximum of 618,000 tons of 94 n.t. during each of the next twenty-five years, for the purposes of this Report.”

We exported 673,742 tons last year at an average value of £41 6s. 5d. a ton but the Commission's report visualises a figure of 618,000 tons.

Mr. Windsor: Rather shortsighted.

Mr. BYRNE: The industry has expanded beyond anticipation; it will not stand still. We will produce more sugar. The world wants it and there is a demand for sugar. We are doing well on the overseas market as the price is satisfactory to us. Although we did not duplicate our mill as suggested by the Royal Commission in 1950 I point out that there is still opportunity for further development in the district because of the tremendous quantity of rich fertile soil most suitable for cane production. I refer to the district surrounding Tully. There would be sufficient land to support two or three mills. The Premier on his visit to open the Tully Falls Hydro-electric scheme passed through some very rich agricultural land most suitable for cane production. The Minister realises that in the Tully district there is a huge quantity of land suitable for cane-growing. Expansion should take place at Tully. That was the proposition visualised in the report of the 1950 Royal Commission.

Mr. Windsor: It is a stable industry.

Mr. Aikens: The most socialised industry in Australia.

Mr. Windsor: The most mechanised.

Mr. BYRNE: Now is the time for us to inquire into and take steps towards an expansion of the sugar industry. We should not wait until 1962. Not only would the Tully district benefit but other sugar districts would do likewise. Various parts of the world are no longer producing the sugar they did. Eastern countries are looking to Australia for their sugar requirements and we could easily without great expenditure supply them. Most of the mills have been improved to such an extent that they can supply greater quantities than their allotted peaks. The home consumption price is all right and the export price has increased. The industry is a most stable one and one that the Minister should keep his eye on with a view to its expansion. I repeat that in 1950 the value of the industry was £24,000,000 and in 1956, £54,000,000. If we can increase the value of a product to that extent we should be farsighted enough to realise that the value ultimately will be materially increased.

I am sure that the Minister is aware that the growing of pineapples has engaged the attention of northern people for some time. In the Cardwell-Kennedy-Tully area huge tracts of land suitable for pineapple-growing are available. It would be possible for many settlers to make a good living there from growing pineapples.

(Time expired.)

Mr. WATSON (Mulgrave) (2.31 p.m.): I have enjoyed the Minister's friendship for many years, and I have a very high regard for him. We have heard a good deal today about the sugar industry, and in addition to congratulating the Minister I should like to convey to the executive officers of his department the very sincere appreciation of all members of the sugar industry. I have a high regard particularly for the officers of the Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations, who have done so much to increase both the tonnage of cane and the tonnage of sugar per acre.

Mr. Aikens: Why has the c.c.s. dropped in recent years?

Mr. WATSON: I should like to enlighten the hon. member for Mundingburra as he knows so little about the sugar industry. However, I shall have to side-track him for the moment.

The figures revealed in the Estimates for the Department of Agriculture and Stock show the importance of Queensland's primary industries not only to Queensland itself, but to Australia as a whole. Exports for 1955-1956 amounted to £1,000,000,000, a large proportion of which comprised surplus primary products. I have often said when walking along Queen Street, "How long can we people in the country continue to carry the city people?" Our overseas credit balances, too, have been increased by approximately £300,000,000, much of which has been due to the export of surplus primary products. That gives some idea of the value of primary industries to both Queensland and Australia as a whole. Since 1945 Australia's population has increased from 7,500,000 to 9,500,000, an increase of 28 per cent. The hon. member for Mourilyan has already referred to the huge expansion that has taken place in the sugar industry from the point of view of both the overseas market and the home-consumption market.

Mr. Graham: That is a vindication of Labour's policy over the years.

Mr. WATSON: If ever an industry had a raw deal from a Government, the sugar industry had one from the Labour Government of Queensland. The deciding factor in any industry is what it receives for its product. Thanks to the Menzies Government the sugar industry today is in as sound a financial position as it has ever been before. Therefore any suggestion from the hon. member for Mackay that the Labour Government was a friend of the sugar industry is eyewash.

Mechanisation is now playing an important part in the economics of the industry. The number of tractors used has increased in the last three or four years from 15,000 to 45,000 and there has been a corresponding decrease in the amount of manual labour. That has been offset to a great extent by capital investment. If the farmers had continued to use

the old Chinaman's hoe methods the industry would not have developed at nearly the same rate.

It is interesting to note that in 1956 the sugar industry produced 1,171,579 tons of sugar from 8,978,051 tons of cane with a total area of 360,932 acres.

The hon. member for Mundingburra mentioned the drop in c.e.s. We note that the crops average about 27 tons an acre and that overall it takes about 7.66 tons of cane to make one ton of sugar. The problem of low c.e.s. has been with us but the department's officers are hard at work on it.

Mr. Aikens: Don't you think it is because the farmers are growing for weight instead of for sugar content?

Mr. WATSON: It is the ambition of every farmer to grow not merely for weight but for sugar. With increased mechanisation many of the old N.Q. varieties have gone out and we have grown what is commonly termed the bamboo variety of cane. Today with the help of the executives of the Bureau tonnages and c.e.s. are improving. This year will stand out as a shining example of the fact that with reasonable weather the new varieties will give high tonnages and high c.e.s. The Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations deserve great praise. We have at South Johnstone a very important station and another at Meringa.

Mr. Graham: It is a wonder you do not give Menzies and Fadden credit for that, too.

Mr. WATSON: The hon. member for Mackay suggests I should give credit to Mr. Menzies for the Bureau. I point out for his benefit that the Queensland Government do not provide anything like the whole of the expenditure on those stations. They provide £7,000 a year, and the growers contribute a very large sum by levy and do not begrudge it.

At South Johnstone we have more or less specialised in experiments with grass and tea. I ask hon. members interested in cattle breeding and cattle fattening to listen to this. So far have we developed at South Johnstone that a grass there blended with the guinea grass gives a carrying capacity of one beast to 1.2 acres, which is claimed throughout Queensland to be a very high figure indeed. That has taken years to achieve. It will take some beating. It is to the credit of the officers at South Johnstone that in addition to work on grasses they have been able to prove that we can produce rice, tea, etc. I have had the opportunity to watch their experiments with tea. They can now produce 3,400 lb. per acre. I have brought a sample along this afternoon because I am sure all hon. members will be interested to test tea grown on plants supplied by the South Johnstone experiment station. A few weeks ago when I attended a show in the area I drank tea which had been locally grown. This sample has since been

sent to me by post. With your permission, Mr. Taylor, and Mr. Speaker's permission, I intend to provide tea for all hon. members to show that we can produce as good a tea as any other on the market today. All hon. members will be interested in the cost. Mechanisation is coming into the tea industry. At South Johnstone they are experimenting with mechanical picking of the buds. That is where the expense comes in. I believe that the officers have got onto something at last. They are hopeful that they will be able to pick the buds mechanically so that we can at least compete with the high prices at present being paid for tea. If the tea from this sample is as good as I tasted before, I am sure hon. members will agree that Queensland's product is as good as any other tea.

I have been interested in the sugar industry for very many years. At the annual field days at the Meringa experiment station I have had the opportunity to address the growers in support of the Bureau. It may be interesting to note just what the functions of the station are. First of all, let me point out that thousands of cane seedlings have been brought down from New Guinea for trial. Out of 3,000 or 4,000 seedlings there may be only one suitable cane for Queensland conditions. Their experiments have produced very wonderful varieties. The economics of the industry must always be studied and so the Bureau's fertiliser trials have been of great importance. Most farmers will appreciate that in the past a considerable amount of money was unwisely thrown away through not having a true knowledge of what their land was lacking in. To this end Meringa set up a soil-testing section. Soils sent in by the various farmers are tested and then the farmers are advised of the quantities of the various fertilisers required.

Earlier in the year we were privileged to see the growers of Queensland present a stone plaque to Meringa in recognition of its work on the eradication of the cane grubs which caused such disastrous havoc in North Queensland in the last 25 to 30 years. It is very pleasing to know that the growers appreciated what was done. In giving thanks on behalf of the growers, the Prime Minister complimented the Bureau on arriving at a solution of the problem.

I understand that the Minister will be introducing legislation in an effort to control the giant sensitive plant. If I had the time I could give a complete picture of what is happening because of this weed or pest. The matter is so important that the Minister will be introducing legislation to class it as a pest and thus enable departmental officers to take action on farms affected by it.

The millers were anxious to ascertain the reason for the fall in c.e.s.; it was thought it could possibly be due to the set-up of the mills. We now have at Meringa a man who is called a trouble-shooter. He looks for the

cause of the trouble and after he finds it he corrects it. He plays a very important part in the milling section.

I wish to touch briefly on the subject of pineapple-growing. I think hon. members should take a very realistic view of this industry. Like other members from the North, I am particularly interested in the development of pineapple-growing there. Support for my statement is to be found in the fact that not long ago I was instrumental, as a member of the Cairns Executive, in introducing the pineapple growers to the sugar-growers for the purpose of getting help in expanding the pineapple industry. We know that the establishment of a cannery in Cairns may be a difficult proposition. It may not be known to every hon. member, but it is nothing new to Cairns. I was a very interested member of the Pineapple Growers' Association in the early period and, with others, I suffered a monetary loss. It may be interesting to hon. members to know that £39,000 was subscribed towards the establishment of a cannery in Cairns not many years ago. It was a good prospectus. After getting the £39,000 the gentleman who had the prospectus made an appeal to the Government for further assistance for a cannery. The Government gave a guarantee of about £168,000 but the cannery is closed today. There have been many discussions on the advisability of having another cannery in Cairns. I say advisedly that we should study the economics of the position. I believe that the growers are not sufficiently agreed to make the proposition a paying concern.

Mr. A. J. Smith: According to the Cairns and Townsville papers the growers are incensed at the statements that there are not enough pineapples there to start a cannery.

Mr. WATSON: I do not think the hon. member knows the position. On 27 September I had the privilege, with the Premier, of listening to deputations in Cairns. A deputation from three growers sought the Premier's support for a guarantee of £250,000 if 4,000 tons of pineapples were available. Half an hour later another deputation of three growers said it was their considered opinion that they would be much better off if they did not have a cannery in Cairns until crops increased although they were not against the establishment of a cannery. In the last year of operations of the Cairns cannery, the growers were paid £15 a ton. The factory lost £6 a ton. In other words the growers should have received only £9 a ton. Last year the growers received £38 a ton, less £6 6s. and the rail freight to Cairns. They received £22 compared with £15 when the factory was operating.

The hon. member for Cook said that the cannery was closed because of lack of knowledge and ability on the part of those operating it, and that it was bad administration.

Mr. Wallace: Mismanagement?

Mr. WATSON: The three gentlemen who interviewed the Premier were directors of the old factory. If it was badly administered, a new cannery might be badly administered.

The hon. member for Tablelands spoke on the subject. I say to him that pineapple-growers must come to an agreement before any action can be taken. Some of them prefer the present system under which they received £38 a ton last year; others want a cannery. The people of North Queensland want a cannery, but it would have to be economically possible. It is useless to suggest a cannery at Cairns, Mareeba, Stratford or Townsville unless the growers put their own house in order before approaching the Government for a guarantee of £500,000.

Mr. Adair: They have done it in Rockhampton.

Mr. WATSON: They have not done it in Cairns.

Mr. Clark: They send them to Brisbane.

Mr. WATSON: That remark illustrates the attitude of the Opposition. We heard hon. members on that side of the Chamber put the case for Mourilyan Harbour and others put the case for Cairns Harbour. We must be realistic. The hon. member for Mourilyan hit the nail on the head when he said the economics must be considered. Development of Mourilyan Harbour has been promised since 1929 but no developmental work has been undertaken. The differences of opinion amongst hon. members opposite were not apparent until this Government took office. The Government have given the assurance that the harbour is to be developed. Bulk handling should be installed at that port. The freighter costs and rail concessions on Tully sugar are costing the sugar industry, not the Government, approximately £500,000 a year. All sugar-growers have to bear that cost. It must not continue. Cairns Harbour, of course, should not be allowed to stagnate.

Mr. Adair: It will.

Mr. WATSON: The Cairns Harbour can be maintained and the Mourilyan Harbour developed. If it is developed and the sugar of the four mills of the area is exported through Mourilyan Harbour, the Government must see that the Cairns Harbour does not suffer monetarily. I have been asked how that can be done. The present cost to the industry is £500,000 a year. If the difference in harbour dues is £50,000 on Babinda sugar, the Government should provide that money rather than allow the Cairns Harbour Board to be embarrassed financially. It may be suggested that I am having two shillings each way. I am a grower and mill director, but my opinion is that the economic position should be the major consideration. The Sugar Board will be the deciding factor.

I have advocated and will continue to do so, that it is time the socialistic idea of allowing the Central Sugar Cane Prices Board to control the sale of farms ceased. As one who knows what he is talking about, I say the socialistic idea of my getting the consent of that board to sell my farm to Bill Jones is outdated and outmoded. I want the Minister to give favourable consideration to the releasing of the imposition that has been placed on the sugar industry over many years. It may be suggested that there is a protection given to value.

Mr. Jesson interjected.

Mr. WATSON: The hon. member for Hinchinbrook knows that over the past few years whilst the Central Board has decided prices, black-marketing has been rampant in the industry. He knows that as well as I do. (Time expired.)

Mr. FOLEY (Belyando) (2.56 p.m.): I join with others in congratulating the Minister on his appointment. It would appear from the remarks made during the debate that he has the ability to deal with the many problems concerning primary industries that will come before him from time to time. Problem after problem has been raised during this debate; no doubt his department over the years has done its best to solve the problems of industry. When I first entered Parliament only a few thousand pounds was voted for the department but its importance gradually developed until now over £1,000,000 is appropriated. From what I know of the department, and from what I have been told by experienced men, the department is doing a remarkable job for the industries of the State. If a disease suddenly breaks out in stock or if there is a problem connected with crops the matter is brought under the notice of the departmental experts and very often they find a solution. If they cannot they get onto the job of finding a way of overcoming the trouble.

For many years the department has advocated fodder conservation, improvements in pastures, and many other things. Quite a lot has been done in some districts with fodder conservation but I think there is room for a considerable amount of propaganda, in whatever form the Minister thinks advisable, to bring about a greater practice of fodder conservation, particularly in pastoral districts. Some little time ago I met Mr. Skerman as he was getting off a plane that I was joining. He had been out to the Longreach district to a place called Dundee where there was a field day. He mentioned other places where several thousand tons of good fodder were buried in anticipation of a very long drought.

If one makes a study of the death roll among both sheep and cattle caused by drought—and I take it the Minister has, because he has referred to it—one will find that following every severe drought since 1890, it has taken up to 23 years for the original stock

numbers to be restored. After every drought the stock numbers on graphs show that there is a slight rise, then a fall, then a rise again, and so on, over a period of 20-odd years before the original figures are restored. That shows how necessary it is to encourage the practice of fodder conservation in the pastoral districts. Many people will raise the subject of rainfall. Although it is not the practice of the Department of Public Lands to insist upon a fodder-conservation condition in areas where the rainfall is less than 20 inches a year, the rainfall at Dundee, which I have just mentioned, is less than 20 inches and further west it is less still. Queensland has experienced a series of good years recently, and considerable tonnages of fodder could have been made into ensilage and buried for use during a dry period. I assure the Minister that money spent in fodder conservation propaganda would be well worthwhile.

When the Minister introduced the Vote he dealt with almost every primary industry in the State. However, no reference at all was made to the poultry industry. Incidentally, I point out that it gets only slight mention in the department's annual report. The industry, for many reasons, is at a very low ebb. Although a rise in the price of eggs has been recommended to the Egg Board, it has followed a severe slump in the industry that made it almost impossible for poultry men to carry on. Because of the slump, poultry men began to unload their laying hens to the abattoirs at the extraordinarily low price of 1s. 1b. Thousands of good laying hens went to the abattoirs, and when there was an increase in the price of eggs the poultrymen had so few layers left that they could not take advantage of it. They are now spending thousands of pounds on mash for their pullets, but until the pullets begin laying they can get very little return. They are now asserting that when the price of eggs was reduced they should have been told that they could expect an increase in the near future. They now complain that some members of the Board took advantage of their inside knowledge and did not unload their laying hens on to the abattoirs so now they are getting the full advantage of the present price while hundreds of others are not. The Egg Board in its bulletins points out that much of the difficulty is due to overseas market conditions. Great Britain, one of our best markets some years ago, has subsidised the industry and built it up so that she is now able to supply almost all the eggs her people need. Indeed, she is unloading some of our eggs and her own surplus onto the European market.

From inquiries I have made in the West—at Alpha, Aramac, Barcaldine, Longreach, Tambo, Augathella and Emerald—I have learned that there is room for the organisation of the home market in Queensland, that is, if a system could be built up through the Egg Board to exploit local markets in country districts. Storekeepers

say they cannot get supplies or that when they do they are not of the highest quality. With fruit trains we supply fruit and vegetables for the West and the North and much the same thing could be done with eggs.

The high price of mash made up by the various companies such as Redcomb, makes it hard for the poultry-farmer to show a reasonable return unless he has many laying hens a year. The farmer with 1,000 or 2,000 hens finds it hard to make ends meet because of the low returns per layer. I urge the Minister to discuss with the Board means of improving conditions in the poultry industry and putting it on a sounder basis.

One can find no fault with the department's work. It has set up an experiment farm to study the laying results from different types of grains and other feed and it is conducting experiments on breeding. I take it to develop a type that will produce a better egg and better laying average. All those efforts, will help the economy of the poultry industry.

Hon. O. O. MADSEN (Warwick—Minister for Agriculture and Stock) (3.10 p.m.): In my opening remarks I mentioned that I had not dealt with a couple of sections of the department. As the Department of Agriculture & Stock comes under one Vote I had already spoken at great length. Perhaps at this stage I should take the opportunity to deal with the other sections and perhaps assist hon. members yet to speak.

I was particularly interested in the remarks of the hon. member for Belyando regarding the poultry industry. I can assure him that I am fully cognisant of the problems facing it. Very recently, of course, we have had the experience of very high production costs and yet low prices, indeed almost ruinous prices with the collapse of the United Kingdom market. On the other hand the industry was faced with very high feeding costs in Queensland, which are likely to continue for some time. The industry has very little control over feeding costs. High feed costs have been brought about by the greatly reduced wheat crop last year and unfortunately there is not much promise of the present crop being sufficient to satisfy the grain needs of the State. Those engaged in producing grain know full well that the wheat industry is the industry around which all other grain industries revolve. The wheat industry more or less sets the standard for all grain industries. A failure in the wheat industry has marked effects on the other grain industries of the State. We can see no relief from the position until about April or May next year. Unfortunately, every day that the rain is delayed further aggravates the position. Although we may be subject to certain criticisms we are endeavouring to hold every bushel of wheat and every bushel of barley harvested in Queensland with a view to offsetting the position as much as we possibly can. Not only is it necessary to hold

our own grain so that it will be available but if we have to import grain—which undoubtedly we will—the extra transport costs must naturally be reflected in the cost of feed required by the poultry industry.

I have been disturbed to learn about the great number of hens being slaughtered particularly during the last month or two, when I know full well that it could easily have the effect of creating a shortage of eggs later on. I think it is realised by the poultry industry that there is a limit to what the consumer is prepared to pay. After all if the price is too high it is reflected in the reduced sale of eggs which further reacts against the industry. Prices are in the hands of the industry and naturally the industry guards as far as possible against increasing prices so that they become prohibitive to the consumer. Unfortunately, as the hon. member stated, the United Kingdom market price has been largely determined by the amount of subsidy paid by the United Kingdom Government. The poultry industry is not the only one which has been affected by the policy of the United Kingdom Government. Other exporting industries have also suffered similarly. I have seen the effect on the dairying industry when we were competing against subsidised prices rather than prices determined by cost of production. The United Kingdom policy has reacted against all exporting industries in this country. The production in Great Britain has risen tremendously. The tendency all over the world is for countries to become as far as possible self-supporting in food production. That is indicative of the competition we have to face on world markets. There are few of our industries whose export position we can feel happy about. In the case of wheat, butter, and eggs the overseas price barely covers Australian cost of production and it is below cost in the dairying industry. With the exception of wool there are very few of our industries for which overseas markets are bright. The Under Secretary, Mr. Bell, refers to this matter in his report and points out the extent to which Australia is dependent on the wool industry for her overseas trade balance. Mr. Bell emphasises that we must consider this position. We cannot tell how soon the wool industry may be placed in a similar position. If that happened just imagine the effect on our overseas credits and trade balances.

It does not reflect a rosy picture. I appreciate the remarks of the hon. member for Belyando. I have had a few interviews with representatives of the industry. I am conscious of their difficulties and I assure the hon. member that I will do all in my power in an effort to place the industry on a sound basis. I think the Government made a great mistake last year in saddling the industry that required grain, with the cost of the freight on imported wheat. This year it is our intention to ask the poultry industry to pay only its fair share with the other industries. We believe that the heavy burden placed on them last year was more than they

could carry. Although some relief will be afforded, profitable returns cannot be expected until the grain position has much improved. There is no possibility of very great improvement in grain until the sorghum crop is harvested. It is not yet all planted and in some cases the dry weather is having a very detrimental effect on its growth and the harvesting will be greatly delayed.

I wish to make reference to the Division of Animal Husbandry which is a particularly important section of the department. The livestock industry is very important in the western and northern areas of the State. I am pleased at the opportunity of becoming more familiar with the work of this section. I appreciate the complimentary remarks of hon. members of the officers of my department. I am delighted to work with them and I recognise fully their great accomplishments over the years.

Mr. Aikens: They seem to have their work at their fingertips.

Mr. MADSEN: They are keen to meet the needs of farmers and graziers. They have not overcome all problems, but they have rendered valuable assistance.

I paid a tribute early in the debate to the former Minister. I am satisfied that the excellent officers of the department will be able to cope with the many problems presented to them. At least they will make every effort to do so.

The work of the Division of Animal Industry can be divided into research, extension and supervision. The first two, research and extension, are of equal importance. Supervisory and inspectorial work comprising the administration of various Acts and regulations is being developed along new lines. Every effort is being made to administer those Acts for the benefit of all concerned. Collaboration rather than compulsion is being encouraged. I emphasise that point. No longer is a departmental officer who goes to the property of a dairy farmer regarded in the same way as a policeman; he is looked on as a friend who is there to give advice and assistance. I fully support that approach, believing that it will provide better results than any measure of enforcement. It is only when Acts are flagrantly broken that drastic action has to be taken.

Mr. Aikens: There is the wise guy in your industry, just as there are wise guys in other industries.

Mr. MADSEN: Absolutely.

The control of contagious or infectious diseases is being undertaken by encouraging stock owners to realise that prevention and control are to their advantage. Compulsion is only considered as the last resort. An example is the prevention and control of

pleuro-pneumonia. The campaign of vaccination now being encouraged by departmental staff has increased preventive inoculation from 300,000 to 1,000,000 per annum and it is expected that this figure will continue to increase.

Similar expansion will be made in other control work, and the interests of the producer, the consumer and if necessary the trade will be considered.

A progressive programme of research is planned in both the husbandry and disease fields. The main problems of the various stock industries have been listed, and experimental work in beef and dairy cattle nutrition, breeding and cross-breeding for greater production, have been planned.

I am certain that all hon. members have noted the tremendous progress made in this direction in the past few years. The word "economics" has been used frequently this afternoon. The economics of production have to be studied. If Australia is to compete on the world markets, it is necessary to develop this particular side of the industry to the greatest possible extent.

The development of artificial insemination for bull testing and disease control will be continued and expanded, and the efficiency of this work controlled by adequate safeguards. We have experienced greater difficulty with diseases in recent years than at any time in my experience. The problem seems to be increasing year by year. The losses due to infertility and other diseases are beyond comprehension. The subject is particularly important to both the dairying and grazing industries.

Drought feeding experiments will be extended in both the cattle and sheep industry, and fodder conservation methods examined and demonstrated on departmental research stations.

The hon. member for Belyando mentioned fodder conservation and the work of departmental research stations. In opening the debate I drew attention to the valuable work carried out at Rocklea by the officers of my Department. It has been demonstrated already what it is possible to accomplish in the conservation of the very roughest of fodders. Tremendous progress has been made in the storage of grain to meet drought conditions. The department has supplied very valuable information to farmers and others interested in the conservation of grain.

Experimental work with lamb mortality and sheep infertility, the two major problems of the Queensland sheep industry, will be continued and expanded, and further work with external parasites developed in the research and extension fields.

The production of young prime beef to fill the demand of the overseas and local markets will be encouraged by the development of feeding methods already examined and demonstrated on departmental farms and

private properties. Such work will include feeding of conserved roughages, improved pastures and crop.

We find that there is a need for a quality product required by the consumer on the export markets. The tendency of those markets is to look for a younger beast in prime condition rather than the extra big beast.

Mr. Aikens: For how long can we continue selling our primary products for less than it costs to produce them here?

Mr. MADSEN: That is a particularly important point. Those people who are ever-ready to condemn those engaged in primary production should realise that point. We have endeavoured to establish an Australian price based on Australian costs, but unfortunately it is impossible to do anything about the price on the export markets. That has been one of the tragedies we have had to face in this country for the past five or six years. Let me assure hon. members that nobody has been harder hit than those engaged in primary production who have to sell on the export market. There are few industries able to sell their products on the export market at prices commensurate with Australian costs of production. There is a limit as to how far that can be taken.

Much discussion took place about pineapples, but what is the use of allowing anybody to get into an industry if the economics of it are not sound? That is the position with the sale of tinned pineapples on the export market. I attach particular attention to the cotton and tobacco industries that produce considerably less than our needs.

Mr. Aikens: Those are industries that should be expanded.

Mr. MADSEN: We are producing far below Australian needs, and I am hopeful that with the help of the Commonwealth Government we can expand them. They are important to Queensland and seem to offer a tremendous future. We have no need to look to the export markets with them. Since I have taken over the department I have suggested to the Commonwealth Government that we should have some guarantee from them over a period of years, that they should be prepared to acknowledge certain phases about the growing of cotton. After all, the first essential for an industry is confidence. We cannot induce anybody to go into an industry unless there is confidence in its future. If the Commonwealth Government were prepared to give a guarantee, say, for ten years, people would be prepared to go into the cotton industry with confidence, to develop the land and provide the necessary machinery.

Mr. Aikens: We could set up an embargo as we did with the sugar industry.

Mr. MADSEN: All those matters could be taken into consideration.

Improved methods leading to greater milk production per acre in the established dairying districts are being demonstrated on co-operators' farms, and this work will be developed by the extension staff. The severe shortage of milk in Northern and North-Western Queensland is well known and research work with hybrids, using Zebu milking types, is to be commenced.

The development of breeds suitable for tropical conditions could play a very important part in developing North Queensland. Following development of the North's mineral deposits, which will naturally result in a greatly increased population, the introduction of new breeds could result in a large increase in food production, particularly in irrigated areas.

Mr. Aikens: Is it a fact that there is some doubt that Santa Gertrudis cattle can be acclimatised in North Queensland?

Mr. MADSEN: I am not in a position to answer that, but with various crosses the Santa Gertrudis breed seems to be the most suitable for the North. I was discussing the matter during the luncheon adjournment, and it seems to be the opinion of most northern cattle men that cattle with an infusion of Santa Gertrudis blood are much better than those without it. Naturally, the cattle-owner is not slow to notice these things, and he will act to his own advantage.

Mr. Aikens: The cattle-owner will make the best cross to suit the climatic conditions?

Mr. MADSEN: I believe so. Of course, the crossing of breeds can get out of hand at times, but it seems that the infusion of Santa Gertrudis blood will be a definite improvement.

The improvement of pig production by a pig-testing station at Rocklea will be completed early next year, and the poultry improvement plan has already commenced.

There is tremendous scope for experiment stations in these industries. So far the poultry industry has been regarded as nobody's business. Of course, many factors have to be considered, particularly in the export trade. I refer, for example, to the hardening of the shell.

I shall be very interested to discuss all these subjects with the officers of my department. They are of very great interest to me, and it is necessary for me as Minister to become as well informed as possible. I am conscious of the tremendous scope of the various industries, even though they may be regarded as small in comparison with others.

Cattle tick and tick fever are the cause of the greatest loss of production in the beef and dairy cattle industries. Work with insecticides is continuing and will be expanded. In these investigations, both dipping and spraying procedures are being examined. There are many problems associated with blood-borne parasites in cattle. These are grouped generally under the name of tick

fever, which causes heavy losses in the marginal tick-infested country. Problems of immunisation and treatment by vaccines and drugs, and better management, have commenced recently and will be expanded.

Last Friday I mentioned the colossal losses caused by these pests. Cattle tick is one of the most common pests, but it causes grave losses to the industry. Many landholders are afraid of it, and I know the dangers associated with it. If tick-infested cattle come into clean country, the department has to face up to infestation of the clean country and the introduction of diseases such as redwater.

Mr. Aikens: Ticks can cause a good deal of trouble if they get among cattle that have not developed an immunity to them.

Mr. MADSEN: My word they can! To continue and develop all this work, additional research areas are being examined and prepared. The results of research work completed by departmental staff are being passed on to the industries by demonstrations and by extension officers. Similarly, completed research from Commonwealth and overseas workers is being examined and presented to the stock-owners of Queensland. The research and extension staffs work closely together, planning the programme of research, carrying it out, and passing the results on to the animal industries. The Government are mindful of the problems of the stock-owners of Queensland, and have planned a progressive and realistic programme with the finance and staff available.

I agree with those hon. members who said that the Department of Agriculture and Stock has a tremendous part to play in the future economic and social welfare of the State. When we take into account the wealth derived from the various primary industries, in which we all share directly or indirectly, we can realise the great importance of the department. I am sure it will do all it can with the funds available. I hope they will not be curtailed because of the very useful and necessary work to be done.

Mr. WALLACE (Cairns) (3.37 p.m.): I congratulate the Minister on his appointment. I am of the opinion that he has the temperament and capacity to do a good job.

It was my intention to speak on agriculture generally but, as we are allowed to deal with bulk handling on this Vote, I shall speak of it as it affects the ports of North Queensland. I shall deal at some future date with such aspects as the economic repercussions through the unemployment that must occur. However, while I regret the need for the installation of bulk handling facilities, I realise, as many others do, that progress cannot be stayed and that the mechanical handling of any commodity mean progress. The bulk handling of sugar is akin to the bulk handling of motor spirits and oils. Unlike the hon. member for Mulgrave, I am not having "two bob each way." After

listening to him and to the hon. member for Tablelands I doubt that the city of Cairns or the Cairns district will get the cannery that we have been fighting for so long. I have grave doubts, too, whether Cairns will share in the installation of bulk handling facilities for sugar. I believe those hon. members indicated the attitude of the Government towards Cairns and its district. I hope I am wrong. I hope the Government will give effect to the requests from the northern parts of the State.

Revolutionary changes will be brought about by bulk handling. It must be accepted in the advancement and the modernising of ports. Everything else, however, must not be subjected to the innovation; it should be inter-related with the stabilities and capabilities of the various suitable ports. The rule, "First things first" must not be overlooked in any tendency to overglamourise bulk handling facilities.

Let us consider the suitability of the ports for bulk handling, starting at Mackay. Mackay has been converted to an overseas status by the spending of more than £1,500,000. It must be admitted that Mackay is only at best an artificial, man-made harbour and that it is dangerously exposed in that it could suffer serious harm from the force of cyclonic elements and indeed be completely put out of action. Further, the harbour is a nightmare at present to large vessels. It is only due to the skill of master mariners that serious accidents to overseas vessels have not occurred more frequently. I say this advisedly. I am sure that hon. members will fully realise the truth of my remarks.

I come now to Townsville. Townsville is now being prepared as another overseas bulk sugar handling port. It is another man-made artificial port, certainly not so exposed as Mackay but nevertheless very limited in its capacity for development. Townsville is not, and never was, a sugar port in reality and it would not be as seriously affected as the ports I am going to mention if it lost all its sugar trade. Bowen, for instance, has a good natural harbour crying out for development. Although its main trade is sugar we find that it is proposed to cut its trade up between Mackay and Townsville. Therefore the port of Bowen might just as well close down completely because most of its trade is sugar. Bowen people were never fortunate enough to have a Premier to represent them, and they pay the penalty, irrespective of the port's fine natural recommendations.

I come now to Cairns. Here is another very pointed example of pressure from without. Cairns, the largest sugar clearance port for many years and the centre of sugar-growing, is the best naturally-sheltered harbour in Queensland, not excluding Gladstone, because Cairns has no rock in its harbour to impede its development. Although Cairns is almost wholly dependent on sugar, as my figures show, it is being shabbily

treated by being refused bulk handling facilities while an obscure and very doubtful small place like Mourilyan is to be given preference in this regard. Of course, I do not consider the Mourilyan Harbour question to be a permanent serious obstacle to making a first-class overseas port of Cairns, but you have the audacity of some people who would make Cairns a bagged sugar port when it should be the first to have bulk-sugar handling facilities. It has the capacity and the security whereas other ports present a danger with a possible loss of millions of pounds on harbour development. That must be a stern reality for all thinking men.

The following figures show the tonnages exported from Mackay, Townsville, Cairns and Bowen, taking 1955 as a normal year—

		Total Tonnage Exported.	Sugar Exported.	Percentage.
		Tons.	Tons.	Per cent.
1955	Mackay	289,188	288,898	91
1955	Townsville	362,000	191,000	53
1955	Cairns	339,000	246,000	72
1956	Bowen	131,000	98,000	75

From these figures it is obvious that apart from Mackay, the ports of Cairns and Bowen are almost wholly dependent on the sugar trade. That being so, why should these two natural ports in North Queensland and in which sugar plays such a part, be threatened with a writing off? It is something that the Government will need to watch very carefully on present calculations and recommendations. Unless it is wisely handled it could become a public scandal and discredit any Government in favour of such a policy.

It has been said by public men who should know better that the Cairns Harbour Board does not want bulk handling. I am speaking for the Cairns Harbour Board and the port of Cairns. Let me ask a few questions of the Premier, the Treasurer and the Minister for Development, Mines, and Main Roads. The Minister for Development was a sugar executive and he should know the answer.

The virile and expansive port of Cairns knows full well that with bulk handling coming into operation Mourilyan will receive at least interstate status, which means a loss to Cairns of 80,000 tons of Innisfail trade, catered for and enjoyed by the port of Cairns for the last quarter of a century, and without anything to take its place. If the Sugar Board and the C.S.R. Company have their way a further 45,000 tons of its own Babinda sugar now coming to Cairns will go to Mourilyan Harbour. In all 125,000 tons of sugar, exactly 50 per cent. of present Cairns sugar trade, will be lost to it. Would the Sugar Board welcome and adopt any proposal that would have for its objective the sending of it insolvent or cutting its economy down by 50 per cent.? Would the Premier or the Treasurer, as businessmen, welcome anything that was going to cripple the State or any financial

scheme that they were interested in? The answer, of course, is no. Therefore, bear in mind that whilst the Cairns Harbour Board never once opposed a bulk handling sugar policy, some of its members, fearing and apprehending the disastrous results ahead, all devastating to the economy of the port and the business of the city pointed out these fears in debate alone.

I now point out very definitely that the port of Cairns could be sent insolvent if certain pressing influences have their way. How can you compare Cairns with the other oversea ports? Mackay did not lose one ton of sugar with bulk handling nor will Townsville, but Cairns, essentially a sugar port, could lose 50 per cent. of its sugar trade and so go out of business. I ask you, in all fairness, has not Cairns every right to appeal for mercy from ruination, and that is what could be brought about unless wiser counsels prevail.

In 1955 Cairns had a port quota of 700 waterside workers, Townsville 770 and Mackay 400. With the loss of 50 per cent. of its sugar export trade compared with no loss at Mackay or Townsville it would surely become a ghost town by the cutting off of spending money, the equivalent of £500,000 per annum for 500-odd waterside workers at, say, £20 a week. Tully sugar was railed to Townsville 25 years ago, a distance of 127 miles against only 84 miles to Cairns, or half as far again. The saving by the shorter distance to Cairns would have meant much to the Sugar Board, but for some extraordinary reason Cairns was denied sugar that rightly belonged to it while Townsville had no claim to it. That shows how some ports have been spoon-fed by the Labour Government. I must tie up the railways with the bulk handling of sugar. I say very positively that if the railways hauled Innisfail sugar to Cairns, instead of its being lightered to Cairns, 50 per cent. of the transport costs would be saved, and the railways would thereby receive revenue to which they were entitled. That would make up for some of the loss that will be involved in taking Tully sugar to Lucinda Point and some Mackay sugar to their port, and so the waste of millions of pounds in making Mourilyan Harbour an overseas port would be averted.

The fallacy of constructing two overseas ports in close proximity to each other is shown by the experience with Rockhampton and Gladstone to be fatal—both vying for the same trade in cut-throat competition. Let us not repeat this grave mistake in building up Mourilyan, which will only rob Cairns of its natural trade. The railways, with their modern diesel engines, come prominently into this picture. The lighters that are now used are obsolete, particularly for handling bulk sugar where speed and large tonnages are of paramount importance.

Cairns lost the Chillagoe Works when they were closed some years ago and now Mount Mulligan has suffered the same fate. The

cannery, of which I shall have more to say, is likely to go too, meaning nothing else but loss of population and trade to the port of Cairns and its district. This will close one of the best harbours in Queensland and reduce one of the finest cities, to a ghost town. I say that very sincerely.

Cairns must be protected; it is too good to be thrown to the wolves. That is evidenced by the fact that during the War the Commonwealth and the United States Forces were prepared to spend £6,000,000 on the Cairns harbour. Was Brisbane, Townsville, Mackay or any other port in Queensland ever paid that compliment? I cannot understand the Sugar Board's logic. Cairns which is a wet port should have been given consideration before Townsville, which is a dry port. At least it is more suitable as a bagged sugar port than Cairns for that reason, although it is not generally regarded as a sugar port at all. This is where the Sugar Board was very negligent in the interests of economy. Further, it should not have been necessary to ascertain first whether Mourilyan Harbour was suitable as a sugar port. It may take 10 years to find out if Mourilyan can be made a suitable port by clearing a large rock formation in the harbour.

Very few people, including those at the university conducting tests, know anything about the subject. The future of the Cairns port depends on whether the experiments prove that the work could be undertaken successfully at Mourilyan so that vessels of deep draft can enter the port. At the moment most big vessels have to go from Townsville and Mourilyan to Cairns to top up, which proves definitely that Cairns is the superior port.

Townsville is not as safe as Cairns. It is a man-made port and can suffer serious damage in cyclones. I draw the attention of the Committee to an article that appeared in "Truth" on the 10th instant, on the cyclone damage to Townsville on 24 January, 1896.

The CHAIRMAN: I ask the hon. member to keep off the subject of cyclones.

Mr. WALLACE: I shall relate my remarks to sugar handling. Cyclones can wreck man-made ports, whereas natural harbours like Cairns are impervious to cyclones. Ships in port can be moored in the deeper creeks and can there ride out the storms without being damaged.

The Government must consider all the facts. While the Sugar Board is fighting for maximum economy irrespective of any other consideration, Cairns is fighting for its very survival as a port. I may be treading on someone's toes in showing in true perspective the relative suitability of ports, but I do not for a moment desire to be personal or offensive. I appeal for fair play for the port of Cairns and its people

who even under the best conditions will suffer severely, while Mackay, Townsville and Mourilyan Harbours would not suffer any present trade loss.

I pay a tribute to the officers of the department both in Brisbane and Cairns and I thank them for the many courtesies extended to me. Every time that I have called on them I have been treated with the greatest courtesy and I was always able to get all the information that I desired.

I want to say something now about the cannery not necessarily confining my remarks to the canning of pineapples. We have heard much in this Chamber about pineapples but I want to speak of the canning of vegetables and beef as well as pineapples under the one roof.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I suggest to the hon. member that he speak about the growing of vegetables.

Mr. WALLACE: On the coast and on the Tableland we can grow any known vegetable. With the Tinaroo Falls irrigation scheme a great incentive will be given to the growing of vegetables because with tobacco-growing it is necessary to grow crops in rotation. Vegetables could be grown in rotation with tobacco. On the Tableland we have a share-farming organisation which I believe would be the largest vegetable grower in the State and if necessary it could supply the whole of Queensland with vegetables. There is no doubt about that. And this has been made practicable, I suggest, by the advice given to it by officers of the Department of Agriculture and Stock. If a cannery was built at Cairns, vegetables, fruit and meat could be processed under the same roof as pineapples. There is a small meatworks at Cairns and I am given to understand that it is anxious to expand its trade in the canning of meat. It has not gone in for the processing of meat but for some years it has sent it to Melbourne to be processed. It is believed that this work could be done economically at Cairns for the benefit of the district, stock-growers and workers generally. I therefore suggest to the powers that be that when they think about building a cannery at Cairns they think not only of pineapples. The Cairns district can produce vegetables and meat for Australia and for the overseas markets. It is for the Government, not the cannery, to see that markets are available for the commodities that are produced in this State. Not far away from North Queensland there are markets which could be developed for our sugar, meat and other products.

We can produce passion fruit of high quality in the Cairns area. I am informed that there is a great shortage of passion fruit for the processing trade and that we have to import a good deal from overseas. Passion fruit grows prolifically in North Queensland and although it is sometimes subject to

disease, I am sure that officers of the department could in collaboration with growers, develop a passion fruit industry that would meet all trade requirements.

The hon. member for Burdekin has had a good deal to say about the processing of mangoes. For his information, mangoes were successfully processed by the Great Northern Cannery when it was operating. The only disadvantage was the high cost. Mangoes cost a good deal more to process than pineapples and other fruits, because all the peeling and cutting has to be done by hand. The price that the cannery was allowed to charge for the processed mangoes was uneconomic.

An Opposition Member: The mangoes grown in Cairns are a very good class of fruit.

Mr. WALLACE: Excellent Kensington mangoes suitable for canning are grown both in Cairns and on the Tableland. In spite of what the hon. member for Mundingburra had to say recently on the subject, anything that Townsville can grow, Cairns can grow better.

Another fruit that is not heard of very much is the guava. I understand that overseas it is grown prolifically and processed in the form of a drink. The guava grows all over North Queensland but unfortunately it is susceptible to fly attack. I understand that there is a fly-resistant variety, and I ask the Minister to consider introducing it into North Queensland.

(Time expired.)

Mr. V. E. JONES (Callide) (4.2 p.m.): I congratulate the Minister on the high office that he has attained. I am sure that his extensive knowledge of Queensland's primary industries will be of great help to the officers of the department in furthering the interests of the State.

Queensland's economy depends almost entirely on what is produced from the soil, and it is fitting that the Minister should have been elected to his high position because he has an intimate knowledge of the working of the land. He has also had many years of close association with various organisations connected with the primary industries. For example, he was Vice-President of the Queensland Dairymen's Organisation for six years, and then served as President for four years. As that body has a membership of 20,000, it can truly be said that the Minister has had a close association with the problems of the man on the land.

We have heard speeches today on a variety of subjects. The hon. member for Cairns, for example, told us many hard luck stories from his electorate.

Mr. THACKERAY: Mr. Taylor, I rise to a point of order. I draw your attention to the state of the Committee.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I am satisfied that a quorum is present.

Mr. V. E. JONES: After hearing what the hon. member for Cairns had to say, all I can do is advise the people of that area to change their representation. They have been represented by Labour for far too long.

The pig industry has not been mentioned in the debate so far. A survey I made recently disclosed that on the Northern Tablelands feed supplies were maintained until the end of October when continued dry weather caused a sharp drop in dairy by-products. Maize supplies decreased rapidly and green feed and root crops were not available. However, meat-meal supplies were adequate. In that area the pig-producers suffered great hardship through the drought.

In Central Queensland dairy by-products were limited. Feed grains were available in reasonable supply until September when it became necessary to feed with caution. Meat-meal was available in sufficient quantity to meet the needs of the industry but green feed and winter crops made little growth and eventually died back because of the dry conditions.

In the Burnett district there was a slight increase in dairy by-products until about the middle of September when production declined rapidly. The demand for meat-meal increased but supplies were not readily available. The grain supply deteriorated quickly. Farmers planted large areas of winter cereals but, owing to continued dry weather over the last few months, very few of these crops will yield any grain at all. Natural pastures have dried up and are of no value for pig feeding.

On the Downs, supplies of grain are acute. Meat-meal and dairy by-products are available in very limited supply. Green feed, except where irrigated, was almost non-existent.

In the Moreton area conditions during recent months have not been favourable for crops or pastures, little or no growth taking place and most cereal grains being burnt off before coming into head, through lack of moisture. All feeds were in short supply, certain grains being very costly, meat-meal only available in small and irregular quantities and dairy by-products far from adequate.

On the marketing side—on the Northern Tablelands a steady increase in the number of pigs marketed was maintained and grading continued around 90 per cent. first-grade. However, during the last few months a tendency for more second-grade pigs to be marketed was evident and, as a result, the Northern Pig Marketing Board and Bacon Association asked for departmental assistance. A circular has been prepared on the subject of over-fat pigs, which the Pig Board is to forward to all suppliers. Prices remain firm at 2s. 3d. a lb. for first-grade, with the usual 3d. a lb. difference between lower grades.

In Central Queensland quite a large percentage of pigs trucked by rail were porkers and were forwarded to destinations north and west of Rockhampton. Regular truckings of baconers were made to Maryborough and Cannon Hill. The flow of porkers and baconers continued through the Monto saleyards.

Because of this position, the pig-growers, together with the beef-producers and fat-lamb raisers in the Callide Valley, have taken action. We have an example of how farmers in the Callide and Dawson Valleys are trying to improve the quality of their products. I refer to the abattoir under construction at present by co-operative effort, so that beef, mutton and pig-meats will be put on the market in the very finest quality. The dairy-men of those districts have already built their own co-operative bacon factory. It was opened in 1936 and it is manufacturing up to 200 tons of butter a month. The new abattoir is planned to treat 300 head of beef cattle and as many tinnors and boners as are available each week together with 1,000 pigs, 500 vealers, and 500 bobby calves. The cost of the works is estimated at £92,000. Already residents in that area have taken out 70,000 £1 shares. There is provision in the plan for further expansion which will include a bacon and tinning section, and slaughtering facilities for fat lambs. The site is on the banks of the Callide Creek in which there is an abundance of water. Electric power will be supplied from the Capricornia Regional Electricity Board's power station in Rockhampton. Callide coal from the nearby open cut will be used in the boilers, generating steam for heating, cleaning and cooking.

I congratulate the shareholders on their initiative in constructing this abattoir to treat the livestock on the spot. The cattle numbers in the valleys are 264,000, and in the Banana shire alone there are 41,000 sheep, and 20,095 pigs. It is expected that there will be a rapid increase in sheep numbers in the next few years as many new settlers are already developing their properties for fat-lamb production. The Callide and Dawson Valleys are only a very small portion of the Fitzroy River Basin. The expansion in that area by individual effort proves the wealth that can be extracted. I believe that the underground water supply in the Callide and Dawson Valleys is perhaps the best in the Fitzroy River basin. The river basin itself drains a catchment of 58,000 square miles, but at present, in the absence of some form of water control, only about 60 per cent. of the area is reasonably well watered, and only about 20,000 square miles can be considered really high-grade and well-watered productive soil. This is due to the uneven distribution and unreliability of the rainfall. So I repeat myself by again congratulating the pig producers on building this abattoir so that their products will be purchased and marketed at the highest grade possible.

Let me continue to review the pig industry in Central Queensland and say that while many market pigs were either purchased over the scales or consigned direct to the bacon factories within the area, the auction system is gaining in popularity. A well-patronised auction sale is conducted monthly at Theodore, handling store and market pigs. Weekly sales are now held in Rockhampton selling pigs, vealers and bobby calves. The store pig price has fluctuated with the usual rise following any light fall of rain, but in previous months prices of this class of stock literally "flopped," also porker and baconer prices declined due to drought conditions.

In the Burnett, on the Downs and in the Moreton areas marketing conditions and prospects have not been promising. With pig numbers down because of the dry season the Christmas trade which normally operates to the end of October was expected to increase the demand for quality baconers, but a reduction in price from 2s. 1d. to 1s. 8d. lb. was made. This state of affairs, together with the shortage and high price of feed, has discouraged many producers who had gained faith in the industry over the past few years, consequently it is expected that production will fall sharply.

From the latest statistics available, I find that this is factual, because the production of pigs in the year 1955-1956 was 394,788, and for 1956-1957 it had fallen to 381,725. For the month of July, 1957, we marketed 29,625 pigs whereas the figure for July, 1956 was 26,872. To show how alarming the decrease is, in the month of August, 1956, 30,034 pigs were marketed, whereas in August this year there were only 27,336.

I take the opportunity to express my appreciation of the work done by the officers of the department. For many years in Central Queensland we have had the services of excellent officers. Irrespective of the time of day or night that they have been required, on every occasion they have made themselves available to anyone in need. Only recently we had what I might refer to as a disaster in Stanwell because of the arsenical poisoning. When the officer in charge at Rockhampton was contacted he immediately made himself available, together with the slaughtering inspector, on the Sunday morning. Immediately they were notified they took action. The people appreciated the efforts of those men who work under difficult conditions.

Mr. Davies: Was there any charge?

Mr. V. E. JONES: No charge at all. They came along willingly. I was there and I saw the officers carry on their work. No matter how filthy the conditions are, they carry out their duties efficiently and do everything possible to help the people in a time of crisis.

Mr. Davies: Do the farmers appreciate it?

Mr. V. E. JONES: I am not surprised at that interjection from the hon. member. The hon. member does not know what it is like to be on a farm or to be out in the country as a practical pig farmer. The Minister and I who have had experience know that the farmers appreciate it. As members of the Labour Government you cut down their travelling time. It is not the policy of our Government to restrict these officers, but to enable them to give the best help to the farmers. As a practical farmer I say that the farmers do appreciate very sincerely the efforts of these officers. Perhaps there may be some disgruntled person whose request an officer was not able to attend to straight away. I do know that in all cases where an officer has not attended to a case immediately he has done so as soon as he was free.

During the month of August a considerable amount of time was devoted to the Royal National Show. Officers of the branch assisted at the departmental display and acted as stewards in the pig section. The cured bacon carcass competition was judged at the Doboy Bacon Factory and then displayed in the meat hall.

At the annual general meeting of the Australian Pig Society, Queensland Branch, the President made reference to the work of the branch and thanked the staff for the assistance given to the industry throughout the year.

Recently Mr. T. Abell, Senior Adviser at Atherton, was actively associated with the dairy school for farmers conducted by the department at Atherton, Malanda and Ravenshoe.

Progress in the building of the Pig Test Station at Rocklea to which the Minister referred, has been maintained and at the close of the quarter the roofing of both the centre block and wing had been completed, together with the cement plastering on the outside walls. Plastering of the inside walls of the centre block and laying of the floors in this section is now in progress. In the wing, work is being continued with the division of the pens, construction of troughs, fitting of water fountains and the laying of the hollow brick floors. It is thought the building will be completed by the end of December or early January and that the installation of air conditioning and gristing plants will commence. This will be of great assistance to the pig-raisers of this State. As one who was a producer of pure-bred pigs, I know that we had to do much research and investigation. Most of the pig-raisers are handicapped by not having the amenities which will be supplied at Rocklea. The estimated cost of the wing is £45,000. Included in that is £16,000 for the gristing plant and air-conditioning plant. I cannot find in the Estimates any provision for a residence. That is necessary so that a close watch can be kept on temperature, which must be kept constant, and so that constant supervision and prompt attention may be given to plant.

No advice has yet been received about the allocation of loan money for the construction of a residence adjacent to the test station. Should early advice be received, it is possible that the building could be commenced while the necessary gear and labour are available. Experimental work at the regional experiment stations, Kairi, Biloela and Hermitage, is continuing. Early weaning trials are in progress and it is hoped by this system that a greater number of litters will be produced by each sow with an improvement in growth rate of the pigs. To avoid losses in young pigs the Government have been making available to pig-farmers moulds for the construction of circular farrowing pens. The assistance is popular and approximately 40 applications have been made for the use of these moulds. On most farms two or three pens have been constructed. The farmers realise the advantages of the pen, and present indications are that up to 80 per cent. of the losses formerly sustained during the period from birth to weaning at eight weeks have been eliminated.

This system together with the round farrowing pen is considered to be a major advance in pig-keeping and it is expected that eventually it will greatly reduce the cost of production.

The prospects of pig producers are not very bright, particularly with the present high price of ham. Certain anomalies exist in the industry. The hon. member for Baroona may be conversant with some of them. Unfortunately many carcasses produced today are over-fat. Under price control only a small amount was allowed for that portion of the carcass. That may account for the difference in the return to the grower and the price paid by the consumer.

Mr. JESSON (Hinchinbrook) (4.23 p.m.): I congratulate the Minister on the presentation of his Estimates. I take it that most of the preparation was done by the previous Minister.

I join with other hon. members in complimenting the staff of the department. The officers are efficient and courteous at all times. I frequently go to the department seeking advice on horticultural subjects and garden problems. I have always found the officers to be very helpful.

I should not have spoken in the debate but for the remarks by the hon. member for Mulgrave about the control of sale of cane farms. I think he did a great disservice in a mean way to the industry and in saying that I do not mean to be offensive. The hon. member for Tablelands has a grin on his face and looks like a cow in a cabbage garden.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. JESSON: The remarks of the hon. member will not be appreciated by sugar-growers. He urged the lifting of controls

over prices of farms and criticised the present system of submitting to the Central Sugar Cane Prices Board applications for approval of sales of farms. It has had a steady effect on the capital value of the sugar industry. The hon. member for Mulgrave knows that. He knows that when former Premiers came back from overseas they reported that Queensland could fulfil the British requirements of sugar. He knows that the Government opened up land to meet the extra production required for sugar for Great Britain and other places. At that time people were offering fantastic prices for land to get into the sugar industry. The hon. member for Mulgrave knows that; Ministers know it and so does everybody else. If the Central Sugar Cane Prices Board had not kept control on the industry it would have become over-capitalised and the costs would have been so great that sugar would have gone off the working man's table. By this time half the sugar farmers would have been destitute and broke. The hon. member has asked the Government to lift the control that the Central Board exercises over the sale of farms. He wants everybody to have an open go. He said that I knew that there was black marketing going on in the sugar industry.

Mr. Watson: You are admitting it now.

Mr. JESSON: I said that when prices were controlled by the board the board had a steady effect on the capital value of the industry. The hon. member knows very well that farms could not be sold at the prices offered. Prices were kept under control and many farms were not sold.

Mr. Windsor interjected.

Mr. JESSON: And now we have the hon. member for Fortitude Valley coming into the debate—the village blacksmith, under the spreading chestnut tree. He might know something about horse shoes but little or nothing about sugar. The hon. member for Mulgrave said that there was black marketing going on. Many of the farmers are glad that they did not sell their farms because today they have put their sons on them. Why, even £100,000 was offered for a farm which cost £20,000. Hon. members know the fabulous prices that were offered for the Abergowrie lands when they were cut up.

Mr. Watson: You are now admitting it.

Mr. JESSON: I am not admitting it at all. The hon. member said that the control should be lifted which means that men with money could hop in and get cane farms. Even the jacaranda trees in front of Parliament House are dying since the Government took over.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. member to confine his remarks to the Vote.

Mr. JESSON: That comes under agriculture.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. member to confine his remarks to the Vote.

Mr. JESSON: The hon. member for Mulgrave knows what I am saying is correct.

Mr. Gilmore interjected.

Mr. JESSON: The hon. member for Tablelands does not know much about sugar at all. He speaks with his tongue in his cheek.

Mr. Watson: He did not sell pies.

Mr. JESSON: Now the hon. member is getting dirty.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Conversations across the Chamber must cease.

Mr. Watson: I am sorry.

Mr. JESSON: I ask that the hon. member for Mulgrave withdraw the words he used about selling pies as they are offensive to me.

The CHAIRMAN: Please state your objection.

Mr. JESSON: The hon. member interjected across the Chamber about selling pies. That is something I know nothing about.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I have not been able to ascertain what the hon. member for Mulgrave said, but if he said anything offensive to the hon. member for Hinchinbrook would he please withdraw his remark?

Mr. Watson: My statement was that the hon. member for Tablelands at least was not selling pies, and I do not think that is offensive.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member for Hinchinbrook.

Mr. JESSON: I would sooner be a galah than a big yellow mongrel dog.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! If the hon. member for Hinchinbrook will not proceed with his speech, I shall have to ask him to resume his seat.

Mr. JESSON: I was saying—and I say it again—that the hon. member for Mulgrave did a disservice to the sugar industry when he advocated that controls on the sale of cane-farms be lifted. It would result in agents, solicitors, and others reaping a harvest, and the industry would soon become over-capitalised. If the price of sugar goes much higher, the same thing will happen to the sugar industry as has happened to the dairying industry following the introduction of margarine. People are now using margarine where they previously used butter, and if sugar gets much dearer saccharine will largely take its place in the homes of the working people.

I was very pleased to hear the Minister speak about Zebu cattle. I think the late Frank Fraser was the first man to introduce

Zebu cattle into Australia. Mr. Edmonds and I helped him to get a permit to import the breed into Queensland.

Mr. Gilmore: How long ago would that be?

Mr. JESSON: About 15 or 16 years ago. He used to run them on Cattle Creek, near Ingham.

Mr. Gilmore: Zebu cattle have been running round the Kuranda district for 40 years.

Mr. JESSON: They must be the hon. member's class of Zebu, something like himself. I always get "knockers" when I say anything. I know there were a few scrubbers in the North, and they gave Zebu cattle a bad name. They were running loose in the Gulf country and could not be yarded. That was the great fault with cattle imported from India and other places. They were very wild and cattlemen did not like their appearance. They had a big hump on the neck.

It may have been 20 years ago that the late Frank Fraser brought the Zebus to North Queensland. He had a stud on Cattle Creek, outside Ingham, and crossed the Zebus with other breeds. I know Mr. Edmonds and I helped him to get a permit for them from the Department of Agriculture and Stock. I think Mr. Bulcock was Minister at the time. If I was sitting beside the Minister I could find out from one of the officers of the department in a couple of minutes when the Zebus were first introduced into Queensland and who introduced them. I have seen in the Ingham district excellent dairy cattle that have resulted from crossing Zebus with Jerseys. Mr. Fraser's son Lex is milking them now. I do not know whether they are the second or the third cross. They milk very well and are very quiet. In times of drought they always look well fed and well groomed. I think it was Fraser's Zebus that were first sent to the St. Lawrence district. You can see them grazing as you go past in the train. I thought it my duty to the sugar industry to nail down the remarks of the hon. member for Mulgrave about relaxing the Central Sugar Cane Prices Board's control of the sale of farms. I hope the Government will never alter that. There may have been blackmarketing in some cases, but if the hon. member knows of any it is his duty as a citizen of the State to expose it.

Mr. HARRISON (Darlington) (4.36 p.m.): Having worked with the Minister for many years outside the Chamber, I have special pleasure in congratulating him on his appointment. I couple with that my appreciation of the work of the officers of the department right from the top to the bottom. I have worked in very close contact with nearly all of them for a very long time and there are no people in the State for whom I have greater respect and admiration.

I intend to speak particularly about the dairying industry and I shall start with the fundamentals. In its early days in Queensland dairying was almost exclusively a family

effort at land settlement. It was suited only to men of limited means, therefore the land was settled in small areas. Later I shall deal with the problem of what is to be done with some of those small areas which have become unsuitable for dairying. Looking back over the years one can appreciate what dairying has done for the State in opening up the land and developing it into an industry of tremendous economic importance. I think the hon. member for Callide said there were approximately 20,000 dairy farms in Queensland. I am sorry I have not had an opportunity to get the exact figure, but, on a rough calculation, taking in those actually engaged in dairying and those otherwise dependent on it, both in country districts and in the cities, I should say one person in 10 in the State is dependent on the dairying industry.

Many people do not realise that dairying is a round-the-clock industry. It cannot be conducted under the same conditions of employment as most other callings. Dairy-men must be on the job seven days a week, every week of the year. They are prepared to do that but they look for some recognition of it.

Secondly, in Queensland a unique effort has been made to establish a dairying industry in sub-tropical and tropical climates.

That is something that has not been attempted, at least on the same scale, anywhere else in the world. Even though we may not yet compare favourably with the production levels in more temperate climates, where dairying is carried on, the dairying industry in Queensland has done a very fine job for the State under the circumstances. Today the industry not only provides for the needs of the local population but it has built up a big export trade. The export trade in butter and cheese for some time now has not been very prosperous. Because of rising costs of production over recent years, the Queensland dairying industry finds itself in a position of serious economic disadvantage compared with the southern States which have more favourable producing conditions.

What can be done to help the industry? What can be done to maintain it in a solvent condition so that it can continue to make a great contribution to the economic welfare of the State? What can we do with many of the small areas I have spoken about which are not suited for other forms of production? Certainly we do not need to worry about some of them, but what about the others, particularly those in the rain forest areas where irrigation and cultivation cannot be practised? They depend on grass to carry on dairying and during a drought like this you see what happens.

Mr. Aikens: Cannot they conserve fodder?

Mr. HARRISON: Not easily in the areas I am talking about. They often cover steep hillsides—stony, ridgy, rugged country. It is

very good grass-growing country but not suitable for the conservation of fodder. What are we to do with these areas?

Mr. Davies: Would these areas you are speaking about be freehold or leasehold?

Mr. HARRISON: Freehold.

Mr. Davies: These small areas?

Mr. HARRISON: Most of the dairy farms in Queensland are held under freehold tenure. If we cannot maintain the dairying industry in a prosperous or solvent condition what are we to do with the areas that cannot be easily converted to some other form of production? Beef-growing is perhaps the only practical alternative to dairying on some of this land. The conversion may be easy on what we term marginal land.

Mr. Davies: What area would these small farms be?

Mr. HARRISON: They would vary according to the quality of the land. I would say they would range from 80 to 100, 200, 300, up to 400 acres according to the quality of the land. In the past men have reared families on these farms. They have brought the land into production and thus added to the State's income. I am concerned about this very real problem. I cannot think of anything else to do with much of this land but maintain it as part of the dairying industry. The next question is how we can do everything possible to help to make—

Mr. Power: What would you suggest?

Mr. HARRISON: I am going to suggest it now.

Mr. Davies: Before you make the point, what is the water supply like in that area?

Mr. HARRISON: That will be my next point. What our farmers need is a better system of financial help to provide for fodder and soil conservation and water supply on these farms. The industry needs the great help that it gets from the department. The department can also give the farmers splendid advice, which, added to their practical knowledge, make them better equipped to carry on production.

I pay a tribute to the department for the advice given to the various primary industries. It gives advice on the care and management of the soil, on the growing of crops and pastures, and the conserving of them. It also gives advice on the care and management of stock, both in relation to better production and control of disease. Finally it gives advice on the care and handling of the product, whether it be milk, butter, cheese or beef. The new techniques taught by the department, combined with experience gained over the years, makes a solid foundation on which the industry may develop. We must not allow the activities of this department to decrease; we shall endeavour to

improve the service. Help comes from the department in many ways. I mention here the whole system of organised marketing.

Mr. Power: Built up by Labour Governments.

Mr. HARRISON: Yes, I give the hon. member's Government credit for it. In my first speech I gave the previous Minister credit for the work he did. I also mentioned Mr. Bulcock and the late Mr. Forgan Smith.

Mr. Aikens: You will be giving credit to the hon. member for Baroona for the work that he did as Prices Minister.

Mr. HARRISON: No. Certainly not. Despite all this help, we still have to give more attention to the dairying industry. I shall tell the hon. member for Baroona what I think would be a great help.

Mr. Power: I want to know where the money will come from.

Mr. HARRISON: At least the industry deserves something more. This industry should be one of the first to receive assistance.

Mr. Power: I do not disagree, but I am asking who will provide the money.

Mr. HARRISON: It is provided for other things.

Mr. Power: Whom do you say should provide it?

Mr. HARRISON: I shall address you, Mr. Taylor.

Some method must be found for providing the finance so urgently needed for quick development and a reduction of the unit cost of production. The money has to be found, as it has to be found for other things in the interest of the State, and I cannot think of anything more important than a prosperous primary industry. If primary industry languishes, it affects not only those in the country but also those in the cities. If producers are not getting income from their land, business in the cities is soon affected.

Mr. Power: You have not told us where the money is to come from or whether it should be given as a loan or a gift.

Mr. HARRISON: Many farms have a great potential, but the farmers lack finance to undertake the necessary water conservation, soil conservation and fodder conservation. A substantial sum would be required. It may need for a start £250,000, £500,000, or £1,000,000. The money could be made available as loans. Those in the dairying industry would willingly accept the money on that basis with repayments at regular intervals through their dairy organisations in the same way as drought relief loans are repaid. I ask the Government to give serious consideration to my suggestions, and I hope that in the next two or three years action will be taken along those lines. It would be a great benefit to Queensland.

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) (4.53 p.m.): I congratulate the Minister for Agriculture and Stock on his elevation to his high office. In the years that he has been in the Chamber he has created a very favourable impression. I suppose he could be described truthfully as the most affable and approachable man of many affable and approachable men in the Chamber.

His appointment as Minister for Agriculture and Stock was a foregone conclusion when his Party selected him as a Minister. I doubt if in the ranks of the Country-Liberal Government there is a man who knows more about the problems that confront those on the land than the Minister. There may be some who know as much, but I do not think any would know more.

I was particularly pleased to hear him say, in reply to my interjection, that we have almost reached the point where we must give serious consideration to how far we can go with the production of primary products for sale overseas at less than cost of production. Let us get down to fundamentals and admit that for many years the people of Australia and particularly the people in Queensland have been subsidising the purchase of cheap food by overseas people. For years Queenslanders have paid high prices for second-grade beef so that our first-grade beef could be sold overseas at a much lower price than the amount we pay for second-grade beef. The same applies to butter, cheese and eggs—in fact, to almost everything produced on the land in Queensland. The people of Queensland pay very high prices for inferior quality produce so that the top-notch quality may be sent overseas and in some instances sold at only half the price we are paying for the inferior quality. I know that there is some justification for that because some primary industries were established on the basis that they would supply the home market and in addition build up the market overseas. The cold hard fact remains that the market overseas is fast disappearing. Only the other day I read where the Danish people who for many years have supplied the bulk of the butter to Great Britain have engaged in a price-slashing war to get almost the whole of the United Kingdom butter trade for Denmark. And so the same position applies with Argentine in regard to meat supplies and to other countries. Since the last world war the Government of Great Britain irrespective of their political complexion have gone flat out to increase the agricultural production of that country.

Mr. Ewan: Very successfully.

Mr. AIKENS: As the hon. member for Roma says, "Very successfully," and today in Great Britain they are producing—I do not know the actual figures; but I think I am safe in saying this—four or five times as much agricultural produce as they produced before the second World War. Not only do

Australian primary producers face intense competition from British farmers themselves but competition from other competitors for the British market. I follow on to the point made by the Minister. I led him, as he said later, up the garden path in my interjection that we will have to look in Queensland for the establishment of industries to supply our own local needs. The Minister mentioned two commodities in short supply in Australia inasmuch as our local production is concerned, tobacco and cotton. I have travelled all over the northern part of Queensland from time to time and I have gone into the tobacco-growing areas and discussed with tobacco-farmers their problems and I have been on the marketing floors of Mareeba and Townsville. I know the problems confronting the tobacco-growers. I think the Minister will agree with me when I say that the solution of the tobacco problem—and when I say that I mean the cultivation of sufficient tobacco in Australia to supply Australia's needs—rests with the sincere desire to grapple with the tobacco monopolies that now control the trade. We have the B.A.T.C. and other tobacco monopolies in Australia who do all they can by sly tactics to crush the young and growing Australian and Queensland tobacco industry.

Mr. Windsor: And when there is a sale they have one buyer.

Mr. AIKENS: That is so. And they see to it that the prices they pay are the cheapest they can pay for the first-grade leaf. They refuse to pay a proper price for good leaf which may not be first-grade and for the other leaf which is quite usable, they make no bid. It passes into the discard. It is not useless. After the war I went into the Mareeba area when there was competition amongst the tobacco buyers. All grades of leaf were sold at prices acceptable to the tobacco-farmers. I remember on one occasion when a farmer in the Aitkenvale area who grew tobacco sent several bales to Mareeba. The secretary of the Mareeba Tobacco Growers' Society, Mr. Ralph Leinster, showed me the bales of tobacco. Although they came from my own area I was not impressed. I said to him, "What are you going to do with it?" He said, "We will sell it; we can sell anything that is tobacco. The buyers will buy because there is so much competition for it." That tobacco was sold although I honestly repeat that I was not at all impressed with it. Since those days, of course, the various tobacco companies have either been absorbed or have merged so that now their affairs are conducted by one or two holding combines or big monopolies that are holding the tobacco farmer up to ransom.

When the Minister attends one of the innumerable conferences that are held from time to time of the various State Ministers for Agriculture, I feel certain that being an honest man he will grapple with the problem of having more tobacco grown in Australia by going to the root of the trouble and

tackling the big tobacco combines. Until that is done, it is useless to talk about growing more tobacco. The combines will control the industry in the light of their overseas purchases and commitments. It is useless for the Commonwealth Government to lay down a quota of Australian leaf that must be incorporated in tobacco and cigarettes manufactured here. The combines merely say, "We cannot buy the percentage of Australian leaf stipulated in the quota."

Having dealt with that point, I shall deal now with something that I mentioned in the Chamber some years ago. From 1944, when I first came into Parliament, until the redistribution of electorates in 1950, the whole of the Lower Burdekin area was in the Mundingburra electorate. As I did not know very much about general farming and possibly less about the sugar industry, I had to start from scratch. All that I knew of the sugar industry was that as an engineer I had hauled thousands of tons of cane and raw sugar.

Naturally, I learned a good deal about the sugar industry and other farming industries from sitting in the Chamber and listening to hon. members who knew their subject. I also went among the farmers. At that time Mundingburra was a very big electorate. It still covers 1,100 square miles after having Haughton and Burdekin cut out of it.

Mr. Windsor interjected.

Mr. AIKENS: Mundingburra is not a pocket-handkerchief electorate like Fortitude Valley. All that grows in Fortitude Valley is Bathurst burr, and the only animals to be seen are a few sparrows.

If an hon. member of Parliament wants to serve his constituents well, it devolves upon him to learn everything possible about the industries already established in his electorate and those that could be established there. In my early days as an hon. member of Parliament, I advocated the growing of cotton on the Lower Burdekin. Farmers grew it there during the war years and they have grown it spasmodically since then. It has been grown very successfully. The farmers in the area grew cotton of a high grade and had prolific crops. One of them told me that although he had a very big cane assignment, he got as much from his cotton crop one year as he did from cane. I said to him, "Why not continue to grow cotton?" He said, "I struck trouble with harvesting problems and pests the following year." However, he went on to tell me—and this has been verified by other farmers in the area—that the real obstacle to the successful growing of cotton in the Lower Burdekin area is the garnering of the crop. Cotton must be plucked mechanically, but when the farmers on the Lower Burdekin want mechanical pluckers they cannot get them. They have to wait until the growers in the Theodore, Monto and Dawson Valley areas have finished with them.

I feel sure that the Minister agrees that we must establish new primary industries in Queensland, and the one that offers the greatest scope for expansion is the cotton industry. The Minister is an experienced farmer and probably knows more than I about the problems associated with the establishment of a larger cotton industry in Queensland, but I am sure he will not take offence at any suggestion I make. One of his first administrative acts should be to set up a committee of inquiry—it could consist of officers of his own department—to investigate the growing of cotton on the Lower Burdekin. In my opinion, that district offers greater scope than any other for the development and expansion of cotton-growing.

Mr. Coburn: At one time it was said that the Lower Burdekin would become the Dixieland of Queensland.

Mr. AIKENS: I agree with the hon. member for Burdekin. I am certain that it could be the Dixieland of Queensland. We know that the cane farmers there rely upon cane as their basic crop. Most, if not all, of them have a living assignment of cane. Some have a cane assignment that gives them a fairly comfortable living, but most of them, have large areas of land that is not assigned, and they are ever eager and ready to grow some new crop if they can grow it profitably. The Minister and the other practical farmers on the Government benches know that a farmer will grow anything if he can make money out of it. That attitude is to his credit.

If the Government set up a committee of inquiry and even set up an experimental cotton farm in the Lower Burdekin and had their men stationed there so that they could, for two or three seasons if necessary, grapple with the problems that confront the farmers there, I have no doubt that within three or four years, the Lower Burdekin would be the greatest cotton-producing area in Queensland. If we could establish cotton-growing there in the primary stage, it might lead to the establishment of carding and topping and other secondary industries associated with cotton. It may be possible in the first instance only to card and top it. Later on we may be able to go into the question of establishing textile industries and everything else in the Lower Burdekin, based on the port of Townsville.

I do not know how many acres of suitable land are ready for cotton-growing in the Lower Burdekin, but farmers have demonstrated time and time again that it can be grown prolifically. They have demonstrated that they can grow cotton of a fine quality and they are eager to grow it if they are assured that every time they do so, at least they will get a reasonably profitable return from their work and from their investment.

I do not know whether the Minister knew it, but the first problem associated with

cotton-growing in the Lower Burdekin was the garnering or the plucking of the crop.

Mr. Madsen: Mechanisation will solve that.

Mr. AIKENS: Yes, mechanisation will be the solution of the problem. I do not know how many cotton-plucking machines there are in Queensland. I would assume that those who have been growing cotton in the Theodore and Dawson Valley for years would be entitled to some preference in their use but, when farmers have a crop of cotton of good quality ready for harvesting—and wide open, they tell me, at its point of peak production, to insect infestation—you can imagine their feelings if they have to wait day after day or week after week for machines to arrive by rail. They may be held up, probably in the Dawson Valley or elsewhere. It would be a good investment for the Government to buy all the cotton-plucking machines that the Burdekin farmers need and simply tell them to go ahead and grow the crop.

Mr. Graham: How much cotton is produced in the Burdekin now?

Mr. AIKENS: At present very little, because they have not got the guarantees that I am asking the Government to give. If the hon. member for Mackay had been listening to me intently, as he should have been, he would have heard me say that they have grown a great deal of good-quality cotton on the Burdekin.

Mr. Graham: They grew it in Mackay at one time but they do not grow it there now.

Mr. AIKENS: If they can grow it in Mackay, let them grow it there, too. The last figures I saw indicated that Australia grows only about 9 per cent. of its cotton consumption. There is not the slightest reason why we should not grow 100 per cent. of our requirements.

Mr. Graham: How many bales are produced in the Burdekin?

Mr. AIKENS: I do not know. I know only that it can be done.

Mr. Graham: Is it being done?

Mr. AIKENS: They have proved that it can be done. What they need first of all is a guarantee from the Government of the security of their investment. They do not want to grow a good crop of cotton this year only to find that the price has been manipulated, for one thing, making it uneconomical to grow it next year. And they want to know for a surety that their cotton will be harvested when it is ready for harvesting. I put it up to the Minister as one of the first jobs he should tackle. I know he feels as keenly about it as I do. I ask him to make an immediate investigation of the possibilities of establishing a cotton industry on a large scale in the Lower Burdekin with all the guarantees that the

farmers need for continuity of crops, for harvesting and for the protection of their interests. That will lead not only to the establishment and maintenance of a big primary industry in Northern Queensland but also to the establishment and development of one of the big secondary industries that we so vitally need.

I have another suggestion to make for North Queensland.

Mr. Low: Tell us about the new State.

Mr. AIKENS: If we have a new State we will govern for all the people, not as the hon. member for Cooroola would do. We would not set out deliberately to cut the throats of some primary producers.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. AIKENS: The Agricultural College at Gatton does a good job but it is established down here in the southern portion of the State. It deals with a particular soil in a particular climate. I understand that it deals mainly with beef cattle herds and a little bit of agriculture. Up in Northern Queensland, 800 to 1,000 miles away from Gatton, we have entirely different problems from those experienced down here. We have a different rainfall, different temperature variations, different climate, and different soils. I suggest to the Minister that he immediately investigate the possibility of establishing a Northern Queensland agricultural college that can study Northern Queensland agriculture and stock problems under Northern Queensland conditions. North of Mackay we have 250,000 people. Surely to goodness with our own problems of soil, climate and rainfall we should be able to establish and maintain an agricultural college in Northern Queensland to cater for the needs of the children of 250,000 people. We know, of course, that agricultural colleges are expensive to maintain. Sometimes the fees paid by students do not meet running expenses. I would suggest that the Minister meet that problem by granting to the State Agricultural College in Northern Queensland a sufficiently large cane assignment that would more than bear the brunt of the expenses of running such an establishment. I believe that there is a denominational agricultural college in Northern Queensland. I have been informed that they were granted a big cane assignment and that the profit from the cane assignment goes a long way towards paying the expenses of the college. In its own way that college is doing at least some good for the development of agriculture and the promotion of the love of agriculture in the minds and hearts of young North Queensland people. But on the other hand it is the duty of the State to set up its own agricultural college in Northern Queensland. We have young boys up there, and perhaps young girls, who would like to enter the various departments, services and functions associated with agriculture and stock. But there again

they face the problem that once having passed their Junior if they wish to learn anything at all scientifically and academically about agriculture and stock they have to leave the North and come all the way to Gatton. Because of the distance they have to go away from home and the expenses that have to be incurred by their parents in maintaining them down here while they attend the Agricultural college we are not getting in Northern Queensland the huge numbers of boys and girls who would be interested in agriculture and stock if we had our own college up there.

I know I mentioned this matter some years ago. Members of the Government who are now gracing or disgracing the Opposition benches said that one agricultural college was enough. They said that Gatton was fulfilling all the needs of the Queensland boys and girls. But some of us did a little research into the problem only to find that Gatton was not big enough to take in all the Queensland boys and girls who wanted to learn scientifically and academically about agriculture and stock. We found also that quite a number of boys were coming from other States to the Queensland Agricultural College at Gatton. Queensland was providing accommodation for these students while our own students were not provided for. Whether there was some justification, I do not know. I do not think there was. The Government of the day thought there was. I thoroughly disagreed with it.

Mr. Jesson: They have put a quota on the New South Wales boys.

Mr. AIKENS: Even so, I still say it was not quite right for the Queensland Government to maintain an Agricultural College and admit boys or girls from other States while their own boys and girls could not get into the college. The salient point is that Gatton is in a temperate zone. It is a different class of land and there is a different rainfall; everything is entirely different from North Queensland where we consider an Agricultural College should be established. If the Minister were to do that I think he would be astonished at the interest taken by the northern boys and girls in the various ramifications of the Department of Agriculture and Stock and in the opportunities offered to young farmers, whether boys or girls. I commend the suggestion to the Minister.

Mr. Gair: Gatton Agricultural College comes under the Education Department.

Mr. AIKENS: I believe it does, but I thought that on this debate on the Department of Agriculture and Stock at least I was within reasonable limits in bringing forward a suggestion that such a college should be established. Without a college you do not generate as much interest in agriculture and stock on the scientific and academic basis. Without an Agricultural College the interest

of the boys and girls is stifled because their parents, more often than not, are financially unable to send them down to Gatton.

(Time expired.)

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN (Barambah) (5.18 p.m.): On these Estimates many of us think of the primary producers of the State. I wish to pay a tribute to the men and women in the various primary industries throughout Queensland. I have nothing but the greatest admiration of the part they play in the life of our State. We often refer to the work of those in other industries, they also play an important part, but they enjoy many amenities and perhaps better working conditions than the men and women engaged in primary industries. I cannot help thinking of those who live in the isolated portions of the State. From time to time I have met men in the far back country who have to travel 250 to 300 miles to visit a small shopping centre. When we think of the conditions under which they live and their lack of amenities we should pay them a tribute for the important part they do. When we think of primary producers generally we should think of those who are being severely affected by the drought in parts of the State—like the Balonne electorate and other areas. I express gratitude for the blessing of rain received in a very large portion of the State and the great difference it has made to primary producers fortunate enough to get it. In my area, the South Burnett, it has made possible the planting of grain and it has brought greater production of milk and butter. The rain was of great advantage to the State.

The hon. member for Mundingburra spoke at considerable length about primary producers being subsidised by a section of the community so that primary products could be sold overseas. I understand the point, but I emphasise that the export of those primary products makes possible the import of many articles that would not otherwise be possible. The present system of a higher home price than export price is justified on that ground.

It must not be forgotten that primary producers pay dearly for implements and machinery. The high standard of living of workers means a high price for these articles. The primary products must be sold at a fairly high price to ensure a reasonable return to primary producers.

An hon. member spoke of over-capitalised farms. What is the reason for that? Primary production generally is very complex and involved—much more so than in the days when I was directly engaged in it. Today all types of chemicals are needed to deal quickly and effectively with weeds. Primary producers must have a knowledge of the quantities to be used apart from the type of chemical. Some chemicals kill weeds growing among other plants. Various injections for

the treatment of sick animals have to be understood by primary producers. Up-to-date methods are employed.

Mr. Aikens: Have they brought the big brown toad into the Lower Burnett area?

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: I do not think it is necessary in the Lower Burnett.

Mr. Aikens: They were brought into the North, and now the authorities cannot get rid of them.

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: I am not familiar with that.

I doubt whether many hon. members realise the up-to-date farming methods employed in Queensland, not only in various types of equipment and plant but also aircraft. Not many hon. members would know that most of the canary, barley and linseed grain is sprayed by aircraft. Today aircraft can do the work quickly and efficiently as well as scientifically and cheaply. Aircraft are also used in sowing seed to improve pastures. In one district alone last year our aircraft flew over 50,000 acres, and one can see how rapid the development has been in bringing primary production up to date so that it can compete with other countries.

I join with other members in complimenting the Minister and in saying how pleased I am that we have a practical farmer as the head of this important department. He has a sympathetic understanding of the problems of the primary producers and the dairymen. I agree with his remarks about the important part that his officers play in the economic well-being of Queensland. They play an important part in the prosperity of many of our industries, particularly when we think of the technical advice they give in the various fields of agriculture and primary production generally. I pay a tribute to the men at Kingaroy. I know many of them well and I know the work they do. It is only fair that I should express my appreciation of their services. I was particularly pleased to note the policy adopted by the Minister on his assumption to office, in making sure that the men in his department are able to carry out the work to which they are assigned in the various branches. They have been supplied with means of transport to enable them to carry out their work quickly and efficiently. They are not restricted with lack of transport as they were some time ago. Men can carry out their jobs only if they have the means to do so. It is also necessary to give them accommodation. I know the position that applies at Kingaroy and elsewhere. Accommodation is a real problem. The office of the department at Kingaroy started off in a small way many years ago. Today there are 17 men employed but they still occupy the same old building and have to work in a confined space. They work under extreme difficulties. Although a room has been made available for five men in another street, the working of the office is

not practicable. For typing services, they have to come to the main office. I appeal particularly on behalf of the officers at Kingaroy but my remarks apply to officers elsewhere. They are entitled to better office accommodation so that they can carry out their work efficiently.

I pay tribute to the officers of the department who are working on soil conservation in the Kingaroy district. Their work is very important. The primary producers of the South Burnett have co-operated fully with them in conserving soil. Thousands of acres of land have been contoured. I have often seen the work that has been done when flying over the district in my own aircraft. However, if the job is to be done properly the number of officers will have to be doubled. At present there are only three permanent officers and one temporary employee. The area is one of the richest primary-producing parts of Queensland and has tens of thousands of acres under cultivation. Although I realise that the Minister is facing a problem in getting more men for this section of his department, the number at present employed cannot possibly cope with the tremendous task confronting them. As the opportunity presents itself, I hope the Minister will try to make more men available for soil conservation work, not only in the South Burnett area but in other areas as well. The real difficulty, of course, is the award under which the men are employed. The rates of pay are not high enough to attract young men. Only those who are imbued with the spirit of helping the State's rural industries are entering this field of endeavour.

I have already said that the primary producers are appreciative of the opportunity of contouring their land, but the main waterways present a very big problem. It is evident in my district that the primary producers feel that they should not be called upon to bear the cost of constructing the main waterways, some of which entail a great deal of excavation and earthworks. I refer particularly to the Boobie catchment scheme, which the previous Treasurer was good enough to inspect following a request for a subsidy. Unfortunately the subsidy did not eventuate and the scheme is now in abeyance. It is beyond the resources of the primary producers themselves to construct large waterways, and the Government should grant a subsidy to lessen the burden on them.

I congratulate those men in the South Burnett area who are working towards the establishment of abattoirs at Murgon. I know they will be helped by the Government at the appropriate time. I urge them to push ahead with their plans, and I hope the people of the district will support them.

In reply to an interjection from the Opposition some little time ago about hours of work, I point out that the officers of the

Department of Agriculture and Stock not only give an excellent service to the State but they also work long hours. Many of those officers give long hours, no doubt in a spirit of doing their work, and I express appreciation of that.

I commend to the Minister the phases of the work of his department, in my district and in other parts of the State, that I have brought to his notice.

Mr. ANDERSON (Toowoomba) (5.36 p.m.): I congratulate the Minister, knowing very well that he is the right man for the job. He comes from the Darling Downs, one of the greatest agricultural areas in the world.

Mr. Hanlon: Do not work the parish pump too much.

Mr. ANDERSON: While I am on the parish pump, I might let him know that the staff in Toowoomba are very capable but they are cramped for space and there will soon become available the old fire brigade station. A new one is being built and at the rate they are going it will be finished next March or April. The old building will then be available possibly for a government department and I urge the Minister to stake his claim before some other department gets in.

Reference has been made to the canning of pineapples. Recently I spoke to an English gentleman who said that instead of having "State canned pineapples" or "C.O.D. pineapples" on the labels we should have Queensland pineapples" or "Australian pineapples." The same applies to fish and beef and all other canned goods. He said that if we advertised the State and the nation we would greatly increase the export trade. I commend the suggestion to the Minister.

I urge him also to tell the officers of his department to be very careful in future with the building of abattoirs. Toowoomba was the first country city to have a local abattoir and naturally it was the guinea-pig. I trust that the Minister will make his officers conversant with the faults that have occurred there. The cost of removing the defects has led to a greater cost of the product, which must be passed on to the consumer. I have a list of those faults and corrective measures here. The first deals with the stockyards at the abattoir area. Naturally the areas must be hygienically cleaned.

The list reads:—

Stockyards.

- Areas not fully cemented.
- Gates needed re-swinging; others had to be moved.
- No escape openings in drafting yards.
- Extra rail required on race.
- Further subdivision of paddocks to accommodate the number of operators.
- Unloading ramp for cattle.

No provision for crush for drafting mobs of sheep.

Sections of floor in race and gates had to be replaced and cleats let in to allow the cattle to walk up without slipping.

Slaughter Floor.

A shock absorber had to be put onto the knocking box to ease shock on overhead timbers.

Chaining up area too small and minor accidents have occurred.

The beef trees were altered and new fingers purchased to stop cattle from falling onto the floor.

A circular saw was installed in place of the reciprocating saw to speed up the kill. Trough installed to take water and trimmings from cattle and to avoid soiling the floor.

The mutton section and rails were altered to enable slaughtermen sufficient room to perform normal operations and to avoid congestion.

The pig section was moved and the tanks cut in size and the small stock pens and gates were also altered.

A washing bay for small stock was constructed to put out a clean article.

Tiles had to be put on the walls of the slaughterhouse for appearance and cleanliness—to make the cleaning of the walls much more easy for the men working there.

The chiller floor had to be sealed to prevent moisture from entering the walls and insulation.

Metal framework had to be put in on the beef drop because no adjustment was made in the green timber supports. The offal floor was exposed to the elements and all openings had to be enclosed or the men would not work there. The laneway between the tank-house and the retaining wall was too small to allow anything other than a utility to unload the paunch manure bin. The motor on the expeller was too small. Oil tanks were placed on the slaughter floor and offal floors instead of adjacent to the tank-house. There was no outlet from the salt pit and the overflow was over the roadway. The changing floor was too small. There were no facilities for the unloading of by-product purchases. The tank-house was far too small for storage and normal working. The digester and blood drain were altogether inadequate in size. The oil pump supplied would not lift tallow to the first settling tank. There was no provision for the return of the gear to the slaughter floor.

One of the most important things in an abattoir is effective water disposal. No serious thought was given to efficient water disposal or its associated problems apart from settling. This is a very difficult problem in an inland area where there is no sea to run the water. It brings about a problem with flies.

The amenities room for the men was far too small. The union got onto that shortly after it was built. It has been rebuilt twice the size. The dining room and office was too small. There was no power grindstone, or equipment for the drying of clothes. All these things are very important for the convenience of workers.

The biggest problem is the boiler. The boiler was not placed in the right position to save the double handling of fuel. The boiler capacity is far too small to run the plant. A new boilerhouse with a new boiler will be built shortly at a cost of £20,000. When abattoirs are to be constructed in fast-growing cities adequate provision must be made for future expansion. Adequate boiler equipment must be provided.

Mr. Windsor: Who was responsible for this place?

Mr. ANDERSON: I do not blame anyone entirely because this was the first local abattoir built. I trust that we shall learn by experience so that there will not be the same problems in other abattoirs built throughout the State. We know what has happened at Bundaberg. There is not sufficient room for the men in the slaughterhouse and consequently they will never reach the tally that they are supposed to kill. I am bringing these matters forward in the hope that such defects will be prevented when other abattoirs are established in the future.

Mr. DAVIES (Maryborough) (5.44 p.m.): I make no apology for speaking on the Vote for the Department of Agriculture and Stock. Any hon. member who does not take an interest in this Vote which covers important activities in the State is hardly worth a place in the Chamber. The hon. member for Aubigny once said that hon. members should restrict their expressions of opinion in the Chamber to subjects which related to their employment before they entered Parliament. If that happened it would be a very poor Parliament indeed.

I take this opportunity of congratulating the Minister on his appointment. I think the hon. gentleman is well equipped for his job. The Minister's broad experience and fluency of expression make him eminently suitable for the position. We realise the number of difficulties and problems that will confront him as a member of this Government.

One feature of the debate is the lack of interest in it by members of the Liberal Party. Their failure to take part in the debate, with one or two exceptions, indicates that they have not a keen interest in agricultural matters. They have been absent from the House during the debate on these Estimates. It is typical of their approach to the magnificent legislation introduced by Labour Governments since the early 20's. It has always been attacked, particularly by members of the Liberal party.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. member to keep to the Vote.

Mr. DAVIES: I was leading up to it. In 1922 legislation was framed, and it became the basis of further legislation introduced by Australian Labour Party Governments. In 1922, when the first producers' organisation was introduced there was criticism of it by various newspapers. It was the first organisation of its kind in the whole of Australia. One or two leading members of the Country Party said years later that it was used by the Commonwealth and the other States as a model on which to frame their legislation. It was a Labour Government who pioneered the way of commodity boards on which the primary producers were represented. It is a long story of activity on behalf of the farmers but as I said before, the Liberal Party has no understanding of the problems of the farmers. The Country Party has a practical approach to them, but its members will find it difficult to convert members of the Liberal Party to their way of thinking, particularly after the recent separate conferences that were held by the Country and Liberal Parties which are supposed to be one party. It indicates a distinct cleavage between the parties. The following appeared in the "Producers Review" in 1922:—

"Under the new organisation the farming community is at the dawn of a new and prosperous era, and they know it."

Labour took office after nearly 60 years of Tory-Liberal-Country Party Government, during which time nothing was done in the interests of the working farmer who was simply exploited by the class now represented by the Liberal Party.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. member to deal with the Vote before the Committee.

Mr. DAVIES: The attitude of the Liberal Party towards this Vote shows that it has not got the interests of the farmer at heart.

The article continued—

"The Government agricultural proposals are a proof that the workers are prepared to assist the farmer in his fight for better conditions."

Such statements displease members of the Liberal Party.

This is the statement that appeared in the "Daily Mail"—

"Great credit is due to the Premier for his bold piece of practical statesmanship. It represents the framework on which a co-operative structure may be built with advantage to both the producers and the States. The Country Party cannot afford to fight co-operation merely because it is proposed by the Labor Party."

A further statement appeared in the "Telegraph," another paper that could not be called a Labour paper.

Mr. Windsor: What about something constructive?

Mr. DAVIES: I am not allowed by the Chairman to deal with hon. members of the Liberal Party.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member must confine his remarks to the Vote. If he is endeavouring to get in some political propaganda, I think it is inappropriate. I ask him to deal with the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture and Stock, or resume his seat.

Mr. DAVIES: I do not quite understand your ruling, Mr. Taylor. Surely I am entitled to attack the attitude of hon. members of the Government parties towards the agricultural industry. They refer to some State enterprise as examples of socialism and communism, but when they are dealing with State enterprise in the interests of farmers they raise no objection to it. I deplore that unfair party-political criticism of the actions and record of the previous Government.

This is a statement in 1922, by a member of the Liberal Party, Mr. G. P. Barnes—

“A more daring, audacious and cruel Bill was never presented for the consideration of a deliberate Assembly in the British land. This is a coercive measure, intended to dictate to everyone what he shall do and what he shall not do. I sincerely hope that this fair land of ours is not going to be cursed by the passing of legislation which will be destructive of our freedom and which will prevent all development in future.”

He was speaking on the introduction of the Bill which laid the basis for the magnificent legislation that followed. His statement is typical of statements of hon. members of the Liberal Party. He described it as an example of pro-Sovietism.

Mr. Windsor: Who said that?

Mr. DAVIES: Mr. Barnes, a member of the Liberal Party. It was pleasing to hear speeches by hon. members of the Country Party in which they recognised the great work of Labour Governments of the past. The hon. member for Darlington paid a tribute to their work in the field of agriculture. That tribute and the compliments of other hon. members of the Country Party are a good indication that the State has enjoyed good government.

The hon. member for Nash praised the work of the department in these words—

“Through the combined efforts of the department and the producers we have been able to maintain a very high standard of living and full employment throughout the State.”

He went on to say—

“I must give the department's officers full credit for their assistance to producers.”

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He referred particularly to the splendid work of two of the officers.

Mr. Pizzey: Did you say the Labour Government were responsible for the good work of the department?

Mr. DAVIES: The Labour Government inspired these men to carry on with their wonderful work. That Government must be given credit for their work, just as the previous Government would be blamed for any of their faults. A Minister cannot pass the responsibility for it onto the Under Secretary or any of his officers of the department. The manager of a firm must accept responsibility for the work of his employees.

The hon. member for Nash spoke of the help given to bean and pea producers in his area by two officers of the department, Robert Groszmann, a plant breeder and entomologist, and Joek Johnson, a pathologist. He said that officers of the dairying and horticultural sections had done much to make the Gympie district an outstanding fruit and vegetable district in Queensland. The hon. member for Nash wanted another Government official appointed at more expenditure to the Government to help the primary producers. The hon. member for Darlington said that nobody deserved help more than the primary producer, that he was the most important man in the community. The men out of work and looking for jobs are the most important. Do not let us be one-sided about this. The unemployed throughout the State are entitled to consideration by the Government.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. DAVIES: That aspect is certainly disturbing. I have referred to the constancy with which hon. members of the Government attack Socialism and call us Communist agents, but when it comes to any form of agricultural activity they want more Government expenditure. I do not mind that but I refer to their inconsistency. When the hon. member for Darlington was speaking about dairy farmers I interjected and asked if the land was freehold or leasehold and he told me, almost indignantly, that it was freehold. I did not want to interrupt him at the time. How is it that such a small area is held as freehold? Mr. Bell, the Under Secretary of the department, put his finger on the matter when he said—

“Moreover, the small farm has insufficient land for the rotation or spelling which is so essential after a few years.”

That is something that should not be forgotten. Many landowners take all they can out of the land, saying, “This land is mine and I will do what I like with it.” It is the duty of every man who owns land to make it richer than when he took it over.

Mr. Pizzey: Have you a garden in your backyard?

Mr. DAVIES: Yes. The Under Secretary went on to say—

“This ‘fragmentation’ is a concomitant of unrestricted freehold and has provided an acute problem in the old world.”

That paragraph deserves consideration by members of the Government Party.

In the days when there was prosperity in the pineapple areas land speculators cut some of the land into blocks that were too small, and now the owners cannot make a living on some of them.

I should like the Minister to give some attention to the bulk loading of sugar at the port of Urangan. The Treasurer said recently that in 10 years’ time the loading of bagged sugar would cease throughout the State. Urangan depends upon the loading of bagged sugar. It is a magnificent port with 30 feet of water at low tide. The quantity of sugar shipped from it will be reduced from 100,000 tons to 50,000 tons when the new river port is opened at Bundaberg for coastal trade. Much of the land in the Maryborough district is capable of growing sugar and I ask the Minister to look ahead and inquire into the provision of bulk loading facilities at Urangan.

I do not want to be accused of misinterpreting the answer that the Minister gave to my question this morning. This is the statement of the Under Secretary on which my question was based—

“The Commonwealth Government has refused to give temporary relief in the form of subsidy and there can be no doubt that the egg industry faces an unpromising future.”

I thank the Minister for the lengthy reply that he gave to my question.

On page 10 of the Department’s annual report the Under Secretary says—

“Most of the Darling Downs soils, after 50 to 100 years of cultivation, have failed to show any economic response to applications of fertiliser.”

I shall be pleased if the Minister will enlarge on that statement when he is replying.

There is one matter on which I express strong resentment on behalf of the farmers of Queensland. The debate has three hours to go, and with the exception of three-quarters of an hour in which the Minister will reply, we are not to hear one further speaker from the Government side of the Chamber.

Mr. Hewitt: What did you say?

Mr. DAVIES: I should not be surprised if the whips were cracked during the dinner adjournment. This is one of the most important debates of the session, but twice today there has not been a quorum in the Chamber.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I advise the hon. member for Maryborough that the Chairman of Committees decides whether there is

a quorum in the Chamber. On one occasion when the state of the Chamber was drawn to my attention, 16 members were present.

Mr. DAVIES: I shall direct my final remarks to the dairying industry. I have lived on dairy farms and I hold certificates for milk and cream testing, in which I have also conducted classes in milk and cream testing and herd testing. I have also organised calf clubs. I have been closely associated with some of the leading dairymen in the best dairying districts of the State. Although I am fully aware of the problems that confront the dairying industry, there is at present a tendency to spoon-feed the farmer. It would seem that the pioneering spirit of old is disappearing. I hark back to the days when the pioneers with their bullock-wagons journeyed outside the then boundary lines of the State of New South Wales during the early years of the 19th century. No-one knew whether they would return, but most of those who settled down made a go of it. I am not asking for a return to those conditions, but there should be more pioneering by the farmers and not so much pampering of them. During the recent drought in the South Burnett area some farmers still had hay left when the drought broke, while others had no hay at all from the beginning of the drought. A return should be put before the Committee along with the Annual Report. Of the 22,000 farmers in the State I should say 80 per cent. have milking machines. How many of those farmers have stored hay against a bad season? How many of them are willing to fall back on the State—“on the dole” as hon. members opposite say when they are referring to people without a pension? The man who does not tend his farm correctly, who does not put full energy into it and who does not seek the assistance of the esteemed officers of the Department of Agriculture and Stock is sabotaging Australia’s effort. We cannot afford that. We cannot afford to have in the workshops, in management in industry, or on the farm, people who will not pull their weight and take advantage of every scientific aid available. Only last week the hon. member for Aubigny called us Communists on this side of the House. He did not point the finger at those in agricultural industry who are not playing their part and are relying on the 50 per cent. subsidies waiting for them. How many of them rely too much on State support? They are now in a minority and it is a decreasing minority. However, too many of them want to be spoon fed, and it is time that Government members rose in their places and placed the facts before the Committee. As the Report of the Under Secretary says, there is still room for much improvement in both the level and uniformity of quality. Take the winter production, for instance, and note the tremendous fall-off in production. During the year 74 per cent. of butter produced in Queensland was officially graded. 34 per cent.

of it was graded choice, 54 per cent. first class, and 12 per cent. second and pastry grade.

The Under Secretary's report says—

“Whilst conceding that the climate of Queensland increases the difficulties of producing high-quality butter and cheese, it cannot yet be said that the problem has been squarely faced.”

That is the opinion of the Under Secretary. Speaking of experiments on an Atherton farm, he said that the butter fat production increased from 182 lb. butter fat per cow to 348 lb. The yield per cow in the experimental herd on the Kairi Regional Experiment Station has increased from 167 lb. to 267 lb. in seven years. He said the herd was purchased as an average district herd and was built up by culling and testing. “Culling” and “testing” are terms that are just being recognised by many farmers today. There are still some farmers of the old type who say, “I have been on a farm all my life and you cannot teach me anything. I don't want any of these so-called experts telling me how to run my farm.” Such men are an economic charge on the cost of production and we cannot afford to have them in the community.

I am pleased at the Minister's approach to the Vote. I thank him for the courteous way in which he has given us information on any question we have asked. I give him credit for paying a tribute to the Labour Governments of the past for the grand job they did for the State. As I said before, if the Department of Agriculture and Stock is run efficiently in the interests of the farmers and the people on the land, the Government controlling it must have proved themselves to be the friends of the farmers despite irresponsible statements by critics on the other side who know better but use them as political propaganda.

I make no apology for bringing politics into the debate. We are not here at a garden party or for afternoon tea. This Vote is important in the affairs of the State and the politics of the parties affecting the working conditions of the people on the land are diametrically opposed. Therefore I am certain, Mr. Taylor, you will agree that the Vote cannot be debated without introducing politics. However, our political view is on a national level because we are drawing attention to the dangers of such careless methods of production from the national point of view. That is why we are so eager to draw the Government's attention to the need for the genuine use and extension of their influence with Robert Gordon Menzies, the Prime Minister, to get more funds—though it looks hopeless according to this morning's paper—to enable them to extend their activities. We will be happy to see them extended so long as they always remember that the greatest problem in any land is the man who is prepared to work but cannot get a job.

Mr. COBURN (Burdekin) (7.25 p.m.): At the outset I congratulate the hon. member for Warwick on his elevation to Cabinet rank. We who have been here for some years and have had a close association with the Minister know of his great qualifications for the job he has now undertaken. He is a most courteous person, one who is always ready and willing to listen to any suggestions put before him. Whether he will be so willing to do the things we want done we shall have to wait and see. I am confident that if it is possible to do anything in the interests of the State he will do it.

Many peculiar things happen in the Chamber. Anybody with a sense of humour could derive a good deal of amusement from time to time. The hon. member for Maryborough spent most of his time in criticisms of persons and parties and only about ten per cent. on the Estimates under discussion. He then sought to tell us how important they were. If they are important the sooner we concentrate on them and do something that may be helpful to the department the better.

Everybody will admit that modern farming is a very complex business requiring much more than brawn and muscle or a pocketful of money for its successful conduct. A farmer must be experienced in the practice of farm work and trained in the science of farming, both of which involve a good deal of technical knowledge. He must possess more than average intelligence today to enable him to interpret and absorb the educative material which keeps him abreast of technical and scientific developments. He must have more than an elementary knowledge of the management of finance in relation to the buying and selling of commodities and the efficient use of credit. Without experience and knowledge of the characteristics of the land which he is to farm, and without training in the particular form of production in which he is to engage, he carries a handicap which inevitably reduces his efficiency in the use of the land and which cannot be overcome by mere physical capacity. But in addition to the qualifications of ability and training there is one other absolutely essential factor, incentive, which is of great importance in determining the efficiency of the farmer. It is the mainspring of initiation and effort. Physical capacity may be possessed, experience gained and knowledge acquired but the result of their combined application will depend very largely upon the initiative and effort displayed in their application. The stronger the incentive for the farmer to display these qualities the more efficient are the productive results likely to be. Incentive to productive effort depends partly on pride but more particularly on inducement. The two great inducements are opportunity for personal gain according to the efficiency of the productive effort and fear of loss in status as a landholder through inefficient effort and management. The latter,

however, loses its force unless it is backed by firm administration by the Government in the interests of the nation as a whole. It is my opinion that the general level of efficiency of farm operators will be highest where conditions are such that—

(a) There is a reasonable reward for reasonable efficiency and the opportunity for personal gain for the farm operator increases in accordance with improvement in his productive efficiency;

(b) The price of land functions in such a way as to set a reasonably high standard of efficiency;

(c) No concession to inefficiency is made by Governments; and

(d) Inefficient operators are readily eliminated.

Because of the complexity of farming today and great knowledge that a farmer must possess so that he may succeed, it is absolutely necessary for the Government of the day to provide facilities for his training and his education along those lines. I suggest that the Minister should give more thought to putting a little more enthusiasm into establishing junior and senior agricultural courses even in preference to establishing agricultural high schools and colleges. Although we admit that in North Queensland we could probably do with an agricultural college to teach those who are going to be farmers the science of farming, we realise that if we have junior and senior agricultural courses attached to our schools in areas where they can be established we shall probably do much towards providing the type of farmer for the country that the country most needs.

The hon. member for Mundingburra discussed the possibility of developing cotton growing on the Lower Burdekin to a much greater extent than previously. We all know that during World War II there was a great necessity for raw cotton and Mr. Bulcock, who was then Minister for Agriculture and Stock, came to the Burdekin because he realised that no other place offered the same opportunities for the production of cotton as the Burdekin did. He induced the farmers to grow cotton for a war effort. I was in the heart of the district at the time, and almost every farmer grew cotton. They used every type of labour they could recruit including women, young and old, and even school children. Unfortunately a good deal of the cotton was not harvested, and there was a good deal of ill-feeling amongst the farming community that this was not done after they had produced the cotton. It was imported from other countries in the interval, and a good deal of it not harvested in the Burdekin area was allowed to rot. The farmers on the Burdekin are very partial to growing cotton; they realise it is an excellent rotational crop with sugar cane. I know from experience that there is a good deal of criticism about the supply of the cotton-picking machinery. It is not available just when they want it. That is one of the things that is militating against the production of

cotton on a large scale. The general manager of the Cotton Marketing Board wrote to me telling me of the great opportunities that were presented on the Burdekin for the growing of cotton, and he gave me an analysis of the productive capacity of the Burdekin. He said that in 1953 D and PL 14 produced 1,342 lb. to the acre and in 1955 that was increased to 1,522 lb. Miller 43/9/0 produced 1,333 lb. in 1953, 903 lb. in 1954 and 1,325 lb. in 1955. The best type they grew evidently was the Empire type which produced 1,249 lb. to the acre in 1953, 1,018 lb. in 1954 and 1,733 lb. in 1955. Those were the results of trials carried out at Ayr and Millaroo experimental stations. Mr. Johnson, the manager, said—

“Whilst the yields from such trials are often larger than those obtained from commercial crops, experience has shown that in normal seasons where cotton is grown with supplementary irrigation in most irrigation areas of Queensland yields of at least 1,500 lbs. per acre can be obtained. At the present price such a yield would be worth about £80 per acre for the cotton delivered on rails.”

That is no mean return—£80 to the acre for cotton.

Cotton can be grown as a supplementary crop to cane. Cane grown on land after a cotton crop has been harvested produces a better crop.

Mr. Johnson also said that the Board invested in two cotton planters for the use of growers in the Burdekin area, and each year, at some considerable expense, sent at least one cotton-picking machine to harvest the few available crops.

Many of the farmers dabble in potato, pineapple and tomato production, but prices of those commodities fluctuate and in times of glut it is not worthwhile sending them to market, whereas with cotton the grower would receive a guaranteed price of 1s. 2d. a lb. Cotton pickers would be sent to the area. With unlimited irrigation the crop would be such that a return of £80 to the acre would be obtained. It seems possible that agriculture can be expanded in this way. It would provide employment for many people. The department should concentrate particularly on the Burdekin area, on encouraging farmers to plant cotton. Australia imports about 94 per cent. of her raw cotton requirements, so that there is virtually an unlimited market for home-grown cotton. It is a crop from which farmers would get a good return for their effort.

A great deal has been said in the debate about the conservation of fodder. All hon. members realise the advantage of readily accessible fodder in times of drought when natural grass is not available. On that point, I have a very interesting letter from a lady grazier in the Mount Larcom district, written after I spoke of the possibilities of processing mangoes. She said that the

mango seed could be used as a stock food and was used widely in India. The letter reads—

“Naturally, the Government would not wish to incur expense unnecessarily and as buildings and machinery take such a long time to plan and erect, may I suggest an idea to start canning and processing this season's coming crop without much delay or additional expenditure?”

“The Koongal Cannery near Rockhampton could be used for canning the fruit and the Peanut Marketing Board could be approached re plans to process the meal from the mango seed if their machinery were suitable and they were not using their plant. This is the general idea, and all the details would have to be worked out.

“Atherton has a Peanut Marketing Board but I don't know about a cannery.

“Kingaroy Peanut Marketing Board could process the meal from the Border, north to say Bundaberg or Gladstone and, so on, thus making use of existing buildings and machinery until a new cannery could be constructed in Townsville and as the dry weather is continuing the Peanut Board may be glad to co-operate as there may not be a large peanut crop this ensuing year.

“By using this method of (co-operative) manufacture the Government would get a general idea of the cost of production, sale for product, etc., without actually incurring any major expense and then could safely plan their new canning and processing factory.”

Mr. Thackeray: Did she find out whether the machinery in Rockhampton could treat mango seeds?

Mr. COBURN: I do not know, but I pass on the information to hon. members and the Minister in the hope that some inquiry will be made into the possibility of using mango seed as stock food in dry periods.

The mango seed has a definite food value. I had an analysis made by the Department of Agriculture and Stock and the results indicated that it could be used very profitably for feeding starving stock during periods of drought.

Mr. Jesson interjected.

Mr. COBURN: The hon. member for Hinchinbrook speaks of the kernel. That is the most valuable part of the mango seed. The husk of the mango seed has not the food value of the kernel. I understand that one of the troubles with the kernel is that a weevil gets into it and that it deteriorates rapidly in value because of that. There are thousands and thousands of mangoes of the poorer types that are not marketable. The best types can be easily marketed. The poorer types of mango are not in demand and there are thousands and thousands of them in North Queensland the seeds of which could

be used as stock food if they could be handled economically. This lady says that the kernel could be used as food for cattle in dry periods. This is the analysis given of the kernel of the mango seed—

	Mango.	Wheat	Hay.
	per cent.	per cent.	per cent.
Water	8.0	11.0	
Protein	6.0	5.9	
Fat	7.8	1.7	
Fibre	5.6	26.1	
Carbohydrates	69.5	48.9	
Lime	0.224	0.18	
Phosphoric Acid P ₂ O ₅	0.421	0.21	
Potash	—	1.47	

It would seem from that analysis that there is greater food value in the kernel of the mango than in wheaten hay. We could probably process the kernels of the many we now waste, to save beef and dairy stock in dry seasons, and this is a possibility that we should explore. If it is found that it is not economical to handle them in this particular way, we could desist with the scheme. It is a bright idea and a constructive one worthy of thought and should be followed up. If it is a source from which we can get fodder to feed starving stock it would be of value to the State.

Mr. Adair: How many tons would be required?

Mr. COBURN: I cannot tell the hon. member that as insufficient research has been made into the matter. I do know, however, that nobody has bothered about the poorer type of mangoes. They fall off the trees and are put into carts and taken away and buried to prevent them becoming a nuisance. Nobody has ever cared about them. Many tons are wasted.

Mr. Jesson interjected.

Mr. COBURN: The hon. member for Hinchinbrook seems to know a good deal about mangoes.

Mr. Jesson: I break the kernels and eat them and that is why I am so strong and vigorous.

Mr. COBURN: One of the most important factors in farming is water. We on the Burdekin realise that water is a most valuable commodity. Without it we could not produce the crops of cane that we now produce. I think the Burdekin is the only sugar-cane district in Queensland that has consistently produced its mill peak over the years. That is because of the underground water supply, but there is no guarantee that the underground water supply is going to last for ever. Annually, during the flood season, millions of gallons of water flow away to the Pacific Ocean and are lost forever. There is a spot on the Burdekin River made by nature for damming. No engineer ever saw a spot where he could so easily place a dam with so little destruction of the country because of the water impounded, as at the Burdekin bore.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I trust that the hon. member is not proceeding to talk about irrigation.

Mr. COBURN: I am talking about water for farming. The sugar produced on the Burdekin is worth £10,000,000 a year. If that production was lost to the State—and it would be lost if there was no underground water supply—the Department of Agriculture and Stock would bend every effort to restoring water supplies. If a dam was built at The Falls, there would be a constant flow in the Burdekin River and the underground supplies would be replenished as the 500,000,000 or 600,000,000 gallons a day were pumped from it to water the crops.

I have just said that the sugar produced in the Burdekin area is worth £10,000,000 a year to Queensland. In addition, at least another £1,000,000 comes from small crops, such as potatoes, tomatoes, pineapples and tobacco, and from beef cattle. The aggregate value of the production of the Burdekin district is approximately £11,000,000 a year, and it depends entirely on the underground water supply. The only way we can be sure that the water supply is ours for all time is to dam the river at The Falls. Then, instead of wasting the water, we can use it as we need it.

The construction of a dam at The Falls would also prevent most of the erosion that goes on along the Burdekin at present. I have seen farms completely washed away when the Burdekin has broken its banks. I instance the case of one farm with a crop of about 1,500 tons of cane on it which was washed away overnight. Where it had previously stood there was a depression 20 ft. deep, and there was no sign of the farm or the crop. It was washed away and lost forever. That is the way in which a good deal of land is being lost to the Crown. Erosion is causing much more loss of land than is the changing of tenure.

Flood mitigation in the Burdekin River area is a very important matter. Up to £130,000 has been spent in building stone walls along the banks to strengthen them. However, one of the best methods of protecting the banks and preventing erosion would be to dam the Burdekin at The Falls. Much of the water that flows down the river at flood time would be caught in the reservoir and stored. At a later stage it could be released to flow down the river bed at a slower rate than if it was unimpeded.

Mr. Davies: Do you think that scheme is economically sound?

Mr. COBURN: Definitely. If the Burdekin's underground water supply was lost, the State would lose production amounting to £11,000,000 a year. The Burdekin district would become arid without water. It would be highly economic to spend £70,000,000 on a project that would assure the State of production amounting to £11,000,000 a year.

Mr. Davies: Have you read Artie Fadden's report on it? He condemns it.

Mr. COBURN: I am not concerned with Artie Fadden. I am concerned with the welfare of the district that I represent. It is my firm opinion that the Burdekin area depends entirely on its underground water supply. The only way to be certain that it will continue to produce to the extent of £11,000,000 a year, is to conserve the water supply by damming the Burdekin at The Falls.

The building of a dam on the Burdekin could result also in the generating of thousands of kilowatts of electricity. That power could be used for the production of further wealth; it would obviate the need to send alumina overseas to be processed.

Many farmers on the Burdekin are very concerned about the conservation of underground water supplies, and I should like the Minister to interest himself in the subject.

(Time expired.)

Mr. BEARDMORE (Balonne) (7.50 p.m.): I join with other hon. members in congratulating the Minister on his elevation to office. His is a very important portfolio covering a wide range of agricultural and pastoral matters so important to the general well-being of the State. With his knowledge of the job he will acquit himself with great credit.

Unfortunately for the Government a very severe drought exists in Queensland, mostly in farming and pastoral areas, causing great personal hardship and severe stock losses, which only general rains can remedy.

I congratulate the Government on the decision to remove the royalty on kangaroo skins until 31 March. I take a great deal of personal satisfaction in this because I have made representations on it in the Chamber previously. I know it is really a trial period but I warn the Government that it is not a fair basis because no kangaroos are shot in the summer months as the skins are almost of no value and do not pay for the cost of the ammunition. Furthermore, shooters do not walk around in the hot, dry weather. I hope the Government will extend the period to, say, the end of August next, which will give a better indication of the value of the scheme.

Mr. Davies: Have you any difficulty in getting shooters?

Mr. BEARDMORE: At this time of the year, yes, but not in winter.

Mr. Davies: Do you think if you could persuade the Government to adopt the policy you advocate it would help get them out there?

Mr. BEARDMORE: Yes, I certainly do, because it will do away with the trouble of getting permits and with the need to send the skins away to a certain place. It will

also eliminate the checking-over which is a worry to the people of the Outback. They help one another if they are given a free hand. I ask the Government to extend the time. Up to 24 August last 500,000 kangaroo skins had been handed in this year under the royalty paid to the department. That is only a small percentage of the kangaroo numbers.

Mr. Thackeray: How do you estimate the number of 'roos?

Mr. BEARDMORE: You never shoot more than a percentage of kangaroos and I would say at a guess it would be between 15 and 20 per cent. That will give hon. members some indication of how great an economic burden the kangaroo pest has become. Its numbers are ever increasing.

In "The Courier-Mail" of Monday, 18 November, an article by a staff reporter from Charleville said—

"Kangaroos are a greater menace than the rabbit before myxomatosis, Warrego and Barcoo sheep men claim.

Graziers want an intensive publicity campaign to establish a lucrative kangaroo hide industry.

The graziers also want—

Shooters' licenses eliminated;

Bounty payments on skins;

Surplus army ammunition released to shooters at cut prices.

In a tour which took me from Charleville through Augathella and Tambo, more than 100 miles north, and later south almost to Wyandra, I saw grazing paddocks close cropped and ruined by kangaroos.

I saw 170 kangaroos dead beside the roads on a night drive on the 27-mile stretch between Westgate and Yanna sidings south of Charleville.

The car frequently had to swerve and stop to avoid more than 100 'roos on the road.

Mr. Jack Jillett, of Chatham, a 60,000-acre sheep station midway between Tambo and Augathella, said:—

'Shooters are not working because ammunition prices are high and low price of skins.

There are more six-foot old man 'roos around than I have ever seen.'

As a matter of fact, I have seen some that could put me in their pouch. Continuing with the article—

"A shooter once bagged 1,000 'roos in quick time on my property. They would get many times that now,' he said.

Mr. Bob Martin, chairman of the Tambo Branch of the Warrego Graziers' Association, and owner of Ivanhoe Station, 18 miles south of Tambo:

'I recently counted 88 kangaroos in three minutes on one corner of my property.

A market for kangaroo hides should be built up in Australia.

America is taking our hides at low prices with no competition.'"

As a matter of fact, only one American buyer operates in Australia. I quote from the article again—

"Mr. A. G. McKechnie, Graziers Association Industrial and Field Officer, said some graziers felt that their properties carried as many kangaroos as sheep."

I quite realise that.

"Rotational grazing no longer was possible.

Sheep had to be put into empty paddocks to beat kangaroos to the feed.

Charleville skin buyer, Mr. J. K. Thompson, said kangaroos shooters had to pay a bounty of 5 per cent. of the gross price to the Department of Agriculture and Stock, and a licence fee of £1 per year.

Current Brisbane prices were firsts 3s. 6d. a pound, seconds 2s. 6d., and thirds 1s.

Shooters could not make 'roo shooting pay on less than 5s. 6d. a pound.

He said .303 rifle ammunition cost £5 a hundred and shooters needed a 90 per cent kill at 1s. a bullet."

I can speak personally on this subject because I am quite sure there are as many kangaroos as sheep at the present time on my property. I know a man who decided to pay 1s. a head for kangaroos but he told me that after paying for 2,000 he could not see any appreciable lessening in their numbers so he decided it was just a waste of money.

Mr. Davies: How many would a good shooter kill in a day?

Mr. BEARDMORE: It would depend upon how good a shot he was.

Mr. Davies: A good shot.

Mr. BEARDMORE: It is hard to say. Kangaroos are doing a great deal of damage in the West during the present drought. They travel hundreds of miles to areas where isolated storms have fallen. They eat out the feed so vitally needed to keep stock alive. Hon. members may have read recently that a kangaroo crashed through the wind-screen of a car on the road into Dalby. The account was published in a Melbourne paper, as a matter of fact. Recently I made it my business to get in touch with the insurance companies in Queensland. One company told me that one in nine of the claims have been for damage caused to cars by kangaroos. Another company told me that similar claims represent 50 per cent. of all western claims. Another said one in ten, another said 50 per cent. of all claims and another that handles only 2 per cent. of car insurance business said that they paid £1,100 on such claims this year and yet another said 20 per cent of claims at an average of £65 each. That is not the whole story. Many cars are not even registered.

Mr. Thackeray: What are the police doing?

Mr. BEARDMORE: They do not need to be registered; they are used on the owners' properties. I hope, as I said earlier, that the Government will extend the trial period to the end of August. Wild pigs are reported to be destroying up to 100 per cent. of the grazing pastures. It is reported that wild pigs are destroying up to 100 per cent. of lambs in the south-west whilst drought conditions prevail and this is a very serious matter for the grazing industry in that area. A bonus of 2s. a pig snout is inadequate. A sow will produce 16 pigs in a year which is an indication of the seriousness of this menace. The only way to encourage the destruction of wild pigs is to increase the bonus on snouts to double what it is today. I commend that suggestion to the Government. I wish to refer to the irrigation scheme carried out in the St. George district by the Department of Public Lands. It services 20 irrigated farms which grow fodder. It is hoped that sufficient fodder will be grown on these farms to supply the landholders with fodder for starving stock, thus obviating the heavy cost of freight on fodder from the south. It is hoped also that in the near future we will not be dependent on the cities for our fodder.

Mr. HEWITT (Mackenzie) (8.2 p.m.): I offer my congratulations to the Minister on his elevation to the position of Minister for Agriculture and Stock. The hon. gentleman's experience and knowledge will enable him to do an excellent job. I also wish to pay a tribute to the stock inspectors throughout the State. Over the years it has been my privilege and pleasure to have dealings with many of these men. In most cases I found them most approachable persons who were ready to do everything they could to help the man on the land. These men have done much good for the State, particularly in the tick areas. Over the years pleuro-pneumonia and redwater have taken great toll of stock. Since the introduction of bleeders from the Yeerongpilly Animal Health Station, and assisted by knowledge gained from stock inspectors, many owners have been able to prevent losses of stock through redwater. Knowledge gained is passed on by one grazier to another and much has been done to lessen the losses from this disease. As a result of the efforts of these inspectors, pleuro-pneumonia is under control in all areas. Much good work has been done by the cleansing dips. I refer to dips such as at Eidsvold, one of which I had in my charge for many years. Mr. Mulhern and his officers have done very good work in that district. It was charged on the basis of 6,000 a year, but today three or four times that number are going through. Stock owners from clean areas can purchase cattle in the Eidsvold district, knowing that those cattle will have one dipping before going through the dips at Cardaga and Boondooma.

I ask the Minister to consider similar facilities at Gracemere when the Saleyards Board establishes a dip at the saleyards,

Between 1,200 and 1,500 head of fat cattle are handled every Monday, and many additional store cattle are taken through the area to southern portions of Queensland. A cleansing dip would be of great advantage.

Central Queensland has two-fifths of the cattle numbers of the Commonwealth. That in itself indicates the great need for departmental assistance when the dip is erected. The provision of a dip charged at Government expense would be of great service to graziers and farmers.

Mr. Mann: Do you not think the rail should be extended into the saleyard?

Mr. HEWITT: For the information of the hon. member, the rail has been extended into the new yard at Gracemere. He is thinking of the dim and distant past when he was in the district. Most D.D.T. preparations are excellent, and we found when using Rucide in the Eidsvold dip that it was effective for six weeks or more, whereas when arsenical dips are used cattle have to be dipped every two or three weeks. I urge the Government to consider standardising dips by using only D.D.T. solutions, although the department may have a reason for not using it in all instances. I recall the dip on "Moocoorooba," in the Camboon district. It was charged with an arsenical dip. If it is still in operation I ask the Minister to see whether it could be charged with D.D.T. I make the same request in regard to other dips in the State. Cattle become tick-infested when driven any distance. Heavy stock losses can occur after the fourth or fifth day of dipping should they be dipped in arsenic when en-route to saleyards. These may appear to be minor matters, but they are very important to many people.

Mr. Mann interjected.

Mr. HEWITT: The hon. member for Brisbane understands the difficulties of drovers with cattle that have been put through an arsenical dip. The stock are knocked about, apart altogether from the possibility of losing them.

Mr. Jesson interjected.

Mr. HEWITT: Another interjection from the hon. member for Hinchinbrook. He would be the first I would put through a dip if I had the opportunity. It would possibly cleanse him.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. HEWITT: The provision of adequate facilities on stock routes is essential to development. I am pleased with the attention given by the department in recent years to this work. Water points are being established wherever possible, thus alleviating the problems of drovers. Anybody with my experience of droving will realise that drovers work under adverse conditions. Everything should be done to make their lot easier. By doing so we would be making the

lot of the man on the land easier, too. The provision of water facilities along stock routes would greatly benefit him and help make the markets for his stock more accessible. The lack of markets has not only held back the development of the State, but it has also had a detrimental effect on many of our irrigation schemes.

We should also attend to pasture improvement and bring about development there. The Department of Agriculture and Stock is to be congratulated on its interest in pasture improvement. I refer to Brian pastures at Gayndah, and a small irrigation plot at Theodore that has shown good results for the effort of its very capable manager, Mr. Baker, who only recently relinquished the position. I am not critical of the department because I honestly think it has been well administered over the years. The former Minister also had a detailed knowledge of farming in this State and he was well fitted to carry out his portfolio.

Mr. DEWAR (Chermside) (8.13 p.m.): I congratulate the hon. member for Warwick on his elevation to Minister for Agriculture and Stock. I have had many interesting talks with him over the years and there is nobody more fitted than he to carry out the duties of his office. I congratulate him on the way in which he has approached his job and I am sure he will make a success of it.

The hon. member for Maryborough spoke at great length and bewailed the fact that there were no speakers from this side of the Chamber. It is interesting to record that I am the twelfth hon. member to have spoken from this side of the Chamber. We have had five speakers from the official Opposition, three from the Queensland Labour Party and the two Independent hon. members. It is reasonable to say that hon. members on the Government side have done their duty in relation to these Estimates. As you know, Mr. Taylor, we have a Committee system in our Party, that each member of the Government Party at the beginning of the Session indicates the committee on which he would like to serve. For instance, a group of members may feel that they have a special interest in a particular phase of Government activity. We are in a much better political position by weight of numbers than hon. members opposite and we have more capacity, too. Hon. members of the Government Party have indicated an interest in many of our committees. It naturally follows that the members of the party who are on the Agriculture and Stock Committee will speak on the Estimates now before the Committee. The Liberal members of the Government are pleased to sit by and allow their country cousins to speak on them. In turn, when Estimates in which the Liberal Party members are interested are introduced, they return the courtesy by allowing us to do our job. The result is that we can present ourselves to the people as a solid and stable Government. There are men on the Government benches

who are capable of discussing every facet of government. So much for the puerile suggestion of the hon. member for Maryborough that there are no speakers on this side of the Committee.

Mr. JESSON: How many wild pigs are there at Aspley?

Mr. DEWAR: If the hon. member for Hinchinbrook is not careful I will accept the advice of the hon. member for Burdekin about exporting bald-faced billy-goats.

Let us see what the Labour Government did for the farmers. I need go no further than refer to their failure to build a railway link between Blackall and Charleville and to extend the northern line to Camooweal.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. member for Chermside to confine his remarks to the Vote before the Committee.

Mr. DEWAR: I am leading up to it. In times of drought it is essential for livestock to be transferred from badly affected areas to places where feed is available. The Labour Government's approach to matters such as that was nothing short of disgusting. During my time in Parliament I can recall their Primary Producers Organisation and Marketing Acts, known as the "Ned Kelly" Act. Under it the Government could point a gun at the primary producers and tell them what to grow, when to grow it, and what to do with it after they had grown it.

Opposition Members interjected.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The interruption of hon. members on my left has been persistent since a quarter past 7.

Mr. JESSON: I did not get here until half past 7.

The CHAIRMAN: I tell the hon. member for Hinchinbrook that it ill becomes a gentleman to continue to interrupt. I am sure he wants to be a gentleman. I sincerely trust that the interruptions will cease.

Mr. DEWAR: The hon. member may want to be a gentleman but he has an up-hill battle.

Mr. JESSON: I rise to a point of order. I object to what the hon. member for Chermside said.

The CHAIRMAN: I did not hear what he said.

Mr. JESSON: He said I was no gentleman. I am just as much a gentleman as he is, on the grass or anywhere else he likes to go.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. member for Chermside to withdraw any offensive remark that he may have made about the hon. member for Hinchinbrook.

Mr. DEWAR: In deference to you, Mr. Taylor, I withdraw the remark.

I refer also to the attitude of the Labour Government towards the poultry farmers who,

in their battle for fair conditions in the sale of their product, took certain action. As a reprisal, the Government that allegedly were sympathetic towards the farmers of the State increased the number of birds that a backyard poultry farmer could keep. They adopted a dictatorial attitude, and again pointed the gun at the head of the primary producer. Such has been Labour's attitude towards the primary producer during the whole of my parliamentary career.

The hon. member for Maryborough said that members of the Country Party were interested in the farmers, whereas all that Liberal Party members were interested in was using them. Nothing could be further from the truth. During the whole of my association with the Liberal Party of Australia, Queensland Division, there has existed within its ambit a rural committee. Headed by Mr. Bedwell, himself a primary producer, it has done a great deal of worth-while work. It has within its ranks practical primary producers of the State and they have been responsible through their investigations for making suggestions to this Party when in Opposition and to the Federal Government. Much of what they have done has been brought before the Parliaments of Queensland. The Liberal Party, as a part of the Country-Liberal Government of Queensland, is beholden to no-one in battling for the rights of the primary producers. I have been associated in a small way with secondary industry and I know full well just how much it and the people of the State depend on the primary producer. I will take second place to no man in that belief. It has been my training right through my life to such an extent that I am more than convinced of the importance of primary industry to the State. We will always be able to export the products of primary industry although, because of certain conditions, we are very much up against it in competing with secondary industries in other countries of the world.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I think the hon. member has made the point he rose to make in reply to the hon. member for Maryborough and I ask him to get back to the Vote.

Mr. DEWAR: The hon. member for Balonne spoke about kangaroos and the problem they are in the country. He mentioned the prices the shooters get for the hides on the Australian market; that is a very real problem. I do not know how much a hide drops in weight in the tanning process. A large kangaroo hide when tanned would weigh $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb. and a very small one about half a lb. The average would be about $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. to 1 lb. I have not had much to do with it lately but, from memory, I think a good hide brings about £1 a lb. Naturally the hide wet when sold by the shooter would weigh more like 3 lbs. so there would be a fair drop in weight between its raw state and when it is sold. That might give the

hon. member for Balonne an idea of what the average hide is sold at by the tanner. A good clean skin, free of bullet holes except perhaps in the forequarters, would sell at somewhere about £1 or 30s. in its finished state. It is a great pity that a greater demand cannot be created for kangaroo hide because there is no doubt that, ounce for ounce or pound for pound avoirdupois it is the toughest hide one can get.

Mr. Aikens: Apart from politicians' hides.

Mr. DEWAR: I am excluding politicians from this. That part of a horse's hide that is associated with its tail, which is very popular for the old type of cut-throat razor strop, is extremely tough but I should think that, pound for pound avoirdupois, the kangaroo hide is the toughest. I suggest to the hon. member for Balonne that he and his primary producer friends might create a demand by asking their boot retailers to produce for them boots made from kangaroo hide. He pointed out to me that the Americans are very keen on kangaroo hide. He had the opportunity to see through a hide-treatment works in America. He advised me that the Americans have been able to successfully tan kangaroo hides and bring the outside surface to such a texture that it will take a polish. Tanning methods in Australia are apparently not sufficiently well advanced or the demand for the finished skin has not been such that tanners are prepared to do the necessary research to bring a hide to a texture that will take a polish. Because of the value of the kangaroo hide as a commodity it might be possible to create a demand for it. One of the main usages of the kangaroo hide today is in the plaiting of good class whips. There again the demand has fallen off for kangaroo hide whips. They are very expensive because perfect skins must be used. When the hides come out of the pits you can see the faults in them. If there is any flaw in the hide the whip breaks down when it is cracked. The average whip about 8 ft. long would be worth about £5 today. One of the big troubles with the kangaroo whip is that if it happens to hit a sharp stone on the ground one of the strands might be cut and the whip has to be discarded. For some of the rougher work they are using raw hide as it is called—the red hide or white hide whip which will withstand the shock of hitting stones on the ground. I would say that kangaroo hide would make an excellent riding boot and it might be possible to create a demand throughout the country. It would be like perpetual motion—the greater the demand the more shooters would go after kangaroos; the more kangaroos shot the greater the carrying capacity of the property. Another use for kangaroo hide is in the wind bag of the Scotchmen's bagpipes. Unfortunately there are not enough of them, but it is the kangaroo hide wind bag that produces those beautiful sounds that issue from the bagpipes.

In passing let me mention a matter I have previously raised in the Chamber. I agree with the hon. member for Mackenzie that the previous Minister administered the department extremely well. While he did take notice of what I had to say about the matter and got a report from the responsible authority, many reports are like appeals from Caesar unto Caesar. The person who makes the report is the person concerned with what is happening. I do not care whether it was deliberate or accidental but the report was fairly nebulous. I raised the matter of what I said was a shocking waste of a national asset in the apparent disregard for the way hides are taken off beasts at the Brisbane Abattoir. The Brisbane tannery trade depends almost entirely for its supply of hides on the Brisbane abattoir. About two weeks ago, I discussed this matter with the new Minister and he has very kindly consented to join me in a tour of Brisbane tanneries when Parliament adjourns. I suggested this in the past but I did not get anywhere at all. It is all very well for those concerned with running the Queensland Meat Industry Board at Murarrie, to say that the hides are first class and leave it at that. The only way in which you can tell whether a hide is first-class is to view it after six weeks, when it has gone through the salt and liming pits and tanning pits. You cannot tell whether it is first class by looking at it when it is fresh. When the hide has gone through the pits it is then that you see the shocking flesh cuts. It is at that stage that the hide is classed for the various types of leather. Once the hide goes through the salting and liming and the tanning pits the person in charge has it taken out and turned over. He is able to look at the grain for marks and barb-wire scratches. At that stage the hide is three-eighths to half an inch thick because it is blown up full of extracts and the fleshing is still on it. Even at that stage these cuts are apparent. I have often had a look at them myself over the years that I was associated with the industry. These butcher's cuts were up to ten inches long, and they made the hide useless for many things. It is most important to have hides that are free of cuts for saddlery work. Much of the leather is split down for upper leather in the boot trade. Some may go into sole leather for shoes. An inspection is made of each hide, but still when the hides go off the tables and are finished off you can see these cuts manifesting themselves. At that stage many sides of leather are found to be completely useless for the purpose for which they were intended. There is a tremendous wastage of a national asset because of the apparent disregard of care in the removal of the hides. As I said before, the Minister has promised to come with me and see for himself what I have been trying to explain to the House.

Mr. Aikens: What do you suggest should be done to stop it?

Mr. DEWAR: I have always had a theory—I do not know whether it would work or not—that it should be possible to make a machine that would grip the hide and tear it off.

I wish to refer to a matter dealing with abattoirs which I have discussed with the Minister. There are private organisations at Murarrie, which are killing cattle. These people are able to buy cattle to kill for overseas markets and for areas outside Brisbane. When orders are placed by local meat retailers, the cattle have to be sold on the hoof and then driven to the abattoir. These orders amount to between 100 and 200 cattle a week. The cattle must be killed at the Q.M.I.B. plant. The firm's representative must follow the carcasses through the various stages of processing and the salesman must then sell them on the Q.M.I.B. property at Murarrie. It is another plank of the Socialist plan. It is a ridiculous state of affairs when people who have the ability to kill for overseas markets and the necessary plant cannot process cattle for sale in the metropolitan area. I ask the Minister to consider allowing those people to kill for their own requirements in the metropolitan area.

Hon. O. O. MADSEN (Warwick—Minister for Agriculture and Stock) (8.36 p.m.): Before dealing with other aspects of the work of the department, I shall touch on some of the points raised by hon. members. It would be impossible to deal with all of them, but I assure hon. members that they will receive consideration and in certain instances, I may be able to supply further information.

The hon. member for Maryborough mentioned the statement by the Under Secretary in the annual report on the use of fertiliser on the Darling Downs. The Under Secretary said it had not been possible to get great benefits from the use of fertilisers. He did not say that some benefit was not obtained, but he endeavoured to point out that the additional return did not warrant the expenditure.

Mr. Davies: Would the depth of the soil have something to do with it?

Mr. MADSEN: The Darling Downs has a multiplicity of soils. The variation in wheat quality is a problem exercising the minds of the departmental officers. Queensland has a reputation for producing wheat of high quality, but we fear the deterioration in quality that may take place with the passage of time.

Overseas visitors marvel at the fact that the Downs has been producing crops for 70 and 80 years and that the land appears to be just as fertile as ever. Farming, of course, is now more scientific. Methods that were once regarded as ideal have now been discarded. At one time farmers turned over soil with the plough and regarded it as essential to good farming. Today the

first two or three inches of soil is regarded as most important and it is not turned over at all. The underneath soil is aerated and broken up. These advances have been possible as a result of research by both State and Commonwealth officers.

I remember reading a report on the Darling Downs when that land was being thrown open for closer settlement. It was before my days in the industry. That report specifically stated that the land was not suitable for wheat-growing, but today it is the top wheat land in the State. Years ago we used ploughs pulled by teams of horses and bullocks, but that now is not regarded as the best method.

Mr. Bell said that no appreciable benefit had been obtained from fertilisers, but he still recognises the need for further investigation.

I think I said earlier that for many years farmers thought the application of superphosphate was all that was required to fertilise the land.

Frankly, I admit that thousands of pounds have been wasted in putting fertiliser on land with no results as the land already had the minerals that were being applied to it. It is important that we have tests made to know what our soil contains. The department is co-operating in helping the farmer with trials on his own property.

Mr. Aikens: They have a system of soil tests in the cane industry.

Mr. MADSEN: The department feels that the farmer can make the tests himself. My experience as a farmer tells me that natural fertilisation of the soil is something that could be practised to a greater extent. It is done in the sugar industry by the planting of legumes to return nitrogen to the soil and in assisting to conserve moisture. It is a matter that applies to agricultural land generally. There is a big field yet to be explored.

I made reference to the expansion of the cotton and tobacco industries. I have to admit that I do not know a great deal about them but I have made it my business to find out. I realise the problems of those industries.

With the exception of wool the market for a few of our industries is not too rosy at the present time and Mr. Bell makes reference to that in his report. We have to grow crops that we can sell in this country and not overseas.

I understand the problems of marketing, and at my instigation the department has written to the Minister for Primary Industries pointing out, in relation to cotton, that the first necessity is to instill confidence into farmers. The farmer must know that if he grows a crop he will not be let down. Surely that is a sound and wise approach. If there are two crops for which we can do a good deal in providing markets ourselves,

they are cotton and tobacco. Hon. members may say what they like about the primary producer but his costs are related to the costs of the country. We can improve his methods and he can use his best endeavours but there is a limit to the extent to which he can reduce costs.

In view of the great development in irrigation schemes on the Tableland the cotton and tobacco crops call for all the investigation possible so that the people on the land may be placed on a safe footing. What is the good of encouraging people to go into an industry unless we can find a market for their product?

Mr. Aikens: As in every walk of life the farmer wants to feel secure.

Mr. MADSEN: Yes. No doubt irrigation has taken a lot of the risk of farming. I was particularly pleased to hear the Minister for Public Lands refer to the proposal of irrigation on suitable farms. It is something in which I am interested too. Although we talk a good deal about fodder and water conservation, we must help more farmers with assistance to irrigation, so as to mitigate the ravages of drought. I think there is some weakness in the Tinaroo Falls irrigation scheme. On the one hand there has been a considerable expenditure in providing water but nobody in any Government department seems to know very much about the land. Both angles should have been considered at the same time. While we were spending money on conserving water, we should have been conducting an intense investigation into what could be done with the land when the water was applied. A committee has now been established to investigate the potential of the land, and I sincerely hope that its report will be favourable.

With the development of the mineral fields of North Queensland, much more food will be needed. The hoped-for increase in population, too, should help a great deal towards the establishment of canneries and other industries.

If a man goes onto land without knowing what it is capable of producing, it is heartbreaking to find that despite all his work he is doomed to failure from the start. I have a good deal of sympathy for the man who falls into a trap such as that.

I assure hon. members that everything possible will be done to help the tobacco and cotton industries, because they will assist greatly in developing the State.

The hon. member for Barambah referred to soil conservation, something of great concern to me. A good deal has already been done to prevent soil erosion, but the conservation of soil should concern us all. I have received a very interesting report from the department's soil conservation officers, and I have made inquiries about the possibility of stepping up the activities of this section of the department. The great difficulty, of course, is to get men for

the work. We are now advertising for them. We want engineers to take levels and perform kindred duties, and other men to put their recommendations into effect. The soil conservation officers say that at present there are 2,500,000 acres of cultivated land in the State, and over 1,000,000 acres require the installation of structures to arrest or direct runoff flows. This area and an additional 1,000,000 acres require commonsense land use, including the judicious use of pasture in order to reduce runoff and erosion and to stabilise the soil.

I am sure that year after year many hon. members have seen land go out of production because of soil erosion. As a practical farmer, I know that in areas of uncertain rainfall there is a tendency, particularly in dry periods, for the farmer to work the land to conserve moisture with the smallest fall of rain. He tries to bring it to a state where he can sow his crop with about half an inch of rain. Unfortunately, he might get up to 3½ inches, with the result that the land suffers from sheet erosion because it cannot absorb all the moisture. Another farmer might leave the ground rough and make provision for heavy rain, only to find that he has not worked the soil enough.

The department's soil conservation officers have made great progress with the problem. We have passed the stage of dealing with one farm at a time. We think now in terms of schemes to take the run-off from the whole of one catchment area.

We should like to set out a plan to cover the catchment area—to have the whole matter dealt with, local authority roads, main roads and so on before anything is done. Progress has been made in the Kingaroy area and a similar programme has begun in the Pittsworth area. I think he will get excellent co-operation from the farmers. It may be necessary to review the legislation because four different Acts affect it and there is some conflict.

Apart from the erosion control aspects, water disposal rights are very contentious matters in rural areas. The solution becomes more difficult as time goes on because of the increased run-off, siltation of water disposal systems, and development of watercourses on new sites. Levee bank construction with all its defects is the only solution available to the farmer in the absence of action by competent authority to delineate the drainage patterns. The position is further confused by the overlapping administrative advisory and regulatory powers for run-off and erosion control possessed by various Government departments, four in all, and some local authorities. We shall have to try to avoid that overlapping.

In 10 years run-off control measures have been applied to 45,000 acres of agricultural land on 1,400 farms in the State. Last year 13,000 acres were protected. The area needing treatment is increasing at four times this

rate and there is still the back lag of 1,000,000 acres yet to be treated. In other words, we are going backwards instead of catching up with the problem.

Mr. Power: You will go further back with the present Government, too.

Mr. MADSEN: I think we may be able to report the very opposite after a very short time. If the hon. member wants to bring the Government into it, it shows that the previous Government were not greatly concerned about the land when, three months after taking over, we have to report that we are going back.

Reasonably satisfactory control techniques have now been developed in the engineering aspect of the work but the field of land use investigations remains virtually untouched. Farm and catchment planning methods are well advanced by comparison with other States. Plans have been completed for five catchments totalling 27,000 acres, and planning is proceeding on a further four catchments totalling 27,000 acres. So the catchment area plan appears to be the sensible approach to the problem. Dealing with one farm, say at the top of the catchment area, and turning the water on to its neighbours below does not get anywhere. It is only by planning the whole area that we can deal with it satisfactorily and effectively. Provision for implementing these plans through the agricultural draining section of the Local Government Acts is unnecessarily complicated and unsatisfactory. Official projects will proceed on only three of these catchments.

Mr. Windsor: Would that mean conserving the water?

Mr. MADSEN: No, it is simply to deal with the run-off with a view to conserving the soil rather than to deal with erosion. We want it to be thought of rather as conservation of the soil than as erosion control. As far as possible we want to sow that idea in the minds of the farmers, too. A sound basis has been determined for advanced planning by the establishment of a grid pattern over the main agricultural areas. Further progress depends on relieving experienced officers of field surveying work. It was proposed to appoint six "surveying" or "working plan" officers this year. What needs to be done? Our rate of applying mechanical control measures must be increased. Even if it were quadrupled a period of 40 years is required to bring the situation under control, allowing for dealing with new cultivated land. There are many areas which will be unproductive or unworkable well within this period of time. That is to say, the prediction is that despite all these things there will be quite a lot of land going out of production before it can be attended to, at the present rate of progress. I have already discussed this matter with the Under Secretary of my department to see what we can do to speed the work up. We have had a

good deal of inquiry from landholders but unfortunately we have not been able to provide the service to deal with it.

The application of good land use practices is even more urgent but the change from an exploitative farming economy must be based on and led by solid research. The volume of our crop research work is good; research into cropping sequences is not so good. The volume of pasture research work for pasture lands is excellent, for agricultural lands it is poor. That is really a brief report on the problem of soil erosion in this State. Quite frankly I regard it as a serious problem.

Mr. Gair: It is not an easy one.

Mr. MADSEN: No, it is not an easy one but a very important one because we know what has happened in other countries. We can almost marvel at what some of the land has been able to take in Queensland. Without any great effort having been made to conserve it, it is still comparatively fertile.

Mr. Windsor: It varies with the individual farm.

Mr. MADSEN: There are many aspects to it. I know, of course, that mechanisation, large soil moving machines will play an important part. When the farms were originally surveyed the farmers naturally liked to fence in neat square or oblong paddocks, so that there would be no difficult corners to negotiate with machinery. But it seems to me that if we had only one big paddock and the farm completely surveyed in contour before any fences were erected, it would help. There is evidence of that being done by farmers throughout the length and breadth of the agricultural areas. Perhaps more than putting in permanent fencing there is a tendency rather to use temporary fencing so that these works can be carried out at any time.

Mr. Windsor: The bulldozer can make the farm easier to work.

Mr. MADSEN: Mechanical equipment naturally has assisted greatly. Local authorities are co-operating splendidly wherever they can to make plant available. It is certainly a matter of urgency and I hope we shall be able to get on with this work at a much faster rate. I hope that we can get landholders generally to take more interest, to recognise the seriousness of any further delay.

Mr. Gair: A good deal of work has already been done.

Mr. MADSEN: I have made that point. What I was pointing out is that we are losing ground.

The hon. member for Toowoomba referred to the selling of canned pineapples overseas under the Australian brand. I would point out that my department has no control over the branding of canned pineapples, that is

a matter for the canneries themselves. My experience has been that the Golden Circle brand of pineapples has become almost world-renowned. I think at this stage it would be tragic to alter the name. I was privileged recently to see a very fine film on canning. When we see what is going on in other parts of the world we come to the conclusion that in the Brisbane cannery we have perhaps one of the finest canneries in the Southern Hemisphere, if not anywhere in the world. Naturally I think the C.O.D. has accomplished something of which it can be proud. It has developed everything with a view to keeping costs down. Reports from the export markets show a downward trend in prices available on world markets.

Mr. Windsor: Is it enough to keep them going?

Mr. MADSEN: Yes. You cannot afford to ignore the fact that the world market is reaching saturation point when you think of establishing another cannery. Although I would be the first to wish to assist the North, at the same time I counsel common sense in dealing with this question. I am hopeful, with the increase of population in the North, that many of these ideas will be developed. I think that the basis for the great increase of population in the North now exists.

Mr. Gair: You will have very keen competition.

Mr. MADSEN: Yes, we recognise that. It is not right to lead producers into something that may be uneconomic. Even with water, there is a cost to be taken into consideration. It is something we have to approach very carefully. I hope that my department through its research officers will be able to gather much information about the problems of pineapple production and vegetables in order to help the people on the land.

Mr. Gair: You must be able to sell all you can produce.

Mr. MADSEN: Yes. Regarding irrigated pastures, there is a tremendous field to be developed. We should not only rely on surface water. There are many areas where there are reasonably shallow underground streams. If we can encourage the financial institutions to assist the land-holders in the provision of water supplies and irrigation much good will result. It is a golden investment to assist the land-holder to save his stock. Irrigation will not only save the stock but keep them in production. There is a bit of a catch in irrigation. Far too many people seem to think that if you have water you can grow almost anything. That is not correct. After all there are limitations on costs which some crops can carry. Potatoes, onions and tobacco give a big return, but crops such as wheat and maize do not give a large return per acre and therefore it would not be economic to irrigate those crops.

Dealing with irrigated pastures, despite droughts, the progress has been encouraging. A steady increase in the acreage sown to irrigated pastures has been evident since 1950 when the first plantings by farmers were made in Queensland. During 1955-1956 and 1956-1957 an accelerated increase has been noted, and it is estimated that a total of 7,000 acres is now sown to irrigated pastures in Southern and Central Queensland. If we can only get that small number of farmers to work on those lines the tendency is for others to follow suit. The Logan and Albert district has approximately 1,000 acres of irrigated pasture, but plantings in both the Lower Burnett and Gympie districts may shortly reach this figure. The Brisbane Valley, Fassifern, Upper Burnett, Darling Downs, and Brisbane coastal districts are also reporting increased acreage. At Bundaberg and in the Callide Valley interest has been stimulated by the success of the initial plantings of irrigated pastures. That of course is the best advertisement. Irrigated pastures are almost exclusively used for dairy production, a very minor proportion being used for sheep and lamb-raising. Increased production has invariably followed the grazing of irrigated pastures whether dairy stock have full time or limited access to the pastures. A frequently quoted figure is an increase of one gallon per cow per day when irrigated pastures provide portion, if not all, of the ration for dairy herds. Succulent feed is necessary for dairy-farming. Pastures not as succulent may be quite good for beast production, but succulent feed is required by dairy herds.

Herd recording returns have shown a marked increase in production of up to 120 to 159 lb. of butter-fat per cow per year from herds grazing on irrigated pastures. This is very important to Queensland where dairying is carried on in tropical and sub-tropical areas.

The hon. member for Darlington described the conditions under which dairying is carried on. Any improvement of pastures is very important.

Where a limited area of pasture makes it necessary to restrict intake by the herd, an appreciable reduction in cost of protein concentrates is effected. This is an important contribution by irrigated pastures. The high protein forage also forms a valuable supplement to the available rain-grown pastures and thus appreciably increases production.

This subject will be given more attention by the Government than perhaps it has received in the past. The Government believe that more emphasis should be given to increased fodder conservation and improvement of pastures. We hope to encourage conservation of fodder in good times and so avoid the need for relief in bad seasons. Fodder in good seasons can be purchased at a

much lower cost, and producers should be encouraged to take advantage of the lower prices to build up stocks of fodder.

With the introduction of mechanisation I think more fodder conservation will be practised in western areas than in the past. With machinery such as hay-balers and forage-harvesters I think it will be possible even on stations running large herds to conserve quantities in proportion to those large herds of cattle and sheep.

We now know a great deal more about the storage of grain. As I said earlier in the debate, we did not know a great deal about moisture content of the grain, but now at very small cost the farmer can purchase equipment to test moisture content. Much more grain is now being stored than formerly.

I think I should refer to dry pastures or rain grown pastures. One of the problems of Queensland is the small portion of the State suitable for irrigation. Water is not available. Development of suitable grasses will be of great assistance. I am advised that the introduction of buffel grass has played a very important part in improving the carrying capacity of many grazing properties. Anything that can be done to improve rain pastures will be beneficial because it represents the greater part of the State. I know that my predecessor was a strong advocate of developing pastures and I support that view. There is a tremendous field to be explored.

Mr. Power: You have not said anything about drought relief for the wheat-growers.

Mr. MADSEN: The subject of price is not within my control. I have heard many discussions and there is a big story to be told. I was impressed with the statement that only the person delivering to the board will get help. The hon. member must realise that all social benefits are not equitable. The man who tries to save a little gets the least in social benefits. The man who has not harvested his wheat and delivered it to the pool has probably made hay out of it and has thereby got a substantial return. Furthermore, he has the use of his land earlier than the man who carried on his wheat.

Mr. Power: What about the man who planted and had a failure?

Mr. MADSEN: That applies right through agriculture.

Mr. Power: Have you decided to give them 1s. a bushel?

Mr. MADSEN: We have decided but beyond that I will not say anything.

Mr. Power: To whom will the approach be made?

Mr. MADSEN: That is not for me to decide. Is it not better to give the wheat-

grower a little extra and keep wheat in the State rather than pay the money away in freight?

Mr. Power: Did you hear what Mr. Archibald had to say?

Mr. MADSEN: I agree with what he said. Although the hon. member for Barooka talks about the State Wheat Board, I think he is misguided because that board has done everything in its power to play the game. I want to tell him that the statement he made regarding the sale of wheat is not true. Since the agreement was reached no wheat has been sold; it may have been sold before the agreement was reached.

Mr. Power: There was an undertaking given to me, and you know it, that if they got a premium increase of 6d. they would not ask for any more and no wheat would be sent out of Queensland.

Mr. MADSEN: The hon. member must realise that you cannot bind people round the neck and feet with all sorts of conditions. It is all right to approach the subject by forcing people to do this and that but you have to realise the position of the wheat-grower. Last year his crop was only one-third of what it usually is and this year it is only one-third or a little better. The position of the wheat-grower is desperate. I have endeavoured and I shall continue with higher counsels, to induce the Commonwealth Government to shoulder a greater responsibility by giving a higher initial payment to the wheat-grower. The industry has shouldered the responsibility of guaranteeing the Commonwealth flour requirements from year to year. I ask any hon. member whether he believes that that should be the responsibility of the industry or of the national Parliament?

Mr. Power: It is the responsibility of the national Parliament.

Mr. MADSEN: That is so. In the last couple of days I have confirmed the fact that it is necessary to carry a quantity of wheat over from year to year so that the Commonwealth will not run short of flour. It is a national responsibility.

Mr. Power: They sent 4,500,000 bushels out of Queensland.

Mr. MADSEN: I think the hon. member for Barooka should withdraw that remark.

Mr. Power: I will not.

Mr. MADSEN: Will the hon. member withdraw it if I can prove that it is not true?

Mr. Power: I can prove that it is true.

Mr. MADSEN: The hon. member cannot prove it. It is a very damaging statement to make in the Chamber that the Wheat Board sold the wheat when in fact it did not.

Mr. Power: They sold 4,500,000 bushels.

Mr. MADSEN: They did not sell it after the agreement had been entered into. What happened before then is a different matter.

The wheat industry is of immense importance to the economy of the Commonwealth. Over the years it has built up fairly substantial export markets. However, the very moment that it fails to supply those markets somebody else will grab them and we will not be able to sell our grain. The hon. member should be careful about denouncing people and saying what terrible things they are doing. Everyone in Queensland is a shareholder in the wheat industry. If the Wheat Board loses its markets and is not able to sell its product—

Mr. Power: They sold 4,500,000 bushels.

Mr. MADSEN: That is a very damaging statement for the hon. member to make.

Mr. Power: I will say it outside the Chamber.

Mr. MADSEN: The hon. member cannot substantiate it. In any case, that is something that the hon. member and I cannot resolve tonight.

Let us adopt a commonsense attitude on the wheat industry. I have tried to point out what it means to Australia. I have been talking markets all day. This year we are faced with an extraordinary position. There have been droughts in the three eastern States and the other States have been affected to a lesser extent. We risk the loss of Commonwealth markets that we might never regain.

Mr. Power: You want the consumer to pay another 1s. a bushel.

Mr. MADSEN: I am just as interested in every other section of the community as I am in the producer, but let us be sensible in our approach to this very vital subject. I stand right behind the Wheat Board. I rather regret that the Grain Growers Association are not appreciative of what the Government are trying to do. I can assure hon. members that the majority of the wheat producers are. I make no apologies for—

Mr. Power: I make no apologies, either.

Mr. MADSEN: The hon. member can have his opinion.

The poultry industry has been mentioned today. No-one contributed to its difficulties to a greater extent than the hon. member did last year when he added the cost of freight of all imported grains to grain (bran and pollard) used for poultry feed.

Mr. POWER: I rise to a point of order. At no time did I have anything to do with the fixing of prices. That is a matter entirely within the province of the Commissioner of Prices. I object to the Minister's trying to pin on me something that was not my responsibility.

Mr. MADSEN: I accept the hon. member's denial, but I am not prepared to admit that the Commissioner of Prices decided to add the cost of freight to grain that was used for feed. On the contrary, I am quite certain that it was a Government decision. I have the greatest respect for the Commissioner, his work, his ability, and all the rest of it. At the same time, I believe it was an ill-conceived decision because, as hon. members have said today, some people engaged in the egg industry are facing ruin and we will be faced with a probable shortage of eggs later on because of the impossible position that has been brought about. The difficulty is not of short-term duration; it will have lasting effects and it may not be rectified until the grain sorghum crop comes in next April or May.

Mr. Power interjected.

Mr. MADSEN: The hon. member demonstrates his ignorance on these matters. I have already told the Committee that wheat is the key to all cereals grown in the State and it is no use trying to establish prices with a difference of £10 or £12 in grain values while they have relative food values. They also have relative costs of production. I have been in the game long enough to know that, and many hon. members on this side can support me.

With the shortage of wheat and the possibility of having to bring some from Western Australia, at least let us give the Queensland wheat-growers a shilling rather than pay five or six shillings in freight for wheat brought from other States. The Board is trying to live up to its responsibility to find the grain the State requires. It is trying to do the job for which it was constituted and I do not think it is for the Government to do anything that will stand in its way.

I know we have differences of opinion on the matter, but I have tried to deal with it realistically. The Government have tried to deal with it in the same fashion and I am confident that what has been done has been in the best interests of all concerned, including the producer and the consumer. Most people realise our difficulty. I cannot recall when we have had two years such as the past two when we have fallen so far short of home requirements.

Mr. Power: The Wheat Board knew all that was happening and still exported 4,500,000 bushels.

Mr. MADSEN: I have answered that. I have sufficient information to know that it is not a correct statement.

Mr. Gair: If it is untrue it should not be hard to disprove.

Mr. MADSEN: It is not hard to disprove at all. Since the hon. member made the statement the other day I have gone out of my way to become well informed on

it, because I can be wrong, too. The information I have is that the hon. member's statement is incorrect.

Mr. Power: I know you would not deliberately mislead the Committee, but you are wrong.

Mr. MADSEN: That is one thing no member of the Committee can accuse me of.

Mr. Power: I do not accuse you of it. I make that clear. But you are wrongly advised.

Mr. MADSEN: I want to be realistic. I think it is better to pay the wheat-grower a little extra to try to hold the wheat than pay 5s. or 6s. in freight that nobody in the State benefits from.

Mr. Power: If you bring the wheat in from Western Australia why not take the 1s. 7d. off it, too?

Mr. MADSEN: The Wheat Board has already paid freight on it from the farm to the port in some other State.

We were hopeful of getting some support from the Commonwealth Government with freight costs. As I said a while ago, I believed they had a responsibility. However, the Commonwealth Government have not elected to accept it. Nevertheless, it has not changed my mind in the least. I believe, as I told the hon. member a few moments ago, that the industry accepts a tremendous responsibility from year to year to meet the flour requirements of the Commonwealth and they should at least have assisted us. I make that statement quite frankly, believing it to be absolutely correct.

I thank hon. members for their very complimentary remarks about me. I thank hon. members for their complimentary remarks about the officers of the department. I have been delighted to take over the department of Agriculture and Stock because agriculture is dear to my heart. I only hope that I can administer the department in a manner that will bring credit to myself and great benefit to the people of the State.

Vote (Department of Agriculture and Stock) agreed to.

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

Balance of Department, Trust and Special Funds—				£
Agriculture and Department Special Stang Fund	Stock Special Stang Fund .. .. .	..	..	35,596
Stock Fund .. .. .	..	..	..	569,175
Buffalo Fly Control Fund ..	..	..	..	50,940
Poultry Industry Fund ..	..	..	..	27,062
Banana Industry Fund ..	..	..	..	17,607
Tobacco Research Fund ..	..	..	..	45,000

Dairy Cattle Improvement Fund	91,544
Stock Diseases Compensa- tion Fund	96,000
Sugar Bulk Handling Facili- ties Special Fund	800,000
Sugar Cane Prices Fund ..	114,135
Potato Marketing Fund ..	500
Commonwealth Agricultural Services Extension Fund ..	67,000
Commonwealth Dairying Industry Fund	72,000

Progress reported.

The House adjourned at 9.32 p.m.
