

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 22 OCTOBER 1959

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

**CIRCULATION AND COST OF
"HANSARD"**

Mr. SPEAKER laid on the table the report of the Chief Reporter, State Reporting Bureau, on the circulation and cost of "Hansard" for the session of 1958-1959.

QUESTIONS**ALTERNATIVE ACCOMMODATION FOR
FAMILIES AT GARBUTT, TOWNSVILLE**

Mr. JESSON (Hinchinbrook) asked the Treasurer and Minister for Housing—

"(1) Is he aware that ten families at Garbutt, Townsville, in the temporary accommodation have received Notices to Quit, dated October 13, requiring tenants to be out of their houses by October 25?"

"(2) Is he aware that in these ten families twenty-five children will be homeless unless they are immediately found further accommodation?"

"(3) Are these buildings being sold by public auction, by tender or by what other manner?"

"(4) (a) How does a person find out if these buildings are for sale? (b) Are they advertised or are there only just a few in the know?"

"(5) Will he review this matter with a view to finding suitable accommodation or houses for these unfortunate people?"

Hon. T. A. HILEY (Coorparoo) replied—

“(1 and 2) Notices to quit were not served. Letters were sent to nine families stating that the buildings occupied by them had been sold and would they please vacate same and hand in the keys. Action for eviction has not been taken in respect of these tenants. Offers were made to purchase the particular buildings but they had not been sold. Temporary housing buildings at Garbutt will only be sold when they become vacant.”

“(3 and 4) The buildings were not advertised for sale. The District Inspector, Townsville, advised youth, cycle and judo clubs, scout and girl guide groups, and church organisations that the buildings could be purchased for removal. As a result of such advice enquiries to purchase were made by other people.”

“(5) On August 6, 1959, in answer to a question by the Honourable Member for Mundingburra, I replied that every effort will be made to provide alternative accommodation for all temporary housing tenants who would be likely to meet tenancy obligations for a new rental dwelling. The record of some of these tenants makes it impossible to consider them for the rental of a house. We have a proposal in mind which will meet cases of that type.”

QUESTIONING OF TOWNSVILLE RAILWAY EMPLOYEE ABOUT KALKIE MURDER

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

“(1) Was a youth employed in the Railway Stores Branch at Townsville taken by the police from his place of employment and questioned for six hours in connection with the murder of Mr. and Mrs. Golchert at Kalkie near Bundaberg on May 15 last?”

“(2) Was the youth released after the six hours questioning when the police were convinced that he had nothing whatsoever to do with the matter?”

“(3) Did the Railway Department dock the six hours' pay from the youth's wages claiming that the youth was 'off duty' for the period he was being questioned?”

“(4) Did the Justice Department also disclaim any responsibility for the payment of the youth's wages?”

“(5) Has the youth yet been paid for the time lost and, if so, by whom?”

“(6) Will he issue through the Weekly Notice full and complete advice to railway employees as to their rights at law, when being questioned by the police, and instruct them not to leave their employment unless placed under arrest?”

Hon. G. W. W. CHALK (Lockyer) replied—

“(1 to 6) When this matter was first raised in Townsville the paying officer rightly deducted the time absent from employment from the employee's fortnightly pay and brought the matter to the attention of the General Manager of the Northern Division. The matter was then referred to the Commissioner for Railways who, in turn, pointed out to me that no authority to make payment for the time lost existed in the Railway Acts. The opinion of the Department of Labour and Industry was then sought, and my colleague in charge of that Department (Honourable K. J. Morris) discussed the matter with me and pointed out that apparently no ruling appeared in any Award. As a result, the matter was placed before Cabinet, which body decided—'That, in any case in which a Crown employee loses time from work as a result of questioning by the Police and is not charged with an offence following such questioning, no deduction be made from the salary or wages of such employee for the time so lost.' All Government Departments have now been advised accordingly.”

MINISTER'S STATEMENT ON OVERPRODUCTION OF SUGAR CANE

Mr. ADAIR (Cook) asked the Minister for Development, Mines, and Main Roads—

“With reference to a statement made by him in Mossman and reported in 'The Cairns Post' on August 1 last, referring to the sugar industry—'Some of these areas, namely, Mackay, Bundaberg and Mossman, had suffered a loss of money as a result of having to leave cane in the field. We will have to give consideration to new conditions and to deal with questions of milling capacity and productivity of mills in Queensland. In regard to peaks he felt that the three areas mentioned were not receiving the full measure of justice and the Minister promised that he would join in helping to have a review of the whole of the mill peak set-up in Queensland,'—what action has he taken to fulfil his promise and with what result?”

Hon. J. A. HEADING (Marodian—Minister for Public Works and Local Government), for **Hon. E. EVANS** (Mirani), replied—

“The Minister for Development, Mines, and Main Roads is at present in far North Queensland on matters connected with his Department. This question will be brought before him for attention upon his return.”

RAILWAY EMPLOYEES ATTENDING LOCOMOTIVE ENGINE BOILERS

Mr. DAVIES (Maryborough) asked the Minister for Transport—

“(1) Does the Machinery and Scaffolding Act now apply to Crown employees?”

"(2) If so, how does the Act apply to the ratio of junior and senior employees attending to various numbers of locomotive engine boilers in a shed on (a) week days and (b) Sundays?"

"(3) Is it according to the Act for a cleaner to be in a shed attending to boilers and lighting-up same from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. on a Sunday without assistance and guidance of superior officers?"

Hon. G. W. W. CHALK (Lockyer) replied—

"(1) No."

"(2 and 3) See answer to No. (1)."

PAPERS

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

Report of the Minister for Education for the year 1958.

The following papers were laid on the table:—

Report of Queensland Trustees Limited for the year ended June 30, 1959.

Order in Council under the Landlord and Tenant Acts, 1948 to 1957.

Regulation under the Liquor Acts, 1912 to 1959.

TELEVISION BROADCASTING BY MR. SPEAKER

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) (11.14 a.m.): I should like to ask you a question, Mr. Speaker. I should mention that I have already had a conversation with you on the matter and I accept the explanation you gave me, but, in order to get the matter on record, I should like you to inform the House. Did you make a television broadcast last night? Did you say that I was an Independent, which would be incorrect, and did you say that I always voted with the Government?

Mr. SPEAKER: There is no provision in Standing Orders that permits an hon. member to ask the Speaker a question from the floor of the House. I assure the hon. member that I will always supply him with any information that he wants, as I have already done in this instance.

Mr. Jesson: Mr. Speaker, may I ask the Premier if he will tell us when the telecast is to take place so that we may all see it?

Mr. Nicklin: I ask the hon. member to give notice of the question.

Mr. Jesson: I do so accordingly.

SUPPLY

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE—ESTIMATES —FIRST AND SECOND ALLOTTED DAYS

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

ESTIMATES-IN-CHIEF, 1959-1960 DEPARTMENT OF RAILWAYS GENERAL ESTABLISHMENT

Hon. G. W. W. CHALK (Lockyer—Minister for Transport) (11.15 a.m.): I move—

"That £2,294,020 be granted for Department of Railways 'General Establishment'."

If hon. members immediately accept that motion and then make a comparison with the amount voted last year and the amount expended during the last financial year then, without knowing the full facts, they may be occasioned some concern. Because of that, it is necessary that I make an explanation of the basis on which this amount has been arrived at. This year's appropriation exceeds that of last year by £1,234,630 or £1,219,109 in excess of actual expenditure last year. The fact of the matter is, however, that at the request of the Treasury Department, an amendment has been made in the method of recording certain expenditure. The payments representing retiring allowance, cash equivalent of undrawn leave, demolished and obsolete assets and workers' compensation, were previously featured under the respective Votes in each of the divisions. This year, however, these amounts aggregating approximately £1,184,000, are included in the Vote for General Establishment.

Mr. Walsh: The other amounts will be reduced accordingly.

Mr. CHALK: That will develop. I think I should emphasise it so that the public will be acquainted with the contribution by the Railway Department in relation to payroll tax; an amount of £659,144 which, due to the rise in the Wages and Salaries Bill, is £16,256 more than last year. Automatic wage and award increases are expected to account for an additional outlay of £29,344. Important significance attaches to my presentation this year of the Estimates of my department in that this is the first occasion that I as Minister will be commenting on or answering criticism in relation to the full period that the department has been under my control or the control of the present Government. It is true that in 1957 I launched the debate on the Estimates of this department, but at that time the Government were but three months old, and in the main, the activities reviewed related to a period prior to the advent of the Country-Liberal Government. Some of my remarks were in relation to the operations of the department under my predecessor. On this occasion, naturally I have to

answer for the administration of the department over the whole of the period during which it has been my honour to be in charge of it.

Recorded in the pages of "Hansard" are many instances of disagreement between my predecessor and me on various issues, but at least at the start of this debate we appear to see eye to eye on one point. It is my intention to follow his practice of making some general observations in my opening remarks, and then to allow the debate to progress so that all hon. members who are desirous of commenting on the administration of the department will have an opportunity to raise various issues. At a later stage, I hope to have the opportunity of replying.

Soon after taking over the portfolio of Transport, I pledged myself to the prosecution of a policy aimed at increasing the level of the department's efficiency, and at that time I invited the co-operation of railway unions and railway employees generally in the attainment of that end. I felt that there was a responsibility on the Government, and particularly on me, to improve the efficiency of the department. For that reason I approached the railway unions and railway employees generally and sought their co-operation. I believe that that appeal was appreciated and heeded by the great majority of employees. That has been amply demonstrated by the fact that during this Government's term of office there has been very little industrial trouble in the department. We have had one or two differences of opinion with the unions, but, taken by and large, the co-operation that I have received from union leaders, which I acknowledge publicly, and the satisfaction expressed by many citizens of the manner in which railway employees generally are facing up to their task are at least some indication that our policy is appreciated not only by railway employees but also by those who use the railways.

I cannot, however, impress too strongly upon individual members of the railway staff, just as I have brought pointedly to the notice of their union leaders, that current happenings in the field of transport call for a sustained co-operative effort if the long-term employment interests of railwaymen are to be protected against the intense competition that is being encountered by the department from other forms of transport. I do not intend at this stage to develop the subject of what is happening to the Railway Department because of the actions of certain operators of other forms of transport under the protection afforded them by Section 92 of the Commonwealth Constitution. But I believe that the average railway employee is extremely mindful of the attack, if I may term it such, that is being made on his livelihood. Because of that, he or she is prepared to play his or her part in assisting the

department to give the service that people require and the service that I sincerely believe it can give.

Mr. DUGGAN: I rise to a point of order, purely for my guidance. Are you going to permit the Minister to develop the subject of road transport in the debate on this Vote, Mr. Taylor, or is it to be accepted that that will be allowed on the appropriate vote, the Department of Transport? I do not want to embarrass the Minister but I want to plan my argument and time according to your ruling.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! It is not the intention of the Chair to allow any discussion on road transport under this Vote. The Estimate under discussion relates to railways and a separate Estimate governs the Department of Transport. I feel sure the Minister has not developed the subject to such an extent that objection can be taken.

Mr. DUGGAN: No, I am not objecting to what he has said on it.

Mr. CHALK: Thank you for your ruling, Mr. Taylor.

Mr. WALSH: I, too, rise to a point of order. I had proposed to raise it; as a matter of fact, I have written a note on it. Previous Governments agreed to allowing discussion not only on the revenue vote of the Railway Department or other department concerned, but also on the Loan Funds and Trust and Special Funds relating to each particular department. I was wondering whether that procedure was going to be followed on this occasion.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! It was my intention to make a statement at the conclusion of the Minister's remarks and after putting the question. I will make it now so that it will be clear to the Committee. I desire to inform hon. members that on the Chief Office Vote I propose to allow a full discussion on the whole of the ramifications of a department (Consolidated Revenue, Trust and Special Funds, and Loan Fund Account) and then to confine the discussion to each particular Vote.

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

Mr. CHALK: Thank you, Mr. Taylor. I appreciate the point of order taken by the Leader of the Opposition and I want to assure him that I have no desire to develop the subject of road transport or to put him in such a position that he would have no right to reply. I simply indicated that railway employees are mindful of what is happening in the community. I will not develop that any further.

Mr. Power: Don't you think they have always been mindful of it?

Mr. CHALK: I have made my statement and I stand by it.

The point raised by the hon. member for Bundaberg is very important. The Chairman's ruling is not only a very wise one but also one that I personally desire, because I think when these Estimates are before the Committee an opportunity should be given to discuss the ramifications of the department generally and not just one small portion of it. Though it is not my intention this morning or at any other time during the debate to discuss the problems associated with the new Mt. Isa project, unless the trend of the debate dictates the need to do so, I inform the Committee that later in the session I will be introducing a Railway Bill. The Bill will contain certain amendments of the Acts as well as a complete outline of the new railway project unit that is now carrying out the work associated with Mt. Isa. Naturally, if hon. members introduce the subject and develop an argument on it it will be my responsibility to reply.

As indicated by the Commissioner for Railways in his annual report recently circulated to hon. members, in the last financial year there was a drop of approximately 38,000 tons in the quantity of second-class merchandise carried, such higher-rated goods being particularly sought by those hauliers to whom I made reference as being able to carry on under certain sections of the Commonwealth constitution.

It has been my happy lot to have received numerous communications from all parts of the State commending the Government on the noticeable improvement in the standard of the service provided by the Railway Department. I do not intend to quote them here—I do not think I should—but they are unsolicited testimonials to the improvements that have taken place and to the manner in which the public contend—not me, the public—that railway employees are giving a better service and that the department generally is able to provide for Queensland a service which they in turn realise is playing a very important part in the development of the State.

For the financial year 1958-1959 revenue increased by £1,522,142 compared with the previous financial year, but despite rising costs the increase in working expenses was, by prudent employment of the department's resources, limited to £583,149. I believe that the Railway Department and the Government as a whole can take considerable credit from the fact that this large organisation, the largest employer in the State, was able in the past 12 months to swallow, as it were, an increase of £1.3 million brought about by basic wage or award increases and other increased payments. By careful administration at least we were able to absorb that additional expenditure. Because we could do so we did not have to pass it on to the consumer by way of increased rates. I think it would be accepted by all in the Chamber that if the Railway Department followed a

policy of increasing freights every time there was an increase in the basic wage or some other increased expense, the department surely would price itself out of the market in the hauling field. In that way we would strike at the very livelihood of the loyal employees to whom I have referred. We have tried our utmost to avoid increasing freights. In some instances the Commissioner has been criticised for his actions but they have all been for a purpose. They have been made with zeal because of the belief that it is far better to reduce expenditure slightly in one direction so that there can be full and continued employment for permanent employees of the department. That is the policy that we have endeavoured to follow and it is one of the reasons why I personally, my Cabinet colleagues, and others associated with the Government are doing all within their power to prevent an increase in rail freights. That is essential if the department is to continue to give a good service and remain the largest employer in Queensland.

As I said earlier, the Railway Department, like other undertakings, has to combat rising costs. A close study of the estimates of expenditure by hon. members on both sides of the Chamber will reveal that the total appropriation under all votes of £36,800,000 for this financial year is only approximately £200,000 more than the amount actually expended during the last financial year. It is pleasing to record that increased tonnages of grain, sugar cane, and other items of agricultural produce were carried in 1958-1959, and that livestock traffic reached an all-time peak. I know that the haulage of these commodities is somewhat seasonal. I know that success depends on good seasons in the industries to which I have referred. The point is that the Railway Department has at all times before it the knowledge that it is responsible, first, if there is a peak period, for the carriage of all the produce. What a calamity it would be if the department, in a time of full and plenty, was not in a position to accept its responsibility as a major haulier. On the other hand, we have been mindful of the fact that during a time when the country is hit by a drought and when there is a falling off in production, the department is paying a number of employees—men who, as far as the Government are concerned, will not be thrown on the scrapheap because of a falling off in business. We have to have these men there when we want them. Consequently, on some occasions it is necessary to have a certain reduction in hours, or whatever the case may be. If overtime has to be reduced, then this Government—and I believe hon. members opposite—accept the basis of a 40-hour week. That is what we are trying to do—at least to provide full-time employment for those associated with the department, and who, over the years, helped the department to grow and establish itself by working on many occasions for years under somewhat primitive conditions in the far western and northern portions of the State.

Mr. Aikens: You're telling me.

Mr. CHALK: The hon. member says, "You're telling me!" No doubt he knows. The hon. member worked in the Railway Department, and I believe, if he is honest and sincere, he will pay some credit for the approach made during the time this Government have been in power to improve the conditions of many men in the West today.

Mr. Aikens: And so will every genuine railwayman.

Mr. CHALK: I agree that everyone who has had experience and knows what is happening will be prepared at least to pay credit to the Government for the way they are attempting to face up to their responsibility. It is not my intention to criticise the previous Government or my predecessors, the hon. member for North Toowoomba, who was for many years Minister for Transport, or Mr. Tom Moores, the ex-member for Kurilpa. I think a number of years did pass by without a true appreciation being gained of the plight of some of the railway employees in the far-flung portions of the State. It is true that many of them are still there. It is equally true that this Government have endeavoured to provide refrigerators for many men in the western areas. Apparently the previous Government thought that what was good for some was too good for others. We have endeavoured to improve housing for railway men. Often when I travelled through the State I found that railway men, some with large families, had previously been denied the right to close in a veranda or provide some other type of bedroom accommodation.

Mr. Foley: Further improvement is needed.

Mr. CHALK: We are continuing to improve housing accommodation. It might be that further improvements are needed in the electorate of the hon. member for Belyando. If he asks his colleagues, however, I think he will learn that many improvements have been effected throughout Queensland in the last two years.

The Government are proud of the fact that during the last 12 months the department has been able to move record tonnages. The handling of those tonnages of goods and livestock was made possible only by progressive dieselisation. Indeed utilisation of this form of traction has continued to be a major factor in contributing to the saving effected by the department in operating costs.

I am quite candid, and compliment my predecessor on the introduction of diesel locomotives. Dieselisation had been started when I took over this portfolio. Progressive dieselisation since that time has indicated what might be expected in the future. I do not give the Leader of the Opposition all the credit for the results of dieselisation. Further dieselisation has been undertaken in the department. In that way we are accelerating development. Difficulties were

experienced, with the tracks and draw-bar gear. Certain changes were necessary. I have mentioned those things during the 12 years I have been in this Chamber. If the department is given sufficient financial assistance or the opportunity to do so, those difficulties will be overcome. I pay full credit to my colleagues for their co-operation. They realise the importance of allocating as much money as possible to the department so that these revolutionary and essential changes can be effected.

When diesel electrics were first introduced, the department could not take advantage of their full capacity. When I sat on the opposite side of this Chamber I was always critical of the fact that sufficient attention was not given to the strength of draw-bar gear, because I realised that irrespective of the power of the locomotive and the quality of the track, loads up to the capacity of these locomotives could not be hauled unless the draw gear was sufficiently strong. Over the last couple of years giant strides in that direction have been taken. I mention as an instance the construction of a large number of wagons with an increased draw gear strength of 34,000 lb. They have made possible the haulage of heavier loads.

Trains weighing as much as 900 tons are now being drawn between Bowen and Townsville. If the hon. member for Mundingburra is as fair as he was in his interjection a few moments ago, he will acknowledge that with the fast train service and goods service the department is playing its part in helping the North and in providing many of the amenities available to people in southern Queensland. The goods service to North Queensland has been commented on by merchants in the North. The 36-hour service not only helps Townsville but also helps the North-West because of the link-up between the service in Townsville and the service to the north-western portion of Queensland. I can recall my experience in years gone by; I know something of the 250-ton load carried between Townsville and Mt. Isa. Whilst we have not achieved perhaps the ideal we can at the present time take up to 800 tons between Townsville and Hughenden. Irrespective of the outcome of negotiations in relation to the new project at Mt. Isa, the department has been progressively following expansion in the supply of heavier rails, and today, whilst we are going ahead with the Mt. Isa project in a certain way we are still delivering onto sites in the far North-West heavier rails to take diesels farther out. I look forward to the time when we will be able to take the heavier locomotives the whole distance. If the North-West is to develop either by mining or further development in the cattle industry we must be able to provide the best and most efficient haulage over the long distances. The decision to advance to 40,000 lb. the drawgear strength of all new rolling stock has already had the effect of advancing loads

from 850 tons to 1,100 tons, the maximum through load for a diesel-electric locomotive between Toowoomba and Brisbane. The Commissioner, the employees, and the manufacturers are proud that we were recently able to lift 1,100 tons between Toowoomba and Brisbane. That is a clear indication of what the department can do and how economically it can be done when we have the facilities. Whether it be in private life or any other form of business one is associated with it is of little or no use having an 8-ton truck if you are going to haul only 4 tons. It would be false economy for the department to have large efficient diesel locomotives if we cannot shift the maximum loads the locomotives can draw.

To derive the maximum benefit from the capacity of diesel electric locomotives to haul heavier loads, it has been necessary for the department to increase the length of crossing loops at a number of stations to accommodate longer trains. In addition to extending several loops on the Helidon-Toowoomba section the department is now in the final stages of carrying out similar alterations to 14 crossing loops between Rockhampton and Mackay. No-one can charge the Government with endeavouring to do everything in the southern portion of the State. It is the desire of the Government to see that money is spent proportionately—between the South and the North. Only recently the hon. member for Tablelands stressed the necessity of strengthening the Kuranda section to provide a service for people in the Forsayth-Georgetown area.

Mr. Graham: He was very critical of the Commissioner on one occasion.

Mr. CHALK: He is now prepared to admit that the Commissioner is carrying out the wishes of this Government. If the hon. member for Mackay wants to be critical of the previous administration he should come out into the open rather than criticise a public servant who cannot come into the Chamber and defend himself.

Recently I took the opportunity of travelling from Cairns to Forsayth, and experienced one of the worst train rides I have ever had. The figures show that that line is not a paying one, but is that because of the lack of assistance by the department or is it that the area lacks productivity and wealth? Graziers travelled distances of up to 200 miles to see me and pointed out that we were using only two K-wagons and one KB-wagon twice a week to shift cattle. They said that if they mustered 200 or 300 head of cattle and got them to the railhead, they wanted rail facilities to get them out. I made a thorough examination of the position and learned that a great portion of the track had not been ballasted for years. That meant that the large steam locomotives and the small diesel-electric locomotives could not be used on it. We have now strengthened the line from Cairns to Kuranda and allotted to it, for the first time, a small

250-h.p. diesel-electric locomotive. In that way we have been able to revolutionise completely the working of trains in that area. The load of "up" trains will be doubled and, according to the latest figures, we will be able to effect in that small area alone a saving of something like £20,000 a year.

We have also examined the need for additional rolling stock in the area.

Mr. Adair: Especially cattle wagons.

Mr. CHALK: I shall be dealing with that matter in a few moments.

It has been said that the Railway Department has not been able to handle all the cattle traffic offering. Perhaps if we take into consideration stock in the far-flung portions of the North-West away from the railway line, there may be some truth in that statement. However, as I have said before, during the last 12 months we have reached an all-time peak in the movement of live-stock. We cannot be accused of falling down on the job. But we are mindful of the vast development that is taking place in North Queensland and it will increase under this Government.

Mr. Aikens: I will see that you do not forget it.

Mr. CHALK: I quite appreciate that.

My colleague the Minister for Development, Mines, and Main Roads is up in the North now. Last week he was in the North-west. Each time he returns to Cabinet he impresses upon me the need for the railways to boost their service to the closest railing points possible because the wealth of the country is there and must be got out if the State is to go forward. The territory is ably, and indeed forcibly, represented by the hon. member for Tablelands, I know, but we will do our utmost to pursue a vigorous policy that will enable us to acquire the additional rolling stock needed.

When I became Minister I was amazed at the extent of contracted liability as against loan funds. The hon. member for Bundaberg knows this only too well, because I believe it was through him that the original tender for the provision of stainless steel carriages for the suburban area was turned down. My predecessor had made an announcement to the effect that the contract was to proceed and the company concerned went ahead. It was this Government who had to come to the rescue and try to work out a basis whereby we did not have a claim against us for certain damages involved. However, the contracted liability was gradually growing on the department. When I ascertained that the Government had allocated to me £5,000,000 of loan money to be spent during the first financial year that I was in charge of the department, I thought I had £5,000,000 to start a programme that I believed, and that my Government believed, was in the interests of the development of the State. But what did we find? Because past Governments had

ordered ahead year by year without regard to when payments had to be made, a little over £3,000,000 of the £5,000,000 went in contracted liability. Admittedly equipment was coming, but with a limited amount to spend one must plan ahead.

So for the first 12 months I could do precious little beyond pay for the goods coming forward and try to keep in full-time employment those men who were engaged on quadruplication and other work under the loan vote. We did it. We were able to do it, firstly, by reviewing the Loan Stores Suspense Account. I do not know who should be blamed, who was responsible for the inflation of that Account. During the war years stocks were over-ordered. Of course, they were over-ordered for a purpose. After all, I was in industry at the time and I did the same. If I wanted 5 tons of iron I ordered 15 tons because I knew that under the rationing system I would probably get only 5. During the war the Railway department did the same. There were shortages so they over-ordered believing they would get enough to carry on. Thank goodness for the State and for the Commonwealth, the Queensland railways were able to carry on during the war. But after the war unfortunately—I say “unfortunately” advisedly—little regard was paid to the continued basis of ordering. Too often 10 or 12 items were being put into the railway stores which could be purchased almost from the next-door storekeeper. It was right that we should have stock but it was equally right that we should not have too much standard stock that would tie up money.

Mr. Power: Railway officials would be responsible for that.

Mr. CHALK: The hon. member for Baroona would like me to say that railway officials were responsible. The railway official has a responsibility, but the Government and the Minister have an over-riding responsibility. The financial side of an undertaking is the responsibility of the managing director.

Mr. Power interjected.

Mr. CHALK: I have no desire to continue this discussion but the hon. member has been in Cabinet and I am sure he will agree with me that the financial side of Government is the responsibility of the Cabinet; the financial side of a department is the responsibility of a Minister. Even if the hon. member wants to blame the Railway employee, the Government and I were able to see what was wrong. We have been able to take £1,000,000 out of that dead stock. That £1,000,000 has gone into circulation. It is keeping men in employment and has kept them in employment in the year of crisis that we went through. After having passed through a year in which the Government had not the capital, the necessary loan money, to spend on development, we passed through a year when we were running our own affairs. The first thing I said to Cabinet was, “If this department is to carry

on in the years ahead it must have a budget, not a budget for one year but a budget for at least five years ahead so that there can be continuity of ordering, continuity of supply, and above all, continuity of finance to pay for what is ordered.”

Mr. Aikens: And what is more important, continuity of employment.

Mr. CHALK: I have said that.

I think every hon. member is mindful of the condition of our locomotives and rolling stock in use all over the State. Realising the need for improvement I asked the Commissioner and his executive officers to give me what they considered would be their requirements for the next five years, having due regard to the development that is taking place in Queensland and the fact that we can run into difficulties from the inroads of other forms of transport. A scheme involving the expenditure of approximately £10,000,000 over a five-year period has been drawn up, based on a spending of £2,000,000 a year. My Cabinet colleagues realised the need to strengthen the locomotive, carriage, wagon and rail-motor resources and I had no difficulty in getting them to endorse this important step that we are prepared to take. Consequently I received authority to order on that basis. We have a plan worked out. We cannot order the whole £10,000,000 worth at once because if we did the material would be delivered in the year following the order. Our plan is to order on the basis that equipment will become available during the year in which the allocation of £2,000,000 is made. Therefore, we are approaching the whole subject of extra rolling stock and locomotives on that basis. An order has recently been placed with the Commonwealth Engineering Company for the construction of 91 urgently-needed stainless-steel suburban carriages at a cost of £2,000,000. The hon. gentleman who is sitting opposite had the responsibility of handling that matter in its infancy and I do not wish to take any credit away from him; but when it got to the stage when tenders were called he had not the money to pay for it.

Mr. Aikens: Ted Walsh would not give it to him?

Mr. CHALK: That is my opinion. The point is what is the good of having grandiose schemes and leading the public up the garden path, telling them what you are ordering if you have not the financial backing to pay for it? That is what happened. We have continued with this contract. We have set out, for the advice of the manufacturer and the department the basis on which it will be paid over three years. I hope next year that we will have the first of these stainless-steel carriages—many country people will say, “Why the city?”—so that the people of the suburban areas will have a service that will allow them to go to work and return home under satisfactory conditions. It is essential that we look at the development of

Brisbane. Heavens only knows there is enough argument regarding the transport operations of trams and buses in the metropolitan area. The Railway Department has a part to play, and it can share, and I believe it will share, in the transport of more people as the metropolitan area develops. Every day in the week I am asked to approve of an extra bus route, and I am told by the police, "You cannot get more buses into this part of Brisbane." That is an indication of the growth in the outer suburbs and indicates the need for the department to be able to handle this growing traffic. That is why we were prepared to go ahead with this contract. Mr. Watson, the managing director of the company, is overseas doing his utmost to get the stainless steel which is necessary. We know that there has been a strike in America that has tied up production.

Mr. Thackeray. Have you considered aluminium?

Mr. CHALK: Yes. The point is that we are going ahead and providing what is available at the most economic price. I do hope that the first will be ready in April next year. We have looked at the position in the country. I have travelled in the rail motors—call them tin hares or what you like—that have been operating in North Queensland and not so far from here. How can you expect people to patronise the service when a heavy storm causes considerable discomfort to the passengers in the rail motor? We realise that we must have a number of these rail motors, consequently we have let a contract for 10 two-car rail motor units of stainless-steel construction that will permit of the rearrangement and improvement of country passenger services.

Mr. Gaven: And the South Coast.

Mr. CHALK: I believe the Railway Department can and should get a considerable amount of business from the South Coast, but it has not offered the facilities to get it.

Mr. Low: And in my area.

Mr. CHALK: The same can be said of the area represented by the hon. member for Coorooora. The railways should be able to compete with other forms of transport, but a considerable amount of business has been lost, and any person associated with business knows that when custom is lost it is twice as hard to regain it as it is to get new custom.

I shall now deal with one or two other points. We are taking delivery of five main-line diesel locomotives. There was some hitch in the delivery of them through the unfortunate strike at the English Electric works but the trouble has been overcome and those locomotives are now becoming available. We could have used them earlier and they should have been available as they will enable us to further improve the service.

The increasing trend towards the handling of commodities in bulk prompted the decision to acquire 300 bulk-grain wagons of

WHX type, each having a carrying capacity of 30 tons. Additional wagon stock, the provision of which is included in the department's plans comprises 10 PX wagons for use in the movement of consignments exceeding in weight the capacity of existing vehicles. I have often received telephone calls from people who want to have a big unit moved from point A to point B. Formerly the facilities were not available but we are now getting them. At the moment the department has one unit only for work of that nature. A further 10 are being acquired.

The department's plans include 100 additional cattle wagons to further facilitate the movement of stock throughout the State. The department needs more, but all sections of the community have to be considered.

I have previously lamented the fact that our predecessors saw fit to initiate simultaneously a number of extensive and costly undertakings. I do not deny that each of those undertakings is necessary, but with the limitations of loan finance and the need to allot some funds to each of those projects, those charged with the responsibility of allocating funds could give only a small portion to each project.

The hon. member for Mundingburra belted me the first time I went to Townsville over a particular building which had been given a certain name.

Mr. Aikens: Duggan's Monument.

Mr. CHALK: It had been unfinished for a number of years. The first thing I did when I went to Townsville was to authorise the completion of that building.

Mr. Aikens: Now they call it Chalkie's Monument.

Mr. CHALK: I do not care whose monument they call it. It illustrates the point I am endeavouring to make. Jobs were started throughout the State, but finance was not available to complete them. The unfinished work represented a large sum of unproductive capital. If that plan had been followed, there would have been little prospect of doing any major jobs for some considerable time.

Since I have been directing the financial side of the department I have given instructions that jobs have to be finished before other jobs are started. That is now the basis.

Coming within the category of the projects to which I have referred, I mention first the transfer of the workshops to Redbank, the building of new workshops at Northgate and Banyo, and the Brisbane suburban quadruplication scheme which has been in progress for six to eight years. I authorised the use of the Redbank workshops otherwise than was originally intended. Ultimately the original plan will be followed. It was found possible to transfer certain

activities to the Redbank workshops. The work on quadruplication gave me some worry. It was in progress from one end of the line to the other, from Sandgate to Ipswich. All these things were highly desirable but were absolutely unproductive. I have endeavoured to concentrate activities on quadruplication between Roma Street and Corinda and I think that those who represent that area will give credit to the Government because they can really see what is happening in respect of quadruplication. As part of the drive to bring such works to completion the new stores building at Redbank has been opened and put into use. Portion of the new workshops under construction at Redbank has been commissioned for the repair of diesel electric locomotives. The diesel locomotive shed at Townsville which was the target of considerable local ridicule in view of the halting of the work following a show of activity, is now in use and is productive. The same thing applies to Toowoomba. Money had been spent on a certain job over the years, but progress had been slow. Consequently I told the Commissioner that the job had to be finished. It is now completed. These jobs were started by our predecessors. There has been a priority laid down and we will get the most urgent jobs done first with some return on capital coming in.

A feature of railway activity on which the Government have been focussing attention is the refreshment rooms service. We have to recognise that these rooms give an essential service in many places, and have to exist. On the other hand, there is clear evidence that in many cases railway refreshment rooms can be conducted by private enterprise and run at a profit, which is not possible so far as the department is concerned. Because of that, during the last 12 months I have been able to let 10 of those rooms which have shown a loss to the department of £11,800. The rentals that the department will now receive amount to £3,500 a year. Although that is but a detail, it is a clear indication of how the department can benefit. Those who have taken over the refreshment rooms are quite happy. A loss of £11,800 can be converted to a profit of £3,500. That policy will be expanded as time goes on.

Mr. Houston: What is the reason that private enterprise can make them pay and the department cannot?

Mr. CHALK: If the hon. member cannot work that one out, his electors should have a look at him.

Mr. Lloyd: Don't you know?

Mr. CHALK: After the interjection by the hon. member for Bulimba there is the hon. member for Kedron of, "Don't you know?" I give him credit for knowing. If he is in the category of the hon. member for Bulimba, well and good. Private enterprise can make a do of a railway refreshment room because a husband and wife can live

nearby and work it. If there was control by the department we would have to provide a number of girls who would have to be billeted as they do not live in the community. Consequently, is it any wonder that costs go up? It is not a reflection on the management of the department; it is a matter of common sense. That is our approach at the present time.

The Government were prepared to contribute to greater operating efficiency and not throw the entire onus onto employees, and so the working conditions of railway employees have been reviewed in a number of aspects. I want to mention just a few of the things that we have done. I have had many deputations from unions who have asked for certain things. They have said to me, "We asked your predecessor for these things, which we believe we are entitled to, but we always received a refusal." Although I could not agree to some of their requests, I believed that they were rightly entitled to some of the improvements they sought. They were minor things that would have cost the previous Government precious little. By the same token, it cost us precious little to accede to their requests, but I am merely pointing out that this Government have a humane approach to the employment of labour.

First of all, railway employees travelling on passes were placed on the same footing for compensation purposes as ordinary paying passengers. Fancy a Government who claim to represent the workers saying to railway men travelling on passes, "You will not be entitled to any compensation, even though the paying passenger is"!

Mr. Aikens: And they could not claim damages in a civil action.

Mr. CHALK: They were given a ticket, herded onto a train, and told, "If anything happens to you, it is your responsibility and that of your wife and family." When I was told about it I could hardly believe it, but I discovered that it was true. We immediately altered the practice.

Another improvement brought about by us in the conditions of railway employees has to do with long-service leave. Under the previous Government, railway men did not have the same long-service leave entitlement as public servants. After serving the prescribed period, the railway man was entitled to only nine months' long-service leave while the public servant enjoyed 12 months. Is there any valid reason why the railway man should not enjoy the same privileges as the public servant? We have now increased from 9 to 12 months the maximum period of long-service leave for which a railway employee can qualify.

Retired railway employees have also been given the long-sought privilege of a station-to-station pass instead of a point-to-point pass. That is something else that costs the department nothing.

Mr. Aikens: It was knocked back time and time again by the Labour Government when the unions and I asked for it.

Mr. CHALK: I do not always agree with the hon. member for Mundingburra, but today his interjections are factual. The file is cluttered with reports of deputations to the previous Minister seeking these improvements in working conditions. When I granted one request a union official said to me, "I did not think that this Government would give us what their predecessors refused." We might be termed a Tory Government but at least we have a humane approach to the working conditions of our employees. The previous Government would not grant their requests. It would have cost them very little, but it would have meant a good deal to their employees and their wives and families.

Mr. Aikens: You might be Tories, but you are too sensible to act as Tories.

Mr. CHALK: I will not come in on that one.

Mr. Lloyd: How many men did you sack yesterday?

Mr. CHALK: I will be answering the hon. member's question tomorrow morning. We have given full-time employment to every permanent railway employee. I challenge the hon. member to name one permanent railway employee who has been dismissed by this Government other than for a cause brought about by his own actions. Not one permanent railway employee has been dismissed from the service during the two years or so that we have been in office. We try our utmost to keep people in full-time employment.

As will be readily appreciated, a general review of the provisions of a measure like the Railways Act is not an undertaking that can be quickly disposed of, but action has now been completed in this direction and legislation embodying amendments deemed desirable will be introduced by me later this session. I am astounded at some of the trivial provisions that have been allowed to remain in the Act over the years. We propose to clean up many of them.

Let me remind the Committee of another very important matter that has been faced up to by this Government. How often had my predecessor and other Labour hon. members had hurled at them, on platform after platform, criticism about compensation payable for death or permanent injury! Everyone knew that it was more fortunate to be knocked down by a motor car than by a train, or to be hurt in a bus than in a railway carriage. We faced up to that. The limitation of £2,000 placed on compensation for death or personal injury, which had obtained since 1914, was removed. The relevant sections of the Act were amended, too, to provide for increased maximum payments, more in keeping with ruling money values, being made in instances of loss of or injury

to animals and loss resulting from grass fires caused by railway locomotives.

Mr. Aikens: I hope you are not forgetting that some other hon. members want to talk.

Mr. CHALK: The hon. member will have his opportunity.

Finally, I want to pay public tribute to the services given to the department by our goodwill officers. When I took office complaint after complaint came to me, and it was said, "We have a complaint. What is happening about it? We have got in touch with the department but we can do nothing." We appointed four goodwill officers.

Mr. Thackeray: They do a good job.

Mr. CHALK: I am pleased to hear that coming from the other side. We appointed Mr. Sturgess to the South-eastern Division, Mr. Ogilvie to the South-western Division, Mr. Burkitt to the Central Division, and Mr. Honeycombe to the Northern Division. I want to have recorded in "Hansard" my personal appreciation, and the appreciation of the department, of the work those men are doing. They are going out into the country soliciting business. They are asking the ordinary business man, "Why have we lost your business?" or "What can we do to help you?" Only yesterday I had an outstanding tribute paid by a business man who termed the goodwill officers "trouble-shooters." He said, "Appointing those men was the best thing the Railway Department ever did." A case occurred in North Queensland, Mr. Honeycombe's area. I understand several complaints were made by a business house. Mr. Honeycombe said, "All right, I will be round straightaway." He investigated them. The person who spoke to me said, "It was so unlike the days gone by. Not only did he investigate them but he came back to tell us about them." That is the type of service we want to give. These men are playing their very important part. As time goes on we shall probably appoint more. They have been responsible for getting considerable quantities of wool back to the railways. They have cleared up many misunderstandings about freights. These are the things that indicate this Government's approach to the Railway Department. If we can continue like that, if we can build up our rolling stock strength, if we can get the goodwill of the public which I believe we have been regaining, if we can get the co-operation and assistance of the administrative staff I am confident that the railways will play their part in developing Queensland. I pay particular tribute to the administrative staff. I have had nothing but complete co-operation and assistance from the Commissioner and Secretary. I have been astounded at their knowledge. The same could be said about many other officers associated with them. They have a job to do. Given the right guidance I believe that this great undertaking can prosper and become a business that at least will pay

working expenses and not be a drain on the revenue of the State. If the railways lose money it means less money for hospitals, schools and other facilities. All the finance comes out of a common pool. By measuring up to its responsibilities, by being given the right guidance, I am certain that the Railway Department can and will in the years ahead play its part in the development of the State.

Government Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. DUGGAN (North Toowoomba—Leader of the Opposition) (12.32 p.m.): We have heard a somewhat extraordinary speech this morning. The hon. gentleman, instead of being Minister for Transport, engaged in athletics and fencing. He would make an excellent fencer with his parry and thrust. He started by saying that he did not want to import any personalities into the debate, nor did he want to take away any of the credit due to previous Labour administrations and previous occupants of the office of Minister for Transport in this State. Having paid those tributes to those gentlemen and Governments he proceeded to say how shocked to the very core he was about certain malpractices that had operated for so long on the industrial side, how we had overspent money, and the deplorable condition of the rolling stock. He finished up, of course, finding that in his first term of office he had not been able to balance the budget as he had so earnestly sought us to do on so many occasions. We heard him bring forward the old plea about the railways having to serve the requirements of the State, that they were a development agency and all the other arguments which we used for so many years. We were criticised for so defending our administration but he is now employing the same argument in the defence of his own administration.

The hon. gentleman was like a knight coming out in his shiny new armour. When he was in Opposition he was selected as the man to concentrate on transport matters in the shadow Cabinet. It was a shadow that materialised in due course through a series of fortuitous circumstances which the Minister would not want me to regale the Committee with, but with which he is perfectly familiar. However, he is there and I do not want to take away any of the credit or distinction of being the occupant of such an important office. However, he has said himself that he now has an opportunity after a break of 12 months—the Railway Estimates were not discussed last year—to defend so valiantly the great reforms and ideas which he said should be introduced when he was not a person occupying a position of great administrative or executive responsibility. He now has the opportunity and he says, "I shall give an account of my stewardship and see what happens."

Let us have a look at two of the important things the hon. gentleman said when he was in Opposition, and what the Premier said just before the last election. These people

talk about everybody falling down on the job. I am not going to spend time defending my previous administration, but I do say that neither I nor the Labour Government of which I was a member, have any cause to hang our heads in shame regarding the steps I took on my initiative or our collective responsibility as a Cabinet for the rejuvenation and the rehabilitation of the railways. Despite the fact that there has been and always will be the necessity for industrial reforms I have no occasion to hang my head in shame on the general treatment of railwaymen. I have in an honoured place in my home a grandfather clock valued at £100 which was presented to me by railwaymen for my services to them during the period that I was in office. I also received a special presentation from the Trades Hall after my defeat as a token of esteem from all the unions of the Railway Department. I treasure that gift and the sentiments expressed on that occasion.

The only thing I give the Minister credit for is the question of long-service leave. If the hon. gentleman is so keen on going back through the volume of files he will find that I did ask the administration to furnish a report to me on that. It was not implemented because of circumstances that need not be enumerated here. The Minister talked about compensation and made a great fuss of these trivial things that have an impact in the industrial movement. How many men were injured who were treated the same way as other passengers. I say that there is not one who has been disadvantaged under this rule.

The hon. gentleman also referred to the station-to-station pass. I question whether there is one man in the Railway Department who has not over the years been permitted to go precisely where he wanted to.

Mr. Coburn: The establishment of the principle is important.

Mr. DUGGAN: That may be so. I am not going to spend much time on these matters. There was not a more vociferous critic of the Railway Department than the Minister was when he was a member of the Opposition. When the hon. member for Ithaca was coming back from Townsville last week, owing to a breakdown a diesel train was immobilised for three or four hours and a woman unknown to the hon. member for Ithaca or myself said, "You do not hear Mr. Chalk making a great fuss about these things as he did when Mr. Duggan was Minister." I have not dealt with any parochial matters—and there are many in my electorate which I could have brought up if I elected to follow the pattern of the hon. gentleman.

Let me get back to what the Premier and the Minister were going to do before the last election. This is what the hon. the Premier said—

"Our policy will be to run the railways like any other business and, in reality, the railways are Queensland's largest single enterprise with every worker a shareholder

—and we believe that all railway employees are just as interested in their successful operation as we are.”

Fair enough words, I suppose, for a policy speech. Maybe the Minister and the Premier are going to treat the shareholders as preference and ordinary shareholders. I have told the story, the ending of which was that the only benefit the preference shareholders would get would be nothing a fortnight earlier than the ordinary shareholders. If the Minister is sincere and wants every employee in the Railway Department to be a contented shareholder, let him treat the great body of men employed by the department on the same basis as he recently treated through the Commissioner the white-collar workers of the department. I am not averse to white-collar workers getting just recognition, linked as they are with the Public Service, but if the Minister wants a contented service he will not get it by denying on the one hand substantial benefits to a large body of men who are doing equally useful work with the clerical section in the administration of this important State instrumentality, and on the other hand giving those benefits to the clerical section.

As the Minister is so anxious to hurl back at me my alleged failure to acknowledge my industrial obligations, I point out to him that, when adjustments were sought in the wages of tradesmen, I was able to persuade my colleagues to accord to railway employees a 27s. 6d. margin for skill for tradesmen, and 17s. 6d. for non-tradesmen. Neither he nor his ministerial colleagues has been willing to apply that principle to men employed in other departments of the Crown such as the Department of Public Works. They have not received similar recognition.

The Premier in his policy speech went on to say—

“To achieve our aims, and to gain the experience and knowledge of all sections of the service, we intend to set up a Railway Consultative Committee that will include among its members Railway Union representatives nominated by the union members.

Its function will be to make recommendations as to ways and means to improve the administration, working, and efficiency of the railways, better working conditions for employees, and any other matters that would assist in the task of making the Railway Department, not only the biggest, but also the most successful business in Queensland.”

This is what the Minister had to say on the subject in 1954-1955, page 965 of “Hansard”—

“We should set up a committee of inquiry to make a thorough investigation of every phase of the Railway Department’s activities. On that committee there should be a representative of business interests. It should also have on it a responsible railway administrator as well as a responsible

rank-and-file railway employee. It should also have available to it the best technical brains as well.”

Those two major undertakings were given, the first by the Premier and the second by the present Minister, who was so anxious to earn his political spurs that he said on several occasions that this committee of inquiry should be arranged. Despite the fact that he now comes to the defence of the Commissioner, I suppose there was no greater critic of him than the Minister when in opposition.

As one with 10 years’ association with the Commissioner of Railways I can state that I do not suppose in the whole of the Public Service one could find a more dedicated officer. During his working hours he is talking railways, and I think that during his sleeping hours he is dreaming about them. I do not know of any man who has been more punctilious or who has been actuated by greater zeal and fidelity to duty than the Commissioner, not that he has always agreed with me, nor I with him. He is a very knowledgeable officer who unquestionably works very hard himself. While on that thought I pay a tribute also to his chief lieutenant, Mr. Lingard, for whom I have held a high regard ever since I have been in close association with him. He is one of the most able public servants in the State, a modest retiring man but unquestionably one of the most knowledgeable men I know. Because of the wide ramifications of the Railway Department, he carries a very heavy responsibility indeed. He needs not only a specialised knowledge such as that possessed by officers in, say, the Department of Public Lands or some other department, but also a general commercial knowledge, because of the drawing of contracts and other matters which bring him so frequently into association with business interests.

To many other officers of the department, whom I shall not enumerate individually, I express sincere thanks for their many years of courteous, fine service and efficiency. I also pay a tribute to the employees generally throughout the department, from the Commissioner down to the youngest apprentice or employee. As I pointed out there was always implied criticism by many of these gentlemen, particularly the present Minister. Since he assumed office he has not undertaken to discharge one of these requirements which he felt was so necessary. He considered a rigid inquiry necessary to correct the financial drift which is characteristic of the Queensland railways and indeed of all railway systems. I do not intend to engage in cheap criticism. I want to deal with the problem according to the importance it requires. I realise that the Railway Department is an important Crown instrumentality bringing in much money and having wide ramifications, and apart from a general attack on the policy being pursued I will not engage in a criticism of trivial matters such as the absence of lavatory locks or doors, which has been a feature in a debate on railway Estimates in

years gone by. The Minister has found, despite an improvement in the financial position, that he is relatively no better off than the state of affairs that obtained in the other States because of the buoyant conditions. The Commissioner attributes the improved position to seasonal conditions and the great increase in the movement of agricultural products and livestock. There has been an increase of 350,000 cattle moved in the last financial year, which increase was brought about by seasonal conditions and the tremendous demand for beef in America which is reflected in the revenue of the railways. The Minister, in his parry-and-thrust attack gives thanks to myself for the provision of diesel power and other things, but when he was in Opposition he said, as is reported on page 1087 of Vol. 215 of "Hansard"—

"Moreover, if it was right in 1950 to have 145 locomotives on order, should we not have at least as many on order today to replace old and worn-out engines, and to meet the increased demand? But today we have only 44 engines on order. Can that be said to indicate foresight?— We must scour Australia, and if needs be, overseas, to obtain delivery of new rolling-stock, not to be delivered in the years ahead but almost 'off the hook'."

That was what the present Minister said when he was a private member tearing railway administration to pieces. He has not done what he said should have been done and, indeed, if you look through the record you will find that from 1 July, 1945, to 30 June, 1956, which covers the period of my occupancy of the portfolio, the Government spent £24,869,486 on locomotives and rolling-stock. That was spent at a time when the value of money was greater than it is today. The effective utilisation of funds for more rolling-stock is reflected more strongly in those figures than in comparable figures today. To show what we have done in these matters, I mention that I set out in booklet form some of the things that happened between 1950 and 1956. This booklet shows a record of which I do not think any Government need be ashamed. It contains a summary of what was done in that period, and hon. members will find that between those dates 8,821 new wagons of steel construction were placed in service, but the average injection of wagons into the railway service since the Minister has been in charge has been but a fleabite, and would not average one-tenth. An analysis of the expenditure as set out in the Commissioner's report shows that it is a fleabite compared with the main impact of expenditure during the term of Labour Governments.

The Treasurer, when dealing with the matter recently, took a different attitude to that of the present Minister for Transport.

In 1954, when in Opposition, the present Treasurer said—

"I have applauded the various steps involved in a bold policy of re-embarking on the spending of money to equip the

railways with fresh capital improvements and an up-to-the-minute approach of railway transportation. Over the last two years we have seen that policy unfolded in completely bright fruition."

He was there commending the bold step taken by the previous Government in purchasing, for example, 177 new locomotives, of which 58 were diesels.

The Minister said that he would go round the world and, if necessary, buy locomotives "off the hook," yet his Government have not placed an order for one locomotive since their accession to office. If there is any benefit from the policy of dieselisation, it must be recognised as flowing from the wisdom of a Labour administration in realising the need for it. The Commissioner's ability to meet the present obligations of the Railway Department result only from the foundations that were laid by Labour in years gone by.

Reference has been made to the placing of an order by the previous Government for £2,000,000 worth of carriages. I shall not detail the circumstances of that matter, but the order was not repudiated while I was Minister. If it was, it was at a time when there was a difference of opinion within the Labour Party and when I found myself no longer with the body of Cabinet, which went in a certain direction and formed a new political party. The Commissioner, as well as the present Treasurer and other people, know that money could have been found for those carriages and would have been found had the then Cabinet not foundered. In any case, the option was due to lapse last August, but the Minister exercised the option I secured and placed an order for the carriages. I am unaware of any legal obligation that rested on the Government. I certainly did not advise the company of the acceptance of the contract, nor did any responsible officer of the department. I am subject to correction in this matter, but I should be very interested to learn of any legal obligation that rested on the department in that matter. In any case, the Minister destroyed the whole value of his criticism when he said that the carriages were urgently needed.

Mr. Chalk: I did not take any credit from you. I said you did not have the money.

Mr. DUGGAN: We did have the money. Circumstances other than finance came into the matter. I am certain that if I had stayed with the other members of the Cabinet and they were still the Government, the order would have been placed a long time ago.

Mr. Chalk: Then you are responsible for the fact that the carriages are not here?

Mr. DUGGAN: That could be so.

There are two other matters to which I should like to refer, but as time is pressing I shall have to be very brief in my remarks.

The first relates to the consultative committee, which has not yet been brought into being. The Minister, with a great blaring of trumpets, found it politically prudent to bring to Queensland Professor Hytten, an alleged authority on transport matters. However, despite a very gracious approach to the Minister—we have almost made an obeisance to him in our efforts to learn something about the report—we cannot get it. Why does not the Minister bring the report to the light of day? There must be very good reasons for his failure to do so. As a rule he is very vocal but in this matter he is acting like the reluctant debutante. I ask him to reconsider the matter and table the report.

Secondly, I am rather disturbed at the statements attributed to the Premier—and indirectly on one occasion to the Minister for Transport—that the Government are disinclined to proceed with the proposal to electrify Brisbane's suburban railways. I think a careful survey of the traffic problems in every metropolitan city will prove conclusively that rail transport offers the most effective solution in the movement of large bodies of people quickly and cleanly in a modern community. Brisbane's suburban traffic is something like 27,000,000 passenger journeys a year. Meubourne's runs into 258,000,000 passenger journeys a year and the suburban passenger journeys number 244,188,585. The figures are much the same for Sydney.

Here is an opportunity to offset the decline in coal production. Coal can be used much more economically in a stationary boiler than in a mobile one such as a railway locomotive. By electrification we could do as New South Wales does and progressively reduce the cost of electricity supply to consumers, both domestic and commercial. If we had more power generated we could use at off-peak periods West Moreton and Maryborough coal. On the 3,000-volts D.C. system we could have the foundation laid for ultimate expansion to various other places.

When I was Minister for Transport, the present Treasurer, Mr. Hiley, referring to the line to the South Coast, said, as recorded at page 1084 of the 1956-1957 "Hansard"—
"You call tenders for a franchise for an electric line there; you will be surprised at what you will get."

The Government have been in office for nearly three years and I see no evidence of any disposition to call tenders for a franchise there.

Adequate provision must be made for the future transport requirements of the people in Brisbane. No Government, however, sectional, can afford to deny adequate transport facilities to a city with a population of 600,000 people and still growing. They would help immeasurably to open up more areas in outer suburbs, cheapen the land and relieve the congestion on city streets.

I hope that nothing will be done to jeopardise the early implementation of the electrification proposals. I think they are sound in every possible way.

(Time expired.)

Mr. FOLEY (Belyando) (2.15 p.m.): I give full credit to the Minister for any improvements he may have effected since he has held his portfolio. He has mentioned some and emphasised the fact that many of them did not cost the department anything. Nevertheless, as time goes on, railway employees will enjoy the minor privileges he referred to. At the same time I point out to the Minister that over the many years since Labour first became the Government of the State considerable arrears were cleaned up. Whereas once the average railway employee, particularly the fettle, was classed as the Cinderella of Government employees, Labour administrations brought him to a very high standard of living. Even though the Minister has no doubt made many improvements following Labour's policy there are still arrears that he has been unable to catch up with. That position obtains at the end of every financial year as he will find as long as he is in charge of the department. Because of the limited amount of finance that can be allotted to the Railway Department yearly the Commissioner and his staff always find it impossible to keep pace with the demands that come from all sections throughout the State. Consequently there are always arrears from one financial year to the next. In the war years railway men responded magnificently. They gave everything they had for the efficient transport of troops and materials, an effort that has been acknowledged as second to none anywhere in the world. Rolling stock and engine-power effectiveness was reduced almost to zero. Something had to be done. The Labour administration responded. Over a period of years between £40,000,000 and £50,000,000 was poured into the Railway Department for rolling stock, locomotives, diesels, and other equipment to make up for the deterioration during the war and because of that expenditure, rolling stock and locomotives have a greater measure of effectiveness today than at the end of the war. As the Leader of the Opposition pointed out the Minister is getting the benefit of that improvement brought about by the previous administration. The department now has the requisite engine-power; rolling stock had been brought up to a very high standard. Nevertheless the Minister will find during each year that there are arrears of work that cannot be attended to because of insufficient finance. I was not here when the Minister commenced his speech this morning, but I listened to his remarks about the great development in the North-West, North, Mackay and Toowoomba areas, but I did not hear him say anything about the Central Division. Previous administrations poured many millions of pounds into the improvement of that division. By regrading and relaying and making pass-points, the

Clermont line was brought up to a very high standard of efficiency. Similar work was carried out between Emerald and Rockhampton and Emerald and Bogantungan, where much relaying and regrading was carried out costing many millions of pounds over a period of years. However, there is still much more to be done if we are to have the advantage of diesel engines beyond Emerald. For instance, it will be necessary to reduce many of the grades on the Drummond Range. At present a big staff is needed at Bogantungan, where they have to reduce the load and double the engine power to bring the trains over the range. I bring that to the notice of the Minister. It would be a great advantage to the West and the Railway Department itself if bigger loads could be carried over the range.

During previous debates on these Estimates I referred to the advantage of having maintenance repairs to wagons and engines carried out locally. At present everything appears to be centralised in Rockhampton, where there is very fine equipment but I emphasise that many jobs now carried out at Rockhampton could be done locally, say at Longreach, Blackall, Alpha or Emerald, where it was done years ago. It would be a benefit if we could decentralise the work of repairing and maintaining rolling stock. I have raised this subject on more than one occasion, and the Commissioner has considered my suggestions, but no changes have been made. In my last letter to the railway department, when I knew of his visit to the Central West, I suggested that in considering these problems he should discuss the matter personally with the men, instead of taking with him staff officers from the head office of the Central district. The men will not discuss these matters in front of the officers through fear of intimidation. They are hesitant to offer suggestions or speak freely then, although they speak freely to me as their representative when I visit the district.

I have in mind the demand they had made for years for a cutting apparatus at Alpha, to be used by fitters and others. The department had developed the habit of saying, "No," to every suggestion, and this apparatus was not supplied. Later, they were successful in their efforts and in a period of six months the advantages to the department in reduced costs for labour and otherwise were amply demonstrated.

My next point should be of interest to the department. Until recently the lathes at Emerald, Alpha and other places were very old. I suggest to the Minister that on his visits to these districts he should speak with the men on the job. He can take his cue from practical men. Labour and other costs for daily jobs could be reduced considerably. The men will point the way to economies.

I have taken up the matter time and again, and notwithstanding the Commissioner's refusal to make certain recommen-

dations, there is merit in the suggestions of men on the job. If the improvements they suggest were carried out, their work would be lighter, and labour costs would be reduced considerably.

I have seen as many as 11 locomotives on the line at Alpha. They could not be attended to because of insufficient labour and equipment. They remained at Alpha until it was convenient to send them to Rockhampton. Time and money are lost through delay at Alpha, and the time in taking the equipment to Rockhampton and returning it. Decentralisation would give quicker results.

I turn now to the hoisting gear in locomotive and wagon sheds. For years, until recently, the men had to use an old type jack to raise wagons and locomotives, but recently modern hoisting apparatus was installed at Emerald.

Mr. Windsor: Since this Government came into power.

Mr. FOLEY: No, it was done just prior to the election of the Government. This Government, of course, will reap the benefit of reduced costs in depots where the improvements have been made. I suggest that in his visits to country centres and particularly to some isolated centres, the Minister look at the type of equipment the fettle has to use to keep his section of line in repair. The equipment in use today is of the dark-age type. I can look back at the activities of the Postmaster-General's Department over 20, 25, and 30 years, when a hole was dug in the ground with a bar and shovel and the telegraph pole was hoisted up by a gang of men, but today that department uses the most modern equipment, enabling the work to be done effectively, quickly, and at a minimum cost. We should take a leaf out of the book of other departments and do something towards modernising the equipment the fettle has to use. In no section of the Railway Department is there a group of men who give such loyal and useful service with the equipment at their command than the fettle. They are out in the hot sun, and in all weathers, and are as fit as an Olympic competitor, but they are using the same equipment they used 30, 40, and even 50 years ago. Here there is room for improvement. At one time they had to pump their way to work for many miles from their camping site, perhaps at the far end of their section but motor trolleys have improved their lot in recent years.

The Minister said that during his term of office he had done much to improve the housing conditions of railway employees but the improvement has been continuous over the years, and anything he has done is the result of the policy of previous Governments. I interjected while he was speaking to say that there are arrears in housing in almost every part of the State. I suggest that a larger portion of the Vote be devoted to the building of houses for fettle, locomotive

men and other railway men at the various depots. Every time that I visit Emerald and Alpha, at any time of the year, one, two, and perhaps three men will tell me that they have applied for a house without success. They ask me to do something to get it for them. I cannot help everyone in the Railway Department to get a house, and so I suggest that the Minister allocate a larger portion of the Vote to the building of accommodation for men particularly in the isolated portions of the State. Unlike the city dweller, these men work under very adverse climatic conditions. Nothing but the best is good enough for men who give such excellent service to the Railway Department.

I suggest to the Minister that on the next occasion when he introduces his Estimates, he should give an account not only of what he has done but also of what he has been unable to do.

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) (2.36 p.m.): I listened with considerable interest to the Minister's speech, particularly his remark that he found it necessary to recast many of the outmoded and archaic by-laws of the Railway Department. I suggest that he apply that principle to the whole administration of the department, which at present is cluttered up with precedents and cobwebs from the past.

Let me give an example of how outmoded some railway by-laws are, and this is something that came under my direct notice only a few short months ago. A man in a highly-contagious state of tuberculosis travelled by train from Townsville to Brisbane so that he could get medical attention here. He travelled in a first-class sleeping compartment. It is quite probable that on the journey down he went into the various railway refreshment rooms and the buffet car and mixed with other passengers at the risk of infecting them with his complaint. I make it clear that I am not blaming the man concerned; I am merely telling this story to exemplify the crass stupidity of some railway by-laws. The man was a veritable reservoir of infection; he was able to mix freely with the other passengers, and presumably he handled many appliances used on the train in the preparation and serving of food.

His illness was so far advanced that the medical treatment he received here was unavailing, and he died. His relatives wanted his body taken back to Townsville in the coffin compartment of the luggage van of the "Sunlander". Naturally, they wanted it placed in a hermetically sealed tin or lead coffin, but bless my soul if the railway regulations did not preclude them from doing so! Although he could travel down, a veritable reservoir of infection, his body could not be taken back in the coffin compartment of the luggage van of the "Sunlander" in a hermetically-sealed coffin. The railway regulations prescribe that the body of anyone who has died

from an infectious disease cannot be carried in a luggage van, even though it may be in a hermetically-sealed coffin.

To do the Commissioner justice, I pointed out to him the stupidity of the regulation and he issued instructions that the body was to be taken back to Townsville in the coffin. That gives hon. members some idea of the crass stupidity and the almost mid-Victorian aura of some railway by-laws.

Mr. Windsor: He is a very good Minister.

Mr. AIKENS: I did not get in touch with the Minister. Either I am not speaking plainly or there is something wrong with the hon. member's ears. I said that I got in touch with the Commissioner.

The Minister has said that the Railway Department realises that it has to meet intense competition from road and air transport. It always has had to meet competition from sea transport and it has done so more or less successfully. The Railway Department now employs officers—I think they are called "good will" officers—who go out and meet the public and put the case of the Railway Department before those who might use the railway system for the transportation of their goods.

Mr. Low: It is a very good idea.

Mr. AIKENS: An excellent idea and I know that the officers concerned do very good work. But they are up against many problems. One that could very well be investigated is the remarkable facility with which police officers in country districts will give a permit for road transport when it should not be issued at all. But that is by the way and I will not develop it any further. It is something the Government should examine.

The Minister is to be commended for saying to those who administer the railway service in the State, "The old days when the Railway Department had a monopoly and the people had to have their goods carried by rail and had to travel by rail are gone for ever. We are now facing intense competition from many avenues and we have to be modern and go out and meet it."

Unfortunately the Minister has not gone far enough. He paid a tribute to the railwaymen, the rank and file of the service, and said he believed they were just as eager as he was to co-operate in grappling with and overcoming the problems of alternative means of transport; but for some reason unknown to me, he has not agreed, to adopt the only course that can successfully put the Railway Department on a competitive basis with other forms of transport and that is to set up advisory committees in every division comprising members of the rank and file of the railway service, members of the various railway trade unions, who can meet regularly with the general managers, and at times come down and meet regularly with the Commissioner and his officers, and tell the general

managers and the Commissioner just what should be done to put the railway administration on a really up-to-date foundation.

Let us be quite honest about it. We have in the railway administrative section some men who still live mentally in the days when the Railway Department had a monopoly and they either cannot or will not realise that this is the year 1959 and that competition is keen. Consequently, all sections of the railway service must be so moulded and welded together as to present a united front to all forms of competitive transport.

The advisory committees would be well worth while and would justify their establishment. If they did not bring one extra pound of revenue to the Railway Department—although I have no doubt they would bring countless thousands of extra pounds of revenue to it—they would be worth their establishment if they operated only for the prevention of industrial disputes within the railway service itself—disputes that have happened but should not have happened.

I have in mind two disputes in my own beloved home town of Townsville. They occurred because of the archaic, cobwebbed attitude of the railway administrative officers.

The first was the shunters' dispute in the south yard at Townsville. I have a very high regard for the shunters in the railway service. The hon. member for Belyando paid a well-merited tribute to the fettlers, the bridge labourers, the bridge carpenters and all those who work out in the sun and in the far-flung outposts of the railway service of the State; but I am sure the hon. member for Mackay will agree with me, as the hon. member for Keppel would if he were here, when I say that there are many jobs in the railway service that we would not like to do and the job above all that I would not like to do is the job of shunter.

Mr. Power: He takes his life in his hands every day.

Mr. AIKENS: He takes his life in his hands; he works in all weathers and he works at top pressure all the time. Moreover, he works by night as well as by day.

Mr. Baxter: With the worst monetary reward.

Mr. AIKENS: That may be so. There is a case where, owing to the reorganisation of the signalling and the interlocking system in the big shunting yard in Townsville known as the south yard—and I will make this as little technical as I can—they decided they would take all the interlocking gear out of the shunting yard and have the points manually operated. That is, the shunters had to hold the points by hand. In a big shunting yard there is a foreman shunter, and in charge of each engine, a shunter-in-charge and a shunter. It meant that if one man was holding the points the other shunter had to do the cutting off, the hitting up and attending to the braking gear. In other words, one shunter had to do the lot while the other was holding

the points. When the interlocking gear was taken out of the south yard the unions concerned—particularly the A.R.U. of which I am and have been a fully financial member for 41 years, proud of the privilege the union gave me to continue as a fully financial member after I came into Parliament in 1944—said to the general manager, "Look, the shunters in the south yard have enough jobs to do now, goodness only knows. If you are going to insist that the points be manually held we need some assistance in the south yard." The attitude of the general manager, supported by the Commissioner who is sitting in the lobby listening to me, was perhaps an attitude that had been engendered by years of Labour Governments. They received a dogmatic "No." The attitude of the Government for far too long has been, "If a railwayman asks you for something just say, 'No'. Don't investigate the rights or wrongs of their suggestions but just say, 'No', and tell them to go and jump in the lake." As it happened, the shunters in the south yard—and more than one union was involved—decided to put on a regulation strike. Again the hon. members for Mackay and Keppel—and the hon. member for Norman whom I forgot was an ex-engine driver—can tell you just what shunters can do if they work according to railway regulations. They can say, "No hitting up at night" and various other things that the regulations strictly forbid. So they worked in accordance with regulations. For quite some time all shunting in the south yard was virtually paralysed. It was taking trains eight and nine hours to get in from Stuart, a distance of six miles. Thousands of tons of western loading were held up in the south yard alone. All this time the railway administration was adopting the attitude of, "Say 'No' if the railwaymen ask for anything, just as was done in the good old Labour days. Say 'No' and let us hope that they will weaken." At one stage someone entered the picture—I do not know who it was but probably the Minister—who sent a railway officer up to Townsville. He was a man who had come up through the ranks, a man who had had outside experience in the person of Mr. Dinsmore. They also sent a railway union official from Brisbane. They went onto the job, saw the conditions under which the men had to work, and said, "These men are right. They should have got right from the start the extra assistance asked for." They were given the assistance, the regulation strike ended, and again the business of the Railway Department in Townsville went merrily on. But look at all the revenue that was lost! Look at the goodwill that was lost while that dispute was in progress! I do not want to embarrass the Minister but I would not mind betting that while that dispute was on he was inundated with telegrams from all sorts of crackpot road hauliers in the area, particularly one from Ingham, asking for permission to run hundreds of tons of goods by road from Townsville to Ingham.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member will not mention the subject of road hauliers or road transport.

Mr. AIKENS: It is very difficult to deal with a railway holdup and not bring in other forms of transport that capitalise on every holdup in the railway system.

Quite recently we had another dispute in Townsville that almost paralysed the whole of the northern railway system. I refer to the dispute in the diesel engine shed at Townsville. When the diesels were being repaired in the old shed—the old carpenter's shop in the north yard—and it was necessary to move the diesel engines into the repair shed one of the shed enginemen would come from the loco shed, move the engine and then go back to his job in the locomotive running shed. But, as the Minister said, when they finished Duggan's monument it was purely a steel skeleton silhouetted against the eastern sky. When they finished it they called it Tom's monument or Chalk's monument. The general manager of Townsville, backed by the dogmatic Commissioner said that all diesel locomotives kept in the shed were to be moved about for repairs and shunting by the fitters or electricians. The fitters, said, "Not on your life. The moving of a locomotive is a driver's job. It was a driver's job when we were in temporary quarters and it has to be a driver's job now." Imbued with the idea driven into them when the Labour Party was in power that they must not give away to any suggestion of improvement in working conditions, the general manager said that the locomotives for repair in the diesel shed were to be moved by the fitters. The hon. member for Mackay and the hon. member for Norman will be astonished to hear me say that the diesel locomotives were being fly shunted by fitters.

Mr. Baxter: Against every regulation.

Mr. AIKENS: Yes. Finally they said, "No, we won't do it. Bring the locomotive enginemen down from the shed." Anybody who knows anything about big sheds knows that there is a shedman moving engines under steam, a man qualified to drive, also a relieving set, and sometimes a spare set of enginemen in the shed. All they had to do was to walk down from their shed to the diesel shed, shift the diesel engine and walk back to the locomotive shed. The general manager said "No" and the Commissioner said "No", and again the whole of the transport system was thrown into chaos. Finally, after the opposition transport vultures had perched on the railway fence waiting to pick up the carcass, after that had gone on for weeks and the department had lost scores of thousands of pounds of revenue and scores of thousands of pounds of goodwill, the men were given what they asked for in the first place.

Mr. Walsh: In spite of that you always voted with the Government.

Mr. AIKENS: I can remember only the other night when I walked into the House and voted with the A.L.P. against the Government the hon. member for Bundaberg and his colleagues slunk out like dingoes in the night because they were not game to vote for the Government or the A.L.P. That is an effective

answer to the hon. member. It occurs over and over again. If we are going to have efficiency in the railway service let us immediately get together this Advisory Committee and the men whose bread and butter depends on the continuation of railway transport. Let us get these men together with the railway administration officers so that they may clear away from the minds and brains of some of our administrative officers the cobwebs that have grown there for so long.

There is another matter on which I wish to speak in a purely constructive sense—which is something very unusual for me. Usually I am destructive. I learn that there is to be introduced in the air a sardine service. Ninety-five persons are to be crowded into an Ansett A.N.A. plane.

Mr. Wordsworth: Hanging from the wings.

Mr. AIKENS: Hanging from the wings. The people are complaining about terrible conditions in tourist class travel, yet our old-fashioned mid-Victorian railway administrative heads forget that the railway service is operating in the twentieth century. Personally they are very nice men, but I can smell old English lavender any time I go near them, the old English lavender of the mid-Victorian era. It is a wonder they do not wear muttonchop whiskers and brocaded clothes and give Latin quotations as in the early days of Queen Victoria, because that is their mental attitude to the railways system.

Mr. Davies: Whom are you referring to?

Mr. AIKENS: To nearly all of them, and if the hon. member was in the administrative section of the railway system he would be the worst or the most archaic of the lot. He is the most versatile member in this Chamber—he is a failure at everything.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. AIKENS: I will not transgress your ruling, Mr. Taylor, but I ask your permission to say that air transport is advertising extensively, that road transport is advertising extensively, that sea transport is advertising extensively, but do we see an advertisement in the papers or over the air or anywhere else as to the virtues and advantages of railway transport?

These goodwill officers could do much if they had the power to spend money on advertising. I asked the Treasurer on one occasion—I think when he was introducing his first Budget—"Are you going to do as the Moore Government did because quite a lot of people will be disappointed if you do not?" and he used these words of wisdom in his reply, "You cannot prune yourself out of a depression. You must spend yourself out of a depression." So it is with the Railway Department. It is facing intense competition. It cannot prune itself out of the position, but it can spend itself out of it, by advertisements setting out the virtues, the real economic virtues of travel by rail.

The cost of an air trip from Townsville to Brisbane even in the sardine service is, I think, £14. The cost of a first-class rail fare from Townsville to Brisbane plus sleeper is probably £7, £8, or £9. Many people will say, "Yes, but if you travel by air you have not to pay for a sleeper or your meals in a buffet car." In order to combat that statement it is merely necessary to point out to them that whether a person is in Brisbane taking a holiday after a road trip or an air trip or a train trip, he has to pay for his meals and his accommodation. Consequently if it is pointed out that the only thing a person saves in travelling by air is time, and it costs money to save that time, he will weigh the financial pros and cons of travelling by air and travelling by rail.

Mr. Wordsworth: A busy man never gets a rest if he travels by air.

Mr. AIKENS: I know that Members of Parliament are allowed 16 single plane trips a year, but, except during last year when there was a serious illness in my family and I went backwards and forwards to Townsville quite frequently. I do not use that right on more than half a dozen occasions a year, because I prefer to travel by train where, as the hon. member pointed out, I can get a rest. I prefer to travel in quietness and comfort rather than have the sardine conditions of air travel, whether first or tourist class. God knows what the conditions will be under the new Ansett-A.N.A. class.

I have told many people of these things. Quite a few of them were amazed when I told them, for instance, that the Australian taxpayer pays £16,000,000 a year to keep the airlines in existence. They have been amazed when I pointed out to them, and demonstrated it with pencil and paper, that a family can travel by "Sunlander" from Townsville to Brisbane and in comfort, and save £9 compared with the same trip by air. I say to them, "Certainly you get to Brisbane one day earlier and you have one day extra in your holidays or in your business trip in Brisbane, but is it worth £9 in hard cash to have that extra day in Brisbane? Is it worth £9 in hard cash to have that extra day of business time in Brisbane? When they work it out in pounds, shillings, and pence, they say, "Now that you have pointed it out to me in that way, I do think it would be better financially to travel by train." The Government do not advertise the railways. Let them get out and tell the people all these things. Do not have goodwill officers going from person to person seeing them separately. How many politicians, apart from myself, would be elected if we only saw one person at a time? Advertise and tell the people what you have to sell and what you believe in and what benefits will accrue to them if they support you. I say to the Minister, for goodness sake clear away some of the spiders and cobwebs among the administrative officers. As other businesses advertise so must the railways advertise. Use the

newspapers, television, radio and every medium to sell the railways to the people. If you, Mr. Minister, do that and adopt the modern business approach of getting business, and if you take union officials in the railways into your confidence and form advisory committees, you will hold and extend your business. Then, if you do that, I do not think you will stand up in this Chamber next year and tell us that the Railway Department is still losing money. I do not think the Commissioner will, in his next report, say that the number of train passengers is down.

(Time expired.)

Mr. HERBERT (Sherwood) (3.2 p.m.): I should like to express to the Minister and his officers the appreciation of the residents of Chelmer to Corinda for the new railway stations in that area. They are the best on the Ipswich line, the most modern in Australia and a credit to any district. Before the Government came into office we faced the awful possibility of having stations of the same style as that at Taringa. Now, we have modern brick railway stations, a credit to any community and particularly a community that relies entirely on the railways for transport.

I want to speak on one very important subject, the possibility of establishing a safety section within the Queensland railways. It is well known, to the shame of the previous Government, that if an inspector from the Department of Labour and Industry were allowed onto railway property he would find more cases of breaches of the relevant rules and regulations than he could handle. Of course it was said that as a Crown instrumentality the railways were not beholden to these inspectors. The previous Government allowed industrial safety to get into such a deplorable condition that it would take more than a Government's term of three years to remedy it. The Minister has improved the position mainly by making sure that all new installations comply entirely with the regulations laid down for outside employers. Given time he will be able to bring the entire system to a proper standard. At present it would be beyond the resources of any one term of Government to rectify. The Minister is seized with the importance of the problem and is doing everything possible within his power to solve it.

I should like to make another suggestion. In other railway systems there are safety sections and I should like to see them here. That does not mean that the railway service has to allow inspectors from the Department of Labour and Industry onto railway property. A safety section could be something within the department itself. The sections are in operation in New South Wales where they operate with considerable success. If we had experts from the southern States to tutor one or two of our officers we could initiate something similar here which would result in a good deal of saving both in human suffering and money.

At the recent Industrial Safety Convention in Brisbane, which members of the Labour Party avoided, a seminar session was conducted by Mr. J. G. Holdsworth, who is safety engineer for the New South Wales Railway Department. As a result of the discussions at that seminar, I gained a good deal of knowledge of the problems associated with industrial safety.

I should like now to refer to many innovations introduced in New South Wales in the interests of industrial safety. The New South Wales department's safety section was established in 1946 following a phenomenal increase in the percentage of injuries to staff between 1940 and 1946. In February, 1946, in New South Wales, the injury rate was 1.95 per cent. That is a very high rate in an undertaking like the railways. The percentage of injuries to staff improved from 1948 to a minimum of 1.33 in November, 1952. The rate then increased to 1.63 per cent. in May, 1956, and at present it stands at 1.48 per cent. In other words, since the introduction of a safety programme in New South Wales railways, losses through injuries have fallen by approximately .5 per cent.

An analysis of the average number of staff employed, lost-time injuries, and the percentage of injuries to staff, gives an indication of the branches, and locations within them, where the majority of accidents occur. Forty-five per cent. of all lost-time injuries occur in the mechanical branch, 27 per cent. in the way and works branch, 20 per cent. in the traffic branch, while the remaining 8 per cent. are distributed between the other branches. The proportion of lost-time injuries sustained by employees in each branch has been fairly consistent since the introduction of detailed accident statistics in 1946. Unfortunately, we have not the same figures for Queensland, so that I cannot give hon. members a comparison.

It is considered that the rapid reduction in the accident rate during the period from 1946 to 1948 was due to the reaction of all concerned to the Commissioner's directions, a number of which were issued, and to the assistance rendered by officers of the safety section in the elimination of potential hazards. The systematic investigation of accidents and co-operation of the medical section also assisted. From June, 1948, the downward trend became less pronounced, which is attributed to the consistent attention that had been given to the prevention of accidents.

The increase in the accident rate over recent years could be due to many indeterminate factors. Several causes were worked out, as follows:—

(a) The lessening of the enthusiasm displayed by the staff in earlier years. When a scheme of this nature is introduced the staff become very keen on it, but after a while they become rather lax and lose their enthusiasm.

(b) The absence of a uniform approach to the problems of safety. In other words, different sections adopted varying systems, which led to problems of overlapping.

(c) The failure of many controlling officers to make maximum use of the facilities available from the safety section. Apparently, some of the men selected were not the correct type for the job.

(d) The lack of appreciation by many junior supervising officers of their responsibility in matters affecting the safety of employees under their control.

(e) The failure to appreciate the effect accident-free production has on economy and efficiency.

A sustained safety programme must become an integral part of the railway administration in Queensland if improvement in the existing accident rate is to be effected. Such a programme should be based on the elements of a safety organisation as recommended by the National Safety Council of America. America, of course, is the most safety-conscious nation in the world. It has the game down to a fine art. It has drawn up seven headings under which safety problems could be tackled.

Mr. Power: What are you quoting?

Mr. HERBERT: I am quoting some material supplied by the safety section of the New South Wales department. It has been supplied by experts in the field and it is of particular interest in this State. No-one else has bothered to raise it here before. These are the recommendations of the National Safety Council of America—

1. Management leadership.

That means the assumption of responsibility and declaration of policy by management. There is no point in trying to initiate any safety campaign in the face of managerial opposition of any sort. Any management that opposed safety control would be acting against its own interests as well as against those of the staff.

2. Assignment of responsibility.

Management must hand over to certain personnel—safety directors and supervisors and safety committees—the job of looking after industrial safety in the railways. It should be handled by an engineer with the necessary qualifications.

3. Maintenance of safe working conditions.

That means inspections and engineering revisions and other procedures to make sure that any safety material provided is maintained.

4. The establishment of safety training. Safety training is available in Queensland but far better courses are available in the South.

5. An accident record system.

That means an analysis of all the accidents, working out where the heaviest incidence occurs and taking action to reduce it.

6. Medical and first-aid systems.

That means adequate material, personnel and treatment to be available for anyone unfortunate enough to get hurt.

7. The acceptance of personal responsibility by the employees.

They have to be trained and their interest in the training must be maintained.

In the railway service, if the personnel assured of the co-operation of management. I am certain we will have the wholehearted co-operation of the unions in the campaign. The recommendations have already been accepted by many Australian companies. Most of the bigger industrial engineering works, B.H.P. in particular, go in for industrial safety in a big way. Australian Iron and Steel, General Motors-Holder and many others have big industrial safety sections, and they have them for a number of reasons, chief among which is the saving in time and money and trained personnel, altogether apart from the saving of human suffering, which is the important consideration.

I suggest that a safety council be established within the Railway Department. This does not mean the employment of large numbers of extra public servants although it would probably mean the signing-on of at least one safety engineer. I suggest that the safety council should comprise at least 12 people and the following is the suggested constitution—first, a chairman fairly high up the ladder of seniority in the department, but not the Commissioner himself as he has so much else to do. Certainly the chairman should be a man with sufficient seniority to be able to talk to the Commissioner on problems that come under his notice. Others would be—a safety engineer; chief mechanical officer; two representatives from the mechanical side of the railways, one from the workshops and another from the running and maintenance; one from the Ways and Works Branch; one from traffic; one from electrical; one from signals and telegraph; and one from stores. That would be as large as the committee need be. Actually it is the size of the committee in New South Wales and would probably be the best size for Queensland. It would mean the signing-on of only one extra man, with safety engineering qualifications. The remainder of the personnel would come from the department. It should take only a relatively small amount of their time. The department's safety engineer could be the head of this committee if he had sufficient seniority in the railway service. The following are the terms of reference accepted by many railway systems throughout the world—

(a) To co-ordinate safety activities of the branches;

(b) To consider all matters associated with occupational safety, referred to it by the heads of branches, the safety engineer, employees' safety committees, or other sources and make appropriate recommendations.

These would include the preparation of draft safety rules and regulations.

(c) The authority to appoint branch or inter-branch committees to deal with particular aspects of safety such as warning lights, protective equipment, or investigation into specific safety matters. After considering the committee reports, recommendations would be submitted for approval.

(d) To consider the department's responsibilities with respect to legislation designed for the safety of workers, and make appropriate recommendations.

Of course, that means in this State they would be asked to bring the standard up to the standard set for outside employers in similar industries.

(e) To consider the departmental approach to accident statistics and make recommendations to ensure conformity with standard forms, as required.

(f) To review all safety standards referred to the department by Standards Authorities and recommend on their adoption or otherwise.

(g) To review accident trends and make appropriate recommendations.

(h) To consider the introduction of additional forms of protective equipment and adjustments to existing facilities, and make recommendations as considered appropriate.

(i) To deal specifically with safety training, education and the development of associated training aids.

(j) Minutes of all meetings to be prepared and published for the information of all concerned.

That system has been adopted in many railway instrumentalities throughout the world. I think it should be adopted in Queensland for the benefit of the employees in the Railway Department. The Safety Section of the Association of American Railroads goes a lot further than any accepted system in Australia. In addition to those included in the aforementioned terms of reference such items as highway crossing accidents, trespassing, train accidents, train service accidents, non-train accidents, home and off the job safety are covered. Many of these things are covered in Queensland by other instrumentalities such as the Road Safety Council and the Police Department. We have already got a big enough problem with railway accidents within the service without going as far as the American system.

Many private organisations develop safety through committees operating at the various levels of administration. For example, Broken Hill Pty. Ltd. has 43 committees which meet weekly, fortnightly, or monthly, depending on the size of the department or level of administrative representation. They all pass on recommendations. At the present time there is no system in the Queensland Railways under which employees can

have certain knowledge that something will be done about any safety recommendations that are made.

At the lower levels of administration consideration could be given to the inclusion of employee representation on the safety committee. It is absolutely essential that the men undertaking work on machines and so on should be given an opportunity to have a say on the safety committee. This could be done by the selection of an employee safety representative at locations where they exist or other appropriate employee where such is not the case. This latter suggestion conforms with one of the conclusions reached at the recent safety conference held in Canberra and generally adopted by other industries.

The principal items required to be covered by controlling officers would be—

(a) Investigation of all accidents, both minor and lost time.

(b) Safety inspections.

(c) Consideration of matters arising out of accident investigation and safety inspections.

(d) Consideration of safety suggestions submitted by safety officers, safety representatives and other members of the staff.

(e) Conduct employee safety meetings, where applicable.

(f) Submission of progress reports to the head of the Branch.

The investigation of all accidents would be carried out, not because of their effect on revenue or public relations but to find the reason for them so that they could be avoided in the future. The functions of the Safety Section in the railways are mainly of an advisory nature, and do not vary to any extent to those applicable to any large industrial undertaking. The work of the Safety Section within the Queensland Railways would be of an advisory nature, but it would be a very important one. We never had a system of this nature before. If it is confined entirely to the department, the Commissioner and his officers will be able to regulate the flow of money to where it is most needed. It would be obvious from the recommendations where the greatest dangers existed. It would bring the railways up to a standard which we require as a responsible Government. It is a tremendous job and will take a long time. Fortunately the Minister has the vigour and enthusiasm to attack it, and he has a staff which is capable of carrying out any job entrusted to it. The Minister will have the co-operation of the trade unions because they have been clamouring for this for years, but did not get Government co-operation in the past. Judging by the figures available, the problem will take years to solve. It is fortunate that the Minister assumed control of the department at a time when the workshops at Redbank were to be commenced in order to ensure that they will be of a standard acceptable in outside employment. I hope

that in his next year's Budget, the Minister will find sufficient money to develop the safety section in the Queensland railways.

Mr. LLOYD (Kedron) (3.23 p.m.): It is interesting to see the number of Government members rising to speak. During the first year or so very few Government members spoke after the Ministers introduced their Estimates. It was interesting to hear the speech delivered by the hon. member for Sherwood. I am sure the hon. member was sincere. Judging from his remarks one would imagine that the railways were continually suffering accidents and that it was necessary for continuous inquiry to be made into the incidence of safety. There is some merit in the case the hon. member presented for the setting up of a safety council. I do think that the Minister in the short time he has been in control realises that the derailments and other factors concerned in the safety of railway men have been due mainly to deficiencies which require tremendous capital expenditure. The Minister made extravagant claims in an endeavour to bolster up his own administration; he attempted to belittle the administration of previous Labour Governments in regard to industrial matters within the department. I am inclined to agree with the hon. member for Belyando that the Minister would have spoken for a long time if he had attempted to outline his errors and omissions during the brief period that he has been in charge. He attempted to criticise the Labour Government for many things that are still wrong within the department, but he did not mention the great expenditure on new equipment and rolling stock and better conditions for employees carried out by the Labour Government. One has to travel over the railway service to realise the conditions of many railway men. On the western line many of them are still asked to use hurricane lamps in their wagons. The department and the Minister have been asked to install power points near sidings, so that the men can use electricity, but those points have not been installed. The Minister speaks of some small omissions by the previous administration but neglects to give his errors of omission.

He did not deal with the fact that yesterday 44 temporary employees engaged in the construction gang at Mayne were given notices of dismissal, and that some two weeks ago a further 25 men at Redbank were dismissed. This is happening at a time when, according to the Minister, the railway service has to be modernised. We find that construction gangs are being whittled down to the minimum under this Government.

The Minister paid a compliment to the Leader of the Opposition and the previous Administration for their foresight in placing orders for new equipment, diesel electric locomotives, carriages and rolling stock, as well as other equipment needed to improve the service and so make it attractive to the public. Many millions of pounds were spent

on modernisation by the previous Administration, yet we find from the Auditor-General's report that under this Government there has been a sudden and savage reduction in the expenditure on capital equipment. The table appears on page 90. It is a summary of expenditure on capital additions to rolling stock for the past two years, and since 1 July, 1945. These are the figures—

	1957-58	1958-59	Total since
	£	£	1 July, 1945 £
Construction of			
Locomotives ..	1,212,874	220,854	10,234,533
Carriages and wagons ..	915,173	457,392	18,125,021
Rail motors ..	1,912	—	823,711

Hon. members will note the reduction in the construction of locomotives in the year 1958-1959, as well as the reduction in expenditure on the construction of carriages and wagons. In addition no rail motors were constructed in 1958-1959. The figures illustrate that the Minister is refraining from expenditure on modernisation of railway equipment.

The expenditure in 1957-1958 was purely and simply for completion of orders placed by the Labour Government, but what has happened since then? Apparently no further orders have been placed for the purpose of modernising the railway service so that it can compete successfully with road and air transport.

Tourist air travel has been mentioned. That service will more than compete with the railway service. I understand that the air fares will be very close to first class rail fares.

Much was done to improve railway passenger accommodation by previous Labour Governments, and particularly by the Leader of the Opposition when he was Minister for Transport. Further improvements are essential, to make it attractive to the public. The service on the "Inlander" and "Sunlander" has improved the service immeasurably but it is not all that could be desired, although that is not the fault of railway employees. They are doing their utmost to give every possible service to passengers on those lines. There is a shortage of conductors. In many cases, after leaving Brisbane, passengers are awakened at half-past 4 in the morning for a cup of tea. That is a service the people demand. There is no adequate accommodation on trains for conductors. They have no amenities whilst travelling. They have to occupy a small compartment containing only a seat and no sleeping accommodation. What is more, the department is forcing conductors to pay for their own meals or take cut lunches with them. By and large the arrangements in regard to conductors are unsatisfactory. If the department wants to attract the travelling public to the railways it must provide amenities. Present air fares are close to railway charges, and people will adopt the most convenient method

of travel, the one offering the greatest facilities. They will naturally travel by air if they can.

Mr. Power: You speak about conductors having no sleeping accommodation. Are they off duty?

Mr. LLOYD: No, they have to stay on the train overnight. There is no provision for sleeping accommodation. Each conductor has to occupy a compartment which is even worse than the broom cupboard spoken of by the hon. members for Mundingburra and Burdekin. It is about 4 ft. 6 in. in length by 2 ft. 6 in. wide having no facilities and only one seat. In many cases conductors have to stop on the train overnight and service up to seven and eight carriages. They start work at half-past 4 in the morning to get through their duties by the time their trains reach their destinations. They must have the train ready for the new conductor to take over.

Mr. Power: Do you suggest that a conductor on duty should have a bed for sleeping?

Mr. LLOYD: I do not say that they should have a bed to sleep in but they should be provided with decent conditions instead of the poky little boxes that they have to occupy now.

Mr. Chalk: I will reply to that.

Mr. LLOYD: The Minister will have a lot to which to reply. The Minister has boasted of the conditions he has offered to railwaymen. He has fallen down on the job. Apparently he is concentrating his attention on the south-east corner of Queensland and has not been outside to see the conditions elsewhere. There is room for great improvement in the conditions of employment of railwaymen.

Mr. Chalk: Nobody denies that. You people got them into a mess and I have been trying to get them out of it.

Mr. LLOYD: The Minister made a song and dance about what should be done but let him implement all the things he said should have been done instead of blaming the previous administration. He knows it is impossible to remedy things in five minutes. Many anomalies existed in the service; many have been aggravated since his government came into power.

Mr. Chalk: Whom are you condemning?

Mr. LLOYD: I am condemning the Minister.

Mr. Chalk: For the sins of your leader?

Mr. LLOYD: Many have been aggravated by the Minister. There is a lot to be done; we have always recognised that. The Leader of the Opposition attempted to correct things and he is still highly thought of by railwaymen in Queensland for that. He was unable, of course, to agree to all their requests.

Mr. Houston: They supported him in the by-election at Toowoomba.

Mr. LLOYD: Yes, they supported him solidly.

From what the Minister said on railway refreshment rooms, one would get the impression that he had saved the department £11,000 by leasing them to private enterprise. He said also that the income from the lessees was £3,000 a year, which meant a total saving to the department of £14,000 a year. However, the figures in the Auditor-General's report do not disclose anything like that. In any case, I point out that the practice of leasing railway refreshment rooms was started by a Labour Government. If the Minister refers to the Auditor-General's report, he will find that it does not support his claim.

He has tried to bolster up his administration of the department, but the figures in the Commissioner's report do not substantiate his claims. Although there has been some increase in the department's earnings, the greater part of it has come from the carriage of minerals from Mt. Isa and livestock from the North-west. In other words, the increase has come from traffic in the Northern and Central Divisions, both of which show an excess of earnings over working expenses. In contrast, over the past five years the Southern Division has continued to show a tremendous excess of working expenses over earnings.

The Minister, of course, has said that competition from road transport is more evident in the Southern Division than in the other divisions. It is also true that frequently there is no back-loading for trains that travel to centres in the South-west.

I intend to say something about the metropolitan railway service under a later Vote.

The Minister has claimed successful administration on his part, but both the number of passengers carried by the railways and the tonnage of goods and minerals transported have dropped since the last year of Labour's administration.

Mr. Chalk: I said that this morning.

Mr. LLOYD: That bears out the Minister's assertion that something will have to be done. We agree entirely, but why make fantastic claims about successful administration when the Government have not attracted goods traffic back to the railways, which they claimed to be able to do by devious means?

Let us face the facts soberly. The figures do not substantiate any of the Minister's arguments. He finds himself in a position somewhat similar to that of Labour Governments years ago. Obviously it is impossible to operate a railway system as a profitable undertaking unless the Government are prepared to modernise equipment, to spend money on new rolling-stock and reconstruct lines for a faster turn round. All that should be done but it is not being done.

The Auditor-General in his latest report discloses that Railway Department expenditure on those works has decreased. Railway finances are serious enough to warrant detailed and lengthy consideration. They certainly indicate a need for some alteration in the Commonwealth-State financial relationship. At page 86 of his report the Auditor-General makes the startling disclosure that over the last decade accumulated railway deficits have mounted to the substantial figure of £34,707,017, and he sets out a statement showing the adverse effect of the losses on Treasury finances. He gives two sets of figures for the 10 years from 1949-1950 to 1958-1959, one the result excluding interest and the other the result including interest. The result excluding interest would have been a deficit in the 10 years of a little over £9,000,000 and the result including interest is a deficit of £34,707,017.

With such an impact of railway finances on the State's Budget, it is important to convince the Commonwealth Government and the other States of the seriousness of Queensland's railway problems. We have the second greatest length of line in the Commonwealth and the abnormal circumstance of having to carry goods long distances from remote areas to the ports. That has a savage impact on finances, but no consideration has ever been given to it.

We return to the same old argument that the formula of the original financial agreement, making available to each State of the Commonwealth over a 5-year averaging period so much loan allocation, is completely unsatisfactory for Queensland's conditions. Victoria, with a shorter total line, has a fantastic turnover of passengers compared with ours. Victoria's passenger journeys number 167,405,000 against Queensland's 34,270,000. It is not hard to realise why our costs are so high and our revenue so low. The State should immediately press the Commonwealth Government for a revision of the formula under the financial agreement to give us a greater share of the loan moneys to improve the railway system, to modernise it to give more efficient and faster passenger- and goods-services and thus enable it to meet competition. Instead of an overall basis of loan allocation for public works and the development of Queensland, there should be a separate assessment of the various items on a different formula—so much for railway finance, State by State, so much for development work, State by State, and so on. If the Premier and the Minister for Transport made representations to the Commonwealth Government along these lines, they would be doing more to represent the electors of Queensland than by making a vociferous speech on railway administration for an hour and a half as the Minister did. Successful representations based on the substantial arguments that could be used would greatly benefit Queensland. That is one method. Favourable consideration should be

given to a State like Queensland that produces 25 per cent. of the nation's export income. Consideration should be given to the economic transport of goods from remote areas to the State's ports and harbours. In its present condition the Mt. Isa line not only is unsafe for workers but the department could not possibly operate it economically with the continual derailments. These are all matters to be considered when debating the railway estimates. The Minister would have put up a much more constructive argument had he refrained from his attempt to belittle his predecessor.

Mr. DONALD (Bremer) (3.47 p.m.): Invariably when hon. members opposite were in Opposition they accused the Government of the day of being negligent in not extending the State's railway system. But now that they are the Government, not only have they failed to construct any new lines but they have decreased the mileage of track by 30 miles. I am not going to criticise that fact very strongly because I realise there may be justification for removing the line from Dimbulah to Mt. Mulligan following the closure of the State mine. Of course, it must be remembered that there is some talk that the old gold mines may recommence working. The stock argument of the Premier when he was Leader of the Opposition was the Government's failure to extend the railway system. Instead of increasing the mileage of track the Government have reduced it.

Once again the Commissioner's report reveals that the interest charge is one of the most crippling handicaps we have to overcome. In one year's operations the Railway Department has to earn £3,667,814 so that the moneylenders can receive their pound of flesh. That is a huge amount that has to be taken into consideration when the Railway Department is condemned. For every mile a train runs 3s. 9½d. has to be found for the people who have lent money to the Queensland Railways. Whether it be a passenger train, mixed train, or goods train, the first charge on the railways goes to meet 3s. 9½d. for every mile travelled to satisfy the moneylenders who advanced the money, not to help the State develop but to make easy money for themselves. That cannot be justified. Hon. members opposite may reply, "Should we repudiate?" Had the same wisdom been shown in the building of railways in Queensland as was displayed by the A.L.P. Government led by Andrew Fisher when the line was built from Port Augusta to Kalgoorlie with no interest charge, our railways would have been paid for and would now be paying handsomely. It is gratifying to know that the earnings have risen by 8½d. per train mile and expenses have dropped to 4d. per train mile. That reflects the good management or at least better business. But the interest charge has increased by ½d. a mile. As a result of bountiful seasons which meant an increase in products to be carried the Minister has

been able to reduce working expenses but he has not been able to keep the interest charge even static. I wonder if the people who continually criticise the railways and its management take this factor into consideration or are they interested enough to know or care? The people who work in the railways and manage the railways, including the Minister and the Commissioner, know just what the railways have to earn to satisfy the companies and the people who have invested their money and who must get their interest payments. It is not on account of the lack of action on the part of railway employees that the railways are not able to pay their way. It is refreshing to hear the change in the tune of the Minister and other hon. members of the Government—to hear them defending the railways instead of condemning them, as they did when they were sitting in Opposition. Members of the Opposition will be as strong in their defence of the railway employees as they were when they were members of the Government. Those employees, by their enthusiasm and loyalty have been able to turn out cheaper rolling stock than outside firms could do. In answer to a question asked by me the Minister revealed that the cost of carrying out the work in outside industry was about twice as much as in the railway workshops. There again is evidence of the ability of the men in the department to do a good job, and do it cheaply too. The fall in the earnings from passenger traffic amounted to £108,791. That is hard to understand, particularly in the suburban areas. The drop in country areas may be due to air competition on the long runs, but it is hard to understand why the railways are not at least able to maintain its passenger traffic in the metropolitan area. It is no fault of the running staff and perhaps no fault of those managing the railways. In this respect I stress the inconvenience caused to passengers who have to travel from Ipswich and adjacent stations to their places of business or employment in Brisbane. Unlike the hon. member for Sherwood, I cannot say I am happy with the train service. I say that not because I want to say it, but because it is the truth. I am merely expressing the wishes, desires and complaints of the people who are by the nature of their employment compelled to travel from Ipswich and adjacent stations to Brisbane. The train runs late nearly every night. It may leave Roma Street or Central on time but is late by the time it reaches Ipswich, on numerous occasions so late that the passengers are unable to catch the connecting buses and as a consequence have to hire a taxi or walk miles to North Ipswich and other places. The Minister's attention has been drawn to it on many occasions. In fact, some months ago he met a deputation from the combined executives of the Somerset, Ipswich and Bremer A.L.P. branches. Although he promised that the position would be rectified, he has failed to overcome it. I do not blame him, as it may be beyond his capacity, and in saying that I do not

imply that he has not sufficient ability. The trouble may be caused by circumstances beyond his control. It is certainly not the fault of railway employees.

Traffic out of Brisbane, particularly at peak hours, has reached saturation point. Through the planning of the Leader of the Opposition and other Labour Ministers of Transport, I hope the position will be relieved in the near future. Those plans have been followed by the present Government.

For a moment I shall deal with train milages. Compared with the figures for the previous year steam-train milages for the year under review, are shown in the following table:—

	Miles
Passenger	132,891 less
Mixed	226,584 less
Goods	10,535 more

It follows that the total number of steam-train miles during the year under review has fallen by 348,940 compared with the previous year. When the increase in diesel-train miles is taken into consideration, the position is nothing less than alarming. Diesel milage has increased, as shown in the following table:—

	Miles
Passenger	31,095
Mixed	196,194
Goods	564,208
Total	791,497

It follows that much less coal is being used, and the position is very serious indeed.

While progress is being made with the plan initiated years ago for quadruplication of the suburban lines, electrification of suburban lines has been neglected, if not forgotten.

Electrification should proceed simultaneously with quadruplication. The department is proceeding as quickly as possible with quadruplication, but quadruplication will not give any relief to the coal mining industry. It has lost revenue in recent years. The Railway Department used to be the biggest customer of coal in Queensland, but more coal is now used in the generation of electricity than by the Railway Department. By undertaking quadruplication and electrification simultaneously we would be using Queensland materials. We have all the materials that are required for electrification, abundant coal, copper and steel. Quadruplication is essential, but the department should make provision for electrification. I know that some country members have objected to it in the past. They may change their tune now that they are members of a Government. Quick transport to the city does not react to the detriment of country areas. To argue against that would be to argue against progress and what has been found necessary in nearly every capital city of the world. If we want to relieve traffic congestion in our streets the only solution is the electrification of the

railways, and it cannot be said that this is beyond the capabilities of our engineers. Whilst we know that the failure to get £26,000,000 is holding up another railway project in Queensland, sufficient money should be found to electrify the suburban railways system.

If we proceed with electrification we will assist industries in Queensland, including the coal-mining industry. It would assist, of course, the Australian steel industry and incidentally, there is no reason why we should not have a steel industry in Queensland. The copper industry would also receive assistance.

The hon. member for Sherwood referred to the new railway stations between Brisbane and Corinda. That was not the brain-child of the present Government; it was in the scheme of things brought into being by a Labour Government before their defeat in 1957.

If we could carry out the plans envisaged by the present Leader of the Opposition the Queensland Railways would be on the right track. The stations are very pleasant, certainly a big improvement on the old type of suburban station used by the public over the years. My wish is that the Government should proceed with the erection of more new stations including some in the Ipswich area. The Minister promised me some years ago that when quadruplication went as far as Bundamba he would remove the eyesore of the Bundamba station which has not had much attention given to it since its erection and I know he will honour his promise. There is much passenger and other traffic through that station and it is one through which many visitors to our State pass in attending the Bundamba racecourse. It is not a station of which we can be proud. Whilst I might be tempted to stress the need for a new station at Ipswich I shall refrain from doing so because the matter has a long history but I remind hon. members that some thousands of pounds work of work was carried out on it by a Labour Government prior to its defeat in 1929—

Mr. Chalk: And nothing has happened since.

Mr. DONALD: The work still stands but, as the Minister said, nothing has happened since the work on this project was stopped by the Anti-Labour Government that held office in 1929-1932 and nothing has happened since a Government of the same political colour took over the Treasury benches.

The level crossing over the loop line from Bundamba to Redbank constituted a traffic hazard. It was overcome at the Redbank end and I doubt whether many people ever remember the dangerous spot at the bottom of the hill before the Six Mile Bridge. The Department of Main Roads did a good job in raising the road and taking it over the line. Road travellers now would not know that the line is there. There is a big problem.

however, at the Bundamba end which the people of Ipswich have been trying to solve for years and I should be pleased if the Minister would give serious consideration to the erection of adequate warning signs at that end. The problem cannot be overcome in the same way as at Redbank, but it will have to be solved. There are warning signs on the side of the road, but accidents still happen. "Stop" sign or boom gates on each side of the loop-line would be some help in reducing the number of accidents.

The Minister said that his appeal to the railway employees for co-operation was appreciated by them, and that that has been proved by their attitude. Such appeals to railway employees are not new. On more than one occasion I heard the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for Bundaberg make similar appeals to them. I do not think that the present Minister would have any more influence with railway men than either of those hon. members had when they held the Transport portfolio.

Mr. Ewan: You'd be surprised!

Mr. DONALD: I would be very surprised. In the brief time allotted to him this morning, I think the Leader of the Opposition gave us plenty of proof that the railway men thought a good deal of Jack Duggan when he was Minister for Transport.

I should like to let hon. members know how much His Excellency the Governor was impressed with what he saw at the Ipswich Railway Workshops. Accompanied by the Minister, the hon. member for Ipswich, the Mayor of Ipswich, and other prominent Ipswich people and myself he made a tour of inspection of the workshops and expressed amazement at everything he saw, particularly the number of skilled workmen employed and the quality and variety of their work.

The Minister laid great stress on the willingness of railway employees to co-operate with him after he made his appeal. I think that, in return, some co-operation with the employees should be displayed by him. It is not right that a railway employee should be refused leave to attend to union business. The answer that the Minister gave to a question by the hon. member for Keppel confirms that statement. The Labour Government at no time refused leave to an employee to engage in union business.

Mr. Gair: Don't you think that the union should reimburse the employee?

Mr. DONALD: It is not a matter of payment, but of leave. The department should grant leave to railway employees who are delegates to union conferences or who have to attend to other union business.

During the 1957 election campaign the Government promised that if they were elected they would immediately bring railway workers under the protection of the Factories and Shops Act. Although they have been in office for more than two years they

have done nothing about honouring that promise. It is no good saying that the Labour Party refused to do it while they were in office. I repeat, one of the Government's election promises was that immediately they were elected they would give railway employees the same benefits as outside employees. That has not been done. During the term of the present Leader of the Opposition as Minister for Transport he did make arrangements with the employees that gave certain sections a higher wage than similar workers outside. Employees in the building trades outside are very disappointed that they cannot get the same rate as their railway counterparts.

Mr. P. R. Smith: How long have they wanted to be under the Factories and Shops Act?

Mr. DONALD: It does not matter how long they have wanted to be under it. That is not the question. The question is whether the Government are going to honour an election promise solemnly given to the electors of the State. Perhaps the men would be justified in taking strike action to see that it was done.

However, I do not want to be led away from my point.

I want to pay tribute to all those people in the railways service who devote so much of their leisure time to ambulance work. I do not mean the Q.A.T.B. but rather the ambulance classes set up and made available to the public free of charge, which have been the means of many men getting their St. John's medal. Those classes are set up at every big railway centre and the men have a very proud record, perhaps better than those in any other State of the Commonwealth. They have brought honour to Queensland more than once, both individually and as a team.

(Time expired.)

Mr. WORDSWORTH (Mulgrave) (4.12 p.m.): I remember a little over 20 years ago hearing a visitor from another State say that the trouble with the Queensland railways was that they had only three speeds—slow, dead slow, and stopped. That might have been so in those days, but, thanks to the efforts towards modernisation started by the former Minister for Transport and pursued with such vigour by the present Minister, the Queensland Railways are now entering world class, or as near as they can get to world class on the 3 ft. 6 ins. gauge that our forefathers decided on. To the extent that that work has been done, all must be very proud of the efforts of the Government.

I am not going to be a yes-man or a member of any mutual admiration society during this speech. I propose to offer some criticism, which I think will be constructive. I do not say that the targets of my criticism arose through the actions of the present Government, but they do hold the railways back in the competitive world of transport today.

The hon. member for Mundingburra hit the nail on the head when he said that the railways, with goods to sell in the face of such

keen competition, should embark on some sort of advertising campaign. There is plenty of precedent for it. All other forms of transport expend a considerable amount of money and energy in advertising their wares. Railways in other parts of the world do so. The Canadian Pacific Railway is one example. It advertises all over the world what it has to sell. But first of all the railways must have the goods to deliver. We have some very good trains in Queensland. I refer particularly to the air-conditioned trains, but I am going to criticise the running of them to some extent. I travel on them a great deal and think far too much time is wasted in stops between Cairns and Brisbane and return. The South-bound train seems to pick up time and arrive in Brisbane on time at the end of its slightly more than 1,000 mile journey but the reverse usually applies on the trip North. Unless it has changed in the last few weeks very rarely does the mail train arrive in Cairns on time. The trouble with Queensland trains seems to be that they stop too often for too long. In other States, other than at major stations, the trains stop for only a couple of minutes at a time; but once they stop in Queensland it is rarely less than six minutes before they get under way again. This happens even in the wilderness where there is no crossing of trains. Perhaps the driver has to get his own staff but the train seems to stop much too long. Not more than a month ago I was on a train that left Brisbane on time. We were an hour late into Bundaberg, an hour and a-quarter late into Rockhampton but time was picked up between Bowen and Townsville and we arrived in Townsville on time. But again another quarter of an hour was lost in the Townsville station because of the antiquated method of unloading parcels and goods. Attention should be given to expediting the loading and unloading of these trains. They are not merely passenger trains, they carry parcels and various goods. The train I am talking about picked up two tons of beans in Rockhampton. Trains should be got away on time and kept on time by cutting down the number of stops and time of stopping right through to Cairns.

The time-table for the northern train is quite satisfactory but the train south, particularly between Cairns and Townsville, runs to a very awkward time-table. The train leaves Cairns at mid-day. The railway refreshment rooms do not pay. One of the reasons probably is that people do not like having a meal before mid-day, therefore they do not have lunch before they leave. If the train left an hour later they would use the railway refreshment rooms. By minimising the number of stops and the time of stops the train could arrive in Brisbane at the same time, if it has to arrive at the very inconvenient hour of 6 a.m. Lunch is served at Tully at half-past three and the evening meal at Townsville at half-past eight. It seems to me to be a stupid time-table that the Government inherited. It was a better time-table before the previous Government altered it. Undoubtedly the railways are losing money because of it.

My friends on the Opposition benches have said quite rightly that the previous Government were responsible for the modernisation of the railways by the introduction of diesel-driven and air-conditioned trains. I acknowledge that. Anyone would be a fool who did not. That policy has been carried on. But whoever was responsible for the design of the air-conditioned trains, to my mind, was guilty of a very serious omission in regard to safe travelling. Some years ago a very serious railway accident occurred at Traveston, near Gympie, in which many people were killed. Shortly after that a locomotive engineer named Neild patented a device called Neild's patent.

Mr. Aikens: It was more trouble than it was worth.

Mr. WORDSWORTH: I know that it had its faults but it did provide for safety. It consisted of a tripping gear under each carriage so designed that if the carriage left the rails the gear would apply the Westinghouse brake. That patent was apparently removed from the air-conditioned train. Only a few months ago my wife was travelling on a train when there was an accident and the Railway Department was lucky that there were not many deaths by the derailment of the *Sunderland* just south of Innisfail. It did not get any publicity in Brisbane, but it was very close to a tragic derailment. On this occasion it had been raining for months and the rails had sunk and the leading luggage van, I understand, left the road and continued that way for some distance. I understand that in the case of steam locomotives when a carriage leaves the rails the rough pulling makes it known to the driver, but that does not apply to the diesel locomotive. In this case the Westinghouse brake hose broke before it got to the bridge and that is when the train stopped. If it had gone further half-a-dozen carriages would have gone over a bridge into the water. It may not have been wise to omit the safety device in designing the air-conditioned train.

Mr. Aikens: If there was a Neild patent on it the chances are it would not have worked.

Mr. WORDSWORTH: I have been on trains when it has worked.

Mr. Aikens: They work when you don't want them to work and they don't work when you want them to work.

Mr. WORDSWORTH: Now the hon. member has made his speech I shall continue with mine. Getting back to the selling of the services of the department it would be a great advantage if people could make a reservation without having to give two months' notice as is the case now. If that was altered the Railway Department would get more passengers on long-distance runs. There is also room for improvement in the method of advertising adopted by the department. It would also be of advantage if they employed an advertising man to do the work. The railway advertising that I have seen lacks the first principle of advertising—to be attrac-

tive enough to be read. It is usually in small print without a special heading or any spaces. One of the troubles today with busy executives and business managers and parliamentarians is that they never get enough time for relaxation. They are going from A to B, they get in an aeroplane, they are busy sorting out their papers and when they reach their destination they go straight to the job. Is it any wonder that there is a high death rate from heart failure and strokes. The Railway Department have something to sell in restful air-conditioned travel.

I have spoken up to now about the good service of the Queensland Railways with air-conditioned trains, but now I turn to the bad service. The Commissioner in his report expresses concern about the reduction in passengers, suburban and otherwise, and gives reasons for it. They may or may not be right. The loss in my opinion is mainly due to the fact that suburban passenger equipment is antiquated on modern standards.

In my electorate suburban rail motors run from Cairns and Gordonvale to Aloomba and once a day from Cairns to Tully and return. The Tully rail motor service was started about 26 years ago. At that time I lived in Cairns and worked at Gordonvale, and travelled daily on that rail motor. It used to leave Cairns at 7 a.m. I forget the time it reached Tully, but today it leaves Cairns half-an-hour earlier and gets to Tully half-an-hour later than in those days. If that is progress, I am a Dutchman. The rail motors were new in the days of which I speak but the same motors are still being used on that run. In any private business they would have been written off and scrapped years ago.

Mr. Chalk: Do you know that 10 new rail motors have been ordered?

Mr. WORDSWORTH: Yes, but I am speaking of the reason for the loss in passenger traffic.

Mr. Byrne: You are lucky to get there at times.

Mr. WORDSWORTH: I agree. I know that 10 new units have been ordered, and I hope they will be similar to the one used in the Brisbane Valley. The passenger traffic may then be recaptured by the department. The Cairns-Gordonvale and Aloomba rail motors are the original equipment for that run. One of them is R.M. 25. The drivers refer to them as "bombs." They must be 30 years old. They rattle and flap along the line, and the public do not like to travel in them. Even the school-children dislike travelling in them. Although the school-children are provided with a free pass, they can be seen on the roadside thumbing rides instead of using the rail motors. That is one reason for loss of traffic. By car the journey from Cairns to Gordonvale takes about 20 minutes or a little longer, compared with the rail motor trip of an hour. They stop

frequently, but even between stations they are slow and uncomfortable, and the passengers have to wear raincoats in wet weather. I assume that the position in the Cairns, Mulgrave and Babinda districts is the same as that in other country areas.

I agree with the statement of the hon. member for Bremer on the need to undertake electrification. Much suburban traffic is probably lost in Brisbane, not so much because of the slow speed of trains or the fact that they run late at times, but because of dirty conditions. I can well understand that a well-dressed woman, a woman in light clothing, would not want to travel from Central to Shorncliffe or elsewhere on the suburban line, knowing that she would be immediately showered with coal dust. As soon as the money and facilities are available, I hope the Minister will see that the department undertakes electrification of the Brisbane suburban railways. I do not subscribe to the country bumpkin idea of everything for the country and nothing for the city. The service as a whole has to be modernised throughout Queensland, and the sooner the suburban service of Brisbane is electrified the sooner the department will recapture passenger traffic.

I shall now deal with the longest paddock in Queensland, the enclosed railway area from Brisbane to Cairns, 1,040 miles of fenced line with an average land width of 2 chains. I have often wondered why the department has not done something with the fertile portion of that land in order to get additional revenue. The fenced portion is a liability as it costs much money annually to clear of rubbish. For many hundreds of miles one could not grow anything worthwhile, particularly in some parts of the Central portion because of the climate and unsuitability of the soil. The line, however, runs through many fertile portions and I refer particularly to the area between Gordonvale and Innisfail, country which grew forest scrub. The Minister should inquire into the possibility of planting a line or two of trees to be of use to the State in say 15 or 20 years' time. Alternatively he could adopt a policy we had in operation but which has been waived, of leasing a portion to farmers for grazing purposes. There is nothing new about the idea. A passenger travelling from Melbourne to Adelaide by the Adelaide Express can see fertile farms at Bacchus Marsh growing potatoes and other crops inside the railway fence. The country outside the line has been leased to people, and use is made of this fenced portion that I refer to. In Queensland the line is fenced for railway safety and at present is growing nothing but rubbish. It must cost the railways thousands of pounds a year to clean.

Having made my comments and some criticism I say that the railway system is not the antiquated form of transport that many people think it is. If the motor transport people had to provide and maintain the

roads and if the airway companies had to pay the whole cost to the Department of Civil Aviation for aerodromes, neither of those forms of transport could compete with the railways. If other forms of transport were to allow concessions to primary producers for the carriage of foodstuffs and other essentials for human consumption they would not be able to compete with the railways. The railways have done a good job but it is up to the present Administration to do a better one by making the service more attractive to the people.

Mr. ADAIR (Cook) (4.34 p.m.): I know that the Minister occupies one of the most difficult portfolios in the Cabinet, and I sympathise with him because there is a lot to be done in the Department. The previous Minister did an excellent job and I know that the present occupant will endeavour to do his best. I compliment the Commissioner, Mr. Moriarty, on the excellent work he is doing; I do not believe anyone could do better. Mr. Neeson is a very capable and co-operative officer, who greets everyone with the utmost courtesy.

The hon. member for Mulgrave thought that the train from Cairns to Brisbane could be speeded up.

I agree. I do not like to see anybody inconvenienced, but the "Sunlander" should not have to pull up at many small stations on the run, particularly between Cairns and Townsville. They are already served by rail motors and goods trains, and the time taken on the long journey from Cairns to Brisbane could be reduced by at least four hours.

In my opinion, the most important men in the Railway Service are those in the fettling, bridge, and flying gangs in my area and the Tablelands area. They are out in all weathers and they do an excellent job. In the summer months, which in the North extend from October to March, they work without any protection from a very hot sun. Many of them have been working in the area for 30 or 40 years. Men who have served long periods in fettling gangs, bridge gangs, flying gangs, or similar gangs, should be given the option of a transfer into the workshops at either Cairns or Mareeba. Only recently I spoke to a gang of about 12 men who were working on the line near Cairns. One of them had skin cancers up his arm and round his neck. When I asked him if he would not be better off in the workshops in Cairns, he said that he had not thought of it but would be very pleased if I could help him to get there. Sun cancers can be very serious. If they are not attended to they eventually become incurable.

Some time ago I asked the previous Minister to provide fettling gangs on the Kuranda Range Line with Fairmont section cars instead of pump trolleys. I was successful in getting two section cars, but there are still three gangs working between

Kuranda and Mareeba using pump trolleys. Diesel-powered trains are now using that section of the line and I ask the Minister to give serious consideration to substituting section cars for pump trolleys. The cost would not be great, and the section cars would be greatly appreciated. They are much safer than pump trolleys, because they can be speeded up or easily taken off the line if a train is approaching. We have had a few accidents on the Kuranda Range, but not of much importance. The section cars with Fairmont motors are what the gangs like.

Men working in flying gangs with their home stations at Mareeba or Cairns have to seek accommodation which can be very costly. If the members of the flying gangs could live in railway quarters, as they did a few years ago, they could keep their equipment with them.

I am told that the eating and cooking utensils handed out by the Railway Department are of inferior quality. I do not, of course, blame the present Government for that. However, the tin dishes rust after being used three or four times, and if a better class of utensil could be issued it would mean a great deal to them.

Mr. Windsor: Stainless steel?

Mr. ADAIR: Stainless steel would be expensive.

Mr. Windsor: What about gold? That would be cheaper.

Mr. ADAIR: The hon. member is being absurd. All I say is that the present utensils are unsatisfactory and do not last long. Many men bring their own.

Mr. Windsor: What about Shelley china?

Mr. ADAIR: The hon. member is being ridiculous. The men live out there under hard conditions and all they want is something a little better than they have now.

Mr. Aikens: You would expect that facetiousness from a city slicker, wouldn't you?

Mr. ADAIR: I could expect it from the hon. member for Fortitude Valley because he would not know anything about the conditions these men live under.

As the Minister admitted, there is a shortage of cattle wagons. Many stations that have to get their cattle down to the markets in Mareeba from Einasleigh and other parts of the back country are allotted cattle wagons which is not enough for the number of cattle to be transported.

Mr. Gilmore: They would think they were millionaires if they got 8 or 10 wagons.

Mr. ADAIR: That is so. The cattle lose a lot of weight while awaiting the arrival of the wagons. They have no suitable holding yards. I realise that the department has insufficient wagons to give the graziers the number they require.

Mr. Chalk: As I explained this morning one of the difficulties is the limited number of wagons that can be hauled by one train.

Mr. ADAIR: Unless the supply of wagons is speeded up road-trains will be taking over.

Mr. Chalk: We have already taken steps by ordering two more diesel locomotives for that purpose.

Mr. ADAIR: I know that one diesel is operating now on the Kuranda range. It brings down what used to be three trainloads in the one load.

Mr. Aikens: Where do you get most of your cattle from? Mungana?

Mr. ADAIR: Mungana. All up that line a lot of cattle are reared. They have to be brought to the saleyards in Mareeba and the butchers in Cairns. Master butchers in Cairns have complained that they are told trains will arrive at 3 a.m. but after having their men up from 1 o'clock to wait for trains, they probably do not arrive until 8 o'clock, 9 o'clock, or mid-day.

Mr. Aikens: How far do the diesels go?

Mr. ADAIR: To Kuranda.

Mr. Aikens: Not Mareeba?

Mr. ADAIR: No. I ask the Minister to give consideration to that important matter. The haulage of cattle by road-trains will do a lot of harm to the department. The road-trains up there now will carry up to 90 head of cattle. They move very fast, too.

I come now to one of the shortest railway lines in Queensland—from Cooktown to Laura. Quite a few men are employed on that line. For every mile of line there is a bridge. The men employed keeping the line open are doing a very good job. The rail motor goes from Cooktown to Laura on Wednesday of each week. With the many tourists in the area at present the rail motor is full every Wednesday. I ask the Minister that any contracts let for timber for that line be given to local people. I know that has been done so far. Timber for transoms and sleepers has been supplied by local men. I hope that the department will continue to give them preference.

Towards the top of Cape York Peninsula there are large stands of ironwood timber. It is hard to get a better timber for sleepers.

Mr. Aikens: Is that the same as ironbark?

Mr. ADAIR: No, ironwood and ironbark are completely different timbers. Many hundreds of ironwood sleepers over 50 years old are still as solid as the day they were laid. The trouble with any sleeper is that once it wears by vibration around the dog spike rust sets in, and nothing can be done about it. The sleeper then becomes of little value. There are large stands of this timber at Laura. The ironwood sleeper is superior.

Mr. Chalk: The Railway Department engineers are aware of that.

Mr. ADAIR: There are large stands in that area and I think the Government should, if possible, let contracts for the cutting of these because they are better than cement or concrete sleepers.

Mr. Wordsworth: There are some on the Laura line which have been there for 60 years.

Mr. ADAIR: Yes, and they are still as good as the day they were put in.

Much time would be saved if the trains did not stop at little staff stations, thus allowing more time at the refreshment rooms. I am sure that half the people who get out of the carriages do not get served at Rollingstone. There are many refreshment rooms, the lessees of which apparently cannot afford to employ sufficient labour to serve the passengers quickly. There is also room for improvement in the bars at the refreshment rooms. I am one who has a few drinks and you cannot get a decent drink of beer in a railway bar. The beer is poured out into jugs and then poured into the glasses and it is quite flat. Much could be done to improve the cafes and bars in the refreshment rooms.

Hon. V. C. GAIR (South Brisbane) (4.54 p.m.): I am pleased to have the opportunity to say a few words on the Railway Estimates. I proudly claim to be a graduate of the Railway Department. Hon. members may have read recently that I was a 6th-class unclassified clerk and that I graduated to the position of Premier. The fact that I was an unclassified clerk was not due to any lack of desire on my part to reach a higher position, it was due to the limited avenues of promotion in the service. When I entered politics I did not fail to win recognition even in a Labour Caucus, despite the many factors that operate there. I recall that I was told very early I would have to join the A.W.U. before I would have any chance of becoming a Cabinet Minister.

Mr. Aikens: Who told you that?

Mr. GAIR: I was told that on many sides. However, I succeeded in getting the recognition of my colleagues in the Parliamentary Labour Party and in being elected as a Cabinet Minister.

I have never been ashamed of the fact that I was a clerk in the Railway Department. I gave 15 years of my life to that service, and

I left the department with an unblemished record. That is more than the hon. member, with all his usual humility, can say.

Notwithstanding the increasing number of my defamers, I did not leave the Railway Department because of any defalcations or misdemeanours. I resigned from the department to contest an election and succeeded in unseating the Attorney-General of the day in the 1932 elections. I say those things for the benefit of those who get down in the gutter, or use so much of their time in character assassination.

The department has been the butt of much criticism, but it invariably comes from people without any understanding of the railway system. With all human instruments, or human organisations, it is not perfect; it has its defects and weaknesses, but most of them, I have no doubt, are due to the human element, as they are in all such organisations.

Mr. Aikens: Like a political party—it is only as good as the man at the top.

Mr. GAIR: Up to a point, yes, but that brings me to this observation: We have had good men at the top but they have not always had the support or the co-operation of men at the bottom. I will go on to prove what I am endeavouring to convey. The Railway Department as a transport organisation depends on every individual employee for complete and satisfactory service to the public. It is not much use having an efficient Commissioner or Secretary, or even an efficient Station-master if you have an uncouth porter or uncouth conductor. They will destroy all the efficiency or the good effect created by those at the top. That is what I am trying to convey. In any transport system or other enterprise dealing with the public, it is imperative that those handling the public or coming in contact with the public should have the proper temperament and should recognise the need to give courteous service. In saying that, I am not unmindful of just how impossible the travelling public can be, how exacting, how exasperating and how irritating some travellers can be, but the fact remains, and I am speaking generally, that those handling the public should be men of the proper temperament and demeanour, men who are prepared to give service. Nothing impresses more unfavourably than contact with someone who is uncouth or rude, discourteous or impatient. I am very pleased to see that the Commissioner is still occupying his position, notwithstanding all the threats and wishes for his decapitation expressed here on the change of Government. Criticism of the railways comes from people with little knowledge of them. I have had a very close association with the present Commissioner, and I say, not because he is sitting in the lobby—I would say it anywhere and I have said it before—that I was responsible before the change of Government for the renewal of his appointment. I

did that with confidence and a great deal of pleasure because I do not know of any man in the long years I was in the department or since who has been more dedicated to his work than the Commissioner, Mr. Moriarty. In him we have a man who is conscious of what is required in the Queensland railways. He is an excellent trains man, an essential qualification for his job. He has not spent all his time entirely on the clerical side. He was in charge of trains control in Brisbane, general manager in several divisions, and in all places in which he has given service he has acquitted himself with distinction. I say, when speaking of him, that he is married to the job. He was born of a railway family, and lived his life in the railway, and continues to give service to the public of Queensland, which, I am sorry to say, they are not conscious of, and, in many cases, not appreciative of. I do not know of any public officer who gives more assiduous and devoted service in the discharge of his duties than the present occupant of the office. I remember when he was originally appointed. Some people thought that we should have gone overseas or to some other State for our Railway Commissioner. I did not see the wisdom of that just to be able to say "We got this man from Scotland," or "We got somebody from New Zealand." I have always believed that we should encourage our own employees to rise to the top positions. When positions become vacant, we should not hesitate to appoint our own employees provided they are qualified. In the case of the Commissioner, there was no doubt about his qualifications. We who have been responsible for the appointment of the Commissioner and the renewal of his appointment had the utmost confidence in him, despite the carping critics. The present Commissioner, in association with Mr. Lingard, another excellent and efficient servant of the people who gives unlimited time to his job. The same may be said of Mr. Lee, and many other railway officers, in fact it can be said of railway men generally. I have always felt that the percentage of conscientious railwaymen is high; but there are some, of course, who will destroy the prestige of the railways by their indifference, lackadaisical manner and bad approach to the travelling public. They are concerned only about knocking off and filling in time. Fortunately they represent only a small percentage of the employees. I have often said that there are weeds in the best-kept gardens, and in a large organisation like the railways we must expect to have some of these people. But they are of no use to us. Although the railways are run by the Government, there is no room in any Government department for people who will not pull their weight. They would not be tolerated by T.A.A. or Ansett-A.N.A., or any other people who compete with the railways, and there is no reason why the railways should have to carry them.

Mr. Aikens: If passengers were packed into trains as they are into planes, there would be a squeal to high heaven.

Mr. GAIR: There are many things that the airlines can get away with that the railways cannot. Frequently I have had to sit at airports waiting for late planes and, as an ex-railway man, I have said very loudly, "If this happened in the railways there would be 40 letters in the newspapers tomorrow." But because it is T.A.A. or Ansett-A.N.A., no-one complains.

Mr. P. R. Smith: There are other factors to be taken into consideration.

Mr. GAIR: The hon. member for Windsor rushes in in defence of the air services.

Mr. Aikens: He is a big shareholder in A.N.A.

Mr. GAIR: I do not know whether he is, but frequently I am surprised when I find who the big shareholders among politicians are. It might be very revealing if we all tabled our share holdings and investments. We would then learn where the capitalists really are. They do not all belong to any one political party. The fact remains that the same difficulties as confront air services also face the railways.

Mr. P. R. Smith: Not to the same extent.

Mr. GAIR: Of course they do. Some excuse is always presented for the late arrival or departure of a plane, but everyone is full of complaints whenever a train is running late. Frequently when I have been travelling on a train I have heard complaints about the fact that it is running late, but the people who have complained would have not the slightest idea of what was involved.

Mr. P. R. Smith: Would you say that a train is as dependent upon the weather as a plane?

Mr. GAIR: Trains may not be affected as much as planes by the weather, but that is not the only reason for the late running of planes.

Mr. P. R. Smith: It is a big reason.

Mr. GAIR: Trains can be delayed by floods, washouts, and derailments, but that is never taken into account. Air travellers are prepared to put up with delays—they will sit at an airport for hours without complaint—but railway travellers who are waiting for a late train never stop moaning and groaning. As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be, and the general attitude towards the railways is one of criticism; nothing is right, everything is wrong. People say, "Why don't they bring in a business executive to run the railways? Let them be run on business lines." It was rather refreshing to hear the hon. member for Merthyr say a few days ago that the Railways should not be expected to pay. When his Party sat on this side of the

Chamber they held the view that the railways should pay. Now that they are the Government, the railways are not expected to pay. How can a railway system, which is a common carrier and a public utility, be expected to pay in competition with people who are engaged in the business for a profit? If we ran our railways like Finney Isles or any similar firms we would close down every non-paying line, particularly branch lines. What would the great critics of the railway system, especially in country centres, say about that? They use road transport until the floods come and then they ask, "Where are the railways to carry our goods?" They cannot get over the roads because of the wet. The railways as a public utility have been required to develop the State and to do it at a great cost, but that has not spared them the criticism of people who want them to give service irrespective of cost and at the same time expect them to pay.

I recollect the time when I was a young man in the railways and New South Wales brought into the railway service a man named Cleary who had been a top executive of a brewery.

Mr. Ramsden: He did a very good job.

Mr. GAIR: I do not know whether the hon. member for Merthyr was in Australia at the time or whether he is depending on something he has read. Mr. Cleary was an absolute failure in the railways in New South Wales.

An Honourable Member: He was in the D.T's. most of the time.

Mr. GAIR: I will not say that, but running a brewery is far different from running railways. He was brought into the department, where he did not have a monopoly, in the days when road transport was showing its head in a big way. All his business acumen and business capacity did not support him, because he did not know railways. I subscribe to the belief that to do a railway job well you have to grow up with the railways and get to know them. There are many phases that a newcomer knows little or nothing about.

Mr. P. R. Smith: The Minister is doing all right for someone who has just come into it recently.

Mr. GAIR: The hon. member for Windsor chirps up. He will not be here very long, as I understand he is not very satisfied with the redistribution but time will tell. I sit back and listen and smile as an onlooker in the game of politics today. I heard the Minister saying what he had done and making charges about the previous administration, but invariably he said, "Of course, this was more or less under way when I took over and it was just a question of getting enough money to implement it and complete the job. We would have done more had we got the money." That is the pulse of the matter. In the

debate on the Bill to amend the Stamp Acts, the hon. member for Southport, I think it was, said, "The only reason we are doing this is that we want revenue." If that is so, that was the most honest statement made. They were increasing the tax because they wanted revenue. The same applies to the railways. There is a limited amount of money available and within that limit they have to do as much as possible.

Mr. Ewan: We have not increased rail freights and fares.

Mr. GAIR: The hon. member for Roma very unfortunately says they have not increased the rail freights and fares. Let him be calm and patient. The time is not far off. As one who has been a Treasurer and a Premier I can see it starkly facing them. It has been stalled off after a great battle in Cabinet. The hon. member knows that better than I do. They have no way of avoiding it. His statement, of course, is that of an inexperienced parliamentarian. Had he had Cabinet rank and responsibility he would not have come into that one. There is nothing surer than that increased freights and fares will come.

Mr. Aikens: Why didn't your Government give the protection to the railway employees that the present Government have given?

Mr. GAIR: My friend from Mundingburra is concerned only about small things. I am trying to deal with the railways as a big transport organisation that has developed the State, an organisation that is indispensable to the future development of Queensland. I am concerned about the preservation of a standard of service that can be given only by the Government, a service that we cannot expect and do not get from private enterprise unless we are prepared to pay exorbitantly for it. The hon. member for Mundingburra talks about concessions and all those little tiddley-winky things.

Mr. Aikens: They are not tiddley-winke to the men.

Mr. GAIR: What is wrong with the unions?

Mr. Aikens: You knocked the unions back.

Mr. GAIR: Today we heard the hon. member for Bremer ask, "Why do not the Government bear the cost or give leave to union officials to come to conferences?" Unions are getting big fees from their members today. It costs them nothing to collect them as they are collected by the Commissioner for Railways. There is a periodic show of union tickets and those who have not paid their union fees are threatened with reduced pay.

Mr. Thackeray interjected.

Mr. GAIR: I was in a union before I was conscripted into it like the hon. member. I paid without having to be conscripted. Are not the unions that have

collected these fees morally obliged to spend some of that money in representing their members at the various conferences without relying on the Government to spoon-feed them every time a conference or any other talk takes place? They can find money to travel to Red China and other places under Communist control. They can send delegates and make their contribution to the Australian-New Zealand Peace and Disarmament Conference, another Communist set-up. They can always find money for these things but not for delegates to attend conferences to look after the interests of their members from whom they have collected fees. What do they do with their fees? Other than pay their officials and run around in big cars they give their members nothing in return.

(Time expired.)

Mr. DAVIES (Maryborough) (5.19 p.m.): I was wondering whether the absence of the Minister for Health and Home Affairs indicates anything. We are debating the Estimates of the Railway Department and when he was in Opposition the hon. member for Yeronga said, "If I could not run the railways at a profit I would get out." This is the Government's third year of office and the railways are not being run at a profit. I was wondering whether the Minister for Health and Home Affairs had kept his word. The hon. member for Mt. Coot-tha previously said about the Labour Government, "The Government should appoint a commission of five or seven businessmen to run the railways," clearly showing a lack of confidence in the present Commissioner. No doubt he was of the same opinion as the hon. member for Tablelands. However, other opinion has prevailed in the Government, and the Commissioner is still there. So much for the promises of the various Ministers as they toured the countryside wooing the electors and receiving 43 per cent. of the votes. We know what happened in the election of the Ministry.

The hon. member for Chermerside said this regarding the railways—

"It is long past the time that the Government should see that their own employees do more in the interests of the country."

That was typical of the attitude of hon. members opposite when they were in Opposition, that there was loafing in the railways.

This is what was said by another hon. member of the present Government when in Opposition:—

"To find the reason for the lag in repair we must look at the workshop because the slow repair rate is the main cause. Union dictatorship has been responsible for many of the problems. There is a grave deficiency in output."

This is what the present Minister for Transport said—

“Air-conditioned trains in Queensland are in keeping with the best trains in the States. Inefficiency is the main reason for the falling off in the Department’s revenue.”

Today the hon. member for South Brisbane joined the chorus, finding it sufficiently important to say there were some men in the Railway Department who were not pulling their weight or giving a fair return for their wages. He considered that the number was sufficiently large to warrant his mentioning the matter in Parliament. We do not hold that opinion about the men in the Railway Department. We remember their magnificent service during the war, and how repairs were carried out to keep the service running. If it had not been for their individual efforts the service would not have been equal to the demands placed upon it. The men gave a grand service to the State which is to their credit. After the war the Railway Department had to re-establish itself, and it had to recover from the battering it received during the war but the State has not had any compensation from the Commonwealth Government for the wear and tear on the State railways during war. I think the Minister would find in the files of his department some understanding with the Commonwealth Government about the wear and tear on the railways. It was brought up by the Minister for Railways in New South Wales on a number of occasions and in this respect the Commonwealth Government should be reminded of their duty to the State. The Commonwealth have never compensated the State fully for the extra wear and tear on the railways of this State which were greater than that suffered by any other State during war.

Let me now devote a little time to matters concerning the Maryborough railway centre. During his recent visit the Minister carried out some inspections. I hope that the erection of the lights at the Oakhurst crossing that we discussed will be provided at an early date.

Mr. Chalk: Until the equipment arrives we cannot do it.

Mr. DAVIES: Over the years I have emphasised the need for a master plan for the future railway development of the Maryborough centre, with its problems similar to those associated with Newcastle and Bowen. Many mail trains pass through Baddow railway station, and passengers have to be transhipped and taken to Maryborough. There is a big reserve that may be developed as a future railway station, as the town is developing in that direction, but as that does not seem possible in the immediate future, I suggest that certain improvements be carried out at the Baddow railway station. I know that certain improvements are being made to the station at the moment, but they are not adequate. New lighting has been installed, but it is not sufficient. Three floodlights should be installed in the railway

yards. Trains hauled by diesels cannot be accommodated at the railway station. The platform should be lengthened on what may be called the Bundaberg side, and on the Gympie side. In bad weather passengers have to walk a considerable distance in heavy rain and they and their luggage get wet. Conditions for loading are unsatisfactory. I have seen parcels, mail and luggage from mail trains being unloaded onto the railway line and amidst the signal wires. I hope something will be done to alter that.

Government members have had much to say about the industrial hazards, but there is no place with more industrial hazards than Baddow. Passengers from the Townsville mail have to cross an open railway line to get to their car, despite the fact that engines are on the line and trains are moving to and fro. Sooner or later there will be a serious disaster there.

The place where motor cars wait is completely unlighted. It should be illuminated, or a light placed on the Maryborough side of the stationmaster’s house, with a subway under the line to the platform. The problem would then be overcome. I hope my suggestions will be considered seriously because the conditions are completely unsatisfactory at the moment. These dangerous conditions should not be tolerated in an important city like Maryborough; they call for immediate action. A covered way or shelter shed on the Maryborough and Gympie ends of the station platform is essential. The platform itself should be extended. I hope this work will be undertaken by the men now working on the station. I leave my suggestions with the Minister, trusting that he and his officers will give them very serious consideration.

The roof of the Maryborough workshops in the locomotive shed has deteriorated since the Minister’s visit. There are very large holes in the roof and sheets are missing in places. In bad weather the rain pours in and I ask the Minister to have the roof repaired immediately. If a savage blow should occur, the whole roof would be torn away.

Additional labourers and tradesmen assistants are needed in the workshops. Industrial hazards by the dozen are to be encountered in that establishment. It is rather strange to hear the Minister for Labour and Industry speak of attempts to reduce industrial hazards when they exist by the dozen in this shed. It is impossible for the men, the foreman, and the officer in charge to maintain conditions of safety. Certain rules provide for whitewashing and cleaning of pits. I visit the place frequently, the latest occasion being last week, and I know that the conditions there are entirely unsatisfactory. It is ridiculous for the Government to say they are trying to bring about a reduction in industrial hazards when they permit them to exist in these loco sheds.

Mr. Chalk: Will you enlarge on what you term industrial hazards.

Mr. DAVIES: Articles, rubbish, and cinders lying all over the place. That is unnecessary.

Mr. Nicholson: Whose fault is that?

Mr. DAVIES: The Government, because they do not appoint sufficient labourers to attend to this work. If there were sufficient labourers on the job it could be done satisfactorily. The officer in charge cannot arrange the work if he has not got sufficient labour to do it.

Mr. Nicholson: That is not an indictment on the Government but an indictment on the workers.

Mr. DAVIES: The workmen have not got the time nor are there sufficient men to do the work.

Mr. Nicholson: It is rot.

Mr. DAVIES: It is not rot. I shall be pleased to pass on to the men at Maryborough that a member of the Government says that it is the fault of the men. That is all I shall say on that because it is on record. That is the general attitude of Government members. I do not think the Minister is aware of the full facts about the shortage of labour at this centre. The superintendent is an excellent officer, one doing a splendid job. He has cleaned up the railway yards and reduced industrial hazards by making the ground level, thus giving enginemens better vision. The whole place has been improved and cleaned up.

The Minister said that there had been no reduction in staff but railway men do not view it in that way. There are many outside the railway service who should be in it. There are 1,029 fewer men in the railway service today than when the Government took office, and that is a reason why work is held up. A number of C17 and other engines are not in proper running condition. Railway lengths are not relaid at the rate they should be and work cannot proceed at normal rate because of the reduction in staff. For instance, the permanent way staff has 227 fewer men; the signal and electrical staff 10, and the locomotive staff 400 fewer than in 1957. There are fewer employed on the administrative staff and in the Commissioner's office. The reduction in the number of employees is tantamount to sacking them and not replacing those who have left the service. There will be a shortage of tradesmen in the Railway Department because of the non-appointment of apprentices. Men in the service realise that there are tradesmen outside who should be employed in the department. They feel for men unemployed. The hon. member for Toowoomba, Mr. Anderson, said that there was no unemployment and another hon. member opposite said it was ridiculous to suggest that men were not being employed. I point out to the Minister that there are many thousands of unemployed in the State from whom men could be appointed to jobs in the Railway Department.

Mr. Chalk: Why waiting to be appointed in the Railway Department?

Mr. DAVIES: I have not the figures with me at the moment but the Treasurer said that there were about 9,000 unemployed in Queensland. I point out that many men do not register for employment and they could be among the men who could be appointed. Men not employed in the Tuan forest area would be eligible for appointment in the department. I do not want to see more appointed than are necessary but it is one way in which the unemployed can be absorbed into industry. I am connecting my remarks with the Vote by suggesting ways and means by which the Minister can find work.

The Minister told me in reply to my question this morning that the Machinery and Scaffolding Act does not apply to the Crown. I mention that in passing.

I wish now to deal with the running staff, members of which have to go out in all kinds of weather and are never certain when they will return to their homes. They have to make themselves available for work 14 days a fortnight, which of course, includes Saturdays and Sundays. The penalty rates applicable—that is, time and a-half for Sundays—can be stretched out to make up the fortnightly pay to comply with the fortnightly-guarantee clause. Train crews—that is, drivers, firemen, and guards—have no home life compared with other departmental employees. If one of them takes his wife and family out to some entertainment and the department requires him to work, and sends a message while he is away from home, he automatically forfeits his fortnightly-guarantee payment if he is not available. I have been advised that the department is not obliged to give him any more work or make up his time to the fortnightly payment, and under the circumstances he forfeits the guarantee. If that is so, it is quite wrong.

A Government Member: Did you condemn it when you were a member of the Government?

Mr. DAVIES: That does not make it right. If a man leaves his home for the week-end and is not available when the department requires his services, his right to the guaranteed payment lapses.

I point out that in 1957-1958 the department sold what is referred to as surplus and obsolete stock to the value of £780,308. In 1958-1959 the figure was £773,544, a total for the two years of £1,553,852. The Minister for Health and Home Affairs has said that there is no reason why the railways should not be run at a profit, but the loss last year was £4,925,733. If the surplus stock had not been sold, the deficit would have been about £6,500,000 because that money must have been spent on some work associated with the Railway Department. In passing, I point out that in many workshops throughout the State there is a shortage of

many of the materials that were regarded as surplus and sold. I think it would have been wise if the department had not sold all of these so-called surplus stocks.

In conclusion, I emphasise the magnificent work done in the Railway Department while the Labour Government were in power. They effected a marvellous recovery in the railway service immediately after the war years. We hear a good deal about North Queensland from the hon. member for Mundingburra and the hon. member for Tablelands, but soon after the war the Labour Government bought two excellent rail-motor trains, both for service in the North. In addition, six magnificent four-car diesel-motor trains were purchased, only one of which was for the metropolitan area. The others were sent to the following sections:—

Warwick-Gondiwindi-Dirranbandi;
Toowoomba-Chinchilla-Wandoan;
Maryborough-Gayndah-Monto;
Maryborough-Kingaroy;
Rockhampton-Gladstone.

One has only to travel in those excellent trains to realise what an improvement in service they meant to the country people. In addition, the Labour Government bought eight air-conditioned trains at a cost of approximately £3,250,000. Think what it means to the people of the Outback. Think what an air-conditioned train means to Mt. Isa and to the people of Gregory. The Labour Government did not spend all their money in the city. They had vision beyond the Brisbane Line, and beyond Nambour, where tremendous sums are being spent on roads while nothing is being spent in the Central District and in the Maryborough area. No other rail system in Australia at the time operated so many air-conditioned trains or provided both sleeping and sitting accommodation. You cannot get a second-class sleeper even in the State of New South Wales. Our air-conditioned trains are equal to the best in the world. In 1953, the first, the Inlander, was put into service between Townsville and Mt. Isa.

Reference has been made to the modern equipment used by lengthsmen. No men in the railway service deserve higher praise than those who work on the lengths. They render magnificent service. Fancy the hon. member for South Brisbane saying that men in the railways do not give good honest service, just as one or two Liberal hon. members have said. The lengthsmen set a standard of service that is greatly appreciated by the Commissioner. I have here a list of the modern equipment supplied. If more can be provided, let it be provided. The present equipment includes "Matisa" tie tampers, portable air-compressors, and pneumatic rock drills. Time does not permit me to go right through the list of what was done by the previous Government. Certainly not everything was done. I could cite a record year of improvements in quarters. We would like to see more done, and more could be

done if we had more support from the Commonwealth Government. The present Government claimed that they would get that support but they have had so many brush-offs, as the Minister for Development, Mines, and Main Roads said. Had we got more from the Commonwealth we should have been able to do far more in the interests of those men who are giving a grand service in the remote parts of the State. The Commonwealth Government are not interested. They are even taking mails away from the railways and giving them to the air services, robbing the Government of money that could be used to build cottages and improve the general living standard of those who live in the Far West. Hon. members opposite have not the courage to rise to their feet and protest.

(Time expired.)

Mr. EWAN (Roma) (5.44 p.m.): On behalf of my electorate and myself I extend congratulations to the Minister for Transport on the splendid work he is doing in the administration of one of the most important departments in the Government today. It must be realised that the costs used to determine cost-of-living figures, the advance and development of industry and the benefits extended to the people, particularly in inland areas, are largely dependent on transport. It can truthfully be said that the Minister, by his sympathetic understanding of human nature, his business acumen and his appreciation of the motivating forces in life, as they affect the working man in particular, has brought about a complete understanding and co-operation in all branches of the railway service.

In the report of the Commissioner for Railways one paragraph stands out like a beacon light. It appears on page 10 and it reads—

"The Gross earnings during the financial year ended 30th June, 1959, failed by £1,257,919 to reach working expenses, but if working expenses did not have to bear the debits for relaying (£1,057,695), Payroll Tax (£659,144), and demolished assets (£306,241) which items represented an aggregate expenditure of £2,023,080, the earnings would have exceeded working expenses by £765,161."

Let us consider relaying. A considerable amount of this money would have been spent on relaying heavier rails to enable dieselisation of the railways to be given effect to. A considerable amount of that should be, and could be, classed as capital expenditure. It is not just repairs, but the relaying of track capable of carrying heavier locomotives and heavier loads.

Demolished assets amounted to £306,241. That is a capital write-off which should not be attributed to working expenses. Taking these factors into consideration, all thinking people in the State will join with me in congratulating the Minister and all members

of his administrative staff on the wonderful result of their efforts in the one full year the Minister has administered the affairs of the railways in Queensland. Taking all these factors into consideration—believe me, they are relevant factors—he has almost balanced his budget and the railways have struck even for the first time for many years in their history. It must be remembered that the railways are still giving developmental service to the State. It was said by the hon. members for South Brisbane and Merthyr that the railways could be run on a business footing if it were so desired, but by doing so the development of this far-flung State would undoubtedly be retarded because the railways render a public service to the people by assisting in the development of industries which in turn provide employment and the establishment of further industries for the betterment of all concerned. If the people want the railways to be run as a business concern, we have an administrator sitting on the front bench on this side in the person of the Minister for Transport who can give this service. But his breadth of vision is far greater than that. Because he has broken very close to even in his accounts in the last financial year he is deserving of the appreciation of the people of the State.

Mr. Davies: Do you really mean that he nearly broke even?

Mr. EWAN: He did. If the hon. member knew anything about figures, had he had any experience in actuarial accounting, he would realise the truth of what I have said. I know that he was a schoolmaster, but had he had any business training whatsoever he would not have made such an interjection. In reply to my interjection, the hon. member for South Brisbane with great glee attributed what I said to inexperience. He predicted an increase in rail freights. He said that it was unavoidable. In reply to his prediction let me point out that since the Railway Department has been under the administration of the present Government, particularly the Minister for Transport, it has absorbed basic wage increase after basic wage increase without increasing rail freights or passenger fares anywhere in the State. I venture to say, even though it is not my habit to gaze into the crystal ball, that as long as we have this sound administration, rail freights will not be increased. I suggest that this administration will absorb any unforeseen increases in costs.

Mr. Walsh interjected.

Mr. EWAN: The hon. member had many years in which to do it and he failed miserably. He should now retire gracefully and leave it to younger men with more brains and better ideas and then we will get results, something that the hon. member and his colleagues failed to achieve.

Although the Labour Government were about to beheld 700 railway men the hon. member for Maryborough claims—

Mr. Davies: That is not true.

Mr. EWAN: It has been proved.

Mr. Wallace: It is not true.

Mr. EWAN: When the Minister replies he will prove it. The hon. member says there are 1,027 fewer employees now than when we took office. That is probably correct. Apparently the hon. member who is without business training fails to understand the position. Employees are retired on reaching the retiring age and it is true that they have not been replaced. You do not replace men if there is no work for them to do, the Railways Department is not a charitable institution. The Commonwealth Government provide social services for those who are unfortunate enough to be unemployed. The hon. member who does not understand business methods evidently fails to realise that although there are 1,027 fewer employees in the department today, those who remain receive every consideration from the department and have a feeling of security. They co-operate with the department to achieve the same result as was achieved when the department had 1,027 more employees.

Mr. DAVIES: I rise to a point of order. The hon. member has just stated that I said that the Railway Department now had 1,027 more employees than in 1957. I said that the Railway Department had more than 1,000 fewer employees in 1959 than in 1957 when the Government took office.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. member for Roma to accept the denial of the hon. member for Maryborough.

Mr. EWAN: I am delighted to accept it. The hon. member for Maryborough does not realise that is exactly what I did say. I admit that there are 1,027 fewer employed in the railways today than when the Government took office. The hon. member does not seem to realise that the remainder have, by their efficiency and co-operation, and stimulated by a sense of security, given a better service than that given when the number of employees was 1,027 more.

Mr. Davies: Do you say that the business is growing?

Mr. EWAN: If the hon. member for Maryborough cares to read the report he will see that the business has increased considerably and I have no doubt that under our sympathetic administration the services of the department will be availed of to a greater extent in the future.

The hon. member for Belyando has recommended that the Minister consult practical men, the railway men who do the actual work, that he should get amongst them and find out from them at first hand what should be done or what they desire for full co-operation with the administration. That is just what the Minister has been doing, and I congratulate him on it.

One of the happiest days of my life was the day the Minister visited Roma. I told the boys in the railway yard that the Minister would be visiting the area and I asked them would they like him to address them during the lunch hour. Being good honest-to-God Australians and better Queenslanders, they said, "We will be delighted to hear what he has to say." I told the Minister, and he said, "That is what I am here for, to have a talk with my men, my employees, to find out their requirements and to consult them for the purpose of getting a better and more efficient service, of improving their conditions and of bringing about more contentment and security." We went to the Institute hall and to my amazement about 90 men were present. It gave me great pleasure to introduce the Minister, who spoke at length and at the conclusion of his remarks asked for any suggestions. Some very sensible suggestions were made on improvement of their working conditions and efficiency of the Roma yards. The Minister told them that he appreciated their suggestions. If I remember correctly, about 10 were made. The Minister said, "I will go along with you as soon as the meeting concludes and you can show me the conditions. I want to see them myself. We can discuss them and try to improve them." The President of the union moved a vote of thanks to the Minister, and said that with the change of Government he was in fear and trembling that railway men would be sacked. He went on to say that after the Government's 12 months in office, after having listened to the Minister and seen him in action, he wanted to tell the Minister that the department had 98 per cent. co-operation from railway men at Roma.

One of the men spoke of the conditions at the railway workshops, the engine shed, under which these men had been working for years. The Minister said to me, "You have been there. What are they like?" I said, "I have heard about the hell hole of Calcutta, but I am sure it was better than the railway engine sheds at Roma." We went to the sheds and walked through them. The Minister said to me, "How did you describe these sheds?" I said, "As being like the hell hole of Calcutta." He said, "In my opinion they are worse." He asked the men what could be done to improve conditions, and he gave instructions that the work should be carried out.

He also went through the railway yards, where he received further suggestions. This work has been carried out in accordance with the suggestions of the railway men.

The hon. member for Belyando suggested that the Minister should consult the men, and I congratulate him for his suggestion, but the fact is that the Minister has been following that practice, and, if I am any judge, he will continue to do so, with the positive purpose of improving conditions and getting greater efficiency and co-operation from all sections of the service.

I should like to indicate the paramount attention that the Minister gives to the wel-

fare of his employees. That is exemplified when he in no uncertain fashion exposed an anomaly that had obtained for many years under Labour and with its complete lack of appreciation of the right of employees. For years Labour refused to grant compensation to a railway worker who was injured while travelling on a railway pass during his holidays—a shocking state of affairs. The Minister altered that and now if an accident befalls an employee while travelling on a railway pass during his holidays he is entitled to full compensation. Is it not quite apparent that the Minister, in his honesty and integrity, wishes to give justice and equity to all sections of the community? One of his first legislative acts was to alter the basis of compensation for loss of life in a railway accident. Under Labour the compensation payable for loss of life occasioned whilst travelling on the railways was limited to £2,500. How often have we noticed, under third party insurance, people being awarded £10,000, £15,000 and even £20,000 for the loss of a limb. And rightly so. I am pointing out the lack of justice and equity on the part of the previous Government. The Minister removed all limitation and so the claimant can get the amount granted by a judge after having the full facts before him. Under Labour the amount payable for the loss of a sheep killed in transit on the railways was £1, for a beast £10, and a horse £20, but the Minister, knowing that these amounts were unjust, immediately altered the scale to £2 for a sheep, £25 for a beast, and £30 for a horse. That is indicative of the Minister's sympathetic attitude and his determination to give justice to all people. I have a vivid recollection during Labour's regime of a person having his sheep caught in the railway line when a bushfire came along and destroyed the fences. The sheep rushed ahead of the train and a considerable number were killed. The owner sought compensation from the Minister's predecessor but he would not pay it. It was my privilege to obtain the full facts. I got them not only from the owner of the sheep, but also from the driver of the train and other employees who saw the accident.

Mr. Davies: You are not telling both sides of the case.

Mr. EWAN: I am. If the hon. member knew the facts he would not dare to interject. Once again the Minister took the matter up and granted compensation to the people concerned.

The Commissioner's report discloses that the department has granted very liberal concessions in freight rates to some areas. Many of those concessions have been granted to meet road competition, but it is very gratifying to know that some of them have been granted to encourage the establishment of industry.

I shall give hon. members one example of how the affairs of the department are administered under the present sympathetic Government. Some three or four months ago I

was invited to attend a meeting of a local authority whose crushing plant had broken down. They wanted 600 tons of screenings to seal the streets in a western town, and they had to get them in a hurry to avoid putting men off. I was told that no provision had been made in the council's budget for the cost of transporting screenings, but it was essential to get them from Toowoomba to avoid sacking their employees. They suggested that the Minister might consider some reduction in the rail freight of £4 9s. 2d. a ton. I rang the Minister at 11.30 in the morning, and at 3 o'clock in the afternoon I received a telegram saying that the council would be given a freight concession of £1 a ton. The consignment started to leave Toowoomba the following day at a saving to the council of £600. It is acts like that that give people in the country, particularly the West, a knowledge of the sympathetic consideration that their requests receive from the Minister and the officers of his department. On behalf of the local authority concerned, I publicly thank the Minister and his officers for their action. A paragraph about it appeared in a paper but still people in the area could hardly believe that any Government could act with such promptitude. I made many similar representations to the Minister's predecessor, but I was lucky to get a reply within a fortnight.

(Time expired.)

Mr. THACKERAY (Keppel) (7.24 p.m.): During the last 25 minutes we have seen the greatest "back-flip" of all time from the hon. member for Roma, whose party has openly advocated either that the railways be scrapped or that they be handed over to private enterprise. That suggestion was published in the Country Party newspaper, "Country Life," and similar publications.

Mr. EWAN: I rise to a point of order. The statement of the hon. member for Keppel is a deliberate untruth. It is offensive to me and I ask for its withdrawal.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I advise the hon. member for Keppel that the hon. member for Roma says he has stated an untruth and, that being the case, I ask him to withdraw the statement.

Mr. THACKERAY: In deference to you, Mr. Taylor, I will, but I can obtain a copy of the newspaper tomorrow.

Mr. EWAN: I still ask for a withdrawal. The hon. member has not withdrawn his untruthful statement.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member must withdraw unconditionally.

Mr. THACKERAY: I will withdraw unconditionally in deference to your ruling.

To show how divorced the hon. member for Roma is from the railway movement, let me say that recently he ordered five K-wagons.

Mr. Ewan: Who did?

Mr. THACKERAY: You, from my information, and when you found out the freight rates on them you said, "Blow this. I can get road transport cheaper."

Mr. EWAN: Again I must rise to a point of order. That statement is untrue. It is offensive to me and objectionable and I ask for an unconditional withdrawal.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. member to withdraw the statement and to please address the Chair and to address himself to the Vote.

Mr. THACKERAY: I withdraw, and I address myself to the Vote.

The main thing is that in Queensland we have 6,327 miles of 3-ft. 6-in. gauge railway line and the railways are doing a very good job in the development of the primary industries of the State. However, in the two years that the Minister has been in office the gross earnings have not exceeded the year's working expenses. Only five times, to my memory, has that ever happened and it has happened in the two years of the present Government's administration. It should be viewed seriously.

As the working expenses of the railways for the year ended 30 June, 1959, exceeded earnings by £1,257,919, we must carefully analyse the position in relation to the Department of Transport. Last year road transport earnings were in excess of £1,000,000.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member is not allowed to refer to the Department of Transport.

Mr. THACKERAY: I will leave that till later. Reverting to the activities of the Railway Department, I turn to losses in passenger traffic. These must be very embarrassing to the Government and some action must be taken to offset them, particularly in the metropolitan area. The losses are not so heavy in the central and northern divisions. I daresay with the introduction of new stainless-steel coaches, as the Minister said, and with the electrification of the suburban railways, some of the passenger traffic in the southern division will be recaptured.

It is high-time an air-conditioned train was put into service between Rockhampton and Brisbane. It is an absolute necessity if the railways are to recapture some of the passenger traffic that has been lost to air travel from that line in the last few years.

Previously I have spoken of the valuable work that has been done by the publicity officers in the northern, southern and central divisions. I notice from the Estimates that the wool trade has slipped by 9.7 per cent. in Central Queensland. That is something else that must be recaptured, particularly with the development of Port Alma and the importance of the overseas market. The success of

the wool trade is absolutely essential to the revenue of the railways in the West.

Working expenses have been reduced by 4d. per ton mile—from 38s. 4d. to 38s. That looks well on paper but it has been brought about by booking off station masters throughout the length and breadth of the State. Today trains are operating 150-odd miles on a set working, with no night officers, station masters or other personnel on duty. That partly accounts for the reduction in working expenses per train mile. Station masters, loco foremen and other high-salaried officers are being used as message boys. These officers should not be used to run messages at the whim of general managers. They should stay in their offices. The parcels traffic has shown a loss. Recently I waited an hour and a-half in the Rockhampton parcels office to be served by the one man on duty. There were about 30 people waiting. No wonder the railways are losing their parcels traffic to the airways. The same thing happens in the cloakroom at Rockhampton. Over the week-end the cloakroom is closed and a person wanting his port might have to chase the station master down into the yards three miles away.

The hon. member for Maryborough gave figures for the years 1955-1956 up to the present.

The Commissioner's report shows that the number of wages staff in the locomotive workshop branch in 1959 was 11,530 and in 1958 11,789 or 259 less. This is different from the answer to a question I asked the Minister previously about the work force in the various divisions. He gave me a very different answer. Stores have been offset to the extent of £773,000. The department is operating on a shoe-string economy throughout the State. Every day in the week various engineers are sending out to local warehouses for material.

Mr. Chalk: Don't you believe in supporting local industry?

Mr. THACKERAY: I do not believe in operating on a shoe-string economy, particularly when men are waiting for materials. Yet the Minister wants to get the maximum amount of toil out of them. Recently a railway painter was sent down for a gallon of special paint for carriages. Along came one of the top men in Rockhampton who said, "What are you doing here? Loafing?" The man said, "No, I am waiting for a gallon of paint. We are allowed only a gallon at a time." The other day they had to send out to buy a roll of 8-gauge wire because they did not have enough.

When the Minister went up to Rockhampton he said, "I want you all to know that I'm a good fellow. I want you to realise that I am on your side. In the Cabinet there are a lot of bad boys who will chop your head off." But this soothing syrup he is trying to administer to railwaymen is having the opposite effect to what he desires in

Rockhampton. Because of the pin-pricking tactics of his departmental officers he has had a strike on his hands in Rockhampton. The strike was caused by various officers checking on the number of times employees went to the toilet. Members of the Boiler-makers' Society went on strike. One man was told, "If you speak cheekily to me again you will be dismissed." There we see the "get-tough" attitude of the Minister. Today nothing is mentioned in the Press if there is a derailment, but when the Leader of the Opposition was Minister for Transport in the previous Government, every time there was a derailment there was a fanfare of trumpets. He was told to get busy and stop the derailments. But now we hear nothing even though there are just as many derailments. Does this get-tough policy refer to employees or the administrative officers? On 24 September nine K-wagons stood seven hours at Townsville because there was no connecting train. They were moved to Babinda, about 35 miles south of Cairns where they stood for a six and a-half hours on the way to the Queerah meatworks. Will the Minister say if this get-tough policy is for the employees or the administrative officers. We want something on an even pattern.

In regard to the letting of leases for refreshment rooms, I should like to know what conditions are laid down. Are they to be made grog houses where only beer is to be sold, or are they to provide a service for the women and children who are travelling?

Mr. Low: It is a better service now than ever.

Mr. THACKERAY: I have complaints from Innisfail to Ingham about the lack of service. Women have gone in and waited for a cup of tea and a few sandwiches for the children, but because only one woman was on duty serving beer they were not served and they had to go back to the train when the time was up. That is the type of service that we are getting. We heard the Minister say that it cost £10,000 a year and by letting out contracts they have saved £3,000 a year. At the same time the poor service is chasing people away from the railways.

The maintenance gangs should be increased from four to six. There has been an increase from 60 lb. to 82 lb. in the rail weight, therefore there should be more men in these gangs. The crushing plant which is operating outside Yarwun is a failure. The ballast produced is too large. The grading machine does not do a satisfactory job. The blue metal is the size of this railway Estimates book.

The Minister advocated an increase in the number of sidings throughout the State. At Mt. Christian if the engine stops at the tank the 70F is over the Mt. Christian bridge from where there is a drop of 50 ft. into about 100 ft. of water below which is full of

crocodiles. What chance has the guard getting out on that bridge with safety? The Emu Park line, which has been built for 50 years, is in a deplorable condition. A top administrative officer told me it was in a deplorable condition and not sound and should be re-laid. The line from Lakes Creek to Emu Park needs re-laying. I know the conditions of that line and I know that it is not safe.

Let us deal with freight concessions which must be a hot potato for the Government.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke of concessions in rail freights. The report of the Commissioner lists the unlimited concessions granted to various industries in Queensland. I am not directly opposed to some of them, but others are unwarranted. Each of them should be the subject of a searching inquiry, to ascertain whether the concession is being passed on to the consumer. The need for some concessions is long since past.

Rebates are allowed on the carriage of starving stock. If a grazier is not prepared to give an unequivocal assurance that he will use only rail transport, he should be denied any rebate on the carriage of starving stock.

What return does the department get from the wool-grower? The position is revealed in the figure covering revenue in each Division. In a month's time graziers may be applying for rebates on the carriage of starving stock. The Government must take a firm stand. Unless a grazier is prepared to guarantee that he will use only rail transport, the concession should be refused. The department should not be the milking-goat for everyone in Australia.

Before the hon. member for Rockhampton beats me to it I must mention the Rockhampton railway station, the Chinese pagoda as it was referred to by the Minister.

Mr. Adair: You should get one similar to the Cairns railway station.

Mr. THACKERAY: Yes, one on the same lines.

Mr. Gilmore: When was the foundation stone laid?

Mr. THACKERAY: If the hon. member tells me we will both know.

For months we have heard the suggestion that Queensland has a sympathetic Government, but what is the position in Rockhampton? The department has provided amenities such as aluminium wash-basins but it has not provided any recreation room for railwaymen or any building where the men can eat their meals. They have to sit on the track, or an axle-rod or somewhere else. What amenities have been provided in the locomotive workshops? A septic system should be installed in all locomotive depots.

The Government say they are seeking means to increase the revenue of the department. I said previously that the department should conduct a door-to-door pick-up and delivery service in all provincial towns and cities. The service should be inaugurated immediately. Every year men retire from the department and are not replaced. If a pick-up and delivery service was started, further employment would be provided, and the department would obtain additional revenue.

The American railroads use aluminium containers, units between 15 and 24 feet in length. The goods consigned by rail are packed into these cases which are then loaded onto flat wagons. The department could with advantage adopt a similar system.

Mr. Hewitt interjected.

Mr. THACKERAY: The hon. member for Mackenzie knows nothing about railways although he may know something about cattle.

I am serious when I say that two accidents have already occurred at this point. Byellee which is north of Rockhampton, is the junction for the Monto line. It is all down-grade into Byellee. I know that the hon. member for Cooroora who has been a stationmaster would not know how to put a home signal back. Trains cross the Calliope River and swing round to Byellee but the home signal is too close to the points. The home signal will have to be shifted to the other side of the river so as to give sufficient time for any driver overshooting the signal, to stop. An inquiry into a recent accident is being held at the present time.

Mr. GARDNER (Rockhampton) (7.47 p.m.): This is an important Vote. Those of us who believe in State ownership are glad to know that the Government have followed the policy of the previous Government. The provision of a transport service is a tremendous task. We should feel happy with the effort put forward in the last 12 months. We give credit where it is due. On the occasions that I have approached the Minister he has always treated me with courtesy.

Mr. GAVEN: Mr. Taylor, I find difficulty in hearing the hon. member because of the noise in the Chamber.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I have called for order a number of times and my call has been ignored. Hon. members on both sides of the Chamber must restrain their loud conversations so that the hon. member for Southport and myself may hear the hon. member for Rockhampton.

Mr. GARDNER: We must look forward to Queensland's development. During the last war a magnificent effort was put forward by the railway system and it is only natural that some things should be neglected as everyone was working at high pressure. The rehabilitation of the service has placed a tremendous toll on Queensland but with

sufficient goods and passengers the service could be made to pay. However, the difficulty arises because of the shortage of patronage. The railway service is no different from bus services conducted by municipalities.

The previous Government embarked upon a plan of railway rehabilitation at the end of World War II, and one of the first matters that the then Minister for Transport attended to was the purchase of new rolling stock. Since the end of the war every country has had to face up to the difficulties presented by modern transport methods, and Queensland is no exception. The impact of other forms of transport on the Queensland railways is very hard.

I remind hon. members that the Queensland railway service covers 6,327 miles of 3 ft. 6 in. gauge line, the area of the State is 670,500 square miles, and the population 1,417,404. The railways would face a tremendous task even if the State was fully developed. As we all know, it is far from being fully developed and, in addition, it is mainly a primary-producing State. All this adds to the difficulties of the department.

I sympathise with the Minister, as I have with his predecessors, in the task confronting him. While we would all like to see the railway service run at a profit, we cannot bury our heads in the sand. We must acknowledge the difficulties that confront us. As I have said, the Railway Department has had to face up to competition from airlines and road transport, competition that was not even dreamed of in 1949. We should be satisfied as long as the railways give service to the public and keep deficits down to a reasonable figure. Many people say that the railways should be run on business lines, but they forget that to do that it would be necessary to bring an end to all freight concessions.

During the lifetime of this State a tremendous amount of money has been spent on the railways. With the change from out-of-date to modern methods we are faced with the problem of ever-soaring costs.

The Commissioner's report shows that the gross earnings of the department for the year 1958-1959 amounted to £35,336,019, an increase of £1,522,142 over the previous year. Let me now show where the earnings come from in order that I may suggest to the Minister and his officers how the financial position can be still further improved. During the year revenue was derived from the following sources—

	£
Passengers	3,213,525
Parcels and miscellaneous items	2,629,884
Goods	24,938,216
Livestock	4,554,394

From those figures it will be seen that the main revenue sources are goods and livestock. Passenger traffic revenue for the year 1958-1959 was only £3,213,525. That is

very low and we must try to attract more passengers to the railways and at the same time build up stocks of the right type of vehicles, together with dieselisation, to serve the primary industries and get the best results. Working expenses for the year were £36,593,938, or 103.5 per cent. of the revenue. The excess of working expenses over earnings was £1,257,919. Add to that interest—the great nightmare of hire purchase, the great interest bill that will not diminish—£3,667,814 and you arrive at the actual deficit of £4,925,733. Therein lies a story. When the Railway Department shows a deficit under any Government—it was done under a Labour Government and it is being done under this Government—the Treasurer has to assist it from Consolidated Revenue by making a reasonable allocation to enable the Minister to do his job effectively. In the absence of an allocation from Consolidated Revenue many more men will be sacked and the railways will not be able to operate as they should.

That brings us to the serious problems of the transport system. I have analysed the Commissioner's report very closely. Though I presume there was no way out, I am somewhat disappointed to note that the Minister bolstered up the funds by using the Stores Suspense Account to assist the Capital Account to the extent of £773,544. Not many hon. members would expect a similar sum to be available from that account next year. It is well known that the Minister tapped every available avenue last year, even sold waste, to balance the books. He will not be able to do that next year.

It is true that the Government did not increase freights. I very loudly complimented the Minister on that because the dog trying to catch his tail does not solve any problem. The best course is to try to keep the figure down to a reasonable level, as was done last year. It is true that the basic-wage increases were absorbed, and freight rates maintained. It meant that the department had to absorb a charge of £1,382,270, a very big sum. Working Expenses showed an increase of £583,149 over 1957-1958. We have to be prepared to tell the people of Queensland the true story about the railways, particularly those of us who believe in the need for community service under public ownership. If the railways were to be conducted on a private-enterprise basis, operating purely for profit, it would be a different story.

The Commissioner's report makes an analysis of revenue that reveals a decrease in the number of passengers carried in every division. I can see the story unfolding as I look through the figures. In the southern division passenger traffic decreased by 2.4 per cent., in the central division 5.38 per cent. and in the northern division 4.82 per cent. The passengers are going somewhere else. We must try to encourage them to come back to the railways. It can be done in two ways. The use of the rail motors that were

mentioned should assist. Improvement could be effected in the central division by adopting the suggestion I made last week about air-conditioned trains from Rockhampton.

The carriage of wool decreased in the southern division by 18.12 per cent.—another sign of what is happening. Someone gets the business and we know who! In the central division there was a decrease of 11.41 per cent. We know what is happening at Winton, Longreach and other western centres. The northern division was the only one to show an increase in the carriage of wool, an increase of 5.33 per cent. It is all one big story that we are not allowed to discuss in this debate. The Railway Department is facing competition and the competition must be met.

Livestock traffic in the southern division decreased by 2.39 per cent., in the central division there was an increase of 2.68 while the northern division showed an increase of 27.89. We have a small increase in the central division where road-trains are being used. There was a bigger increase in the northern division where road facilities are not as good. From Hughenden and other areas in the West cattle have to be brought out by rail. In the southern division the livestock traffic is slowly slipping away from us. That is why the appointment of goodwill officers, to my mind, has been a step in the right direction. They do a lot of good but even a greater effort should be made. I do not know whether the goodwill officers already appointed are making the maximum effort but at least their appointment was a step forward and it will pay dividends in the long run. I think that the matter should be investigated further to see whether there is any justification in the suggestion of some hon. members from the country areas for the appointment of more goodwill officers. I regret the losses that will be occasioned by the action of the Commonwealth Government regarding postal charges. The Treasurer said that he could not state what the actual losses would be to the Railway Department, but he did refer to the large increase in cost occasioned by increased telephone and postage charges. I think we have to face up to these problems, and consider all suggestions and make every effort to overcome them. I appreciate the policy of the Government in endeavouring to increase the number of rail-motors. That will be beneficial to the suburban areas, but, as I said the other day, I am not happy that the allocation of £2,000,000 for this purpose should be wholly to Brisbane. I listened to the Minister's explanation about the matter having been delayed because there was no money in the coffers. We have to be fair and reasonable in these matters and recognise that a certain amount of work had to be done and money had to be found. My arguments tonight were supported by the figures I quoted. In addition to rail-motors, I hope that the Minister will review the matter of air-conditioned trains from Rockhampton so that the people from Winton and Longreach

who come to Rockhampton will not have to travel in antiquated cars.

I compliment the Department on the use of refrigerated cars from Rockhampton to Blackall for transporting milk and other perishables. The western people are entitled to every amenity which we can give them. If ever a people deserved consideration it is the people of the West—the real Australians who are prepared to work in the interest of the State and the country.

I wish to make some comment on a matter referred to briefly by the Minister and also mentioned by the Commissioner—the policy enunciated 12 months ago not to have half a dozen jobs going at once. We have to be fair and reasonable about that. It may be better to concentrate on one job and get it finished before commencing another.

Up to £15,000 worth of drain-pipes are on an area at Parkhurst, the site of the proposed new railway workshops, and they have been there for the best part of three years. I hope the Minister will be able to tell us that he will spread his wings and have new workshops built, consistent with the importance of that area. I wish to be fair and state that the Minister and the Commissioner have been very generous to the Rockhampton railway workshops. A considerable amount has been spent in the past 12 months on the latest machinery. The present workshops are inadequate.

Mr. Chalk: We are getting the steel for new sheds.

Mr. GARDNER: I give the Minister a pat on the back for that, but I ask him also to give attention to the building of workshops at Parkhurst.

I notice a report in "The Rockhampton Morning Bulletin" to the effect that the Minister has included in the Estimates this year an amount of £5,000 for plans for the Rockhampton railway station. It has been an eyesore for many years. The foundation stone of a new station was laid in 1929, but through many sets of circumstances the work has not proceeded. On one occasion a contract for the building was drawn up, but finally the contractor would not sign the document. At a later stage, after the war, steel was difficult to get, and the Government, at that time, could not get any assistance from the Federal Government to secure steel.

I trust that the amount of £5,000 included in the Estimates will be kept aside for the specific purpose stated in the Estimates. It has been said that the Ipswich railway station is in a similar condition to the Rockhampton station. It may be so, but it cannot be denied that Rockhampton needs a new station urgently. Apart from the dilapidated appearance of the building, the conditions under which the employees have to work are far from satisfactory. I hope that a new station will be started by the time the next Budget is presented.

I congratulate the Commissioner and the staff of the Railway Department and I thank them for the courtesy with which they have received me whenever I have made representations to them on behalf of my electorate. I have made representations to officers in all sections in an effort to get improvements for my constituents.

(Time expired.)

Mr. RAE (Gregory) (8.12 p.m.): Many points have been raised by hon. members throughout the day. Some have merit, while others are just so much poppycock. In making suggestions some hon. members have revealed themselves to be out of touch with reality. They do not realise the magnitude of the task undertaken by the Minister nor do they give him credit for the manner in which he has applied himself to it. He is one man in the Government who has shown that he has the capacity and determination to do the job and is proving, with the co-operation of his executive officers, his ability to transform the Railway Department from the shambles it was in when he accepted his portfolio to a business undertaking based on sound business principles.

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

Mr. RAE: It was a shambles. That is the only way it could be described. Hon. members cannot deny that they were considering terminating the services of some 700 employees in the department. Those men were reinstated by this Government. The Minister has committed himself to rehabilitating the department and he is performing his task in a very noble fashion. He has had the co-operation of all men and officers. It was said that with the change of government men who had been in high positions for so long would be sacked, but we had no such ideas. They have done a very good job and are doing even better now because they have a better leader.

Mr. Walsh interjected.

Mr. RAE: I am not agreeing at all. Good soldiers fight better when they have a good general in charge. The Railway Department now has a good general, and its employees are doing a better job under him than they did before. The Minister has proved undoubtedly that better service can be given. He has a realistic approach to the department and its many problems. There can be no denying it; it is there for all to see. The men in the executive positions in the departments are conscious of the needs of we people in the West. I can only speak as I have always done on the many problems peculiar to my areas.

Mr. Wallace interjected.

Mr. RAE: The hon. member can only talk of sugar-cane, and knows little about that. I suggest that he keep quiet. If he was a butcher, then let him confine his attack to Jim Sparkes.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. member to address himself to the Chair, and ignore interruptions, and not make any personal remarks.

Mr. RAE: I am sorry. I ask you, Mr. Taylor, to bear with me because it is hard to ignore some of the childish remarks levelled at me from the Opposition benches. With the organisation controlling the railways today there is undoubtedly a real appreciation of what goes on beyond the confines of the city. Under the previous Government there was not that appreciation. We in the West are finding that our cattle wagons are being speeded up; they could be speeded up a little more. Where there is a bouquet there is always a brickbat and no matter how good a thing is it can be improved. Rail freights are high and not conducive to business. There is also too much delay in waiting for K waggons for the private companies get the lion's share. Whilst there are other forms of transport I stick to the good old 3 ft. 6 in. gauge. Over 70,000 cattle go through Winton every year. It is a big trucking centre, but there are certain little things which are being disregarded and I feel that I should speak of them to the Minister. Attention should be paid to a suggestion from the local graziers' association, the men working in the trucking-yard, the station-master, the men who drive the engines and the guards who collectively have put forward a very sensible idea that will not cost the Government very much. It will be of advantage to those who subscribe to the full use of the yard whether at Winton or anywhere else in the State. The Government should take heed of these words of advice. Often when suggestions are made to head office the reply is, "We have sent an officer out and he says 'no'." I have no idea whether the officer concerned would know what he was asked to give his views on. In taking you to task, Mr. Minister, I do so in a constructive way, not in a destructive way as the hon. member for Keppel did when he spoke this way and that way and in the end did not know whether he was going uphill or down. If his speech indicates his engine-driving ability it's a wonder he is here at all.

Mr. Walsh: Are you trucking any kangaroos now?

Mr. RAE: Not at the moment, but I might be forced to if I cannot get a salary rise or an increase in expenses.

The railway fettlers of this State are doing a colossal job under the most adverse conditions. The alleged great Australian Labour Party Government, as they refer to themselves, hoodwinked those men into believing that they were doing everything possible for them. They had them living in tents and hovels. They made the greatest possible use of the average worker's high regard for the Labour movement. The present Government, however, gave full recognition to the hardships suffered by these men and provided very presentable homes for them.

Water is laid on to the homes and they are even painted in attractive shades. At least they are homes for the men and, whether one is a fettleer or a politician, there is no place like home. Hon. members opposite would have had them drinking bore water for the next 20 years. We at least have given them refrigerated bore water. I congratulate the Minister and his officers on what they have done for that excellent band of workers in the way of refrigeration and sympathy to meet western hardships.

I note that £22,000 has been provided for the construction of high-level platforms at Barcaldine and Blackall. That is very good news, because ladies with tight skirts find it hard to get up and down from trains at stations without raised platforms. (Laughter.) I am sure that the news will be welcomed by elderly people, who find it almost impossible to board any train or alight from it, whether it is the "Midlander," the "Sunlander," or any other train, at a station that has not a raised platform.

Frequently I talk to railway men in Longreach and Winton. I enjoy talking to them because they are real men. They have said to me, "Thank God, we now have a Government who are mindful of what we have gone through over the years! They are doing much to help us and taking a sane and sensible view." Whenever I take their requests to the department, I get a sympathetic hearing. As a rule, people do not ask for things unless they need them. It is very heart-warming and stimulating to be associated with men who are realists. In a very humble but dignified way they carry out their job and it must be a source of comfort to them to know that they work under the able administration of the Minister and his officers all united to give greater service to the public.

Mr. Davies: They are very lucky to have a job in this State.

Mr. RAE: They are very lucky indeed because if the policy of the previous administration had been followed 700 of them would have been out of work. I would go easy if I were the hon. member, because he leaves himself open too much. Hon. members opposite did absolutely nothing. They said to themselves, "We will always have that vote." Now they find that I will always have that vote because I am part and parcel of the everyday life and thinking of those people. Their homes, families and conditions generally mean far more to me than they ever meant to any hon. members opposite, of the so-called Australian Labour Party.

I know some people talk too long. It is better to be brief and to the point. Any words I utter in this Chamber come from the heart and from a person who has a full and complete understanding of the stewardship of a member. I trust that I can in some way reflect to my people the qualities, sincerity,

and the ever-strong thoughts of our Minister and of the Railway Department with respect to the wishes of the West.

Mr. WALSH (Bundaberg) (8.27 p.m.): The hon. member for Gregory usually makes some colourful remarks in the Chamber but I suggest that tonight he was inclined to exaggerate a good deal in trying to justify the activities of the Government.

Mr. Harrison: You tried hard to get him off the track.

Mr. WALSH: As a matter of fact I was trying to keep him on the right track. When I made the interjection about whether any kangaroos were being trucked from his electorate I had in mind the fact that the American market was so depleting our dairying and beef cattle industries generally that I understand large consignments of kangaroos are being sent to the States for the manufacture of hamburgers. It is open for the hon. member for Gregory, if he continues to be the hon. member for Gregory, to establish a new industry out there. I very much doubt that he will remain the hon. member. He knows as well as anybody in the Chamber that he is very lucky to be here, and all his superficial pleas to the railway men in the western areas will be of no avail when they are asked to record their votes on the policy of the Government.

Transport is one of the most important phases of our economy. Generally speaking the costs of transport represent one-third of the total cost in industry. While we cannot discuss the overall transport system in the debate on this Vote if I might make the observation I hope the Minister will impress upon the Premier and the Government the need to give the Committee an opportunity to discuss the Department of Transport. If the Government fail to do that, all I can suggest is that they may have something to hide, in view of the rumours circulating. If they feel they have nothing to hide, let them give us the opportunity to debate the activities of that department. We have no other chance of getting to it.

The railways play a more important role in the economy of the State and in industry, particularly primary industry, than any other form of transport. An undertaking with a yearly revenue between £35,000,000 and £36,000,000 certainly is not to be belittled in the way that people are inclined to belittle it in this Chamber, very frequently aided and abetted by an unsympathetic Press. At least it is somewhat comforting to hear speeches from the Government side in support of the railway administration. So different are they from the speeches we heard from them when they were in Opposition and criticism was directed not only at the Minister in charge but also at the administration generally. Many Country Party members particularly were quite vitriolic in their criticism of the Minister and the administration of the department. I know the general trend over there is not in support of the hon. member for Tablelands

who actually wanted to sack the present Commissioner. But somebody must have stood on his toes because he has never continued that agitation. I know the hon. member for Gregory, for instance, would not support him.

Mr. Rae: What is that?

Mr. WALSH: The hon. member for Tablelands wanted to sack the present Commissioner.

Mr. Rae: I would not. I am quite honest about that.

Mr. WALSH: I have never heard the hon. member voice his protest against such a statement. But we do have a lot of knockers, and have had over the years, not only since this Government came into power. It seems to be the accepted thing that people should get up and knock the Railway Department, and I am not saying that there are not some phases of railway administration that do not call for some criticism. It would be stupid of me to make such a statement because with an undertaking like the Railway Department, with thousands of employees, somewhere along the line some mistakes must be made. It is asking too much to ask the public to believe that either the Government themselves or the head office should be solely responsible for efficient administration within the Railway Department. When we realise the decentralisation of the railway system in Queensland and the huge staff that is employed at various places throughout the State, most of whom give loyal service, mistakes must have occurred in the time of the previous Government and it is idle for the Minister to suggest that they do not occur under his Government. It requires the co-operation of every employee within the Railway Department to give the efficiency that the public look for. It is not enough merely to criticise the administration in head office. I consider that I am justified in making critical comments about certain phases of railway administration; I am not going to surrender that right. I shall continue to criticise as long as I think there is justification for it. The tendency in this debate is not to discuss the Railway Department and its administration from the wide view but rather from the trivial point of view. I am talking of the complaints made about people going into toilets. I suppose that sort of complaint will continue until the next Government after this one. But there is a time and place for that sort of criticism. I do not think we can complain if action is taken by any administration, Labour, anti-Labour, or a completely new administration in head office, to counter such things. Apart from what might be expected from the Government and what might be expected from the head office administration and the administration generally throughout the State, it is only fair that those who represent Labour principles should always impress on the employee the necessity for his playing his part to give the fullest benefit to his hundreds of thousands of

fellow-men in the community who depend on him for efficient service within the Railway Department.

I had to make some comments during my period as a Minister for Railways, and I made them openly in this House, against union administration in certain directions. I say the same now. I think the responsibility of a union leader is to encourage every member of his union along the proper lines in order that he may give a better service. I also think the general view of members of the Committee is that it would be idle to suggest that there has not for a long period been an element in the Railway Department that has disturbed and disrupted—not just yesterday or the year before but as far back as 20 or 30 years ago. If the Government of the past exercised direction or jurisdiction over the administration of the department there were many instances when I would have directed the Commissioner to sack certain employees, but that is not the job of a Minister. Much of the criticism levelled against the previous Government is futile. It is always conceded that no Commissioner or staff under him can develop the organisation successfully unless he has support on proper lines from his ministerial head. It is not only necessary in the Railway Department but in every department. If an officer advises a Minister on sound administrative lines and the Minister takes another view in order to appease some of his friends, it must result in inefficiency. I know that things were said about me when I was there. I was there to do a job in the interests of the public and the great body of railwaymen gave me the support which I expected in any action that I took to correct dishonesty and many other things. Luckily such incidents were few and far between. Whenever they came under my notice I as a Minister never attempted to interfere with the Commissioner's decision in such matters.

Claims are made about what this Government are doing about employment in the Railway Department. I draw attention to the fact that the Estimates show that an increase of just over £200,000 will be provided from Consolidated Revenue this year. With an expenditure of £36,000,000, and having regard to all the improvements that must take place in the next 12 months, we have the paltry figure of £200,000 allocated this year out of funds available to the Government to provide for an efficient administration of the Railway Department. From Loan Fund last year, for construction works the sum of £3,308,850 was appropriated and the expenditure was £3,376,021. But this year the amount is only £2,863,290 and so a substantial reduction in employment is inevitable. I know the Government will say, "We have £3,300,000 to be expended on the Mt. Isa line." Last year £1,400,000 was allocated for the purpose, but despite the fact that thousands were unemployed in Queensland not a penny of that money was spent on the Mt. Isa line.

If the Government, through the department, are going to spend £3,300,000 before next June, I should say that they will have to get up a bit of speed between now and then. We are now in October, and I cannot visualise any movement before the end of the year.

Mr. Wordsworth: Don't forget the dry weather.

Mr. WALSH: It will be just too bad for the Government if they have a wet season out there such as they have had in the North. We will find next year that the £3,300,000 allocated for this purpose will probably be eaten up in some other work that will not produce a worthwhile result.

Many phases of the department's activities affect employment generally. First, take dieselisation. The Commissioner's report reveals that it is responsible for the displacement of some hundreds of steam locomotives, the effect being reflected in the amount of employment in various engineering shops throughout Queensland. Employment in the coal industry is reduced. I was amazed to hear recently in a radio broadcast that coal production in Britain last year amounted to 240,000,000 tons, that this year it was expected to be 40,000,000 tons less and that approximately 24,000 coal miners would be displaced. Those are big figures. Dieselisation affects employment in Queensland, just as it affected the amount of employment and the economy of other countries in the world.

Some time ago in Bundaberg I introduced a deputation to the Minister. I repeat the statement I have made previously that the Minister has been very courteous whenever I have made representations to him on behalf of Bundaberg. He advised me when he would be visiting Bundaberg and I made arrangements to introduce these deputations. In the course of one of the interviews, when I stressed the need to allocate work to the Bundaberg foundry, the Minister mentioned among other things the number of diesel locomotives now operated by the department, and the fact that the previous Government had entered into a 10 years' contract with a particular firm. At that stage he was not prepared to outline the circumstances, but I should like him to give the name of the firm and to say whether the contract had Cabinet approval, departmental approval, or ministerial approval. I cannot imagine the Government being tied to any particular firm. My attitude would be that all firms should have the right to tender for departmental work on a competitive basis. That would be my attitude, whether the firm is a Bundaberg firm, Walkers Ltd., or any other engineering firm. I think I am entitled to this information, if the letting of this contract is going to affect the workers in my district.

Mr. GILMORE (Tablelands) (8.45 p.m.): The Vote relates to our largest transport organisation one that plays a big role in our

economy. There is no doubt in the mind of everyone that Queensland today requires a railway transport system more than ever before. We are on the verge of great development requiring transport organisations of all kinds to be at their top. It was pleasing to learn that the railways have recovered and developed goodwill to a degree which did not previously exist. Because of efficiency, delivery times to the North are faster than ever before and people are therefore more inclined to deal with the railways. The railways are a public convenience, but the general public look for efficiency in its service. The customer demands delivery of his goods in the shortest possible time. I was delighted to hear the Minister say that up to 36 hours was the time of delivery of goods between Brisbane and Townsville. There is some delay in the yards at Townsville, and the general rate of delivery to Cairns after leaving Townsville is virtually the same as the journey from Brisbane to Townsville. No organisation can be efficient unless its employees do a good job and are well treated.

I was delighted also to hear the Minister recount the valuable concessions and amenities granted by the Administration to its employees. I recall that one employee with nine children was granted passes to the coast from a point 400 miles inland. Another employee living on the basalt plains where the temperature rises to great heights was provided with a refrigerator. And so on behalf of those men I am only too happy to express appreciation to the Minister for his help.

Mr. Davies: Do you think the people appreciate air-conditioned trains?

Mr. GILMORE: I believe they do. It is an excellent idea to have air conditioned trains and I give credit to the previous Government for providing them. But we must be fair on this issue. While such trains are of service to the people the Commissioner's report tells us that people are turning to other forms of transport. It may be because of present-day economic conditions. People today have much more money than they did under Labour. They can afford motor-cars, air travel, and Pioneer bus tours. That is the modern trend, and no-one would want it any other way. It is in freight haulage that railway traffic should be picking up. Although not very much progress has been made to date, I am hopeful that there will be some increase in due time.

I take the opportunity of thanking the Minister for acceding to my request to go to the Etheridge area. To the best of my knowledge, no previous Minister had ever visited that part of the country. The Etheridge line was—and still is to a degree—probably the worst section in Queensland. The means of locomotion are two very small under-powered diesel units capable of hauling with great difficulty, two K wagons and one KB wagon. Frequently the train ran

late and failed to make the connection with the steam train on time. The area is predominantly a cattle-raising one. Steam trains have gone as far as Mt. Surprise from Alma-den, and through to Mareeba. The haul to Mt. Surprise from Forsayth and Einasleigh was done by the small diesels. Mt. Surprise trucks over 12,000 head of cattle a year. The yards at Einasleigh and Forsayth were allowed to deteriorate to such an extent that the graziers and small farmers in the area banded together and improved them. On top of the range at Forsayth, one of the graziers, Mr. Clark, has built one of the best yards I have ever seen. Cattle can be floated to that point and loaded.

The people of the area are delighted to know that the Government are reconditioning the line from Mt. Surprise to Alma-den for use by diesel-electric engines. It is expected that steam trains will run from there to Mareeba. One great difficulty is coaling the engines at Alma-den. There is no chute there, which means that the cattle have to stand in the trucks under the heat of the tropic sun while one man coals two engines. I know that the Minister is examining the matter and I am confident that some improvement will be made. The result will be that cattle from the area will reach the market in the best possible condition. I hope the new diesel engines we have been promised, and for which tenders are to be called, will be strong enough, or of such capacity, that two of them will equal one steam train, or better still, a small diesel. We are delighted to know that the small diesel is now operating between the Tableland and Cairns, Kuranda being its terminus at the moment. The Minister's aim is to take it on to Mareeba as time goes on. With added inducements and extra service to people in the Gulf country, we can look forward to a much greater use of the railways. Whereas cattle are now driven from the Gulf to Julia Creek, through Pentland to Townsville, they will go through Forsayth to the Mareeba factory and to the Cairns meatworks. That will give greater employment in the district and do much for its development. It is regrettable that the line was allowed to remain in a dilapidated state for so long. I am very grateful to the Minister, and so are the people of the area, for going out to see the conditions under which they live. It is a pet statement of mine, knowing the area and the people, that they are £500 a year behind scratch. If there is a breakdown of a truck or a piece of machinery, a windmill or anything else on the station, they have to send to Cairns or Townsville and the delay could be up to three weeks. Distances are great; communications are bad and air-freight charges on pieces of machinery are extremely high. Living is very expensive all round. The cost of sending children to school is very high. It is by no means an exaggeration to say that the people there are at least £500 a year behind those who live in the more populated centres.

While the transformation in the railway there is taking place, I hope there will be a complete review of the passenger services. It is very difficult for women and children travelling long distances in slow trains with overnight stops and I appeal to the Minister to assist wherever he can.

The railway line between Kairi and Millaa Millaa, a new deviation, was very costly and could not be expected to pay. It may get worse and worse as time goes on. In the township of Kairi there is quite a convenient piece of land held by the railway but not used. It is mostly overgrown with weeds and it costs the department quite a sum to care for. Moreover, there is a distinct traffic hazard in the town. I appeal to the Minister to release that land as a public park. It is only a small strip of land but it could help to relieve in no small measure a very bad traffic hazard. I reserve whatever time I have left for use at a later stage in the debate. I hope the Minister will assist these people in the outback to receive further amenities. I thank him very much for the assistance he has already given to the people in my area.

Hon. G. W. W. CHALK (Lockyer—Minister for Transport) (9. p.m.): At this juncture I think I should reply to some of the points raised by hon. members on both sides. Having listened attentively to all the speeches I think I can say that very little needs to be answered. It is true that hon. members have raised matters more or less directly associated with their own electorates. But this is a debate on the Railway Estimates and very often hon. members think that the way the operations of the Railway Department affect their electorate is one of the most important matters to place before the Chamber. Therefore I think they are entitled to raise such issues. On the other hand, I do not think that there have been many indications of a falling-down in any important direction by the department.

When I opened the debate I said I realised when the responsibility of the department became mine, that the Railway Department was not only a large one but one that could have a tremendous effect on the whole economy of the State. I do not think hon. members opposite will deny that. If the railways show a loss—as they have done and probably will continue to do—whatever amount of money has to be found by the Treasurer of the day to meet the loss is so much less for spending within Queensland on other projects and facilities that the Government rightly provide. If there is a huge deficit the Minister for Education gets less money for schools; the Minister for Health and Home Affairs receives less money for hospitals; and so I could go through the various services and facilities provided by the State. If a railway deficit is to mean fewer school buildings, hospitals, and other facilities that should be provided say by the Department of Agriculture and Stock and other departments, there is a responsibility on every hon. member to do what he can to assist and

advise, and if necessary, criticise. If criticism is constructive, if advice is given in a helpful manner, who knows but that some of that advice and criticism may enable the present Government or any future Government to overcome some of the difficulties and so put the State in a better financial position. That is why I welcome the approaches that have been made. I think the Leader of the Opposition in opening the debate for the Opposition raised very little that could be regarded as criticism. I believe I can sincerely say that he offered very little that might be considered helpful either as far as the administration of the department is concerned. It is true that he had the responsibility of the department for about 10 years; and because of that I thought that with the knowledge and experience he gained in that position perhaps he would be able to see some holes in the policy of the Government and that he would have stated his ideas in the interests of Queensland. But as is typical of him, he coined phrases hoping that they would stick for a short time. I have forgotten how many names or phrases the hon. member applied to me when I was a member of the Opposition. I remember one, the oracle from Lockyer, and there were many others. Today the best he could do was to talk about the reluctant debutante. This is a serious debate affecting every Queenslander, one that should be approached by the Leader of the Opposition in a manner consistent with the importance of the position that he holds. But instead he attempted to attract attention by getting away from the responsibility that he should carry.

Let us look at the points raised by him. Leaving out the things that could be regarded as more of a personal attack on me, I think he raised four points, which I propose to answer because they deal with essentials in my department and concern myself. It is only proper that they should be discussed in this Chamber. I take his first point dealing with consultative committees. He mentioned that the Premier in his policy speech, and I, too, had said that we believed that a consultative committee would be helpful to the department. I do not deny that. I am still of the same opinion, but I am prepared to say this: After the experience I have had over two years in the department I believe that when that committee is set up it must be in such a manner that it will accept full responsibility for its decisions and be able to advance ideas for the benefit of Queensland as a whole. Let us look at the time that the Leader of the Opposition controlled the affairs of this department. He is critical because so far we have not set up this consultative committee, but while he was in charge of the department and the same proposal was made to him, did he attempt to establish this consultative committee? Not at all. Let me quote what he said in a letter to one of the combined railways unions in 1953—

“Following on my appointment as Minister for Transport I gave considerable
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thought to this question of the establishment of a consultative committee. From my inquiries however I reached the conclusion that in the main such bodies would depart from the principles of examining operational problems and could become instead an extra medium for advancing wage or other industrial claims, these being regarded as an essential prerequisite to participation in the responsibilities of management.”

That was his approach. That was the basis, and that is why he did not appoint the committee.

Mr. DUGGAN: I rise to a point of order. My first point which causes me to rise to my feet is that in the case of the Minister and his leader they promised the establishment of a consultative committee, whereas I did not; I was asked to establish it. The second point I want to establish is that with regard to the construction of the Ipswich workshops such a committee was asked for and formed, and plans were submitted to such a committee for their advice, and constructive suggestions flowed from them.

Mr. CHALK: I accept the explanation of the Leader of the Opposition. When I was on that side of the Chamber, he used to say to me, “Don’t be so impetuous, little boy. Wait a while.” If he had not been so impetuous and had allowed me to develop my argument, I would have explained the position. I have the file with me. I defy the Leader of the Opposition to say that at any time during this debate I have attempted to take advantage of him. I have given him credit for the things he started. I am prepared to give the basis on which this letter was written. At a certain period in 1946, prior to the date when the Leader of the Opposition held the portfolio of Transport, a committee was appointed and it operated until 1949, but the Leader of the Opposition will know that that committee ceased to function because certain union interests were not prepared to band themselves together or to discuss problems that should be considered by such a committee.

I have spoken to the Premier about the reference in his policy Speech to the formation of such a committee. The matter is being considered at the present time. At the moment I am making inquiries in the South as to the position there. The Committee is being considered on the basis that it must be prepared to take a certain stand; it must not as it were accept all care but take no responsibility. Before the Government complete their present term of office I think unions will be given the opportunity of being represented on a committee to discuss certain matters. It will certainly not deal with industrial problems. That was never intended. The Leader of the Opposition knows only too well that if such a committee is allowed to function in that manner it would not serve the purpose intended. I do not think the Government can be accused at this stage of having fallen down on that issue.

On my own initiative I called on certain union leaders recently to discuss certain matters with me. I think they have a responsibility, just as I have a responsibility, in respect of some of the things that are happening in our community. Those union leaders came to my office and discussed certain problems with me. I think they are better fitted now to deal with those problems. The information I gained will help me in dealing with the position.

Mr. Houston: Would you care to name the unions?

Mr. CHALK: No, I do not think I should.

Mr. Houston: Why not?

Mr. CHALK: I told those union leaders certain things and they told me of some things of which they were aware. In that way we worked together, the unions and the Government, in the interests of the people of Queensland and of railway employees.

The Leader of the Opposition also raised the question of electrification. The Government at no time said that they would not electrify the Brisbane system. Electrification plans were laid down some 10 years ago. Quadruplication, which is linked closely with electrification, has been in progress for a number of years. As I said before, I was astounded to find that the work had been spread from Sandgate to Ipswich. That is the area that electrification will ultimately serve. I feel that it should be concentrated on certain areas to get some return for the capital invested. Consequently the Government are going ahead with quadruplication to the fullest extent that the Loan Vote will permit, and when we reach the stage when some of the line can be operated, it will be the responsibility of the Government to make a decision on how the electrification scheme will proceed. Look at the position in South Australia, where some years ago the Government undertook an electrification scheme. Because that Government believed in diesellisation and the use of small rail motors there is operating in that State now what is known as the Red Hen type of rail unit which is able to transport passengers in two or four or six units. If at the week-end the department wants to run an excursion to Victor Harbour it can split the units up. The units can be used for any line and they give a good service. I am not saying that the system is absolutely suitable to Brisbane, but until we have some idea as to when this big task can be undertaken financially we should not put all our resources into one scheme.

Mr. Duggan: Excuse me a moment. I mentioned this morning that the Premier stated that electrification would not be started for some years.

Mr. CHALK: I do not know the statement to which the hon. member is referring but personally I think it will be some time before we know how much money will have to be

expended on quadruplication. Quadruplication will help us because half of our difficulties are with the bottle-necks in the metropolitan area. The duplication of lines will give us the opportunity to move more trains, move them faster and to move longer trains as well. If we get that there will be development in the State.

Reference was made by the Leader of the Opposition to the Hytten Report. It is true that the Government engaged Professor Hytten to prepare a report on certain activities of the Railway Department. It is true also that the report cost the State £1,000, and it is further true that on the legal advice of the Solicitor-General and the advice that we got from a leading Q.C. there are some things in that report which, because of Professor Hytten's interest in both rail and road transport, should not be published while we face certain difficulties associated with Section 92 of the Commonwealth Constitution. I told the hon. gentleman and other hon. member who questioned me why the report has not been tabled. I think the Government should heed the legal advice tendered to them. I do not think any hon. member would want me to lay only half the report on the table. It is my opinion that the whole of it should be tabled at the appropriate time. I assure the hon. member that the Government are already acting on some of the professor's recommendations, and in this regard my Cabinet colleagues and I are discharging our responsibilities in the best interests of the State.

The Leader of the Opposition referred also to a statement that I made at a time when we were badly in need of rolling stock. I did suggest then that the Minister of the day should search not only the Commonwealth but overseas countries and buy any equipment off the hook that he could get. I realised then, as I do now, how important that equipment is to the development of Queensland. At that time the Leader of the Opposition placed orders for equipment of which we are now taking delivery. We do not deny that, but I point out that we are now also paying for it and we have no money to purchase other very necessary equipment. We have now embarked on a five-year plan for the spending of £10,000,000. Given the opportunity, I believe that we shall be able to prove to the people of Queensland that our approach will lead to the development not only of the railway service, but of the State as a whole.

Mr. Duggan: I should like your help on one point. How could we have spent that money on rolling stock and still bought 150 locomotives off the hook?

Mr. CHALK: I have already said that the Leader of the Opposition ordered the equipment at that time. He then had a better knowledge of the finances of his department than I had. Similarly, at the

present time I claim to have a better knowledge of my department's finances that he has. If I was wrong at that time I would be the first to admit it. I also said that if I had the money I would tour the world to buy equipment. The expenditure of huge sums of money has prevented us from getting equipment that we believe should have been purchased some time ago.

I wish now to refer briefly to the hon. member for Belyando, who made a worthwhile contribution to the debate. I admit that in my opening remarks I made no special reference to Central Queensland. Neither did I say anything about Roma or Charleville for example; I dealt with no particular area. All I referred to this morning was some of the development that is taking place, particularly with air-conditioned trains and the changes in goods services to the North. However, I assure the hon. member that we are mindful of the needs of Central Queensland and are doing everything possible to bring about the development that he desires. He referred to the fact that fettlers and others were using more or less prehistoric equipment. However some jobs done by fettlers and others cannot be handled in any other way than with the pick and shovel. On the other hand, track maintenance has been greatly mechanised. In the last two years we have introduced vibrators, mechanical equipment for drilling and cutting rails, and equipment for boring and adzing sleepers, and we are using air compressors in many places. We have bought heavy bulldozers, graders and other items of equipment, giving the department the benefits of this advanced mechanical age. But there will always be some work that must be carried out by hand and all I hope is that we will find the fettlers to do it. I have a high admiration for them. They work under very adverse conditions and deserve the respect and thanks of the people of Queensland for the part they are playing to keep the railways operating.

The hon. member for Mundingburra spoke of the advisory committee, a subject that was raised by the Leader of the Opposition. I have already referred to it. He spoke, too, of "selling" the railways by advertising. Perhaps the department could advertise more than it does but in recent months it has spent quite a sum on advertising and I believe we can point to results. The department is mindful of the part played by advertising through newspapers and radio and the trend towards telling people what you have to sell.

I think I should correct him on his reference to employees winning back the wool traffic. Thanks for that should go not so much to the ordinary railway employees as to the goodwill officers. They are going out with zeal and initiative to point out to graziers and others that, if the railway employees did sin in 1956 when the wool strike was on, at least they should be forgiven and that westerners should be

prepared to offer the transport of their commodities back to the department. It is prepared to provide the wagons and to do all that it can to bring to the coastal areas quickly that commodity so precious to the grazier and the State.

The hon. member for Sherwood devoted most of his time to the subject of the establishment of a safety section in the railways and I thank him for his contribution. I know something of the conference that took place in Brisbane some months ago. When the matter was mentioned to me by the hon. member for Sherwood I inquired about it through the Commissioner. We have sought from the New South Wales Government full details of their safety programme. I do not say we will be able to fit it completely into the operations of the Queensland Railways but we will give it the fullest consideration. The saving of one life is important and the department will accept its responsibility and do what it can to protect its men. However, it has been my experience that very often men do not use the safety equipment provided. Some time ago it was brought to my notice that the men did not like to wear the safety goggles provided in the workshops. Some men are prepared to take the risk and it is questionable whether they should be forced to wear them. The issue of respirators was discussed some time ago. Many employees say they are too hot; they are prepared to take the risk. Those are some of the difficulties that the department has to face up to. One is never certain whether one is doing the right or wrong thing.

One of the most remarkable contributions to the debate was made by the hon. member for Kedron. Since I have been in the Chamber I have held the hon. member in high regard but today he just bewildered me. I do not know whether he was completely asleep during my early remarks or just in his usual dream, but the very matters I mentioned were the matters he raised, the things he said should be done. To my complete bewilderment the hon. member spoke about matters that had already been discussed, matters which I pointed out as being objectives the Government desired to achieve.

He mentioned conductors. Conductors on air-conditioned trains work under exactly the same conditions with exactly the same facilities as they had under the previous Government. He suggests that we should provide sleepers for employees who are paid for working from the time they step onto the train until they get off it. They are paid, they have a responsibility and a duty. It is their responsibility to see that certain people leave trains at particular times, that other people enter trains at particular times. Surely the hon. member is not going to suggest that we should provide sleepers for employees actually engaged on active duty! There is provided, and was provided by the previous Government when the train was designed, a special seat for them. When

they travel on a non-air-conditioned train a cabin is made available for them. I am astounded that any hon. member, whether a member of the previous Government or a member of the present Opposition, should make such a suggestion. We want the men to give service. We believe they give a very good service. As I say, I was absolutely astounded to hear the hon. member suggest that they should be provided with a bed to sleep on when they should be working.

The hon. member for Bremer has been in the Chamber for many years. He is recognised as usually being very fair. He was on this occasion. Today he referred to the need for electrification of the railways. No doubt he was very mindful of the need in his area to use coal. I came from the same district and therefore am also very mindful that the coal-mining industry has played a big part in the development of Queensland. Consequently it is not an industry that can be just brushed aside. On the other hand, dieselisation is a feature of railway progress that is here. As we modernise naturally it is necessary to use less coal. It is true that if electrification comes considerable quantities of coal will be used. It is equally true that if electrification becomes a reality it will provide further work for certain electrical establishments in the State.

I recall that the hon. member for Mt. Gravatt interjected when the hon. member for Bremer was speaking and said that in his own electorate there was one engineering firm that was making electric motors. That is true. The hon. member was referring to the English Electric Co., whose works I had the opportunity of looking over some time ago. Its product is second to none, and it could provide this essential equipment but, as I said, we cannot meet the electrification until we have quadruplication nearing completion. Another point was that this Government had given an undertaking to bring the railway workshops under the Factories and Shops Acts. I do not recall having made such a bald statement; but even if we concede that that is true, as was pointed out by the hon. member for Sherwood, this is not something that can be achieved in three years. We have gone further than our predecessors. The health of the community is of the greatest importance to the Government. We have given permission for a Health Department inspector to enter the workshops and point out to the management, the Chief Mechanical Engineer, and the Commissioner the need for better services within the workshops, if he considers they are necessary. Heaven only knows the deplorable condition of sanitation that had been permitted under the administration of the previous Government. One need only go to any workshops of the Railway Department in Queensland, except the new ones, to see the primitive conditions that employees were asked to work under by the Labour Government. At least we have made a forthright approach to this matter. As the hon.

member for Sherwood said, all new plants are being equipped up to the standard of the general specification. I believe as time goes on we will be able to make certain that much old equipment and old electrical installation are brought up to the necessary specification that applies to undertakings outside.

The hon. member for Mulgrave made some comments regarding North Queensland. I appreciate the hon. member's keenness; I know that the hon. member is trying to do what he can for the people he represents. The hon. member and also the hon. member for Cook raised the matter of the speeding up of the air-conditioned train on the journey to Brisbane. That matter does worry me. It is true that we could cut out a number of stopping places in order to save time. But I ask those hon. members—what ones will we cut out? Immediately you attempt to take away a service that has been provided for the public, and which they appreciate, you will immediately have protests and rightly so. That is why I say to the hon. member for Mulgrave that if he can devise a scheme and point out to me where we can delete a stop, and if he will be prepared to say to the people in his area that for the benefit of the general community that stop should be deleted, then I am prepared to take some notice of it. I looked into the matter of altering the arriving and stopping time of those trains. Owing to the spacing between Brisbane and Rockhampton, Rockhampton and Mackay and Townsville and Cairns, or vice versa, it is extremely difficult to get a train arriving at what we might term the major cities at a convenient time. That was one of the difficulties we experienced.

On the other hand I commend the hon. member for his suggestion on fencing arrangements along that line. The Commissioner recently put forward a proposal with which I agreed, to allow cane farmers to shift railway fences virtually onto the line, the idea being that those farmers would be responsible for the complete elimination of Guinea grass, the cause of many fires on cane farms. We have not gone as far as to allow them to grow a patch of potatoes or some other crop along the line, but I am prepared to consider any proposal. By agreeing to the Commissioner's suggestion the fire hazard at least will be eliminated in the area, and farmers will be given an opportunity to protect their properties and assist the Railway Department.

The hon. member for Mulgrave referred to the period of two months in bookings on the air-conditioned trains. I have considered that matter. When I became Minister for Transport the period was 28 days. Many complaints were received about long queues of people trying to book accommodation on these trains. They said the queues were so long it was obvious that they would have no chance of booking on the train. From the reports I have received I think that the extension of the period to two months is an

improvement, as it spreads the demand over a greater period, and the train is booked to full capacity. The problem cannot be solved by an alteration in the period for booking. It can be solved only when another train is available.

For six years while I was in Opposition I made a speech once a year on the air-conditioned train that had been started at the direction of my predecessor in the Ipswich railway workshops. For six years a small amount of money was put aside for work on this train. When I became Minister for Transport I said, "We will finish that train. That is essential. If we do not use it as a standard train, we will at least have carriages which can be used on the present air-conditioned units." Prior to that time no replacement carriages were available to take the place of those under repair. I think four if not five carriages have been just about completed. They will be utilised with the present air-conditioned units.

The hon. member for Rockhampton mentioned certain improvements that were needed in that area. In time we may be able to manage those undertakings. At least the Government, during the time they have been in office, will finish the train which the previous Government started six years ago. When I became Minister for Transport not a penny was being spent on it, and it was just idle stock in the Ipswich railway workshops.

The hon. member for Cook spoke of cattle wagons. As I said earlier today, the department has ordered another 100 wagons. I hope money can be found for more of this equipment, because I realise the importance of the cattle industry. Having regard to the available funds, however, we must hasten slowly. The haulage of cattle is good business. It produces revenue and the Government have an obligation to provide equipment for that class of trade.

The hon. member for South Brisbane discussed fares and freight charges. It was apparent from his speech that with his earlier railway experience he realised some of the difficulties of the department and the Government.

I shall now spend a few moments replying to the hon. member for Maryborough. He astounds me. Hon. members know that when I was in Opposition I was critical of the previous Government. I think that most of the Opposition or those with whom I come in contact are able to say that when I threw something into the ring at least there was something behind it. The hon. member criticised the Government, pointing out that we would have had a greater deficit than shown in the Estimates if we had not sold all this equipment. The hon. member is an ex-school teacher. His methods of bookkeeping are not sound. His responsibility to the electors he represents is to read the Commissioner's report and know what he is talking about. The money went into the Loan Suspense

Account as it was loan money and has nothing to do with the revenue of the department. Every penny derived from the sale of stock was returned to the Loan Suspense Account so that men on construction work could be kept in full-time employment. The hon. member criticised the Government for not facing up to their responsibilities. Was he prepared to accept his responsibility by studying the report and knowing something of the workings of the department? He should not have made false statements which do credit neither to him nor the electors he represents. If he wants to criticise the Railway Department he should know what he is talking about. Anybody can make a fool of himself.

We heard a speech by the hon. member for Keppel but I do not think there was one thing in it to which I should reply. After all, it was just a tirade of abuse, something written for him and something he read rather badly. Contrast his speech with that of the hon. member for Rockhampton who offered constructive criticism. I admire his approach and the way he represents his electorate; he has a knowledge of the requirements of the people and does not come in here with something written which he could not read. We on this side could not understand the hon. member for Keppel.

I want to devote some of my time to the remarks of the hon. member for Bundaberg. I have always recognised that he has certain capabilities because of his years of service in this Parliament. He is a man who in some instances has been pushed around but has a knowledge of the department. It is true, as he said, that we have reduced the Vote from Loan for the constructional side from roughly £3.3 million to £2.86 million. It is equally true, as he said, that we have provided a large sum for the reconstruction of the Mt. Isa line. I believe that before 30 June next year we will spend a large amount of the £3,300,000 that has been set aside. That is one reason why the construction Vote has been reduced; we realise that we shall need money for the Mt. Isa project. However, there will be a saving in the normal maintenance charges on that line. I point out that the money taken from that Vote will be put into circulation in the purchase of essential equipment.

Mr. Walsh: You have only an increase of £211,000 in the figure for general revenue.

Mr. CHALK: That is true, but with the advent of dieselisation and more economical haulage, we can cut down to some extent on working expenses.

Mr. Walsh: The increase in the basic wage will cost you a good deal.

Mr. CHALK: We have made some allowance for increased costs. Any Government worth their salt would do that when budgeting. No-one can say definitely what the extra cost will be.

The other point raised by the hon. member related to a statement that I made at Bundaberg on repair work to locomotives.

I was asked to provide work for the Bundaberg Foundry, but I had to refuse the request. In days gone by many locomotives were in need of attention. However, as our own workshops overtook the lag in other types of repair work, we transferred a larger proportion of locomotive work to them. I think the hon. member himself would agree with the wisdom of that step. I believe it was in 1952 that the Government of the day, through their Minister, gave a certain undertaking. I cannot say whether it was a Cabinet decision or not because the previous Government kept no permanent record of Cabinet decisions as we do today. Probably a note was made on the bottom either of a minute or of a submission made by our predecessors. I will check on that to satisfy the curiosity of the hon. member. However, Commonwealth Engineering Company, the company to which the hon. member referred, was given a contract by my predecessor, now the Leader of the Opposition, or an undertaking that a certain number of locomotives—20 or up to 20 a year—would be given that company over the next 10 years. I understand that the basis of the general negotiations was that Commonwealth Engineering would provide certain machinery so that the work could be carried out quickly. That is the whole story.

Mr. Walsh: But the other firms were given the same opportunity.

Mr. CHALK: I am not responsible for the actions of the previous Government or the previous Minister. I am telling the Committee the facts as I know them. That undertaking was given and I told the hon. member for Bundaberg at Bundaberg that I was not prepared to break a contract or faith that was given by his Government or their predecessors. The responsibility is there. When the contract is completed, Commonwealth Engineering will be on a par with any other company in the State.

Mr. Walsh: I think I did say to you that the other firms, Evans Deakin and the Bundaberg Foundry, had similar rights.

Mr. CHALK: I agree. They may have had similar rights. They may have had similar opportunities. I do not know.

Mr. Walsh: The first contracts were given to Evans Deakin back in 1944-1945.

Mr. CHALK: My recollection of the events is as I have pointed out to the hon. member. My predecessor who was a responsible Minister of the Government, no doubt through the Commissioner, awarded this particular contract—call it what you like—of up to 20 locomotives to Commonwealth Engineering, for a period of 10 years. We are continuing that contract because of that obligation.

At 9.55 p.m., under Standing Order No. 307 and Sessional Order agreed to by the House on 16 October, progress was reported.

The House adjourned at 9.56 p.m.