Queensland

Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 18 November 1959

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WEDNESDAY, 18 NOVEMBER, 1959

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

QUESTIONS

CHIEF OF C. I. BRANCH AND INSPECTOR CRONAU

Mr. LLOYD (Kedron) asked the Minister for Labour and Industry—

“(1) In view of the statement made by the new Chief of the C. I. Branch to the effect that Inspector W. Cronau is the most zealous and successful detective investigator Queensland has had, will he advise whether he is in accord with this statement?”

“(2) What was the comparative seniority of the two applicants for the position of Chief of the C. I. Branch, the appointee and the Deputy Chief, Inspector Cronau?”

“(3) Has the practice of appointing the Deputy to the position of Chief of the Branch been deviated from during the period of the post-war years up to the time of this appointment?”

“(4) If Inspector Cronau was the senior of the two applicants and if his experience and service so obviously suited him for the appointment, did he give consideration to the concern that has been caused by the appointment amongst more junior men within the C. I. Branch, who are ambitious and work hard for promotion?”

“(5) What factors other than length of police service and efficiency were taken into consideration when making the appointment?”

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

“(1) The statement to the press was not made as quoted. Inspector Bauer said when pressmen spoke of Inspector Cronau, that Inspector Cronau was (I quote) ‘one of the most zealous and successful detective investigators Queensland has had’.”

“(2) Both were appointed to the rank of Inspector on the same date, i.e., May 16, 1957.”

“(3) Yes. Inspector F. B. Kearney was assigned from Toowoomba to Inspector in Charge of the C. I. Branch in 1943, and Inspector T. W. Harold came from Roma Street in 1949.”

“(4) Yes.”

“(5) Administrative capacity, leadership, capacity to direct and control staff, ability to maintain and promote public relations, &c.”

“The Honourable Member is not serving the interests either of Police officers or good Police administration by making insinuations in questions which are not founded on fact.”
MALANDA MILK SUPPLY

Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra) asked the Minister for Health and Home Affairs—

“(1) Is it a fact that bottles of milk are put aside by the management of the Malanda milk depot at Garbutt and that these bottles only are used as samples for testing purposes by officers of your department?”

“(2) If not, will he inform the House from what source and under what circumstances are samples of Malanda milk for testing obtained in Townsville?”

“(3) How are milk samples for testing obtained from dairymen and warm milk supplies in Townsville and, if in a manner different to that employed in obtaining samples of Malanda milk, why the difference?”

“(4) How are the Malanda road tankers cleaned at the Garbutt depot after delivering their cargo of milk?”

“(5) If they are cleaned by internal hosing with water, in view of the fact that the area is unsewered and the depot is situated on hard, unhydroscopic land, how are these sluicings, which must be considerable in quantity, disposed of?”

Hon. O. O. MADSEN (Warwick—Minister for Agriculture and Stock), for Hon. H. W. NOBLE (Yeronga), replied—

“(1) No.”

“(2) Samples of milk from the Malanda factory at Garbutt are obtained by the departmental Inspector visiting the factory and selecting samples himself from the stock in the cold room and off the filling line.”

“(3) All milk on the road, whether warm or supplied by the Malanda company, is obtained in the same way. The procedure is set out in Section 133 of the Health Acts.”

“(4) Tankers are cleaned out with a steam hose as soon as possible after having been emptied.”

“(5) The Malanda factory, although in an unsewered area, is connected to the West End sewer.”

RAIL FREIGHT ON BEER

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

“Further to my question directed to him on November 12 regarding railway freight charges in Northern Queensland as compared with Southern Queensland,—

(1) Is it a fact that the freight on draught beer from Brisbane to Maryborough (a distance of 217 miles) on draught beer is 127s. per ton, and on bottled beer 127s. per ton, whilst from Cairns to Townsville (a distance of 211 miles), it is 194s. 3d. per ton on draught beer and 143s. 6d. per ton on bottled beer?

(2) Is it a fact that the freight from Brisbane to Bundaberg (a distance of 217 miles) on draught beer is 127s. per ton, and on bottled beer 127s. per ton, whilst from Cairns to Townsville (a distance of 211 miles), it is 194s. 3d. per ton on draught beer and 143s. 6d. per ton on bottled beer?

(3) If the freight charges are as stated, will he explain the reason for these differentials?”

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

“(1 and 2) Freight rates at present applying for the carriage of beer between the under-mentioned places are as follows:—

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<td>Cairns</td>
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<td>Brisbane</td>
<td>Bundaberg</td>
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<td>Cairns</td>
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“(3) There is severe competition between unlicensed road hauliers as well as competition with shipping services between Brisbane, Maryborough and Bundaberg, and reduced rates were introduced by the previous Labour Government, of which the Honourable Member for Cook was a member, in an endeavour to retain the beer traffic for the Railway Department.

“The present Government has continued that arrangement.”

PAPER

The following paper was laid on the table:—

Regulation under the Primary Producers’ Organisation and Marketing Acts, 1926 to 1957.

FORESTRY BILL

SECOND READING—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE

Debate resumed from 17 November (see p. 378) on Mr. Muller’s motion—

“That the Bill be now read a second time.”

Mr. HODGES (Nash) (11.11 a.m.): I am very pleased that the Bill has been received in such a co-operative manner. In the circumstances I think the debate should be kept to the minimum to allow this comprehensive and effective measure to be passed as quickly as possible.

Without having any desire to stifle debate on this or any other measure I say that when a Bill is received as this one has, lengthy speeches are unnecessary.

The Minister is to be congratulated on bringing in what may be regarded as the first comprehensive Forestry Bill. I have
already spoken about the work of the department and on this occasion I wish to confine my remarks to just one or two aspects of the Queensland timber industry.

I am very interested in the licensing policy of the Forestry Department. Some people are licensed to operate sawmills, others who may wish to acquire licences sometimes find it very difficult to do so. Some licensees obtain supplies of Crown timber, others have to rely solely on private sources for their operations. In one section of the industry, Crown timber supplies are bought at auction while others enjoy the privilege of non-competitive sales for their supplies of Crown timber. I have been very interested to know the reason for the discrimination. Recently the Government appointed a committee of inquiry to investigate the granting of concessions to various sawmills. The stability of the sawmilling industry is of great importance to sawmillers who enjoy these privileges. The holder of an unrestricted sawmilling licence has the advantage of receiving supplies of Crown timber under sound forestry management in the hands of officers of the Forestry Department. He is virtually guaranteed a supply of raw material for his mill in perpetuity. Obviously there is a considerable monetary advantage to this privileged licensee. If any hon. member doubts me let him offer to change places with any of the good-time sawmillers in the State. I guarantee that the Maryborough sawmill of Lambert Hyne and some of the other large sawmills would not change places with these companies. The guiding factor is the method of issuing licences by the Forestry Department. I think if you have an unrestricted licence you are in the swim with the rest of them. Because of my interest in this department I have made it my business to follow closely the inquiry conducted into this industry. I have read the report of the Committee. It seems to me that those who have licences are bent on closing the door against sawmillers who want a licence. The sawmillers seeking licences are determined to remove any restrictions against the issue of them in an endeavour to gain access to supplies of Crown timber. The miller who has a right to Crown timber is equally determined to see that the restricted miller remains that way, and that the Crown timber is made available only for his use and perhaps the use of one or two of his colleagues. Some of the licensed millers go into other areas for supplies that are not economical for them to handle and in my opinion, with the one objective—to close the door against supplies to the smaller millers within the area. The larger millers are creating a monopoly, and we should investigate every aspect of the industry—licences, the availability of timber, and the economics associated with it—in order to ensure that the larger sawmillers do not interfere with the livelihood of the smaller man who is endeavouring to make a living by providing timber in his district. I know that the matter is being looked into but there are one or two matters to which I wish to draw the Minister’s attention. These people hold considerable quantities of Crown timber for their own exclusive use, and thus they have a tremendous advantage over their restricted competitors. This is detrimental to the economics of the sawmilling industry in this State. It is not playing the game with the purchaser or the people generally.

Mr. Graham: Don’t you believe in free enterprise?

Mr. HODGES: Yes, but I do not believe in monopolies.

Mr. Graham: It goes to the highest bidder

Mr. HODGES: It goes to the highest bidder but when areas are restricted for his sole use as he is in a position to get the supplies because of his stronger financial position, that may be to the detriment of seven or eight small millers and is also detrimental to the economics of the industry. The restricted competitor must pay considerably more, or is his supplies, and the additional cost has serious repercussions on the development of the sawmilling industry in this State. On the other hand the Crown through its very benign instrument, the Forestry Department, grants certain persons very valuable concessions. That fact must be brought home to those who receive them.

Unlike many other industries, sawmilling is protected. Competition is reduced to a minimum, and those who enjoy the privileges of the industry must be made to realise their position.

I base my statement on the timber inquiry and the report of the committee appointed to conduct it.

Many who receive privileges do not admit the benefit of their concessions. They must be made to realise that they are achieving something at the expense of the State. The very favoured mills have a definite obligation to the people, which should be reflected in the price charged by them for sawn timber. Whether they like it or not, I ask the Minister to ensure that those mills are called upon to honour their obligations and, if necessary, be forced to do so.

That brings in the subject of control of mills. The timber industry is stabilised, and, whether it is the fault of licensing or not, an element of monopoly has crept into the industry. At the moment the Director of Forests deals with requests and demands by this monopoly, and makes certain recommendations to the Minister. The Minister generally acts in accordance with those recommendations. In view of the growth of the industry, a completely new approach to all aspects is warranted. I am pleased that the Minister has recently appointed a committee for that purpose.
The possession of land in the State is dealt with by a land board, concessions in the sugar industry by the Sugar Board, film rights by the Films Commission, State advances by the Agricultural Bank, liquor licensing by the Licensing Commission, therefore it is only right that forestry and timber reserves should be looked after by a committee such as the one appointed recently by the Minister. When State concessions or State assets are involved, the public interests must be protected.

Irrespective of the capabilities or honesty of a particular officer, I do not think any person should be given the sole responsibility of deciding the concessions or rights, as has been the case in the past. I am not casting any reflection on the personnel of the department. Those officers have had a job to do and they have done it, but one man should not be asked to accept the whole responsibility. I am very happy in the knowledge that the Minister has accepted the recommendation for the appointment of a committee to assist him in these matters. I do not wish to dwell on that subject seeing that a committee has been appointed. The present Director of Forests will be glad to have its recommendations. It will relieve him of the burden he has been shouldering for some time.

Mr. Davies: Which committee are you referring to?

Mr. HODGES: The committee to make reports to the director on licensing and the timber industry generally. Without casting reflections upon any officer, I think the Bill and the recommendations associated with it are more or less a pat on the back to Mr. Grenning, the Director of Forests, who will, when the Bill becomes law, be known as the Conservator of Forests.

Mr. Lloyd: Would not the committee cross his authority?

Mr. HODGES: It will be of an advisory nature.

Mr. Davies: Are you referring to the committee who drew up the report?

Mr. HODGES: No. It is a committee to recommend.

Mr. Muller: I will deal with that.

Mr. Davies: Has the Minister made any announcement as to the appointment of the committee?

Mr. HODGES: I cannot answer that, but the Minister will, when he replies.

Finally, I offer a piece of friendly advice to the Minister, not that I think he requires it. Considerable pressure has been brought to bear on him. As he said, many organisations and persons in this State sought to write their own tickets in relation to concessions and he is to be congratulated on his firm stand, particularly in relation to the administration of the Department of Public Lands. I venture to say that his action has been most praiseworthy. He has been subjected to pressure by both the big and little giants in the timber industry and I sincerely suggest that he should hasten with care and be as discerning as he was in regard to the landholders of the State. The State assets will have to be conserved and developed to a greater extent in the future. The State had timber to meet all demands up to a few years ago but it is now importing timber. It has been said in this Chamber and in the Press that much of our timber requirements come from privately-owned lands but landholders have not adopted a policy similar to that followed by the Forestry Department in replacing the trees destroyed. It is no wonder that there is a timber shortage, and it will get worse in the next 10 or 15 years.

Mr. Graham: Do you think that the big milling interests will put pressure on the Minister?

Mr. HODGES: If a comprehensive forestry policy is pursued the State will not be in the position that has developed in other countries of the world. History teaches us that the great forests of the Sahara were denuded of timbers and today a single stand of cypress is protected as a relic. Such a state of affairs will not come about in this country if the policy of the Forestry Department is continued.

In addition to providing for the State's present and future timber needs, the department's policy is helping to restore and retain very valuable soil that is needed for primary production. The disastrous soil erosion that has taken place in the United States of America is a glaring example of the effect of the wilful destruction of forests. The wilful and indiscriminate destruction of timber can result in the loss of a layer of soil that has taken probably thousands of years to build up. The department's policy under this and the previous Government must be pursued for the protection of the State's vital assets, on which its economy undoubtedly depends.

The ability of Mr. Grenning and his officers has received world-wide recognition. A year or so ago a Forestry Conference was held in this country, and much credit was given to the work of the Queensland department and the undoubtedly ability of Mr. Grenning and Mr. Trist. We are very fortunate to have them in charge of forestry regeneration in this State.

Mr. FOLEY (Belyando) (11.32 a.m.): I listened with a great deal of interest to the Minister's second-reading speech. The Bill is long overdue, and the principles contained in it will result in a good deal of satisfaction to the personnel of the department, who for many years have been working along the same lines.
The Minister has said that since 1906 virtually no attention has been given to bringing down legislative principles for the guidance of the department. From 1906 until the first Labour Government were elected in Queensland, there was a good deal of neglect of the State's timber reserves. Again, during the period from 1929 to 1932, when the Moore Government were in power, little or no attention was paid to reforestation. For 50 years, before a Labour Administration gained control in Queensland, untrammelled exploitation of the State's forests was allowed to proceed. Not a single shilling was spent on reforestation!

It was left to a Labour Administration to lay down a forests code similar to that contained in the Bill. As the result of that code, hundreds of thousands of pounds a year, totalling millions over a long period, were invested by successive Labour Administrations to ensure adequate timber supplies for present and future generations. Had it been left to the old anti-Labour Administrations the forests would have been sadly depleted for the lack of a policy, and future generations, even this generation, would find great difficulty in getting necessary supplies.

The Minister's mention of a general staff of 1,616 officers, and 46 technical officers and 87 foresters indicates that successive Labour Governments have not neglected this important work. Appointments were made to cope with the growth of the organisation.

I wish the Minister all success with the Bill. If it improves the administration and policy of the department it will benefit the State.

On the Minister's figures the area of plantation covers 87,000 acres. Those valuable timbers were planted at the direction of successive Labour Governments. The area of natural forest runs to thousands of square miles.

The Auditor-General in his report for the year 1958-1959 shows how important the timber industry is to the State. He sets out that receipts from harvesting, marketing and selling timber for the year were £2,006,129, of which supplies to the Railway Department and others accounted for £194,997, and that expenditure on reforestation from loan funds was £1,493,251. There were other items of expenditure under Trust Fund and other headings but I quote those figures to show that even more money was spent in previous years to catch up with the lag of silvicultural and reforestation work. The policy of systematic reforestation has been carried on for many years and loans for a planting programme have been made as far back as I can remember.

The policy of constructing graded tracks has been followed for many years, giving greater economy in harvesting timber even in very rough places. I am pleased that generally the code and policy practised by Labour will be continued. Under the Bill the general policy will be aimed at providing a supply of timber in perpetuity. That was the policy in my time and in the time of my predecessors. This idea has always been followed. Foresters can visualise this particularly in the rain-forest areas. In heavy rainfall areas forest timbers grow to perfection. For many years the authorities have been endeavouring to prove whether a scheme could be instituted to harvest timber systematically and at the same time provide a policy of perpetual supply. I do not know how far they have got but they were well on the way towards adopting a policy that would ensure perpetual supplies in the rain forests in the north of the State.

I wish to refer particularly to the areas that are undergoing natural regeneration. In those parts of the State with only limited rainfall—20 inches and less annually—naturally the growth of red ironbark and cypress pine is much slower than in the rain-forest areas. It takes much longer to bring trees to maturity for milling purposes than some of the pines in the planted forests.

From what are known as the big hardwood forests in the Clermont area—of which I have some knowledge because I worked there many years ago—since 1910 up to a few years ago millions of sleeper blocks have been cut and goodness knows how many million super feet of piles, girders, head stops, cobbles, crossing pieces, transomes, and various other kinds of timbers used by the Railway Department. It is a remarkable forest. To walk through it the first time one would not be very greatly impressed but as one becomes accustomed to the characteristics of the timber one is surprised at how much is available. Young timber is growing up in the area since the Forestry Department took over. A greater quantity of what is known as useless timber is also growing in the area. I give credit to the Forestry Department for the policy adopted during the last 20 years. The forester indicates the trees that must be felled by the timber worker. If the timber worker fells a tree which later proves to be useless to him because it has no commercial value he is paid compensation. The system has worked very well and has resulted in the felling of a good deal of useless timber. In those areas where the growth is slow, ringbarking or the falling of useless timber should be carried out each year so that greater space and more moisture will be available for the young timber that is already growing there, thus ensuring its development into commercial timber in a much shorter time. That applies to the ironbark forests of the Clermont area and many other districts, and to the cypress pine areas. The Forestry Department has been carrying out work in certain areas for the purpose of creating a better supply in the future. I do not think any work has been undertaken in the way of natural regeneration in the Central-West and the Springsure district and at the back of Alpha and over in the Augathella district. It is
desirable to have a sufficient supply of timber in those districts to meet the needs of the people because of the high transport charges entailed in bringing timber from other areas, thus increasing building costs very considerably.

Mr. Aikens: Did you do anything about it when you were Minister for Public Lands?

Mr. Foley: Yes. We carried out a general policy, but I do not think we had reached the Springsure and Alpha districts and the area at the back of Aramac. I offer this suggestion to the Minister and the Conservator of Forests for their consideration. I think such work is essential in conjunction with the policy of planting and natural regeneration that has been carried out in the North.

The Minister referred to what has been done to preserve some of the beauty spots in our natural forests and scenic areas throughout the State. I commend the Minister for continuing the policy that has operated for a number of years to ensure the preservation of these beauty spots and to build more tracks to enable visitors to walk to them without much exertion. Many visitors have praised the work of the Forestry Department, and that policy of providing easy-grade tracks to beauty spots should be continued.

Permanent accommodation of a high standard should be provided in permanent forests, with ranches and a cook where the number of men warrants it. Those facilities already exist in certain areas, and are very much appreciated by the forestry workers. They are particularly happy about ranch accommodation. Instead of having to do their own cooking and to live under hard conditions, they are supplied with well-cooked food, and so the workers are contented. Naturally the turnover of experienced labour is not as great. A knowledge of the work can be acquired only after a number of years in the industry. It is of advantage to the department to have experienced employees.

I am sure the Conservator, his assistants and staff, will not be backward in recommending that the policy be continued in other places.

I come to another point worth mentioning, the need to advertise throughout Australia and other countries the natural attractions of Queensland, panoramic views, waterfalls, and natural flora, particularly in the rain forests. From time to time at theatres throughout the State the public see admirable colour films of America and other countries, depicting the natural attractions of those countries. Theatregoers make a note of such things and bear them in mind when they go on holidays.

I suggest that 35mm. films of this type should be prepared. It would be unwise to adopt the 16mm. film, as it is not used in theatres. The film should be in colour. Over a number of years the department could cover the beauty spots of Queensland and those films could be exhibited in other States and other countries. Such a step would pay dividends in tourist revenue obtained from visitors from other States and other countries.

I cannot see much in the Bill to which I can object. Perhaps some amendments will be moved in committee. The Bill is on all fours with one that I presented to Cabinet when I administered the department. Cabinet did not approve of its introduction at the time because of the volume of other legislation that had to be considered. It was put aside and I am now pleased that it has been introduced.

I compliment the staff of the department. I do not think a more capable or better staff could be found in any part of the world where reforestation is carried out on a big scale, and that statement applies to the Conservator who has been referred to as the Director of Forests, his assistant, the technical staff, the rangers and so on, who are full of enthusiasm for their duties. I commend them on their work to date. They were not starved financially under Labour's Administration. They got virtually all they required, and the department forged ahead from year to year. The staff has been increased to meet all the additional duties and I wish them well in the future.

Mr. Bjelke-Petersen: I am sure the Minister for bringing down this important Bill and I am glad to know that it has been received so favourably by both sides of the Committee. I am sure the Department of Forestry must have great satisfaction in knowing that it will be operating under the measure. Mr. Grenning, the Director of Forests, has given a great deal of valuable service to the State and I with others appreciate his fine work and enthusiasm. The Department of Forestry has paid great attention to the preservation of our national parks and reserves in various parts of the State. It must afford great satisfaction to the public generally to know that these beauty spots are so well looked after by the department. The Minister might perhaps go a little further and appoint more honorary rangers to care for our national parks, and so protect our beauty spots.

I compliment the Minister on the work he has done for local authorities by way of subsidies for road works in the shires of Nanango, Wambo, and Kingaroy.

I suggest also that if possible the department should help holders of forestry leases in the construction of dams and other works. Very often it takes a long while to get a decision. The request comes from the ranger and has to go through various channels, whereas the local land ranger should be able to give a decision on minor matters on the spot. It would facilitate important work. Notice should also be given to the holder of a forestry lease of
the intention of the department to allow people to cut timber on it. At present there is general dissatisfaction because holders of leases are not notified. It could quite easily be done. I suggest that special leases, embodying all the necessary conditions of care, should be granted up to a period of 20 years. If a man knows that he has relative security for 20 years, he will readily undertake improvement work that will be of advantage not only to himself, but to the State generally. At the present I understand that only some renewals are granted for 20 years.

I should like to see more reforestation work carried out in the North. As Chairman of the Cooktown Lutheran Mission, which cares for up to 400 natives, I should be very interested in a reforestation scheme under which land on the various missions would be resumed by the department. I am sure that the missions would agree to the proposal. Each area could be placed under the control of a departmental supervisor, and natives from the missions could be employed on the work. In addition to providing people on the missions with useful employment, the scheme would make a worthwhile contribution to the economy of the State.

In a previous debate mention was made of the need to assimilate natives. However, it is very difficult to get some means by which they can earn a living. Pineapple-growing, peanut-growing, and trochus shell-fishing have all been tried, but in each case over-production has presented an insurmountable problem. As I say, the resumption by the department of tracts of land on mission stations for reforestation purposes would create an avenue of employment for our native people. In addition, it would bring about development in a part of the State that sorely needs developing. I know that the Director of Native Affairs, Mr. O'Leary, is very keen that something along these lines should be done, particularly for the benefit of the natives in those areas. I compliment the Minister on the introduction of the Bill.

Mr. HERBERT (Sherwood) (12.3 p.m.): There has been a good deal of discussion in the Press recently about the Government's attitude to national parks, and the inference has been drawn that there has been some alteration in the policy for the benefit of the natives in those areas. There are one or two suggestions that I should have liked to make on the extension of the national parks service. It has often been said that Queensland's national parks cover a very small area and should be extended. I point out, however, that much of the State is not suitable for national park development. For example, nobody in his right senses would suggest establishing a national park in the Mitchell grass country, where vermin could breed and spread into the adjacent areas.

Queensland has really an excellent variety of national parks. The main ones cover most facets of the State that call for preservation. One or two of them could do with a little more supervision, but one must remember that that costs money. One in particular to which I should like to refer is the Carnarvon Range and Gorge, which is a remarkable park in that it is very unusual to find rain forest so far from the coast. It is a refugium for ferns, king orchids, and so on, and is renowned for aboriginal relics and rock paintings. For some unknown reason almost everyone who visits the area returns home with what are called souvenirs or scientific collections. Most of them know no more about science than the people who originally made the paintings. But the Carnarvon Gorge is suffering badly from vandalism, according to reports I have had from people who visit the area. I do not think it necessary to remind the Minister of the need to assimilate natives. However, it is very difficult to get some means by which they can earn a living. Pineapple-growing, peanut-growing, and trochus shell-fishing have all been tried, but in each case over-production has presented an insurmountable problem. As I say, the resumption by the department of tracts of land on mission stations for reforestation purposes would create an avenue of employment for our native people. In addition, it would bring about development in a part of the State that sorely needs developing. I know that the Director of Native Affairs, Mr. O'Leary, is very keen that something along these lines should be done, particularly for the benefit of the natives in those areas. I compliment the Minister on the introduction of the Bill.

At Alexandra Headlands there was a beautiful pocket of rain forest with Picabeen palms and other luxuriant growth that has been there ever since the area was opened. Recently one of the land-development firms moved in, flattened the rain forest and subdivided the area. They cannot be blamed because it is the logical place to expand and there is a tremendous demand for land there. I am not for a moment suggesting that the firm should have handed over part or all of the area for a national park but if we had acquired that section 10 to 20 years ago Alexandra Headlands would have had a small national park or scenic reserve within walking distance. The tragedy of the South Coast is that you can go from Southport to Tweed Heads on a hot Sunday without finding a tree under which to park for lunch.
If we move on the North Coast now before the development is completed and acquire areas for national parks and scenic reserves, we will have something that generations to come will be grateful for. Much of the country is not natural rain forest; it is not even heavily wooded, so it would be a national park of a slightly different type, but at least it would be an area of wooded growth instead of only houses. Although there is still plenty of country available and the only living things in much of the country are sandflies and mosquitoes, in time to come it will be heavily built up. If we acquire the land now for a national park, that will stop its being developed with landscape gardening and so on and retain it in its natural state. It will be an attraction for future generations.

Kondalilla Park is an example of what the national parks section of the Forestry Department is capable of doing. It is not very well known. On most days only one or two people visit it. It should be advertised much more extensively. Of course it is a fair way from the North Coast resorts. But one or two pockets of rain forest still available around the edges of Buderim Mountain could be reserved for future use, and further up towards Coolum are other places that could be developed.

I suggest to the Minister that action be taken in the very near future to set aside areas for national parks and scenic reserves before the proposed main road goes right through the North Coast—in other words, before it is too late.

Mr. DAVIES (Maryborough) (12.10 p.m.): The Minister said that this is purely a machinery Bill. We heard him say that about the City of Rockhampton (Lands Purchase) Bill, but it proved to be far more than that. Therefore on this occasion we accept the Minister's statement with great caution. The Minister referred to a series of questions I asked about tree plantings. I agree that the Minister has continued a policy of tree-planting throughout the State. I questioned him about the amount of work that was being done. He said that there were 1,615 on the wages staff. In August, 1959, he said that there were 1,553 men in various districts. I assume that that would indicate the number of wages staff. The later figure would indicate that because of the Opposition's drawing his attention to the decline in the number of men engaged on this work about 60 more men have been employed. Be that as it may, I cannot see how the Minister can gain satisfaction out of drawing my attention to the figure of 1,615 because that is still far below the number of men employed in previous years. At June, 1955, the number was 1,845, at June, 1956, 1,933, at June, 1957, 1,421, and at June, 1958, 1,709. Now we are told that in August, 1959, 1,553 were employed and the latest figure is 1,615. It simply means that there have been sackings in the Forestry Department and that the work has not proceeded at the same rate as hitherto under the Labour Government. The Minister endeavoured to excuse himself, and if I remember correctly, he reminded me that the planting of trees was one matter and the tending of trees another. I thought that that was rather elementary. I think all hon. members would be aware of that fact. His subsequent remarks served only to indicate that more men should be employed on this important work. As I have pointed out previously, Mr. Grenning was not satisfied with the rate of planting in the State and he drew the attention of the Government to the position. It is a serious one and unless the Government face up to doing as much planting as possible they cannot catch up. The Minister said that in days gone by trees were sometimes planted but not cared for as well as they should have been. That is a severe criticism of the officers of the Forestry Department. I am not prepared to accept the Minister's statement because attention was given to young trees. Officers of the Forestry Department have been conscientious in the discharge of their duties, particularly in the care of young trees. In an attempt to score politically the Minister is willing to indict the officers of his department by saying that in days gone by trees were sometimes planted but not cared for as well as they should have been. I should like to know in what areas that took place. Let him be more definite in his accusations against officers who are his present officers. The Minister said, "We endeavour to see that all trees planted are properly attended to, thus effecting the greater economy." Of course all trees should be properly attended to but that does not excuse the Minister for the fact that there have been sackings in the Forestry Department. The Government made an election promise that they would not sack men and cause more unemployment but we know that railwaymen indirectly have been sacked. Over 1,000 fewer are now employed. There have been sackings in the Forestry Department. In the Maryborough district there are only 64 men employed whereas there were over 100 previously. In the Aramara district, near Maryborough, a number had been employed but it is now down to three or four.

The Leader of the Opposition drew the attention of the Minister to the small number of plantings that had taken place. The Minister made the excuse that they had more trees to look after. Surely that does not warrant a reduction in the number of trees that are to be cared for. I quote the following figures of trees planted over a period:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Trees Planted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1954-55</td>
<td>3,186,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955-56</td>
<td>4,086,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956-57</td>
<td>3,492,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957-58</td>
<td>3,115,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958-59</td>
<td>2,741,600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Minister stands condemned because he is not safeguarding the forestry interests of this State, despite the brave words written...
into the Bill. I was pleased that the Leader of the Opposition referred to the number of trees destroyed in the State. There is no doubt that over the years private enterprise has ruthlessly disregarded the interests of the State and destroyed trees on various properties throughout Queensland. Even though the rate of destruction is not the same now as in the early days when tremendous areas of trees were destroyed wantonly, it is still a difficult problem. As far as I can see from the Bill, no effort has been made to face up to it. If there has been I shall be pleased to hear the Minister refer to it, and what influence the department might have on the owners of private property. I think it is safe to say that at present little regard is paid to the type and size of tree that is taken from private properties. I should like to know what control the Forestry Department has over the size of tree that is taken and in regard to tree culture. Good stands of timber are taken from private properties when it is of a size that the Forestry Department would not permit to be taken from Crown leases. The policy of two trees planted for each one destroyed is a good one. There is no doubt that we are not tree conscious in this State, and this lack has helped to increase our soil erosion problem. We have been guilty of causing soil erosion in many places. If we increase and double the speed of water flowing over the land we increase the carrying capacity more than 60 times.

That emphasises the importance of preserving trees in these areas. The trees help to bind the soil and thus prevent erosion. It would be easy for owners to plant trees. The Treasurer mentioned once or twice the short-age of timber stands in the various centres of the State, particularly in areas surrounding Brisbane. That aspect is dealt with in the report of the Timber Inquiry Committee. I hope the Minister will not follow that report as faithfully as he followed the Payne report on land matters. If he does, the result will be a dissipation of timber interests throughout the State, with detrimental effect on country areas and a boosting of city interests.

I do not intend to dwell on that aspect. The Government have adopted the policy of establishing industrial estates in the city, to the detriment of country districts, and the Lord Mayor, Mr. Groom, on his return from overseas, spoke of the need to establish more of those estates in Brisbane. Even if timber mills in Brisbane are finding that their supplies are being depleted, I think it would be wrong to allow timber in the raw to be brought to country centres to the capital city merely to ensure stability of industries in the capital city. The Government have spoken of their desire to promote industry throughout the State. In this field they have a chance of boosting a country industry, by refusing to give city interests the right to encroach on areas that traditionally belong to country centres. Maryborough could be taken as an example. They should make every effort to protect for country interests the timber supplies that traditionally belong to those centres. If city mills find that their supplies are not sufficient for production at the normal rate, the employees could be transferred to mills in country centres such as Maryborough. In that way the Government could show their sincere belief in decentralisation and their desire to promote country industries. They should do all in their power to prevent country industries from being detrimentally affected in order to boost industries in the capital city.

Throughout Queensland's history Mary­borough has been the main timber district of the State. Back in the 1870's and 1880's hardwood supplied from Maryborough to all districts in Queensland became known as Maryborough hardwood. The best hardwood in the State was referred to as Maryborough hardwood. My remarks are applicable to other districts, but I use Maryborough as an example. Ninety-eight per cent. of the timber milled in Maryborough is sent to other places. The milling of that timber is carried out very efficiently and economically. For instance, a 10-square wooden house can be built in Maryborough today, with hot water system, bath, stove and so on, for approximately £2,200, which is well below the cost mentioned by the Treasurer recently of a wooden house in Brisbane. Generally I should say that hardwood milled in Maryborough can be sold at a comparable or cheaper price than hardwood milled in Bris­bane. Eight hundred employees depend on the timber industry in Maryborough.

I do not intend to quote the various clauses of the Bill, but at page 32 of it we find this passage—

“The cardinal principle to be observed in the administration of State Forests shall be the permanent reservation of such areas for the purpose of producing timber and associated products in perpetuity.”

That object can be achieved by preventing exploitation of Crown timber. Cutting should be undertaken according to a plan to prevent undue depletion of timber reserves. Outside interests should not be allowed to operate in country districts or to prize certain areas or reduce the supplies at such a rate that mills in those areas will not be able to produce at the present rate. I do not want to dwell on the report of the Timber Inquiry Committee which has been carefully consid­ered. I do not know whether there will be an opportunity for hon. members to discuss it with the department on certain features in it that I should like to discuss. By preserving the timber industry in the Maryborough area we would be preserving the livelihood of 800 men. The industry means no less a sum than £1,800,000 to £2,000,000 a year to the dis­trict. It is not the only industry in Mary­borough but it plays an important part in the economic life of the city.

As a layman I was somewhat dis­appointed at the personnel of the Timber Inquiry Committee but, be that as it may,
it recommended that what some people are inclined to call concessional rates from Maryborough to Townsville, should be wiped out. I prefer to call them port rates. I remind the Minister that there are thousands of commodities to which port-to-port rates apply to assist particular industries. I also remind him what could happen if he slavishly followed the recommendations in this Committee's report as he did those in Mr. Payne's report. A shipment of timber was sent last week from Maryborough to Townsville and it was proved that it could be sent cheaper by sea than by rail. What this would mean to the Railway Department I do not know, but perhaps the Minister for Public Lands and Irrigation and the Minister for Transport might discuss the matter. Years ago when trade to the North was by sea the Railway Department approached the timber industry and arranged port-to-port rates to capture the trade from the shipping companies. The arrangement succeeded, but now the railways stand to lose if the recommendation of the Committee is followed. One of the members of the Commission was a representative of milling interests in Brisbane. I further remind the Minister that last week a shipload of hardwood timber arrived in Townsville from Grafton. I am aware of Section 92 of the Commonwealth Constitution. If the Minister wants to encourage the timber trade in the southern States at the expense of the timber trade in Queensland he would be going the right way about it if he followed the advice of the report. I understand that 250,000 feet of timber was sent to Townsville from Grafton several days ago. Because of the efficiency of the milling interests in Maryborough timber can be sent to Townsville at competitive prices. The quality of Maryborough timber is more than comparable with that in the North. If the Government interferes with the trade to the North from Maryborough it will mean that Maryborough timber from perhaps other centres, will go north and the Minister could not regard that situation as satisfactory. The Minister says he believes in a freedom of choice of timbers, and also that there should be no regimentation in the industry.

One hon. member referred to the strength of monopolies in the timber industry. I am not speaking on behalf of any sectional interest, but I point out that there are many small sawmills in the Maryborough district each employing about 20 or 30 men, and all interests must be guarded. I am speaking now on behalf of approximately 800 men who are employed in the sawmilling industry in the Maryborough district.

Much has been said about the timber reserves on Fraser Island. I point out that since 1870 Maryborough mills have handled timber from the Tin Can Bay area. It is taken to Maryborough by a special type of punt, and I believe it can be handled more economically by Maryborough mills than by those in any other centre. The Minister should take steps to ensure that large and small mills in the country do not suffer from the activities of the large milling interests in the capital city.

Clause 12 of the Bill relates to the resumption of land. I know that the Government support the alienation of public land, but in this instance the Minister is being given power to resume freehold land for forestry purposes. I am sure that the officers of the department can be relied upon to advise the Minister on fair compensation so that the owners do not suffer unnecessary hardship.

Clause 11 refers to the training of persons in forestry or any branch of forestry. I should like to know how many people are at present being trained in forestry work. I suspect that the number is not as great as it should be. It is no use saying that as many people are being trained today as three or four years ago; with the increase in forestry work the number should be continually increasing. Many people who are unemployed would be suitable for forestry work, and the State cannot afford to neglect the planting of trees, particularly in areas like Tuan. That is one way in which the Government can absorb the unemployed. I hope the Minister will give those matters attention and show a determination to preserve the timber stands for the industry.

Before preparing legislation or issuing regulations on the report of the Timber Commission he should give hon. members an opportunity to debate that report, particularly as the Government have adopted the policy of throwing the responsibility for evolving schemes to solve their problems onto committees and of abiding by their decisions. There is naturally a fear throughout the timber industry, outside the capital city, that the Government might do something detrimental to the industry generally. I ask the Minister to give hon. members some information about the purpose and the composition of the committee. I am told it has appeared in the Press. One would have expected the Minister to give us the names of the members and to allay our fears by indicating that they were responsible men, not prejudiced and not serving any particular interest.

Mr. Muller: I have made a Press statement on that.

Mr. Davies: That is very good, but the House should have been informed of it before the Press. Apparently the Press statement was made only because the hon. member for Nash raised the matter. Has the Minister just issued the Press statement today? Or was it made previously?

Mr. Muller: Yes.

Mr. Davies: I hope he will enlighten the House on the composition of the Committee.
Mr. ADAIR (Cook) (12.38 p.m.): I congratulate Mr. Grenning and his officers, especially those in the Far North. They are doing an excellent job. Timber is one of the main industries of the North and one of the largest employers of labour, even taking in the sugar industry. With the mechanisation of the sugar industry the timber industry will become the largest employer of labour in the area. Thousands of dollars are spent in timber-getting, road or rail hauling, and working in veneer mills, ply mills and timber mills throughout the Cairns district. In my electorate are some of the largest stands of softwood timbers in the State. On a recent trip to Bamaga at the top of Cape York Peninsula we saw timber being sawn from the pockets of scrub to build homes throughout the Torres Strait Islands and for natives at the missions. The timber is mainly maple and other softwoods for building, hickory and other hardwoods. I doubt whether the Forestry Department know how much timber grows there. From Iron Range right to the top of the Peninsula, we have very large stands of good millable timber. I understand that about 30 miles from Coen there is a fairly large stand of hoop pine. I have seen the hoop pine as I have flown over the area. The difficulty is to get the timber out.

It was a hard blow to the Cooktown area when the Cooktown mill, owned by Bunning Bros., closed down. I have been told that the mill is to be reopened. Most of the timber that would be milled there is in the Poverty area. Roads have to be constructed to get to the timber stands. I consider that the Forestry Department have been lacking in not giving assistance to build roads into the area. Had this assistance been given previously probably the mill would still have been functioning.

Mr. Aikens: Roadways there would be of more advantage to the State than speedways to the South Coast.

Mr. ADAIR: That is right. Rankin Bros. are to take over the Cooktown sawmill from Bunning Bros. At least 26 men will be employed. The revenue to the township will be between £30,000 and £40,000 a year. I hope that the Forestry Department will assist the mill-owners by constructing the necessary roads.

About three years ago on the big tableland tin field outside Cooktown hydraulic sluicing was used for the extraction of tin. Trees were felled and millable timber was allowed to fall into drains and to rot. The practice has stopped now because no longer is tin being taken from the area. I have been told that a company is taking over the rights to the timber and it will be milled at Shipton’s Flats, outside Cooktown. I have been asking for a road to be constructed from Daintree through the missing link to the China Camp area. Up until now my efforts have been unsuccessful.

There is one of the State’s largest stands of softwood timbers in the China Camp area. I have been told by a contractor named Brennan, a man with as much experience as anyone in Queensland in the timber industry, that had he been given the timber he would have been prepared to construct a road 50 feet wide for 18 miles for nothing. The cost of construction was estimated to be £25,000. That he was willing to make that offer is an indication of how much timber is available. Later when he was approached he refused to accept the offer because of the slump in timber at that time.

Forestry roads have been constructed in many parts of my electorate but so far the department has not commenced the construction of this essential road either along the coast or from Daintree to the China Camp area. I should like the Minister to investigate this area. I am told that there are officers of his department in the area now assessing the amount of timber there. I should like the Minister to determine whether it is worth while to construct the road as a forestry road. There are only 18 miles to be constructed, and the Minister will find that the timber that would be made available would make it worth while to build the road. This road is a very important matter and the department should build it as soon as possible because it would lead into one of the largest stands of timber in the North. A timber man, Mr. R. Stiff, experienced in the industry, told me that he took a bulldozer over the 18 miles from the Daintree River to Bloomfield, so it is evident that the terrain is not as difficult as some people would have us believe. He told me that he had no occasion to use an axe on the journey which took two days. There would be no difficulty in constructing a road on the coastal side of Mt. Peter Bot in the Tribulation area where there are large stands of timber. The Forestry Department has already investigated this area. The Douglas shire council has a barge that could be used to transport timber to Mossman. There are also large stands of timber on the coastal side of the range and in the China Camp area, but so far the department has not built any access roads to it and again I ask the Minister to look into these matters to see what can be done.

I refer now to the practice of collecting Cooktown orchids in Cape York Peninsula. Recently a person who had collected 2,000 or 3,000 orchids had the plants taken from him by the police officer at Laura, on the ground that no permit had been issued by the department. The orchids are now at the Laura Police Station, and I should like to know what is to become of them. I have been asked to arrange if possible that they be taken to Cairns and looked after by someone with experience in orchids, so that later they may be sold.

Mr. Muller: Were they all taken off Crown land?
Mr. ADAIR: Yes.

They are at the Laura Police Station, and probably are now dead. The orchids grow by the thousands on Cape York Peninsula, and people who want to collect them do not know the requirements of the Forestry Department. Have they to obtain a permit or what other arrangements have they to make with the department? In several instances to my knowledge the department has refused to issue a permit. I should be grateful if the Minister would make inquiries and inform me of the position.

Mr. NICHOLSON (Murrumba) (12.53 p.m.): I am not going to waste time in embellishing my remarks. The Minister is to be congratulated on his effort to put the department on a better basis. Any action for the conservation, protection or regeneration of timber resources has my wholehearted support. Action should have been taken much earlier than the present for the preservation of native timber reserves. A glaring example of the neglect of the past is provided on Bribie Island, which formerly had stands of cypress timber, renowned for building and decorative purposes. I was astounded to find on a recent visit to Bribie Island with the Minister that the stands of this timber have been so depleted that we had to ask people on the island to point out individual cypress trees. Further up the island timber cutters were still making inroads into the cypress reserves, on a permit basis, although from my observations as to the timber being cut at present, not much could be said for supervision by inspectors of the department. Some of the trees that were being removed were immature, in my opinion, and that suggests that greater supervision of the cutters should be exercised by the department. Unless the trees on this reserve are allowed to mature so that there will be natural regeneration we can say goodbye to Bribie Island cypress. I ask the Minister to take steps to protect the Bribie Island species.

The department has in the past shown some lack of appreciation in some instances of the other man's point of view regarding applications for the transfer of licences. I interceded on behalf of one man who wished to transfer his mill from the Caboolture area to Narangba so that he could cut tea-tree on his own property. He had two reasons for this. The first was to clear his land and the second to utilise what is classified by the department as waste timber. A permit was refused him on the ground that when he cut out of tea-tree he would want permission to cut Crown timber. That was a poor approach to an applicant who wanted to do something for himself by clearing his land with no intention of falling timber on any other reserve. It was said that his venture would prove uneconomic, but if a man wishes to spend his own money in the establishment of his own mill and goes broke in the process, that is his own fault, and nobody should interfere.

Mr. Aikens: Couldn't they have granted him a licence with conditions?

Mr. NICHOLSON: Any type of licence could be granted. It is not right for the department to refuse the transfer of a licence when the licensee does not want to encroach on other reserves of timber. He wanted to cut timber on his own property and it is a poor lookout when private enterprise is refused such a licence. He has used tea-tree in house building over not months but years and he has found that it stands up quite well. I do not think the Forestry Department should hinder a man who is prepared to use waste timber for building purposes, seeing that it conserves other timber for more urgent work.

Otherwise, I strongly support the work of the department. I have no complaints about departmental officers who over the years have done a good job, although we can all make mistakes.

Mr. LLOYD (Kedron) (2.15 p.m.): It is very pleasing to see the introduction of this legislation, particularly as it has been delayed for such a long time. Many of its principles are essential for the conservation of the State's timber reserves. Some time in New South Wales there has been a Ministry of Conservation whose duty it is to attend to the conservation of soil, water and timber reserves, but unfortunately such a step in Queensland has been continually postponed. Legislation similar to this was drawn up by the previous Minister for Public Lands almost five years ago, but unfortunately it was put on one side.

The main fault that I have to find with the Bill is that it does not clothe the Conservator of Forests and his officers with sufficient powers. Although they will be able to declare certain areas as forestry reserves and national parks, other authorities will have to be consulted before definite action can be taken. I realise the necessity for that, but in view of the continual destruction of Queensland's forest reserves, which frequently results in serious soil erosion, I maintain that the departmental officers should be given greater powers.

There is an urgent necessity for enabling Queensland to get a sustained timber yield through reforestation and natural regeneration. Everything possible should be done to plant an area each year equal to the annual cut. As a result of their work and study, foresters are natural conservationists. Some years ago legislation was introduced to set up a conservation committee under the administration of the Department of Agriculture and Stock, and at that time I expressed the opinion that the foresters themselves should have been vested with wider powers.
I stress the necessity for reforestation activities in watersheds and river catchment areas. In the past, departmental officers have had their efforts frustrated by agriculturists, and even politicians, whose activities have resulted in the destruction of timber reserves in catchment areas. Many of the rivers of Queensland either are no longer permanent or are fast-moving streams subject to flooding. The Mary River, which is of topical interest through floods in the past week, is a good example. Years ago it was a slow-flowing, clear stream and people had no need to fear its flooding. The destruction of timber on its banks and in the catchment area brought in its train the hazards of flooding, just as it has done on the South Burnett and other streams. All that happened in the past. When extensive areas of land were opened for settlement, people engaged in widespread timber-cutting without regard to conservation and we are suffering from their actions today.

The Bill, though belated, will give the department power to declare areas as timber reserves, forest reserves or national parks.

The history of forestry in Queensland has not been good. The department was not organised until about 1918 and, possibly for economic reasons, very little was done about reforestation until the middle 30's. Meanwhile so much timber was destroyed that it is now very difficult to provide for a sustained yield for the future.

I do not intend to traverse the history of forestry but it is generally recognised that the part played by forests in soil and water conservation is the most important feature of conservation work. In a forested watershed 25 per cent. of the rainfall is absorbed by the canopy of leaves of trees, by the roots and by the humus in the soil, which is extremely hygroscopic, or absorbent, acting like a sponge. As the timber in the watersheds has been ruthlessly cut, the run-off water naturally has presented flood hazards.

A great deal of research has been done in the United States but very little in Australia. The findings of the Soil Conservation Service established in America in the late 40's make very interesting reading. It estimated that from 1909 to 1945 there was a general decrease of 44 per cent. in United States forestry resources. Over roughly the same period, according to figures made available by forestry officers, Queensland's forestry resources were depleted by 83 per cent.—a fantastic destruction of timber! In America it was estimated that in 1946 the timber requirements would exceed the natural growth increment by 50 per cent. It was estimated that from 1909 to 1945 the actual cost of run-off water, soil erosion, railway, and road damage following the destruction of timber resources in the areas where that destruction does the greatest amount of damage reached the fantastic figure of 3,840,000,000 dollars. The most important point was that run-off water removed 21 times as much plant growth from soil as from crops. It was estimated that the soil taken away by the Mississippi River by run off water and flooding would be sufficient for 1,250 farms of 160 acres with a depth of 12 inches. That fantastic figure gives some idea of the seriousness of deforestation and the need for us to arrive at a satisfactory method of reforesting the State. History can teach us many lessons. Because of the loss of soil countries like China, Iraq, Palestine and Cyrenaica are no longer food bowls for many parts of the world. It is difficult for any one person let alone a Government that are supposed to be the supreme body, to realise the importance of maintaining this increment of growth to enable the forest officers and forestry departments of the nation to secure this sustained yield which will enable us to maintain forestry reserves at a constant figure. It is unfortunate that other demands on the Government since the post-war years have made it impossible to do all that is necessary. But at least we should be making an attempt. By allowing the matter merely to drift because of the tremendous expense involved and because a move might make the Government unpopular is not being realistic. After all, politicians and Governments are only a three-year crop, a forest is a 40-year crop. If it is necessary to make a huge expenditure to meet the problem we must have the courage to spend the money. We cannot continue as we have been doing. If the Minister wants this legislation to be effective in the interests of the State the Conservator of Forests and his staff should be given a free hand for at least three to five years. Probably it would take five years to decide what is the most suitable land to be used for reforestation or natural regeneration and the best species of timber to be planted.

Mr. Power: Who decides that now?

Mr. Lloyd: At the moment it is decided by the forestry department, but the Director of Forestry has not sufficient authority to proceed. One factor I was going to point out was that in the past there has been much opposition from agriculturists and politicians but forestry officers should have the authority to proceed with a plan that they consider is the right one for a sustained yield. Whatever work they have done has been carried out in the light of their experience and studies. Practical and theoretical work has made them natural conservationists. Conservation generally, depends to a great extent on the conservation of forests. We must realise that legislation to conserve timber can succeed only if the Government are prepared to give the Conservator of Forests and his staff adequate power to enable them to decide that certain land should be set aside. Land in the catchment areas of various rivers should be set aside as timber and forest reserves. The Murray River has been sitting up as soil has been washed from the watershed because.
of deforestation in the catchment area. The run-off water has been accelerating each year and causing much erosion of the soil, and the silting up of the Burrinjuck Dam, which is causing concern to the New South Wales Government. The same thing can occur in many river regions unless there are adequate timber and forest reserves set aside, not so much for the production of timber, but as conservation areas where plantations will be allowed to remain in perpetuity. In order to give the Bill a practical application the Conservator of Forests should be given full power over a period of years.

Mr. Power: Don't you think he should be subject to the Minister?

Mr. Lloyd: Certainly as a public servant he is subject to the Minister. Even the Commissioner of Prices was subject to the hon. member for Baroona when he was administering that department. If there is going to be these constant consultations with other departments you will meet the same difficulties that were met in the past. In the past people were crying out for sawmills in areas where the department considered that they should not be established. Owing to political pressure sawmills were established in areas in which they should not have been permitted and much timber was destroyed. I spoke on this matter in 1951 and again in 1952 when I urged the Government to endeavour to bring about a satisfactory replacement of timber for housing. I warned that unless we did take action to maintain our timber resources we may find ourselves in the position that we are finding ourselves in today. Owing to the destruction of our timber resources in South-eastern Queensland the only timber available in any quantity is cypress pine.

Mr. Ewan: Oh no

Mr. Lloyd: There is a growing demand for cypress pine because of the lack of hoop and bunya pines. There is not as great a demand for cypress pine as there is for hardwood and ordinary softwoods that are used for joinery. It is used as a decorative pine. According to the figures issued by the Commonwealth Statistician there has been a tremendous increase in the logging of hardwood and ordinary timbers. Hoop pine is one of the finest softwoods. A significant indication of the reduced supply of hoop pine is in the fact that for the year before the war, 1938-1939, the consumption of hoop pine and bunya pine was 129,169,000 super feet. In the post-war years there was a continuous reduction and the most recent figure for 1958 was 49,517,000 super feet or about one-third. There is a clear indication of the amount of timbers we have been using because of the increased demand for housing purposes, which has greatly depleted our forestry resources. It will be difficult to meet the ever-increasing demand for timber in the field of housing. The work of reforestation must be accelerated, natural regeneration of forests, declaration of new forest areas and reforestation should not be limited on the score of cost, but has lagged in the past. In the last four years in that respect I am not confining myself to criticism of the present Government. The previous Government in 1954 and 1955 seriously curtailed reforestation. No political advantage is to be gained from the work. Private enterprise cannot be expected to undertake reforestation, although some men in the sawmilling industry are willing to do it and are actually doing much of it on their own plantations. I have in mind Jim Brett who has several plantations in Queensland. He has not received due recognition or encouragement in the form of taxation rebates, or otherwise, for his work. Up to a few years ago the Commonwealth Taxation Department gave very little encouragement for this work in the granting of rebates according to the capital cost of planting. Because the incentive is not sufficient, private enterprise finds difficulty in meeting the tremendous cost of reforestation. The history of one such project in New Zealand is well known to hon. members. Those who had capitalised the project became bankrupt in the depression years and the scheme was taken over by the New Zealand Government. They are now reaping the benefit in the cutting of timber planted in those years. Reforestation is mainly the work of Governments. If the Government have the will to undertake the work and are prepared to give the Conservator complete control for five years in determining areas for regeneration, and reforestation, and provide him with the money for that work, the objects of the Bill will be achieved.

Mr. Ewan (Roma) (2.38 p.m.): I congratulate the Minister, Mr. Grenning and the officers under his control on their magnificent work in the preparation of this comprehensive Bill of 102 clauses. When I first read it, I came to the conclusion that the administration must have laboured under a severe handicap for many years.

Mr. Davies: In what way?

Mr. Ewan: In that the officers were circumscribed and had great difficulty in putting into effect any developmental scheme they may have had in mind. That view was confirmed by the hon. member for Kedron who spoke of the way in which the department was hamstrung by successive Labour Governments over a period of 25 years. In fact his speech was purely an apologia of the sins of omission of past Governments. The officers of the department deserve our most sincere congratulations on the work they have performed, despite the obstructions placed in their way, as indicated by the hon. member for Kedron. After the passage of the Bill many of the difficulties referred to by the hon. member for Kedron
will disappear and the department will be able to function to the advantage of the State generally.

After listening to the so-called expert views of the hon. member for Kedron, I wonder whether he has ever crossed the Great Dividing Range. However, it is not my role to be a destructive critic. Usually I offer suggestions when I take part in a debate on important Bills and I shall not depart from that practice now.

To overcome some of the difficulties confronting the department in regard to co-operation from adjoining landholders it seems to me that there should be a line of demarcation between forestry areas, grazing and farming areas, and the like. There are many of these in the West and I refer particularly to the Yuleba area. There should be some scheme of co-operation between landholders in the erection of marsupial-proof netting between grazing and farming lands and the established reforestation areas. This would help to bring about a better understanding of the activities of these groups. Many noxious and destructive breeds unmolested in forestry areas and to my mind little effort has been made to destroy them. One can see coming from the forestry areas great numbers of dingoes, wallabies, foxes and the like, to say nothing of the common kangaroo rat which is one of the greatest distributors of worms in grazing areas. If we could erect fences by co-operation between landholders active steps could be taken to deal with the natural increase of these noxious animals. And furthermore noxious plants could be dealt with. However, this cannot be undertaken without the full co-operation of all parties concerned.

I was interested to note that Clause 23 of the Bill provides for the classification of lands. It states that the Conservator of Forests shall from time to time cause inspections and surveys to be made for the purpose of ascertaining whether lands are suitable for forestry purposes. That is an important aspect and I suggest that such classification be intensified. I listened to hon. members speaking about the denudation of timber reserves from 1909 to the present day. I agree, up to a point, with what was said. Those of us who have travelled through the little-known areas of the State must appreciate that we have huge undeveloped timber resources. I am not in a position to say whether they would all be classified by the department. I refer particularly to the great area of the Carnarvon Ranges from Augathella to Taroom. I spent 10 weeks in going through it and I know every inch of the country. It is hard to imagine the vast untapped timber resources in that area. There are colossal areas of beautiful ironbark, cypress pine and forest gum country. If that land has not already been classified now is the time to do it. It is the greatest single area of timber production potential in the whole of the State, despite the northern area so ably spoken of by the hon. member for Cook this morning, a considerable portion of which I have been through. I have seen nothing comparable to the timber that exists at the foothills of the Carnarvon Ranges. Of course, in order to exploit those resources it will be necessary to build roads. During the last two years the Minister for Development, Mines, and Main Roads has spent a great deal of money in opening up the road from Injune to Rolleston, which has enabled some of the timber resources in that area to be exploited. There is a sawmill in the area, but its operations were becoming uneconomic because of the shocking state of the road before the road work already referred to was carried out. There are a couple of very big sawmills in the Taroom area, too.

The hon. member for Kedron spoke in rather deprecatory terms about cypress pine. Some people fail to understand that there is a ready market for every piece of cypress pine that we can cut. If Queenslanders do not want it, there is a ready market for it in the South. It is the only termite-resistant timber grown in Queensland; white ants will not touch it.

That indicates the necessity for the exploitation of the Carnarvon Range area in particular.

I was very pleased to hear the hon. member for Sherwood refer to the national park in the Carnarvon Range area. The present reserve is very small, and I should like the Minister to investigate the possibility of declaring as national parks additional areas in that part of the State. In my opinion, the scenery compares more than favourably with similar scenery anywhere in Australia. The hon. member for Sherwood said that some vandalism was going on in the Carnarvon Range area. I am not aware of this, but if it is so I can only conclude that irresponsible city people who occasionally visit the area are responsible. The hon. member referred also to aboriginal paintings in the caves. We who live in the bush know how they originated. In my opinion, any white man could do just as well. However, it is not my role to belittle the artistic instincts of the aboriginals.

One of the most interesting aspects of the Carnarvons is the burial caves, which are not fully appreciated by Queenslanders. People from many other countries travel to Queensland to see them. You will see a small hole about 6 ft. in circumference in the rock face about 12 or 15 ft. from the ground, but when you get through the hole you find a cavern about five to ten times as large as this Chamber. Skeletons in a perfect state of preservation are lying side by side. There are literally hundreds of skeletons, and it is a sight that has to be seen to be believed. Many of those caves have never been entered by white men, or if they have, they have not been greatly disturbed; the original spears and other weapons, in some instances, still lie beside the skeletons.
There are dozens of the caves in the ranges and I suggest that officers of the department of forestry be stationed there to make walks, as they have on the islands in the Whitsunday group, so that people who cannot ride horses can see those sights. They can now get as far as the Country Women's Association Hut at the foot of the gorge but many who go from Brisbane on exploratory excursions do not see the real Carnarvon ranges. It is a very rough country and difficult of access. If the area is opened up, and if funds will permit of stationing a few officers to work there so that tourists may enjoy the scenic grandeur, the sheer ruggedness and unspoilt beauty, of the Carnarvon ranges. If this is done, in a very short time, the area will become world-famous.

I know the Minister is anxious to close the debate but I make no apology for taking up the time of the House in bringing my message to hon. members.

Hon. A. G. MULLER (Fassifern—Minister for Public Lands and Irrigation) (2.52 p.m.): I thank hon. members on both sides for their contributions to the debate. It is pleasing that there has not been any real criticism of the Bill, but the speeches generally have dealt with improvements to forestry policy. We appreciate criticism of that kind, even if we do not agree with it all. The task of timber control and planning to make the best use of resources and conserve them is a very difficult one. I have given it all the time I could and I appreciate the work of Messrs. Grenning, Trist, Wilkes and the other officers.

It is true that up to about 1920 Queensland did not do any tree planting. We can readily understand why. Till then settlers robbed the forests without realising that the supply of timber would eventually run out. Great stands of valuable furniture and veneer timbers in North Queensland were burned to clear the land for settlement. It is no use crying over spilt milk, but we must face up to the increasing need to plant trees. It is easy for hon. members opposite to say we do not plant as many trees as we should. I agree. I should like to see the department with enough money to engage in a very much bigger programme of reforestation. It must come. Unskilled workers can do the job, and loan money can give employment while at the same time building up a State asset. It behoves us to do all we can to encourage their work.

The Leader of the Opposition asked that the Bill be made as strong as possible to protect national parks and scenic areas. I completely agree with him. Under the present legislation a national park cannot be alienated except by Act of Parliament. That provision will not be altered; the only change will be to strengthen the conditions. In Committee I shall move an amendment which has already been circulated. By that amendment provision will be made for 14 days' notice to be given to Parliament of any resolution for the revocation of a natural park or scenic area. That will give adequate notice to hon. members, also to the general public of the Department of Forestry of these reservations. Hon. members will have time to inform themselves fully on the matter before the resolution is put to a vote in the House, and the general public will have an opportunity to express themselves in the Press or in some other way before a vote is taken in the House. I think that is a very necessary provision because, after all, unless hon. members know what is contemplated and what the circumstances are surrounding the revocation of an area, they would not be in a position to discuss it as intelligently as they should like. It gives people outside who take a keen interest in this class of work an opportunity to give vent to their feelings. I give great credit to the National Parks Association for what they are doing. They are a voluntary body that does a labour of love. Occasionally they are critical of what is being done, nevertheless, one must admire them for their intense interest in the retention of forests and national parks. If this body of men and women think that anything is being done which is likely to interfere with the State's national parks and beauty spots it will be in possession of information enabling it either to support or reject any proposal.

Loan funds for the planting of more trees have not been as plentiful as we would like. Previous occupants of my present office must have faced the same difficulty. Every year there is a demand for more loan money by all departments for development in every direction. Nevertheless we are endeavouring to make all catch up the back log as quickly as possible. The Government were not making sufficient money available for reforestation, but that has been so for years. The figures I have presented in reply to questions asked by the hon. member for Maryborough show that the plantings were not as great in the last few years as previously, but the amount of money spent has not varied very much. There are other matters connected with reforestation besides planting; naturally the trees have to be cared for after they are planted. A good deal of money has been spent for that purpose and many people have been employed on that class of work. In reply to what the hon. member said about the drop in employment and the drop in the area of new plantations established let me point out that the Government are making available the maximum financial provision possible under present circumstances. In referring to actual areas of plantations established each year the hon. member overlooks the fact that an ever-increasing area of established plantations calls for greater expenditure on the maintenance of such areas. The acreage of plantations established each year represents only one phase of the department's activities. The hon. member may be assured that this Government will do all in their power to
make provision for the future timber requirements of Queensland. It is true that other forms of building material are becoming popular—bricks, cement and the different kinds of manufactured board, nevertheless demand for timber which is no doubt affected by the increase in population, is as great as ever. We must remember that and keep up our supplies as far as possible. Sometimes substitutes are used because it has been difficult during the last few years to get good quality timbers. Those were factors that contributed to the greater use of other materials. As a means of overcoming the shortage of loan moneys action has been taken to bridge the gap by means of natural regeneration. This work has impressed me tremendously. I do not suggest that I was responsible; I give full credit to the Conservator of Forests as he will be designated, when the Bill becomes law. I give him full credit for drawing my attention to the fact that we were not making the best use of the timbers grown under natural conditions. Instead of cutting scrub and planting timber we are making use of the seedlings that come up of their own accord and we are spending money on this class of work. I made a personal inspection and I am convinced that we are doing to do this State a greater service by holding those rain forest areas in North Queensland. This is scrubby and rough country and after the scrub is cleared it is difficult to keep the land clean for agricultural purposes. In most cases there is a growth of rubbish, and the country suffers badly from erosion. I believe that we can get good return by keeping that land in its present condition, growing timber in this area of North Queensland. We are the most privileged people; God has planted the trees there and all we have to do is look after them. But we have been destroying them. The young trees come up as thick as weeds. I was with the Forestry officers and they could pick them out and tell me the different species. They are getting rid of the rubbish and looking after the young trees when they germinate. They are marketing the timber that is mature and they are keeping seed trees. They have a number of different species. They clear away the useless timber so that the young seedlings can get more air and thus stimulate their growth.

Mr. Davies: Has not the department been doing that for years?

Mr. MULLER: Up to a point, but it has been increased, although we are not doing as much as we should. These young trees develop in the shade. They germinate and thrive in the shade, but they do not like to be crowded out. All that work is being done. They are doing it at a loss; they are very valuable and will become more valuable. I believe that if the Government could find £1,000,000 for regeneration in these scrubs every penny of it would be spent to advantage. At the moment we have not sufficient money, but this is a really important work. Soon after taking office I made an inspection of the timber industry in North Queensland where most of the State’s more valuable cabinet timbers, which have a world wide reputation, grow. I realised very quickly the tremendous potentialities of timber treatment in this area and also that not nearly sufficient lands had been set aside for this purpose. I am satisfied that a good deal of this hilly rain-forest country is more suited to the growing of trees than dairying or crop-growing.

I have taken action to set aside in North Queensland more areas as State forests and it has been approved to set aside large areas at Clump Point and also what is known as the Culpa Lands.

At Mt. Spec it has been approved to gazette State forests and likewise in the Mackay area it has been approved to dedicate further areas to this purpose. In these valuable rain forests the valuable species comprise only a relatively small proportion of the growing trees. These valuable trees seed naturally and grow rapidly and experiments carried out show that by logging the overmature and the less valuable trees, we can rapidly improve the growth of the better-class species and whilst increasing productivity of the valuable woods, we can also maintain log supplies to the timber industry.

In effect, Nature is doing the job for us with departamental experts guiding operations. As seedlings grow, only the best species are retained and experiments prove that outstanding results will be attained.

What we are doing is dedicating areas for this purpose on which to grow the more valuable species, taking care to see that the areas are close to markets so that the timber is produced in the most economic way. I was amazed at the difference in value of logs because of the location. In other words, the cost of transport is a considerable factor in the overall price of timber. Timber in an area close to its market is ever so much more valuable than the same type of timber in a remote part of the State. If the timber is handy to rail facilities or to the coast, it is worth much more than timber in more inaccessible districts.

Once these areas are gazetted, all the millable timber, apart from seed trees, is sold to the industry. Then the growth of the younger, more valuable trees is hastened by the removal of the useless species. Whilst this is going on, experts are guiding the growth of natural seedlings of maple, silky oak, silver ash and such trees. Those timbers are so valuable that we must make the best use of them.

The Leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for Maryborough questioned whether the Government have really brought
about any improvement. In the past two years, the following areas have been gazetted as State forests:—

Mackay District—
S.F.R. 658 Macartney & Lacy
S.F.R. 411 Mia Mia
S.F.R. 661 Pelion
S.F.R. 652 Cauley and Macartney

Total

Atherton District, north of Townsville—
S.F.R. 1137 Hull and Rockingham (Clump Point)

Other proposals submitted and approved are—
Mt. Spec
Culpa Lands

A total area of approximately 200,000 acres has been set aside for reforestation.

Even that is not an achievement about which we should boast. We have to do much better. Let me repeat that we must do everything to preserve and encourage the growth of valuable timber in the rain forests of North Queensland. The value in timber production from that land in my opinion would be much greater than the value of crops that could be grown on it.

I was very interested in some of the statements of hon. members, which, although outside the scope of the Bill, nevertheless have a very important bearing on the subject. The hon. member for Nash made a useful contribution to the debate. He spoke of the allocation of logs. That subject is outside the scope of the Bill, as the allocation of logs is covered by the Sawmills Licensing Act. Reference was made to the appointment of a sawmilling licensing committee or board. The allocation of logs to various mills has been a most contentious matter. When I assumed office we had a number of mills with a Crown licence. Those mills had a Crown allocation of logs and were entitled to buy private timber. There were those with restricted licences, not permitted to buy Crown timber but able to buy timber from Crown lands. There was another section who had no licences at all. It was an impossible job to satisfy all interests. Strange to say not one section is happy. Those with an unrestricted licence complained because their privileges were not great enough. In order to get down to a fair means of distributing logs available we had to arrive at a basis. As things were going we would only have enough hardwood logs in the Brisbane district to last for a few years. The supply in the Maryborough area will last longer. Supplies generally are diminishing. Large sums of money have been invested in the milling industry and hon. members can appreciate the concern of those engaged in it. They complained to the officers in charge and when their requests were not met they came to me. To use a colloquialism I became fed to the teeth with the complaints from every section and I asked the Government to appoint a committee to relieve Mr. Trist of the responsibility. He was criticised by people who were not competent to criticise him; it was not fair that he should carry the whole burden. I have no doubts as to the honesty and integrity of that gentleman and I felt that he, with others, should examine the applications for sawmilling licences and advise me as to who should be licensed.

I made a Press statement. There is no hole-and-corner method about the business. I recommended to Cabinet that a committee be appointed and Cabinet approved. The committee will consist of Mr. Sutherland, a member of the Land Administration Board as chairman, Mr. Trist representing the Forestry Department, and Mr. Gilbert representing the milling interests. We hope that when the Committee gets under way the complaints will cease.

Whether there should be a restriction of licences or an open go is a matter to be debated. The hon. member for Murrumba made a wise suggestion when he said that if a person is satisfied there is a living in the business it is his business, and if he goes broke that is also his business. Competition is the life of trade. If a man wishes to engage in the sawmilling industry and cannot make a success of it, it is too bad for him. The control practised over the years has been with the object of protecting a man against himself, the destruction of young and immature timber as well as conserving the limited supplies of timber. When we get down to the letter of democracy and the right of a person to engage in business, we cannot criticise a man for doing what he likes with his own money. What has been done has been with the object not only of protecting the miller but also for the conservation of timber. Any form of control has its limitations. There was much wisdom in the hon. member's suggestion.

The necessity to keep costs to a minimum was dealt with in the report of the Timber Inquiry Committee. Among other things, it was pointed out that the State was losing a large amount of money through conserving timber and then making it available to the industry. The hon. member for Belyando made suggestions about some of the forest areas in the Clermont district. Although I agree that there is a good deal of merit in what he said, it must be remembered that these things cost money. If the royalties are kept below a certain level it is uneconomic to nurse the timber. It is all very well to say that if royalties are kept down the price of timber also will be kept down, but with the reduction of supplies competition between the millers tends to increase the price of timber. The hon. member suggested that private owners might be asked to nurse the trees, but the present return makes it uneconomic. The weakness in the present system has caused the destruction of a good deal of immature timber. It
is impossible to grow both trees and grass, and many people have elected to ring-bark the timber.

The hon. member for Nash spoke about the allocation of logs to licensed millers. That is another matter that was referred to in the report of the Timber Inquiry Committee.

As one would expect from a former Minister for Public Lands, the hon. member for Belyando made a very intelligent contribution to the debate. He is aware of most of the present weaknesses. He referred to what Labour had done, but this matter is too important to be debated from the point of view of party politics. As a matter of fact, there was very little need for forest conservation work prior to 1920.

The Government are alive to the necessity of preserving beauty spots in various parts of the State as national parks. The hon. member made some very kind references to the work of Mr. Grenning, who, I hasten to point out, is supported by a staff of very capable officers. I admire the fearless way in which they undertake their work. I understand that within the next two or three days a signal honour is to be conferred on Mr. Grenning. I am not in a position to make an announcement on the matter, but I understand that his work is to be recognised following an inquiry by some of Australia's leading forestry officials. Furthermore, we have decided to send Mr. Grenning to a forestry conference that is to be held in Washington about the middle of next year. It will be the first time that a Director of Forests of this State has attended an overseas conference. It will cost a few pounds, but the information and knowledge that Mr. Grenning gains there will be of great advantage to Queensland.

The hon. member for Barambah urged the building of access roads to national parks. Of course, the department is not a road-construction authority and its funds are very limited.

We have something in common with the National Parks Association and the Queensland Government Tourist Bureau. The hon. member referred to what has been done at the Bunya Mountains, one of the most beautiful areas in Queensland. A good road would make it easily accessible to people from the Downs. It is not far from Dalby or the Somerset electorate. The hon. member for Somerset and the hon. member for Barambah accompanied me some time ago on an inspection tour. For some years the area has been set aside as a reserve. The local authorities are doing something about the road. It is little use setting aside reservations if access is not given for tourists. Anyone who has not seen the Bunya Mountains would be well advised to visit them.

The hon. member for Barambah suggested employing coloured people from the North Queensland missions in reforestation work instead of having them doing little or nothing around the missions. Again, that depends on funds. It would serve a dual purpose for nothing is worse than to have people lolling about in idleness; it certainly does not build up morale as useful work will. If the missions cannot find work for them, it would be highly desirable to have the Government employ them in that way. The suggestion has a good deal of merit, and I will investigate it very closely.

The hon. member for Maryborough is never backward in sniping at the Government but he must be out of form. It is not typical of him to make wise and sound suggestions, as he has done today. Nevertheless, when an hon. member makes a useful contribution I give him credit for it. I remind him, though, that spending money on tree planting is not the be all and end all of reforestation. He appeared to me to have a brief from one of the leading saw-millers in the Maryborough district. Timber control authorities get plenty of co-operation from milling interests; they have plenty of advice to give, but it is usually more or less parochial.

Mr. Davies: When the day comes that I have a brief from the big interests there, I will let you know.

Mr. Muller: The hon. member must remember that I am not asleep, either. When he is talking I have a very good idea where his information comes from. It was so obvious that I thought I was justified in drawing the conclusion I did.

The hon. member suggested—and I give him credit for it because there is a good deal of merit in the idea—that we should offer every inducement to people to grow timber on private land. If a man has a few acres of land that is otherwise useless it is wonderful what he can do in a few years and
how valuable a stand of trees that he can grow can become as long as they are well chosen.

A pocket of land between Minden and Rosewood has been planted with hoop pine by a man named John Evans. I do not know when he planted it but the stand of timber is a credit to him. Without that timber the land would probably erode. A lot of good work can be done in that way.

The hon. member for Maryborough spoke about the importance of checking erosion. In the last few months I have received information about the work of river trusts. I have in mind particularly the Cattle Creek River Trust in the Mackay district. The breakaway of the river was so great that we were almost at our wits end to know what to do to check it. A Victorian engineer who was sent up said to me, “I don't think the trouble is in the bed of the river alone. The ridges have been denuded of timber with the result that there is a rush of water off the hills at a much greater rate than before. One of the best ways to check it would be to plant trees on the hills.”

The hon. member spoke about Maryborough interests and what could be done to conserve timber. He spoke about barging timber from Fraser Island. Of course economics enter into it because nobody is likely to build barges to carry great quantities of timber from Fraser Island when they can get supplies more conveniently on the mainland. However, all these matters are being looked into.

The hon. member expressed the fear that under the new legislation providing for the conversion of land from leasehold to freehold tenure there might be a danger of timber being destroyed. I assure the hon. member that again every precaution has been taken against that. We are not going to pass stands of timber on to people unless they pay for it or the timber is put to a useful purpose. That legislation is beyond the scope of this Bill, but the hon. member need not worry because the matter is being watched.

Thehon. member for Cook referred to the potential of the Far North for timber-growing. I agree that that territory has tremendous possibilities but it is not so much a matter of the availability of the logs but where they are. Access roads are needed. Because of the cost of going into that remote territory to collect the timber its value depreciates. But we are not forgetting about it. We have spent a fair amount of money on access roads. For the road to the Poverty area we have allocated £11,876 this year and we have plans to spend £40,000 in the next few years on removing the timber. It will take some time before the value of the timber removed equals the cost of constructing the road. The matter of the other road referred to is in the hands of the Department of Development and Main Roads. My department has a surveyor in the area now. The road will be built not only for the removal of timber but also for settlement purposes generally. The hon. member also expresses concern at the removal of the Cooktown orchids from that area, and asked if I would tell him about the control to prevent people from stealing these orchids in the scrubs. This is a matter controlled by the Department of Agriculture and Stock. Everyone is prohibited from taking timber out of the area unlawfully. The Cooktown orchid is a protected plant and officers of the Department of Agriculture and Stock are taking care of that. The taking of timber from reserves and Crown leaseholds and Crown lands generally is prohibited. I do not know who authorised the police, and the officer of the Department of Agriculture and Stock has told me that the matter was not reported to him. That department would supply the hon. member with the information. The Department of Agriculture and Stock keeps a close watch to prevent the removal of flora and fauna from our national parks and reserves.

The hon. member for Murrumba said that immature timber was being taken from Bribie Island. I am informed that that is not happening and that a close watch is kept on all timber on that island. It is true that cypress pine is taken and it has a smaller trunk. Reforestation work is going on there.

The hon. member for Sherwood referred to the question of preserving parks. The contemplated construction of the bridge opens up tremendous possibilities. Before Bribie Island is designed I should like the Government to engage a capable officer to produce a master plan of the area to provide for preservation of the beauty spots referred to, and for roads.

Mr. Davies: The Minister should urge that to be done for Fraser Island before Bribie Island.

Mr. MULLER: Fraser Island has reserves of timber estimated at 600,000,000 super feet and the hon. member would not like to see that timber destroyed. In the other place the stands of timber are not so extensive.

Motion (Mr. Muller) agreed to.

The House adjourned at 3.35 p.m.