

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 15 NOVEMBER 1960

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Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. D. E. Nicholson, Murrumba) took the chair at 11 a.m.

ASSENT TO BILLS

Assent to the following Bills reported by Mr. Speaker:—

City of Brisbane Acts Amendment Bill.
Treasury Funds Investment Act Amendment Bill.

Senate Elections Bill.

Evidence and Discovery Acts and Other Acts Amendment Bill.

All Saints Church Lands Bill.

QUESTIONS

TRANSFER OF CROWN LAND TO HOUSING
COMMISSION, METROPOLITAN AREA

Mr. LLOYD (Kedron) asked the Minister for Public Lands and Irrigation—

“(1) With reference to the report that an area of land of 3 acres 16.2 perches at Greer Road, Bardon, was sold to E. A. Knowles Estates Pty. Ltd. for £3,800 and another area of 3 roods 12.2 perches at Holland Park to Georges Freeholders Pty. Ltd. for £1,400 and in view of the recent statement by the Treasurer that Crown land was to be made available by the Queensland Housing Commission for home builders and that the Commission had in fact recently purchased land for this purpose, will he explain why these particular areas of land were not made available for sub-division by the Queensland Housing Commission?”

"(2) Has his Department any other land in Brisbane which may be suitable for home building purposes and which might assist the Housing Commission in its efforts to make cheaper land available to prospective home builders?"

Hon. A. R. FLETCHER (Cunningham) replied—

"(1) The first area referred to is very steep and broken with a slope ranging from 1 in 2 to 1 in 4. The second area is likewise unattractive due to seepage caused by a spring of water located thereon. For these reasons the land in its present state was considered unsuitable for subdivision by the Crown into residential blocks. Due to their unsuitability and complaints received concerning noxious weeds and rubbish thereon, the two blocks were offered at auction, as one parcel of land in each case, with the idea that some person or company may have been interested in developing them."

"(2) There are other areas in the hands of the Crown and these are located at Monash Road, Ekibin and Sandgate North which areas are considered to be suitable for sale in subdivision. Allotments at Sandgate North are to be offered for sale at auction on Tuesday 22nd instant and allotments at Monash Road, Ekibin will be offered at auction when surveys and subdivisional road construction are completed. In addition there are already areas of Crown land located in Brisbane which have been set apart for the purpose of the State Housing Acts."

TRANSFER OF CROWN LAND TO HOUSING COMMISSION, ROWES BAY, TOWNSVILLE

Mr. AIKENS (Townsville South) asked the Treasurer and Minister for Housing—

"As the Minister for Public Lands in his reply to a question directed to him by the Honourable Member for Townsville North on Thursday, November 10, intimated that he was contemplating the development of a substantial area of land at Rowes Bay, Townsville, for residential usage, will he consider the transfer of this land to the Housing Commission for the purpose of development and sale by the Commission to genuine home builders?"

Hon. T. A. HILEY (Chatsworth) replied—

"There is splendid co-operation between the Lands Department and the Housing Commission and as a result, unoccupied Crown Lands are regularly handed over to the Commission for residential development. The proposal at Rowes Bay has a great deal to be done before any land will be ready for such transfer. The Commission did, in November, 1959, indicate its interest in land at Rowes Bay. It must await agreement with the Council and development of the area."

MISSING PAY ENVELOPES, TOWNSVILLE GENERAL HOSPITAL

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

"As the Auditor-General stated on page 194 of his Annual Report for the year ended June 30, 1960, that pay envelopes valued at £211 2s. 5d. were missing from the Townsville General Hospital,—

(1) Were these envelopes empty and, if so, how many would be missing to be valued at £211 2s. 5d.?

(2) If they were full, how many envelopes were involved?

(3) What action, if any, has been taken or is contemplated to trace the missing articles?"

Hon. H. W. NOBLE (Yeronga) replied—

"(1) On April 22 last, pay envelopes containing £211 2s. 5d. were found to be missing at the Townsville Hospital."

"(2) Six envelopes were involved."

"(3) The matter was placed in the hands of the Criminal Investigation Branch, Townsville, immediately the loss was discovered, but that Department has been unable to locate the missing money or establish the identity of the offender."

SITE FOR NEW STATE SCHOOL, AITKENVALE, TOWNSVILLE

Mr. AIKENS (Townsville South) asked the Minister for Education and Migration—

"Has land been acquired or is in the process of acquisition as a site for a new school in the Aitkenvale area of Townsville and, if so, (a) what is the area of the land, (b) where is it situated, (c) from whom was it acquired, and (d) for what price?"

Hon. J. C. A. PIZZHEY (Isis) replied—

"Action is proceeding for the acquisition of a site for a new Primary School in the Aitkenvale area of Townsville. Notice of intention to resume the area in question was contained in the 'Government Gazette' of October 15, 1960. (a) Twenty (20) acres. (b) The land has frontages to Albert and Alice Streets and Bergin Road. (c) The site is being acquired from:—Jane Catherine Mary Phillips, wife of Peter Phillips; John Alfred Sterritt and Ivy Myrtle Sterritt, his wife, as joint tenants; Kee Wing Lun; Edna Florence Hobson, wife of Robert Francis Hobson. (d) Claims for compensation will be lodged by the former owners with the Land Administration Commission after the land has actually been taken by the Crown. Failing an amicable agreement, the amount will be determined by the Land Court."

UNDERGROUND WATER SUPPLY, LOWER
BURDEKIN AREA

Mr. COBURN (Burdekin) asked the Minister for Public Lands and Irrigation—

"In view of the fact that the Home Hill Engineering Company who last year conducted tests in connection with the underground water supply at Ayr and Home Hill for the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission by putting down bores to bed-rock found at Koolkuna and Kalamia within the productive areas of the Lower Burdekin water to a depth of ninety feet before reaching rock bottom and had negative results in so far as fresh water is concerned at Phillips Camp and Alva Beach, outside the productive areas, will he arrange to have a deep well-boring plant despatched to the Lower Burdekin to make tests to a substantial depth to determine whether there is any water at the lower levels?"

Hon. A. R. FLETCHER (Cunningham) replied—

"The availability of underground water in the Burdekin Delta for present irrigation development is under examination by the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission. This examination will include the possibility of obtaining supplies at lower levels, and the extent of salt water intrusion under various conditions. The desirability of further boring as suggested by the Honourable Member is being considered in conjunction with the investigation work being carried out this year."

PAPERS

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

Report of the Department of Harbours and Marine for the year 1959-1960.

The following papers were laid on the table:—

Order in Council under the Co-operative Housing Societies Act of 1958.

Proclamation under the Queensland Marine Act of 1958.

Regulations under the Queensland Marine Act of 1958.

Regulations under the State Government Insurance Office (Queensland) Act of 1960.

Regulations under the Primary Producers' Organisation and Marketing Acts, 1926 to 1957.

Orders in Council under the Medical Acts, 1939 to 1958.

Regulations under the Hospitals Acts, 1936 to 1955.

Order in Council under the River Improvement Trust Acts, 1940 to 1959.

GIFT DUTY ACTS AMENDMENT BILL
INITIATION

Hon. T. A. HILEY (Chatsworth—Treasurer and Minister for Housing) I move—

"That the House will, at its present sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirableness of introducing a Bill to amend the Gift Duty Acts, 1926 to 1958, in certain particulars."

Motion agreed to.

MOSSMAN TRAMWAY BILL

THIRD READING

Bill, on motion of Mr. Roberts, read a third time.

METROPOLITAN FIRE BRIGADES
BOARD (LANDS) BILL

THIRD READING

Bill, on motion of Mr. Fletcher, read a third time.

CANALS ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

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

Hon. T. A. HILEY (Chatsworth—Treasurer and Minister for Housing) (11.24 a.m.): I move—

"That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to amend the Canals Acts, 1958 to 1959, in certain particulars."

The purpose of the Bill is to meet special circumstances arising in the development of an estate known as Mermaid Bays Estate, situated immediately to the west of the Pacific Highway behind Mermaid Beach. The company concerned proposes to develop the land with canals in accordance with a master plan prepared by the Albert Shire Council and approved by the Department of Harbours and Marine. It is at present precluded from a complete development of canals connected to the existing canal system, as there are three parcels of land, yet to be developed, between the subject land and the existing canal system.

The land is, however, served by an existing watercourse, known as "Dunlop's Drain," running in a northerly direction to Little Tallebudgera Creek. To enable the company to proceed immediately with the development of portion of its land it has been authorised to build some of its canals and connect them by a temporary canal to this watercourse, "Dunlop's Drain."

As the full canal system is provided by the landowners to the immediate north, the company is bound to reclaim the temporary canal and build the balance of its canals in accordance with the master plan. The Albert Shire Council is in agreement with

this development and my engineering advisers in the Department of Harbours and Marine have also reported favourably thereon.

Whilst "Dunlop's Drain" is subject to tidal influence, there is some doubt whether it constitutes tidal waters for the purposes of connecting a canal thereto. The Bill places the issue beyond doubt.

Those hon. members who were in the Chamber when the Canals Act was passed will know that we were concerned firstly about ensuring that these canals would not become refuse pits; that they would be subject to the scouring influence of the tide—the cleansing influence of the tide—and that when sillage and stormwater got into them there would be a clear outlet; in effect, that there would be no ponding of stagnant water, creating a health nuisance. We approached the construction of canals by insisting that they must be connected to tidal water.

"Dunlop's Drain" has a moderate tidal rise and fall. It is connected to tidal water. I am told that the tidal rise and fall is about 2 feet, compared with the rise on occasions in the Nerang River proper of from 2 feet 6 inches to 3 feet 6 inches. The tide therefore will not have the same scouring effect in "Dunlop's Drain" as it has in the Nerang River, but the proposal is an intermediate measure to allow the work to proceed. The Albert Shire Council is very keen about it and my engineering advisers have reported favourably. As soon as the other connecting canals are built this link will be filled in, and the canals will be connected with the ordinary canal system in accordance with the master plan.

That is the sole purpose of the Bill, and I submit it to the Committee.

Motion (Mr. Hiley) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

FIRST READING

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

POLLUTION OF WATERS BY OIL BILL

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE

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

Hon. T. A. HILEY (Chatsworth—Treasurer and Minister for Housing) (11.30 a.m.): I move—

"That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced relating to the prevention of the pollution of the territorial waters and inland navigable waters of Queensland by oil."

This Bill is designed and aimed at the purposes narrowly set out in its definition. I remind the Committee that within the memory of men presently serving in this Chamber, marine transport has seen the last

days and the last evidence of the propulsion of vessels by sail for commercial purposes. We have also seen the hey-day of the employment of coal-fired steam vessels and the eclipse of the use of coal as a fuel for steam vessels, and its supplantation by oil. There appears to be little doubt, again within the experience of many of the younger men who are now in this Chamber, that it may well be that the use of oil for the firing of boilers and the generation of steam may become completely outmoded, and that some future Parliament of the State will be addressing its mind as to how to protect both the land of Queensland and the waters that surround it from pollution by atomic wastes. However, at this stage of the development of marine propulsion the use of oil as a fuel has become the dominant feature, and the result is that it is considered necessary to pass a special law dealing with the pollution of waters by oil and oily mixtures.

For many years world-wide concern has been expressed at oil pollution of navigable waters. Ever since the introduction of fuel oil the pollution by oily discharge has caused the destruction of fish and sea-bird life, and within harbours it has caused the fouling of small ships, river banks and bathing beaches.

As early as 1935 this matter was raised in the League of Nations, but it was not until April, 1954, that the United Kingdom convened an international conference to consider what protective steps might be taken. The United Kingdom had then hoped that it would have been possible to arrive at a draft convention entirely prohibiting the discharge into the sea of oily mixtures, but agreement on this basis could not be reached.

A draft convention was finally settled, providing for the setting-up of zones of varying widths, both for tankers and dry-cargo ships, within which the discharge of oil residues would be prohibited. The Australian zone was 50 miles from the coast in the case of dry-cargo ships, and, in the case of tankers, a 50-mile zone from Thursday Island along the north and west coasts to latitude 20 degrees south, thence some 150 miles from the coast, around the west, south and east coasts, as far as Thursday Island.

A special committee comprising representatives of the Commonwealth and States was appointed to consider this convention and its implementation in Australia. It was realised that if Australia adopted the convention, legislative action would be necessary by both the Commonwealth and the States. The Commonwealth would need to legislate to deal with waters outside the jurisdiction of the States. It would also require to deal with interstate shipping. Each State, for its part, would require to legislate to deal with waters inside its jurisdiction and also intrastate shipping. The Commonwealth legislation would essentially derive its authority from the External Affairs power in the

Commonwealth Constitution. Legislation under this power, if it is to be *intra vires*, must correspond precisely with the terms of the treaty to which it gives effect. Consequently, the Commonwealth law follows almost precisely the terms of the convention. In other words, by its legislation it gives an Australian ramification to the treaty that had been entered into giving effect to the terms expressed by the convention.

Apart from questions of legality, it is highly desirable that uniformity with the Commonwealth be maintained as far as possible in any State legislation. Consequently, a draft Bill was prepared for the guidance of the States, after close consultation with all parties. We are now following the draft in this Bill.

Mr. Duggan: Has similar legislation been introduced in other States yet?

Mr. HILEY: I could not tell the hon. gentleman whether it has actually been introduced, but there has been an all-Australian agreement. This was done through the conference of the Harbour Boards Association, and I am assured by my officers that every State proposes to take parallel action.

Mr. Duggan: An identical Bill, too?

Mr. HILEY: That is the hope. I will be concerned if any State departs from the Commonwealth draft.

At present, pollution of waters by oil is not a serious problem in Queensland. It perhaps would not have become a serious problem had the direct importation of oils from overseas continued. However, with the establishment of refineries in Australia and the transport by sea of oil cargoes between the various ports, the matter is bound to assume some importance. The prevailing winds in Queensland are from the east and oily wastes discharged at sea in any quantity adjacent to our coast must eventually reach our shores, despoil our beaches, possibly destroy fish-breeding and feeding grounds, and cause other damage. It is quite possible, too, that they could adversely affect our coral reefs because the coral polyp is an extremely sensitive animal. It will thrive under conditions that suit it but it is very quickly discouraged by conditions foreign to its ordinary liking. The best example of that is the great cuts in the Barrier Reef where the polyp has refused to live in waters that are periodically affected by the coloured waste water coming down from the coastal rivers in flood. Because the coral animal just does not like to have any dirt in the water in which it lives, we have these great gaps, which fortunately give us a means of entrance and exit from the open ocean to the area behind the reef. It is expected that were oily wastes to be deposited on the surface of the coral, very soon we should have a lot of dead coral and the live coral animal would be discouraged.

Mr. Burrows: The coral insect is an offender itself in that regard when it spawns periodically.

Mr. HILEY: That is a reverse application of it. That is a product not so much of the coral insect itself as of some other organism that lives on the coral reef. That is the one that produces the brown scum.

Mr. Burrows: Yes. It can be very offensive.

Mr. HILEY: Very bad. I think it is as bad this year as I have ever seen it. In one case countless square miles of it were coming in. The way that it swept in is a good illustration of the way oily wastes would come in.

The Bill will become law on a date to be proclaimed. Its provisions will be in addition to, but not in derogation of, other legislation. Provision is made that an offender cannot be punished twice under different Acts for the same offence. I remind the Committee that we have at the present time various provisions giving a general and vague control over pollution. We have that control under the Water Act, the Harbours Act, and the Fisheries Act. This Bill will give a particular power to supplement the vague and general powers contained in those several existing laws.

Generally speaking, each harbour board will administer the Bill in the waters within its jurisdiction, whilst the Marine Board will undertake the administration outside harbour limits.

When pollution occurs, the owner or master of the ship, or the occupier of the land installation or the person in charge of the apparatus, as the case may be, from which the oil escaped shall be held responsible for the offence. The penalties proposed are high, the maximum being £1,000. This figure is the same as that included in the relevant legislation of the Commonwealth.

However, the discharge of oil in certain circumstances will be a defence in case of prosecution. It is quite well understood, I think, that there are occasions when oil has to be discharged for either the safety of the ship or the saving of life. If the ship has been involved in a collision, it is obvious that oil will escape irrespective of what the master might or might not be able to do. In the case of saving life, although I have not heard of any particular example of its being used in Australian waters, the realms of fiction are full of illustrations of where a lifeboat has made a perilous crossing after the master of a ship has hung oiled bags all round the side of his ship to provide an area in which the sea will not break and thus allowed the lifeboat to make its rescue journey.

In addition to that, realising that these things can be made too drastic, the Bill provides that the discharge of an oily mixture of a ratio of less than 100 parts of oil to 1,000,000 parts of mixture will not be deemed under the Bill to be pollution. Here I might anticipate what hon. members are certain to say—"Why accept a complicated formula of 100 parts of oil to

1,000,000 parts of mixture? Why not say, "One part of oil to 10,000 parts of mixture?" I must confess that had it not been that I prepared this Bill exactly to the design laid down elsewhere, I should have done that.

Mr. Duggan: I think what has happened is that the Commonwealth Government are so accustomed to talking in millions that they want to preserve that phrase.

Mr. HILEY: That could be, but they are only repeating what is stated in the international convention.

Expenses of removing oil pollution may be recovered against the responsible party. The obtaining of such costs will not prejudice the recovery of a penalty or affect any claim for damages caused by the pollution.

It will be necessary for owners of intrastate ships to fit them with equipment for the prevention of oil pollution, and requirements in that regard may be prescribed by regulation. These particular requirements will be administered by the Marine Board.

Regulations may be made to provide for the inspection of intrastate ships, a testing and approving of equipment to prevent oil pollution, and the fixing of inspection and testing fees. The Marine Board may appoint inspectors and testers. In the case of a breach of requirements as regards equipment, both the owner and the master of the ship are liable.

Provision is made for regulations requiring masters of intrastate ships or occupiers of land installations to keep oil records showing the movement (including discharge, transfer, or leakage) of oil or oily mixtures. If the required records are not kept, both the owner and the master of the ship, or the occupier of the land installation involved, are guilty of an offence.

Any discharge of oil or oily mixture from a ship or land installation within the jurisdiction must be reported by those concerned to the respective harbour board or marine board respectively. Anyone failing to do so is guilty of an offence.

For the purpose of investigating any pollution, the local harbour-master or anyone appointed by the Marine Board or the respective harbour board may board and inspect any ship within the jurisdiction and examine oil records. He may also inspect any land installations. There is also the usual provision that any person assaulting or otherwise obstructing an investigator is guilty of an offence.

A harbour board may provide, or join with some other person or the Crown in providing, facilities for the disposal of oil residues. Generally speaking, subject to the payment of fees and observance of conditions, any ship may use such facilities; but a harbour board is not compelled to make

them available for tankers or for the reception of oil residues disposed of to enable a ship to undergo repairs. Also, a harbour board is not compelled to allow untreated ballast water to be disposed of in such facilities.

Harbour boards may make by-laws under the Harbours Acts, 1955 to 1959, requiring owners or occupiers of oil installations and dockyards to provide facilities for the disposal of oil residues from tankers and ships undergoing repairs, respectively.

Mr. Burrows: Is that for the disposal on land?

Mr. HILEY: Yes. When you have collected what you are forbidden to discharge you have to get rid of it. Almost always that would be done by burning. The Bill covers the provision of suitable installations in which oily residues can be consumed by burning.

Oil cannot be transferred between sunset and sunrise to or from any ships in any waters within the jurisdiction without permission of the respective harbour board, if within a harbour, or the local harbour-master or some other authorised person, or the Marine Board where the transfer is to take place outside harbour limits.

Any person appointed by the Marine Board or a harbour board, as the case may be, may board an intrastate ship for the purpose of inspection and report as to compliance with requirements. Also, he may test any equipment required to be installed under the Bill.

Under certain circumstances the Marine Board is empowered to grant dispensations wholly or in part from the provisions of the Bill, but such dispensations may be revoked at any time.

I think that fairly outlines the provisions of the Bill. I ask the Committee to observe particularly that it applies to the pollution by oil of the territorial waters of the State, and of the inland navigable waters. The Bill does not deal with other than navigable waters, and it deals only with pollution by oil and oily mixtures. When the Bill was being drafted I considered whether we should overhaul our control of the pollution of streams by industrial wastes. That is a problem that has been giving increasing concern in the densely-populated manufacturing countries where what used to be sweet-running, clear streams containing useful fish have become polluted, noisome wastes because of the effluent from various manufacturing industries. The Bill does not attempt to deal with that. I cannot see that there is as yet any general problem caused by industrial wastes, even though one or two cases may give a little concern.

Mr. Houston: You have not been down to Wynnum lately.

Mr. HILEY: That is probably the worst case. If the hon. member means Wynnum Creek—

Mr. Houston: Dobby Creek.

Mr. HILEY: That is the only one that I know of in the State. Although I am conscious of the problem that will gradually develop because of the discharge of industrial wastes, I do not think this Bill is the vehicle with which to deal with it. It is a standard Bill that has arisen out of the international convention, and we have endeavoured to make it fit in with local conditions because of our own terminology and control. For example, we have vested authority in harbour boards and the Marine Board, whereas in other countries they may have different organisations. With the exception of meeting local conditions of that order we have adhered rigidly to the decisions of the international convention. We hope that when the Bill is assented to by Parliament we shall have legislation identical in term, expression and meaning with similar Bills being passed in all the other States of the Commonwealth.

Mr. DUGGAN (Toowoomba West—Leader of the Opposition) (11.50 a.m.): I suppose the Minister has covered sufficiently the reasons for the introduction of this measure. That being so, there is no occasion to engage in debate, for a prolonged period anyway, on the matter. It was because of that that I did not speak on the previous Bill; I felt that all that could be adequately said had been said and that no disputation arose. Nor is there any point of disputation particularly arising on this Bill because it would seem extremely odd if Queensland did not fall into line with the other States in implementing the agreement that has been reached on the problems arising as a result of vessels using our seaways.

One result of the Industrial Revolution has been the provision of amenities of a widespread character and an improved standard of living but, concomitant with that, of course, is the disadvantage of modern industry in the pollution that results from its effluent. It is a great pity indeed. We are all familiar with the effluxion of industrial waste which has been referred to today. At least we seem to have reached the stage of becoming aware of the danger of pollution from vessels at sea and the extent to which that pollution can spread. It is evident from the Minister's statement that it extends, in some cases, up to 150 miles from the coastline. It shows that the penetration is even greater than I thought because of the influence of winds and tides. It is quite obvious that 150 miles is considered to be the safe limit, otherwise that figure would not have been introduced.

There is, however, one point for debate and I hope that the Minister might consider, and indicate in the second-reading stage, that the subject of industrial waste might be treated as a matter of some moment to the Government and that he will ask his officers to see if some justifiable steps cannot be taken to prepare a Bill in this regard. I think it is a serious matter.

Surveys of air pollution, and so on, have been carried out. I ask the Minister to say

that he does not regard this merely as an opportunity to avoid the opening up of that subject. I should like to see it dealt with at some reasonably early future date. It is a problem that is becoming serious in industrial cities and in certain provincial cities, particularly in the inland areas. Toowoomba is one case in point. There is only a small creek to take away the industrial waste from the bacon factory, the butter factory and other manufacturing undertakings, and the offence is a nuisance that is accentuated in all areas that have not the volume of water necessary to clear it.

I remember reading some time ago about an industrial consultant who came out from England to deal with pollution of our streams. It has apparently become quite a science in some parts of the world, particularly highly-industrialised countries, and this may well be an appropriate occasion on which to examine the problem.

One point that occurs to me is what powers the Government have to take action against some of these people who offend against the proposed Bill. I presume action would have to be taken fairly quickly if an offence was committed in order to prove that a particular ship was responsible for a nuisance that had been created. I was also wondering what would happen if the nuisance was not detected before the ship left Australia. Claim could possibly be made on the owner or the master of the vessel concerned, but a problem might arise if the extent of the pollution was serious and the vessel had left Australia. It might be diverted to another country and not come back to Australian waters.

There are cases in which pollution occurs not deliberately. I think it occurred recently at the Kurnell refinery in New South Wales in circumstances beyond the control of both the owner and the master of the ship. The master was compelled to discharge into the harbour at Kurnell a tremendous amount of oil. I suppose a lesser penalty would be imposed in a case of that nature.

Mr. Hiley: If a person is compelled to release oil for the safety of a vessel or the saving of life, he is excused.

Mr. DUGGAN: That is reasonable, because there is a great distinction between the release for that purpose and for other purposes.

I have not had sufficient experience to say how easy it is to effect prosecutions for such offences. The tremendous length of coastline in Australia may make the position here more difficult than it is in other countries.

I have been on a ship on only one occasion, but it appeared to me that the people responsible for the discharge of that waste did not wait very long after the ship left harbour before getting rid of it. I suppose the same desire to get rid of waste

as soon as possible would actuate the owner of an oil tanker or a dry cargo vessel using oil-fired power. I noticed while on the vessel that every time we left port immediate action was taken to throw overboard the garbage and so on that had accumulated while the vessel was in port. Apparently the desire was to get rid of it as quickly as possible.

Mr. Hiley: Sometimes they do it as they pass Gibson Island.

Mr. DUGGAN: That happened in the vessel of which I have experience—round about that point.

I suppose some interesting contributions could be made on this subject by hon. members. I think it is a very interesting one. The Minister has given adequate reasons why we should take action in common with the other States. The Bill is supplementary to legislation passed by the Commonwealth Parliament. It seems to be a sensible measure.

This is the type of subject on which some very informative and interesting submissions could be made. The Minister has clearly set out the purpose of the Bill. I do not think the passage of the Bill through its various stages should be unduly delayed, unless some hon. member wishes to speak particularly of pollution in a certain area. I do not think it calls for a lengthy debate.

I agree with the Treasurer that the finding of oil in areas adjacent to Queensland would probably bring much closer the time when it will be necessary to use the provisions of the Bill. I have spoken to men in the oil industry in years gone by regarding the establishment of an oil refinery in Queensland. The consensus of opinion was that unless oil was found in New Guinea or in Queensland itself it would be a long time before a refinery was built in Queensland. But with the impact of competition between various established refineries, including the refinery built in Adelaide—apart altogether from considerations of prestige and intense competition between oil companies—it is quite possible that the establishing of a refinery may be done a little earlier than was contemplated three or four years ago. In that event the problem no doubt would become more serious.

The measure is timely. The problem of pollution of beaches and navigable rivers is one of tremendous importance, and one which I think has to be dealt with in an intelligent and scientific way. It appears that much time and thought have been given to determining the best way of dealing with it, and that those ideas have been incorporated in the Bill.

Mr. BURROWS (Port Curtis) (11.58 a.m.): On the spur of the moment I should say that some aspects of the problem peculiar to Queensland are not experienced in other places, peculiarities that arise through the existence of the Barrier Reef. The shipping

lane between the reef and the shore is naturally much narrower than it would be if the Barrier Reef did not run along the coast. My remarks are pertinent to the 150-mile limit set by the Bill. Hon. members can appreciate the temptation to which the master of a coastal vessel would be subject. Take the case of a ship that called at Gladstone and was then going to Port Alma. It would not go outside the Barrier Reef, and therefore would never get 150 miles from the shore. The same could be said of all vessels proceeding up the coast other than vessels of greater draught than the depth of the channel. Those vessels, naturally, would have to go outside the reef.

Progress reported.

At 12 noon, in accordance with Standing Order No. 307, the House went into Committee of Supply.

SUPPLY

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE—ESTIMATES—NINTH AND TENTH ALLOTTED DAYS

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

ESTIMATES-IN-CHIEF, 1960-1961

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

CHIEF OFFICE

Debate resumed from 10 November (see p. 1403) on Mr. Roberts's motion—

“That £233,243 be granted for ‘Department of Public Works and Local Government—Chief Office.’”

Mr. RAMSDEN (Merthyr): I should like at this juncture to join with those who have spoken before me in congratulating the Minister for Public Works and Local Government on the occasion of the presentation of his first Estimates, and join with everyone in the Chamber, on both sides, in wishing him a long and useful occupancy of his office.

I should like to draw the Committee's attention to Appendix 3 on page 13 of the annual report of the Department of Public Works for the year ended 30 June, 1960. If we study that appendix we will see that the expenditure on public buildings for every department during the last seven years of Labour's office amounted to £17,808,955 4s. 6d., and for the first three years of the Country-Liberal Party Government the expenditure on the same items amounted to £15,689,874 4s. 8d. In other words, Labour spent on State buildings only £2,119,081 more than this Government, although the period was four years longer.

Mr. Bennett: We spent it more efficiently than your crowd.

Mr. RAMSDEN: Taking the last seven years of Labour's administration—I think this answers the interjection by the hon.

member for South Brisbane—the average annual expenditure on State public buildings was £2,544,136, whilst the average annual expenditure on public buildings under the Nicklin-Morris Government for the last three financial years average £5,229,958. When this Government have been in office for only another three years, at the present rate of expenditure the State public buildings will have had nearly twice as much spent on them in six years as Labour spent in seven years.

That will not be due to the inflationary monetary values, but to this Government's aim to provide the State with buildings fit for their employees. I might mention as an example the establishment of the Hughenden Public Service Hostel at a cost of some £25,000.

I should like to make a few comments now on Parliament House. I was reading through a booklet called "The Capitol," which is described as "An Omnibus of the Capitol," a magazine of the House of Representatives of the U.S.A. The volume I was reading was that of the 85th Congress of the Second Session, House Document No. 412. That document commences an article entitled "Congress enlarges the Capitol" with these words—

"The Capitol as an architectural structure, like the form of Government it houses, was never intended by its originators to remain as fixed and unchanged as the Pyramids."

I want to apply those words to this House of Parliament because, in spite of the opinions of the editor of "The Courier-Mail," who obviously disagrees with me, I believe that the House should not be considered to be as fixed and as unchanged as the Pyramids of Egypt. The last time I made some reference to this subject in the Chamber, the editor, or the editorial writer, of "The Courier-Mail" came up with a sub-leader in which he used rather extravagant terms of a derogatory nature describing the Chamber as "the best club in Queensland" and pointing out that those of us who had asked for improvements were in fact asking for more amenities for the members of that "club."

Mr. Walsh: Who said that?

Mr. RAMSDEN: The editorial writer of "The Courier-Mail."

Mr. Walsh: I still don't know who he is.

Mr. RAMSDEN: Unfortunately, neither do I.

Mr. Walsh: He probably comes from the University.

Mr. RAMSDEN: The George Street wing—the wing we are now sitting in—was completed in August 1868, and in June 1891, the Alice Street wing was completed and occupied. Since then no additions have been made. This building was erected when Parliament was a supernumerary function of most

of its members, who followed their ordinary pursuits. In these modern days, Parliamentary government has changed and there is a greater call on the time and energies of members.

To want to preserve the historical beauty of the Parliament, as the editorial writer pointed out, is a very natural desire and I personally would resist to the utmost any attempt to destroy the historical significance of the Chamber or of the House, but, again, might I add to the words that have already been spoken by others here my plea for the building of a new wing to Parliament House as an urgent necessity. In saying that, might I ask "The Courier-Mail" to notice that that is a necessity not because members of Parliament must have better conditions of work and not only to ensure the privacy of constituents, which privacy must be protected, but because of the vastly expanding demands of the Parliamentary Library. If I am to be criticised for asking for a new and additional wing on this building to satisfy the requirements of the Parliamentary Library, for one reason alone let my critics come with me to see the crowded conditions under which books have to be stored in the second-storey library room of this wing and in the converted horse stable building and a small periodical room of some 459 sq. ft. situated near the kitchen.

Mr. Walsh: You would not find anything like that in "The Courier-Mail" building, would you?

Mr. RAMSDEN: I should not think so. I have never been through their library but I certainly would not expect them to tolerate the conditions that the Parliamentary Library has to put up with. In fact, on several occasions much damage has been done to books of the Parliamentary Library by white ants and other pests and dampness. This House possesses one of the finest libraries in Australia. At the last count it contained 87,653 books and magazines and, in addition, many volumes that are almost priceless. Just to cite a few—there is a set of "The Times" dating back to 1860, valued at £4,000, and a complete set of "The Annual Register," valued at £2,000.

Libraries are not static; good ones grow. As a matter of fact, our library is growing at the rate of approximately 1,100 books per annum. So I urge the Government, the Minister for Public Works, and the Co-ordinator-General of Public Works, to build in these grounds at least a three-storey wing to meet the expanding needs of the library and the expanding Parliamentary needs of the State. I suggest that a temporary building is not enough. It need not necessarily be of stone, as this building is, but it certainly must be of fire-resistant material. Brick walls and concrete floors would be the best. At least an extra 6,000 square feet are needed to meet the expanding requirements of the library alone, and this area must be filled with adjustable steel shelves.

Mr. Walsh: Have you heard anything of the proposal that the Government are going to buy the Bellevue Hotel and the Queensland Club?

Mr. RAMSDEN: I am afraid I do not mix in the same circles as the hon. member for Bundaberg, so I would not care to express an opinion.

Architects in the Department of Public Works need not distort the ideas of earlier architects; they could implement them. By way of illustration, I point out that the United States Capitol is adding 100,000 gross feet of space, making room for 54 additional offices, eight rooms for House and Senate documents, and two further dining-rooms, at a cost of approximately 10,000,000 dollars, or roughly £5,000,000 in Australian currency. The architects of America, for the most part, approve of this extension. I believe that we in Queensland must face up sooner or later—the sooner the better, for it will be cheaper now than in 10 years' time—to the need for a new wing on Parliament House to meet the growing demands of this Parliament.

Mr. Aikens: Did you know that the photographer had to stand outside the window of Uncle Tom's cabin to take that picture that appeared in the paper?

Mr. RAMSDEN: I did not know that, but I do know that the tables were all bunched together to make it look more crowded. I do know that the hon. member would never be happy, no matter what one did for him. I am trying to make a serious contribution to this debate, and I do not want to be led aside by frivolous comments.

I believe that we must have the vision to see the requirements of this Parliament not only for the present but for the future. It is an amazing thing that the newspapers seem to single out Parliament House and members of Parliament for special attack. For instance, there is no criticism from the Press when a luxury hotel is being built, but there is criticism of the Minister for Transport and of the broken-down condition of waiting-rooms and the broken-down and dirty condition of railway stations because no improvements are made. For some reason, there is also criticism when it is suggested that something be done to add to the beauty, dignity and usefulness of this Chamber.

Mr. Aikens: You are not as important as Marilyn Monroe. You cannot get onto the front page of "The Courier-Mail."

Mr. RAMSDEN: I quite realise that. That is one of the anomalies of our time.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. RAMSDEN: Having made those few remarks about the important concept of a new wing for Parliament House, I hope that the Minister, the Co-ordinator General, and Cabinet, will take some heed of them.

I should now like to come down to the level of the parish pump and thank the Minister and his department on behalf of my
1960—2z

constituents for work that has been done in my electorate. When I was elected as member for Merthyr, in spite of the fact that the electorate had been represented by a Minister of the Crown for many years, the public buildings had been neglected. In the last three years, particularly in the last 12 months, the Department of Public Works has done much to improve the working conditions of those employed in public offices in the electorate of Merthyr. For example, according to the records the Breakfast Creek Police Station has had the first work done on it, other than painting, since 1929. The staff have asked me to express their personal appreciation for the work that has been done. Prior to the alterations five men were sitting side by side, shoulder to shoulder, in an office only 15 feet by 8 feet. Each man would take up 3 feet, so without even taking cupboard space and typewriters into account it will be realised how cramped they were. A new office, 12 feet by 16 feet, has been built and the old office has been converted for the sole use of the sergeant-in-charge. The residence has been renovated for the first time in many years; the sergeant's family now enjoy up-to-date plumbing installations, and at the moment the garage building is being raised so that a modern wash-house can be provided underneath it. In addition, a waiting room has been provided under the house for the use of those who come to the police station on business. It serves to give them a degree of privacy from the traffic passing along Breakfast Creek Road. On behalf of the people in the Breakfast Creek area, I thank the Minister for the work that has been done.

Mr. Low: A tribute well deserved.

Mr. RAMSDEN: I think it is, particularly as it is the first work to be carried out since 1929.

On behalf of the staff and the Parents' and Citizens' Committee of the Ascot State School I thank the Minister for the work done to relieve overcrowding by the building of a block of new classrooms, for the provision of better natural and electric lighting in the old buildings, and for the approval of new galvanised fencing, drainage and road work that is to be done.

For the first time for many years the old New Farm State School has received a coat of paint to make it look more presentable.

Mr. Aikens: Have you done anything about the smog nuisance from the New Farm power house?

Mr. RAMSDEN: I shall not wait for you to rule me out of order, Mr. Taylor, I shall let that remark go until another debate.

Finally, I should like to tell the Minister that the people of Merthyr join with me in wishing him many successful years in office as Minister for Public Works and Local Government.

Mr. DONALD (Ipswich East) (12.19 p.m.): As this is the first occasion on which the present Minister has introduced the Estimates

for the Department of Public Works I should like to congratulate him sincerely on his elevation to Cabinet rank, and wish him well in his work. I was very pleased with the manner in which he spoke of his departmental employees and the value of the work that they have performed, particularly those employed in the construction section. His decision to push on with the erection of residences for school teachers throughout the State is to be commended. The programme could be pushed even further to cater for public servants generally. I hold the very firm view that any employer—the Government or anyone else—has a social obligation to erect residences for his workers who from time to time are transferred from their home districts. The advance that Queensland has made over the years, not only in the last three years, in the installation of water supplies and septic and sewerage systems is nothing less than remarkable and, despite comments to the contrary, I feel that in no other State in the Commonwealth do so many people enjoy these amenities which I consider as essential.

The Minister's decision to have septic, sewerage and electric light supplied to people working for the Government is one on which I commend him because, in the past, we have been rather neglectful in this respect. It has been quite true that the last houses in a district to be supplied with electric light, water supply or sewerage have been the residences occupied by officers of the Government. The position has been no different in Ipswich.

The work that has been performed by the Department of Public Works on the mental hospital at Ipswich is a striking example of the efficiency of the workers of that department, particularly when their work is compared with that performed by private contractors for the department. That is evident in the ward that was opened a few months ago by the Minister for Health and Home Affairs after it was handed over to him by the Minister for Public Works and Local Government. I defy anybody who wants to be inquisitive and make an impartial examination of the value of the work done by men employed directly by the department and that done by those working for private contractors to disprove my claim that the work done by employees of the department is not only superior to the contract work, but also cheaper. Full marks must be given to Mr. Worley and the men under his control for the excellent service the department has given, and is giving, to the community.

One particular point in Mr. Longland's report that is worthy of special comment is the provision of a bowling green at the Wacol Repatriation Pavilion. This is due to the wisdom, initiative and foresight of the Hon. Arthur Jones when he was Minister for Health and Home Affairs. He decided that these bowling greens be established, not only at Eventide, Sandgate, but at other Government institutions throughout the State.

Mr. Aikens: Are they used?

Mr. DONALD: They are used. I had the privilege, with members of the Government and Opposition members, of visiting Eventide, Sandgate, some years ago and participating in a game of bowls. The old people at Sandgate conduct the bowling green in the same manner as ordinary, outside bowling greens are run. They have their officers; there is a greenkeeper, a secretary, a president and a committee. They have a games committee and, on the green at Eventide, Sandgate, a game can be enjoyed in the same manner and on the same basis as it would be in any bowling club in Queensland.

Mr. Aikens: Have they a liquor bar like the outside bowling clubs?

Mr. DONALD: The Government were very wise in that they did not provide a liquor bar, and I compliment them for it. I do not want to pursue a subject outside the scope of the debate, Mr. Taylor.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is not obliged to take notice of interjections.

Mr. DONALD: The establishment of an architectural office at Rockhampton and Townsville is a step in the right direction and will, I feel, facilitate the work of planning and the work in general in the northern and central divisions by eliminating delay and rendering promptly technical assistance when required, particularly by workmen constructing large buildings.

In all new buildings, where practicable, and particularly in the northern, central and western portions of the State, provision should be made for the installation of air-conditioning plant and, where possible, in existing Government buildings. Therefore, it is pleasing to note that the Minister has decided upon such a policy, and his decision to give priority to the far northern and western areas of the State will meet with the approval of everybody. When discomfort is experienced, it should be remedied, and it should be remedied first where it is greatest. I do not think anyone could argue successfully against the decision of the Minister to give priority to work in the Far West, Far North and Central portions of the State over similar work in departmental offices in the metropolitan and near-metropolitan areas.

It is also pleasing to learn that improved facilities such as gas and electric stoves, hot-water systems, wash boilers, refrigerators, etc., are to be provided in departmental residences, and that special provision is to be made to supply those amenities in homes in isolated areas. Perhaps we could go further and provide the amenities where possible for main-road construction gangs and employees of the Department of Irrigation and Water Supply. I know from experience that to some extent amenities have been provided over the years for these employees, but we could give them more and I think the Government should attempt to do so.

It is a great pity that the department had to dispense with the services of 219 employees during the year, particularly when so much work remains to be done and when experience has shown that employees of the department perform the work so much better and so much cheaper than outside contractors. If money can be found to pay contractors for the work, it could and should have been found to continue the classroom programme, to provide employment for the employees who have been dismissed by the department.

The Minister, in the report, has drawn attention to the fact that he would like to have done much more work, and that he regretted having to dispense with 219 employees. He said he would have done much more if he had been able to get the money to do it. I am not laying any blame on the Minister for his inability to keep these men in employment and for not doing all the work he would like to have done. I think we can agree with him, sympathise with him and join in his sorrow at not being able to keep these men in employment and not being able to get all the money to do what he thinks is necessary and that we think is necessary, not only for the welfare of the employees of his department, but also for the continuous development of Queensland.

The department is to be congratulated on its policy of providing work for the maximum number of apprentices in the building trades. In this direction the Government have followed the policy of Labour Governments over the years. For a long period the maximum number of apprentices have been employed by the Department of Public Works. I doubt if the department has ever been criticised adversely for accepting its responsibility in this matter. Unfortunately far too many private builders have not accepted their responsibility to train tradesmen for the future with the result that there is a shortage of skilled tradesmen in the building industry. Instead of young Australians being trained in one of the trades associated with the building industry, they have to be content with being builders' labourers, waiting on tradesmen brought in from overseas. That state of affairs is wrong. We have lads who want to be trained. They are qualified academically as well as physically and they want to be apprenticed to one of the building trades. The best avenue of employment, of course, is the Department of Public Works, but unfortunately through lack of finance the department has not been able to employ more tradesmen and consequently has not been able to engage additional apprentices. It must be admitted by everyone that apprentices are given excellent training in the department and consequently at the end of their apprenticeship they are first-class tradesmen.

Apprentices to outside contractors in a great number of instances are engaged almost exclusively during their apprenticeship period on home construction or on buildings of a particular style. In their fourth or fifth years

they do not get any variety of work or training different from that in their second or third year, whereas an apprentice with the Department of Public Works gets a variety of work. He is employed on the building of cottages as well as large buildings. He has the advantage of being employed and trained on some of the biggest undertakings in the State. Any lad is very fortunate to be apprenticed to a section of the building industry in the Department of Public Works.

The department is to be commended for the vital part it played in the State centenary celebrations. We must all agree with the general public, who were loud in their praise and admiration of the illumination and decoration of the public buildings. This work was performed by employees of the Department of Public Works, and it set an excellent example to be followed by other sections of the community. It is a sad state of affairs that in the majority of cases this example was not followed by many wealthy firms.

I have a few words to say on Public Works expenditure in the Ipswich East electorate. At the Bundamba State School there have been additions costing £4,764, and at the Ipswich East State School there have been additions costing £6,302. I should like to emphasise that the Ipswich East State School is comparatively new. It was erected only a few years ago after much agitation by the residents in the locality for extra accommodation for their children, so that they would not have to go long distances to school. The school has been erected only two or three years, and to meet the growing demand the Government have already found it necessary to extend it at a cost of £6,302. I think the department for doing that, because it was essential. It emphasises the need for a new school in North Booval, for which we have been agitating over the years. I am sure that similar results would be forthcoming at North Booval. We want a school there as soon as we can get it to relieve the overcrowding in the existing schools.

I go once a month to a meeting at the Blackstone State School. In spite of all the work done by the school committee to keep the furniture intact, and trying to make it attractive by painting it and repairing it, there is a need for a completely new set of furniture. I do not know how the children can do their work there. The desks are rough, and the seats are rough. But for the excellent voluntary effort being made by the members of the school committee, much of the furniture there would not be worth chopping up for firewood. I have made representations again and again, but unfortunately they have not borne fruit.

At the Dinmore State School there is a very great need for some attention. Some years ago a new property was bought on the northern side of the Ipswich-Brisbane railway line so that the existing school could be shifted there, or a new school built. I go to this school once a month too, and anyone

who goes there will find that it is almost impossible to make himself heard in the schoolrooms due to the noise on the main Ipswich-Brisbane highway, and the traffic on the railway line to Brisbane. The school is sandwiched between these two thoroughfares, with the road on the southern side and the railway on the northern side. The railway has encroached on the playing area due to the work being carried out on the quadruplication scheme. The playing field is very narrow and is not at all adequate. Here, too, the teaching staff has its work made very difficult. I believe the Minister said he was going to shift that school to a new site or erect a new building in the very near future. I hope I heard him correctly because it is a crying need in the interests of the children of the community and in the interests of the teachers working there, who are trying to give the best tuition possible under very adverse conditions.

The people of Ipswich are very pleased that £5,765 was spent on remodelling the plumbing workshops at the Ipswich Technical College. The college has a very good reputation. It has turned out many lads who have subsequently become excellent tradesmen, and have helped materially in the work of the State.

The need for separating the Ipswich High School from the technical college, which has been apparent for many years, is now a matter of urgency and I trust that the Government will give it favourable consideration in the near future. It was advocated while I was a member of the technical college committee in Ipswich even before I entered Parliament. We still have the one principal and the one building and that is not in the best interests of the youth of the district.

The estimated cost of the Bremer High School was £80,653. The school has been in operation for two years, but the building is still not completed. I think workmen of the Department of Public Works had to come to the assistance of the original contractor to get him out of the mess he was in and to make the school habitable for the children to move in when they did. At the end of the first year there were 104 students enrolled, while at the commencement of this year there were 168 boys and 119 girls, a total of 287 students, attending the school. The school has for its principal Mr. W. Napier, B.A., B.Ed., and a very competent staff of 11 teachers, three part-time manual training instructors and two part-time physical education instructors.

The school ground is of a fair size but it could be made very much better at no great cost if it was levelled with a grader. I hope this will be done before the department leaves the project. The principal is a very worthy gentleman, as enthusiastic in sporting activities as he is on the academic side. He has organised the recreational area into various playing fields and I think his idea is a very sensible one. Instead of concentrating on one oval to be shared by the different

codes of football, by athletics and other sports, he has carried out as far as practicable the idea of dividing the playing area into a Soccer and Rugby League ground, a cricket oval, a basket-ball area, an athletics area, and all the rest of it.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member is wandering on to matters that come under the Department of Education.

Mr. DONALD: No, Mr. Taylor. The Department of Education may control the policy but the Department of Public Works carries out the work and I am appealing for it to be authorised to do this work. There is scope for tremendously good work to be done not only for the children attending the school but also for the Department of Education. I urge the Department of Public Works to help make the school-ground an ideal one, as it can be made with the expenditure of very little money, by using a grader to level the ground so as to make first-class playing fields. Seven or eight years ago ground was bought at Brassall for the erection of a new secondary school. It was bought at the same time as the ground at Silkstone where the Bremer High School now stands, and I trust that in the near future a second high school will be built at Brassall to meet the growing demand for secondary education in the Ipswich district.

The installation of air conditioning in the State Government Insurance Office at Ipswich is estimated to cost £5,000. This office is now housed in premises that are in keeping with the prestige of the organisation, and this is greatly appreciated by the staff and the general public. Without doubt, it is a big improvement on the premises occupied by the office for so many years on the opposite side of the street.

The department is building offices to accommodate the Drilling Branch of the Department of Mines at Redbank at a cost of £4,920. Incidentally, this branch of the Department of Mines is doing excellent work in the West Moreton district.

Much adverse criticism has been levelled at the Valuer-General's Department, and I think much of it is unfair. The officers of that department are doing a very good job under extremely difficult conditions. Unlike valuers outside the Public Service, the valuers employed by the department have nothing to gain personally in making their valuations, and I think they value the properties very conscientiously and fairly. They may make mistakes at times, but which one of us has never made a mistake. None can say that they have valued a property at too high or too low a figure because they will get some gain out of it?

Mr. Dufficy: The hon. member for Balonne agrees with that.

Mr. DONALD: I am pleased I get support in some directions.

In speaking on this section of the Estimates, I wish to pay tribute to Mr. Richardson, who

was Valuer-General for a number of years. During that time, I think he won the respect of all those with whom he had dealings. I also commend the department for the good work it is doing in training cadets.

The Director of Local Government, Mr. Sewell, is recognised throughout the State as a highly efficient officer. I have always found him to be very courteous, approachable, and helpful. However, it seems odd to me that the Director of Local Government, a high-ranking officer of a department under the control of the Minister for Public Works and Local Government, should be attached to and on the payroll of a department under the control of the Treasurer. I realise that there may be a very good reason for it, and perhaps the Minister could tell us why.

I wanted to say something about the Parliamentary building, but time will not permit me to say very much. I agree with the hon member for Merthyr. that the library accommodation is very limited and needs enlarging. Something should be done in the very near future to remove the disability under which it works at present.

While there may be some criticism of the Parliamentary building, its appearance and the workmanship both inside and outside, are a distinct tribute to the people who built it.

(Time expired.)

Mr. BEARDMORE (Balonne) (12.44 p.m.): I wish to extend my congratulations to the Minister on his presentation of the Estimates for his department and the very fine works programme he has been able to carry out during his short term of office. I had some doubt in my mind, and I think other hon. members may have had doubts in their minds, also, about the Minister's ability to stand up to the strain of his Ministerial office, because only two years ago he underwent a very serious operation that could well have affected his future.

Mr. Aikens: It has made him look better than ever.

Mr. BEARDMORE: Perhaps it has. However, he has demonstrated great stamina and shown a lot of good judgment. It is very gratifying to know that he has not only made a remarkable recovery but also has vigorously carried out a heavy works programme with efficiency and great credit to himself. It would have done considerable credit to a Minister with greater ministerial experience. The fact that he followed a very efficient Minister in the person of Mr. Jim Heading did not make his job any easier.

A very important works programme has been carried out in the Balonne electorate in the last three years. It is a remarkable programme in view of the fact that there was such a lag, which was the legacy of the previous Government. But the lag was overtaken and I am very grateful for the work that has been done.

The Department of Public Works and the Department of Education more or less work together. Education is so important to youth today that the two departments go hand in hand. The Department of Education may plan the educational programme but it remains for the Department of Public Works to provide the school buildings and necessary amenities. I congratulate the Department of Public Works on what it has done in this field. The figures leave no doubt about the beneficial programme that has been completed by the Government in the Balonne electorate in the short period of a little over three years. The high school building now under construction at St. George will be available for occupation in the next school year.

If the Committee will bear with me I should like to read a list of the public works that have been completed in my electorate in the past three years.

Mr. Aikens: Have you got a newspaper in St. George?

Mr. BEARDMORE: Yes, we have.

Mr. Aikens: You'll be right.

Mr. BEARDMORE: Here is the list—

	£
Bollon State School	3,921
Bollon Police Station	1,096
Bungunya State School	317
Cabawin State School	445
Daymar State School	289

Dirranbandi State School (replacement of school buildings destroyed by fire, teachers' room, asphalt, painting, etc.)	3,899
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I think it cost more than that.

Dirranbandi Police Station	570
Dirranbandi Court House	361
Glenmorgan State School	551
Glenmorgan Police Station	515
Hannaford State School	2,794
Hebel State School (Repairs, external and internal painting)	696
Hebel Police Station	2,292
Meandarra State School	1,780
Mungindi State School	527
Mungindi Court House	141
Mungindi Police Station	632
St. George State School	26,636
St. George Court House (internal and external painting)	2,208
St. George Police Station	1,839
Surat State School	7,655
Surat Court House	320
Surat Police Station	1,900
Talwood State School	472
Talwood Court House	47
Talwood Police Station	870
Tara State School (general repairs, etc.)	3,581
Tara Police Station	769
Thallon Police Station	1,408
The Gums State School	1,065

That makes a grand total of £69,596.

Mr. Dufficy: Over what period?

Mr. BEARDMORE: Over the term of office of this Government. Other works that will be undertaken during the current year include—

Place	Building	Work
Tara ..	State School	High school accommodation, one classroom, one staff room, Primary
Meandarra	State School	One classroom, health service, staff and store rooms
Surat ..	State School	One classroom, staff, health service and store rooms
Glenmorgan	State School	School residence
St. George ..	Court House	Improvements and connection to sewerage
	Police Station	Sewerage installation, additional cell and shower room
	Hospital	Secretary's Residence
	State School	Sewerage connection
Dirranbandi	State School	One classroom, office and health service room
	Police Station	Connection to sewerage
Thallon ..	State School	Septic, store and staff rooms.

That is quite a feather in the cap of the department and I thank them personally for the wonderful assistance given to the district and me as member.

Mr. Aikens: Was that Vote all on your personal representation?

Mr. BEARDMORE: That Vote was.

Mr. Aikens: You may as well get that in.

Mr. BEARDMORE: I am not so happy on matters pertaining to the Valuer-General's Department. There is much heart-burning and dissatisfaction in country areas over what appear to be anomalies in the overall results of shire valuations.

As hon. members may already know, Balonne shire, of which I have the honour to be deputy chairman, had a very distressing and unenviable experience in the valuation of land by the Valuer-General for rating purposes. It is obligatory that a local authority be valued every five or eight years, even though it may be done tentatively by a valuer employed by the local authority until the Valuer-General's Department can gradually cover every local authority in Queensland. Some shires have been valued several times by the Valuer-General, whilst quite a number still await a first valuation. Their worries have not yet started.

For the purpose of shire rating it should make no difference if values are kept on an equal basis from property to property because, in cases where values have been increased, say, 100 per cent., when the rate had been, say, 6d. in the £1, it would simply mean that the same amount of revenue would be available from a rate of 3d. in the £1. To my mind, where the Valuer-General's Department falls down—in the country areas anyway, and that is what interests me—is that usually perhaps three or four men from the department set out to value a shire, each concentrating on a different portion. All shires comprise

good and bad quality land, and it is easy to realise that a completely honest assessment may be made with totally different ideas of values, resulting in anomalies that would be avoided if one man took his time and valued the whole of the shire instead of having, as I say, three or more different points of view as at present.

Mr. Aikens: You may not get justice but at least you will get uniformity.

Mr. BEARDMORE: The present practice results in extraordinary discrepancies, however honest the individual ideas of values may be. Appeals against the Valuer-General's valuations can be lodged in, and heard by, the Land Court, but that takes time. In the meantime, what happens to the ratepayer who does not wish to go to the court and therefore does not appeal? Should the Valuer-General by arrangement or the Land Appeal Court decide to reduce the higher valuations the man who did not appeal is left holding the baby—and what a baby it can be!

As an instance of what I am pointing out, I mention that the first valuations by the Valuer-General in the Balonne shire took place in 1958 and were adopted by the council for rating purposes from 1 July of that year, with the result that for the two years to 30 June, 1960, because of a reduction in some valuations the council will have to find £45,000 from revenue in order to refund the amount it was forced to overcharge ratepayers—based on an overall reduction of 16.06 per cent.; and if the same position arises in 1960-1961 it could well be that the council's liability for refunds will reach £67,000, based on existing reduced valuations—I repeat, through no fault of the council.

If the Land Appeal Court should decide on a greater reduction than 16.06 per cent., the council could well find itself in serious financial trouble—again, through no fault of its own. I am speaking of one of the most financial local authorities and one of the most valuable primary-producing areas in the State. To emphasise my point, it should be necessary to mention only that the Balonne shire depastures one-tenth of Queensland's sheep numbers. In the ordinary course of events financial difficulties would not occur, but we could find ourselves in a very serious position owing to the fact that valuation adjustments have dragged on from year to year and are still not resolved.

A local authority has no option but to adopt the valuations of the Valuer-General's Department, and rates are collected on that basis.

Mr. Hilton: Did they reduce the rates there?

Mr. BEARDMORE: There has been some reductions, but a number of ratepayers did not appeal. Only those in the higher bracket appealed against valuations; the holders of property of low value with a low rating,

where not a great deal of money was involved, decided to wait and see what happened. Those people, who have had to accept the original valuation, are now in a very bad position.

Mr. Armstrong: Were the rates reduced proportionately with the increase in valuations?

Mr. BEARDMORE: Only the rates of those who appealed. The Valuer-General has a prerogative, and valuations may be reduced by the appeal court.

Mr. Armstrong: You mentioned a reduction of 16 per cent. Would the whole area get that?

Mr. BEARDMORE: No, only those who appealed.

A local authority has no option: it must adopt the valuations of the Valuer-General's Department. Rates are collected on that basis. But when a local authority finds itself financially embarrassed by the Valuer-General's valuations and subsequent successful appeals against them, should it not have some protection, particularly as the circumstances are not of its making? Where local authorities find themselves financially embarrassed by the Valuer-General's valuations and the embarrassment will be accentuated by subsequent successful appeals—some protection should be available to them in a situation that is not of their own making. I suggest that legislation should be considered to prevent the Valuer-General from forcing local authorities to adopt a new overall valuation before anomalies and appeals are adjusted, and they should be adjusted quickly and not be allowed to drag on for years to the disadvantage of the local authorities and the ratepayers generally.

I commend these valuation problems to the Minister in the hope that he will look further into this undoubtedly serious problem for local authorities, one that is causing them much trouble. I hope that he will consider the advisability of enacting suitable legislation to overcome the difficulty.

Mr. AIKENS (Townsville South) (2.17 p.m.): I should like first to congratulate the Minister for Public Works and Local Government on the presentation of his first Estimates. I wish to congratulate him also on the attitude he has adopted in that once a week he comes to Parliament House with his private secretary and sees personally all hon. members who are at Parliament House so that he may take up with them any problems affecting his department that concern their particular electorates. As a result of that action by the Minister, much good has been done.

Much has been said about installing air-conditioning in public buildings in the western and northern areas of the State. It is a particularly good idea. However, it is about time the Department of Public Works adopted the policy, wherever possible, of

installing septic systems in primary schools where the ground will lend itself to the absorption of the effluent. If I may digress a little, it is rather strange that there is one policy for secondary schools and another for primary schools. When a secondary school is erected in a non-sewered area, a septic system is installed more or less automatically. However, when a primary school is built in a non-sewered area there is no provision—except in extraordinary circumstances—for the installation of a septic system. In the outlying suburbs of Townsville we have some very big primary schools at Kurrajong, Aitkenvale, Oonoonba, Wulguru and Stuart. The Minister for Education and Migration mentioned this morning that another area in the Aitkenvale district had been obtained, or was in process of being obtained, for the erection of a primary school. Anyone who knows anything about developmental trends in Townsville must realise that another school must be erected very shortly between Kurrajong and Mt. Louise to provide for the tremendous increase in population that will take place in that area.

There is sewerage in only a very limited section of Townsville. I should say at a rough guess that there is a greater percentage of unsewered premises in Townsville than in any other provincial city in Queensland where a sewerage system is in operation, and it is not likely in my lifetime that big schools such as Kurrajong, Aitkenvale, Oonoonba, Wulguru and Stuart will be seweraged unless, of course, there is a radical change in the personnel of the council.

I suggest to the Minister that, just as the Queensland Housing Commission at Wulguru decided to install its own septic system for all the houses constructed at Wulguru—and there are nearly 200 of them—so also would it be a relatively simple matter for the Department of Public Works to install septic systems at the schools I have mentioned and, in fact, at all schools, particularly those in outlying suburbs of big provincial cities.

Mr. Low: Don't you think we are doing a better job than the previous Government did in that regard?

Mr. AIKENS: I have to answer that in the affirmative. I think the Government are doing a very fine job and I have no complaint about the schools in my area. As a matter of fact, I had very little complaint about the schools in my area when the previous Government were in power. It is just that I had to use a different method of approach to them.

Provision is being made for the establishment of a big new high school at Monkey Island in Townsville. At the present time Monkey Island is nothing more or less than a big mangrove swamp with a small area of land that is above the high-tide mark. That small area of land is used by the Estate Football Club for training purposes

and they have their clubhouse on it, too. That land will have to be reclaimed by the Department of Public Works before the new high school can be built, and I should like—as a favour or, perhaps, if the Minister thinks there is nothing of a favour about it—to have him tell the Committee just how it is proposed, and when it is proposed, to go on with the reclamation of Monkey Island, whether the job will be done by contract or by the Department of Public Works, whether it will be done with spoil from the harbour (which would be an excellent idea if the harbour board could be got moving on it), or whether it is to be done with spoil or soil from some other area in the vicinity of Townsville, or even, as the Railway Department did when it reclaimed the large area of land over on the south side where the workshops now stand, with mullock brought from Charters Towers. I know we are all anxious to hear just what are the tentative proposals for the reclamation of the Monkey Island site for the erection of a second high school in the Townsville city area.

Mr. Low: What area does it involve?

Mr. AIKENS: That is something we should like to know. I understand they have 20 acres in mind. I know that Monkey Island extends over more than 20 acres. I should like to know just where the site will be—whether it will be close to the Railway Estate side of Monkey Island or close to the Charters Towers Road side of Monkey Island. We should like to know something about it. As a matter of fact, I think some negotiations are still in progress between the Department of Education and the Townsville City Council. If those negotiations have been completed, the people of Townsville would like to know just what is going to be done on the matter.

We have heard quite a lot of talk about the success or otherwise of the Department of the Valuer-General. The hon. member for Balonne suggested that perhaps one man should be responsible for the valuation of the whole of one particular area. If that were done, we might not get justice but at least we would get uniformity. For instance, a man might be in the habit of over-valuing. We would then be in the position of having a man going to Shire A and over-valuing it while perhaps another would go to Shire B and under-value it, whereas if both men went to the one shire one of them would under-value a portion while the other would over-value a portion. Whichever way it goes, there will still be a little confusion and some anomalies. Later I will give the Minister a case. I will not mention the man's name in the Chamber, though there is no secrecy about it. He lives in Pimlico, and when one of the Valuer-General's officers went along to value the Pimlico area, he has since admitted, he stood on the corner of each street and looked down the street and valued all the allotments as they appeared to him from where he stood on the corner.

That might be all right if all the allotments in the block are uniform. But in this case, in Derby Street, Pimlico, two of the allotments at the bottom end of the street are in a gully. As a matter of fact, I doubt whether the houses should ever have been built there. They are Housing Commission homes, being purchased on time payment by their owners, and if the owners were to do the right thing, they would fill in the allotments almost up to house level. Because all the allotments in that street were valued on the basis of the good allotments at the other end of the street, these unfortunate owners down at the far end are paying top rates on allotments that are really the bed of a creek. Unfortunately, nothing much can be done about that. I know one man lodged an appeal against his valuation; I know that he has been in touch with the Valuer-General's Department. If valuers are to go round valuing various areas of the State, particularly city areas, they should be provided with a car. If they are not provided with a car, I will lend them my bike so that they can at least ride up and down the streets and see that the allotments at one end are not of the same high quality as the allotments at the other end. If they followed that procedure, I am sure many of the errors that occur now would not occur in future.

I have very often expressed the view in this Chamber that, except in the most extraordinary circumstances, the Department of Local Government should not interfere with the work of a local authority. But I do believe that those extraordinary circumstances have arisen in the Townsville City Council. I think things have gone on, and are going on in the Townsville City Council today that warrant the most searching inquiry by the Minister for Public Works and Local Government and officers of his department. I suppose you heard quite recently, Mr. Taylor, of the fiasco that has resulted from the decision of the Townsville City Council to install parking meters in the streets. The meters were installed on much the same lines as they are installed in certain streets in Brisbane, and after certain people—I emphasize the words "certain people"—had been fined £1 for having parked incorrectly or for having overstayed the parking limit, the Council decided to refund the fine of £1 to certain people only. They left it in the hands of the Town Clerk, who is not a legal man, to determine who should have the £1 refunded and who should have his claim for a refund rejected. I think once a council begins to pick and choose, to make flesh of one and fish of another, it is time an investigation was made.

I think the Department of Local Government should also investigate very fully the action of the Townsville City Council in bringing from Melbourne a barrister named Gifford to fight an injunction before the northern Supreme Court when there were plenty of local barristers available, and when the public of Townsville were never

told at the time, and have not been told since, why he was brought from Melbourne to Townsville, and have never been told how much he was paid in fees and expenses. I am not going to labour the point, because I have already dealt very fully and exhaustively with those matters, and I have already told the Chamber what Gifford was paid. He was paid, I understand, 1,000 guineas, and the people of Townsville are entitled to know why the Townsville City Council had to go not only outside the members of the Bar in Townsville but also right outside the State, past New South Wales, and to Melbourne to bring a barrister to Townsville in secret—and I emphasise the words “in secret”—to fight a case for them before the northern Supreme Court.

I think the Department of Local Government should also investigate the leasing of City Council buildings in Townsville. Anyone who has been to Townsville knows that the whole of the big block in Flinders Street from and including the Central Hotel down to the Commonwealth Bank, is owned by the Townsville City Council. It is all a market reserve, and the buildings thereon are leased to various tenants. The department should inquire why the City Council will give a lease to one tenant and refuse to give a lease to another. The Local Government Department should inquire why they write into the leases of some tenants what they call “a business protection clause,” and why some lessees are not allowed to sell the same type of goods as that sold by other lessees. As a matter of fact the whole subject of the leasing and renting of all these revenue-producing buildings in Townsville should be brought under immediate review by the Local Government Department. I am making no accusations; I am not making any charges but probably I shall do a great deal of it from the public platform. I do not want to take advantage of my privileged position in the Chamber to launch charges here. But the people of Townsville are very perturbed at the action of the Townsville City Council, and they believe that something should be done about it.

Another matter to which I shall refer may be the most serious of them all; on the other hand it may be the most innocent. However, on the face of it, to me it looks the most serious of all. The big building firm of Booker & Co. moved into Townsville some time ago when they bought some properties on the Strand. I understand that this company operates Australia-wide. They bought the old Keyatta property of 23 perches for £5,300 and the Somer property for £16,500. It is common knowledge in Townsville that they propose to erect big blocks of unit flats on this land, as well as other jobs. Not long ago Alderman G. Roberts, the Acting Mayor of Townsville, and the chairman of the Works and Buildings Committee—the committee that will have to decide whether or not the plans submitted by Booker & Co. for these

buildings, or any other buildings they propose to erect in Townsville, are in conformity with the by-laws, and should be passed or rejected—with a clerk from his own legal office formed a £20,000 front company for Booker & Co. I do not know whether that is legal—it probably is, because I am certain that Alderman Roberts would protect himself so that nothing he did was not strictly legal—but if a chairman of a works and building committee, which will have the right to accept or reject plans submitted by Booker & Co. for buildings they proposed to erect, is ethically right in forming a £20,000 front company with one of his clerks for that same Booker & Co., then I know very little about ethics. I know that they say that when these matters come up Alderman Roberts shoves his chair back a couple of inches from the council table and says, “I will not vote on this because I am financially interested.” But that is not good enough for the people of Townsville; it is not good enough for me. If an alderman in a responsible position such as that occupied by Alderman Roberts is asked by Booker & Co., or any other company, to become financially involved with them, he should either resign as an alderman or make a complete and public statement as to why he is doing this for a public company that will have extensive dealings with the council. I should like the Minister to have a look at that angle. I repeat that it may be that it is quite legal; it may be that it is in conformity with the sections of the Local Government Act dealing with that matter. But if I were the chairman of the Works and Buildings Committee, or even an alderman, and a man who was proposing to build quite a lot of buildings in Townsville and who would be submitting the plans to my committee, and later to the council, for approval, asked me would I form a £20,000 front company for him I would say, “No, sir, not for me. Go and get someone else to do it because when your proposals come before my committee or the council I do not want anyone to be in a position to say that I might be influenced even in the slightest degree in reaching my decision with regard to the approval or otherwise of your plans and your specifications.”

I think that the Department of Local Government should have a look at the work that is being done by the Townsville City Council on contract. It would appear now that we have many men and women working in the office of the Townsville City Council—I have no quarrel with them; they are efficient—but they are not working for the people of Townsville. They are there employed preparing plans and estimates for all the various southern contractors, in the main, who have moved into Townsville to do Council work that should be done by the city council itself. So we find ourselves in the position of ratepayers who are paying the salaries of many—and I repeat—good men and women who are working not for

the ratepayers of Townsville but for the contractors who have moved into the city like a swarm of locusts in order to do the work that the Townsville City Council should itself be doing.

I think anyone would agree that at least I have been quite impartial on this matter. I have not launched any personal charges; I have merely laid the facts, as they appear to me and to the citizens of Townsville, before the Minister for Public Works and Local Government.

Mr. Wallace interjected.

Mr. AIKENS: If the hon. member for Cairns wants me to become personal and lay any charges, he knows me well enough to realise that I would not seek the protection of this coward's castle or dingo's den to do it. He knows me well enough to know that I would do it from the platform of the Regent Theatre, or some other public platform in Townsville, and not seek any privilege as a member of Parliament.

Mr. Davies: After you have said it in "Hansard".

Mr. AIKENS: That is a stupid tarradiddle. I would be happy to see again a performance such as I saw when a former Premier sent six police shorthand-writers to one of my meetings in the Regent Theatre in an endeavour to prevent me from saying certain things. That sort of thing only makes me really "go to town," and if the hon. member can get the present Premier to show him those 17 pages of foolscap—I understand they are typed on asbestos—he will realise just what I can and will say from a public platform without any protection whatever.

There are things going on in the Townsville City Council that in my opinion should be subjected to the closest scrutiny and examination of the Minister for Public Works and his Department of Local Government. I repeat that only in extraordinary circumstances will I suggest that any departmental inquiry be held into the affairs of the Townsville City Council because, being a true democrat—not a half-baked democrat like some members of the Government and some members of the Opposition—I believe that as the Townsville City Council aldermen were elected by the people they should be responsible only to the people. But I repeat that one qualification: "only in the most extraordinary circumstances." I think those extraordinary circumstances have arisen and I hope the Minister will see his way clear to send one or more of his prominent officers to Townsville to conduct an investigation along the lines I have suggested and also into any other matters that he may pick up whilst he is there from the dissatisfied, perturbed and deeply concerned citizens.

Mr. TOOTH (Ashgrove) (2.38 p.m.): I wish to take this opportunity of joining in the general felicitations extended to the

Minister on his assumption of office as Minister for Public Works and Local Government and also to compliment him on the enthusiasm and vigour with which he has tackled this task. In particular, I congratulate him on the readiness that he has shown to listen to approaches and suggestions—and indeed, complaints—that may have been offered from time to time, and to co-operate in the solution of problems that have arisen.

I also join in tributes to the former Minister. Mr. Heading has indeed left a mark on the public life of Queensland in many fields and I would say not the least enduring will be his achievements in the three years that he occupied the position of Minister for Public Works and Local Government in this State.

I should like also, if I may, to place on record my own personal obligation to the officers of the department for their unflinching courtesy and co-operation on the numerous occasions on which I have had to approach them, and for their readiness to advise and help and to co-operate in the solution of any problem or difficulty that may be submitted to them.

The most conspicuous feature of this department's activities in the past year has been the heavy emphasis on school buildings and other educational establishments in Queensland. This indeed is probably the most conspicuous feature of this Government's administration, shown by the fact revealed in the annual report of the department, that of all the classrooms built in Queensland in the last decade, over 41 per cent. have been built in the last three years, the three years of administration of the County-Liberal Government; that is to say, in under 30 per cent. of the last decade over 40 per cent. of the classrooms have been erected. The success attendant upon the efforts of the department in this field not only bespeaks an efficient and streamlined organisation but also indicates the impetus and inspiration that have derived from the stimulating leadership of the Minister and his predecessor, the forward-looking policy of the Government and their determination to see that in this field of public administration priorities are given as they should be given.

It is right and proper to compliment the Minister and his department during the consideration of these Estimates, but the discussion of the Estimates also affords an opportunity to present to the Minister in open session in Parliament an account of the problems and needs of each particular district that deserve his attention and sympathetic consideration. On this occasion I propose to do what I have not done since I have been in Parliament, that is, to take a good, firm grip of the parish pump.

In the electorate of Ashgrove there are one or two urgent needs and a large number that are of lesser urgency and importance.

Mr. Aikens: Have you a local paper circulating in Ashgrove?

Mr. TOOTH: There is a small local paper, but that, of course, does not come under the jurisdiction of the Minister and therefore I would be out of order in discussing it.

I wish to say that in important matters affecting my electorate I have hitherto received very kind attention from the Minister, but there are a number of urgent matters to which I wish on this occasion specifically to direct his attention.

The new high school at The Gap, which serves the greater part of the southern end of the Ashgrove electorate, is only one year old. The erection of the building under extremely difficult conditions in the last few weeks of 1959 and the first part of 1960—rain, problems of labour and so on over the holiday period—was indeed an achievement. It was an example of the efficient work that is to be expected from the department, but since the school was opened at the beginning of the year with an enrolment of 160 to 170 students it has become obvious that at the beginning of the next school year the enrolment will more than double. It will increase in 1961 to approximately 400 and, as far as the average onlooker can see, the provision of accommodation for this influx is as yet, only in its initial stages. Judging by what occurred when the school was built and opened, I think we should have no anxiety regarding this matter; nevertheless the people of the electorate who are interested in the welfare of the school and propose to send their children to it would be happy to know that the prospective needs of The Gap State High School are fully realised by the department, and that the progress in providing extra accommodation for next year is constantly under review.

The type of building at The Gap State High School conforms with the newer concept of an open elevated single-storey school with a covered space underneath, as contrasted with the older and more conventional two-storey or three-storey brick and mortar structure. The older, more conventional buildings are more or less universal in Ashgrove and the surrounding areas. The newer type has many advantages in the way of lighting, ventilation, and more sheltered space underneath the building in proportion to the classroom area. In particular—and this is a feature that interests teachers—the newer type has a very great advantage over the older buildings in the ease with which large groups of children may be moved about. In the old buildings, with two, or at the most, three staircases, the movement of groups of children, 30 to 40, and sometimes more, up and down the staircases is a slow, time-wasting process. In the new type of building, with more stairways and greater facility for moving along the balconies, time is saved; and time in the school is the most precious commodity of all. However, there is one disadvantage in the new type of building, and it is a fairly grave one from the point of view of administration and control. It concerns the arrangement of new blocks, which creates unusual and difficult problems of

government and supervision for the principal and the staff. The drain on the principal's time—and indeed on his physical energy—in moving round the building must be considerable. When classes have to be moved from one side of the playground to the other to get from the academic wing to the manual-training section, as they have to be at The Gap, there is a further waste of that most valuable commodity in a school—time.

It seems to me that some very definite consideration should be given to a scheme for grouping the classroom blocks more effectively round a central administration block. If this was done a great benefit would accrue to the school, and the working conditions would be infinitely easier. I know there are problems in this matter, problems of correct lighting and orientation for prevailing winds, and all the fairly complicated problems that the layman rarely considers. It is possible that these difficulties have been studied and proved insoluble. Speaking as a layman, in architectural matters, but as a teacher of some experience, I feel it is a matter that should be continually kept before the designers of schools and, if possible, some solution effected.

I understand an idea is germinating in the minds of the officers of the department at present to initiate regular conferences with selected groups of teachers to discuss this type of problem; to discuss school buildings and their best use, and the best type of structure for those who have to use them. If this is true, I strongly urge the Minister to pursue the idea. If it is found possible to implement it—I know there are difficulties; indeed, there are difficulties in any new approach to old problems—I believe it is an extremely bright idea and that something good will come out of it. However, I make the very important proviso that the Minister ensures that the teachers represent a cross-section and includes class teachers of both sexes as well as head teachers and administrators. With all respect to administrative teachers, they, in common with all other administrators, tend to overlook or forget, as they climb the ladder, the difficulties and problems that they encountered, problems their subordinates are still encountering at ground level.

Reverting to discussion of the new type of building as exemplified in The Gap High School, there is another problem arising that might at first sight seem trivial to hon. members but it is by no means so. It concerns the vastly increased expanses of glass in these structures and the relative inaccessibility of most of it. This has created a cleaning problem that is beyond the capacity of the locally-employed cleaners to handle. The time will come when consideration will have to be given to the employment of a special window-cleaning gang to cover all schools of this type and to do the job at least once a year. Over and over again I have seen this type of situation arise in schools. Windows gradually become dusty, begrimed and ultimately quite opaque. The

effect on children is very bad indeed, and I trust that some attention will be given to the problem.

There are also problems with the primary schools serving the Ashgrove electorate—and I refer particularly to the Ashgrove school and the Oakleigh school—concerning accommodation of a special nature, namely, staff rooms, medical rooms, sick bays and storage rooms. In each case there is a relatively simple and inexpensive solution. The original plan of each of these two buildings provided for large hat-and-bag porches, but, since the inauguration of the new policy of building hat-and-cap racks that can be placed on the balconies next to the entrance to classrooms—and I commend the Department of Education and the Department of Public Works and the Minister on the policy—these porches have become redundant, and they are ideal for conversion into rooms for the special purposes I have mentioned. I therefore ask the Minister to draw the attention of his officers to those needs at Ashgrove and at Oakleigh.

At Ashgrove an additional staff room is needed because the school is a practising one. At the present time the men on the staff have surrendered their room to the use of the female trainees. A medical room is needed there, too, and both these rooms can be provided with a minimum of expense by closing in the now redundant porches.

At Oakleigh there are four such porches. The school urgently requires a medical room, a sick bay and two storage rooms. I trust that the Minister will be so good as to give the matter some attention.

There is also a very serious difficulty at Ashgrove in the shape of an uncompleted stairway on the northern end of the school. It is a flight of stairs that has been in an uncompleted state for some considerable time. At present there are 18 classes, over 700 children, using only two stairways to enter and leave the building. This, of course, results in a very serious time wastage, and a third stairway is urgently needed. It is there in an incomplete state. Worse still, it is barricaded with a few pipes and is a standing and constant temptation to the ever-adventurous young boy, to say nothing of the occasional adventurous young tomboy, to experiment and to take risks with it. It therefore constitutes a real physical danger.

The second problem at Ashgrove concerns the need for really good library accommodation. As all hon. members realise, the library should be the very heart and core of a school. A school without a library is like a powerhouse without a generator. At the Ashgrove State School the present accommodation is so unsatisfactory, and the tenure of the accommodation they have is so uncertain, that the committee is unwilling to incur the heavy expense that is necessary to create a library worthy of the school. I propose to make a detailed submission on this matter both to the Department of

Education and to the Minister for Public Works and I am sure that it will receive the attention it deserves.

At Oakleigh an even more serious problem arises. The school has a very large playing area and is isolated from surrounding residential areas by a wide expanse of playground on all sides, by streets and by clumps of trees. As a result, at week-ends it is regularly the object of attention by groups of vandals. It has been broken into continually. Indeed, only a fortnight ago the headmaster's office was entered and money was stolen. It appears to be quite impossible for the police to identify these people and deal with them. On other occasions rooms have been entered and fouled and left in a disgusting condition, to be found by the cleaner on Monday morning. Spent matches have been found scattered round the rooms. That may give a clue to recent events in other areas.

Some remedy must be found for these problems. The matter has been under consideration by the headteacher and the committee, and it has been the subject of frequent correspondence with the department. I wish on this occasion to support very strongly their suggestion for the enclosure of the open bays along the balconies, through which entry is probably gained, and also the installation of moveable gratings and barricades along the sections of the buildings at ground level.

I believe that ultimately, with the bigger schools, it will be necessary to face the need for permanent caretakers or janitors, and possibly the erection in or near the schools of small flats so that these people may reside there permanently. However, for the present I seek favourable consideration for the suggestion made by the headmaster and committee at Oakleigh.

Mr. Ramsden: What about part-time gardeners?

Mr. TOOTH: The hon. member for Merthyr suggests that part-time gardeners could be employed. That is an excellent suggestion. Perhaps the two positions could be combined. It is a matter for future consideration. With these big city schools and the big schools in provincial areas, we must take some action other than this present method of locking them up over the week-end and trusting to luck.

Another method of overcoming the problem of isolation and providing proper supervision at schools such as Oakleigh would be by building a school residence there. At Oakleigh there is an ideal elevated site at the north-western end of the playground that would be excellent for a school residence and would enable the headmaster to be relatively close to the school at all times. I know that the present headmaster would welcome the opportunity of being on the premises because he is leading a very enthusiastic group of people out there who have every hope and every intention of making the Oakleigh school grounds one of the show

places of Brisbane. They have just completed a magnificent project, a swimming pool with a complete chlorinating plant. It is one of only three in the whole of Queensland, and the expenditure on that project alone was considerably in excess of £10,000.

I compliment the Minister on a recent reform in the procedure for dealing with minor repairs and defects in school buildings. For many years head teachers and their staffs have been irritated and frustrated by the fact that when the lock on a door or a pane of glass in a window was broken, they had to go through a series of time-wasting formalities before they could get the matter attended to.

Mr. Low: They almost had to get Executive Council approval.

Mr. TOOTH: Yes. It has been one of the most annoying things in the administration of a school. But the department have now made an arrangement whereby the lengthy procedure and red tape involved in securing authority to get a lock fixed up or a window-pane replaced has been short-circuited. The headmaster is now authorised to get in touch directly with the District Supervisor of Works on any urgent matter, and between them they attend to it and the department is advised in due course.

Mr. Graham: There is nothing new in that.

Mr. TOOTH: If it is nothing new it is surprising that so much difficulty has been experienced by teachers in the past. I can speak from sad experience. The most trivial things had to be the subject of lengthy correspondence before they could be attended to.

As the time available to hon. members generally is limited, and I understand a fair number still wish to speak, I shall not trespass on the patience of the Chamber any longer, other than to say once again that I believe the Minister will have the help, co-operation and goodwill of all hon. members in the task he has undertaken.

Mr. ADAIR (Cook) (3.1 p.m.): First of all I congratulate the Minister on his elevation to Cabinet rank. I compliment the previous Minister, Mr. Heading, for his good work throughout my electorate. I hope that the present Minister will carry out his duties in the same way, particularly in the areas represented by me and other hon. members from the far North-West. I am not concerned about what happens in Brisbane. As long as we get good treatment in the remote parts of the State I shall be happy.

Like other hon. members I wish to work the parish pump, and I shall devote part of my time to bringing before the Minister's notice the condition of the Mareeba Court House. Mareeba is one of the most prosperous towns in Queensland at the present time, but the Court House is a disgrace to the district. I ask the Minister to have

a look at this old building. An inspection from the outside will indicate that it is unsuitable for the town. Not only is it dilapidated but the magistrate, the clerk of petty sessions and the office staff are all cramped into a small area. The office accommodation is unsuited for the carrying out of efficient work. Only one or two members of the public can be attended to at a time at the front counter. People have to queue up on the veranda, waiting their turn to go inside. I ask the Minister either to sell the building for removal or pull it down and build a new one.

On several previous occasions I have referred to the building of teachers' residences with open verandas in the heavy rainfall areas of the State. In the North verandas on the weather side of houses must be enclosed either with louvres or casements. I refer particularly to the teacher's residence at Redlynch.

Mr. Pizzey: We are not building them with open verandas. You are referring to the old ones.

Mr. ADAIR: The old ones, yes. I understand that at some residences the verandas have been enclosed with casements or louvres.

Mr. Pizzey: You are referring to the old type.

Mr. ADAIR: It would not cost the department much to enclose the veranda of the residence at Redlynch. The schoolteacher there had to buy blinds at his own expense for protection from the weather, especially in the heavy wet seasons that prevail up there. In addition to that, in wet seasons the water lies on the veranda floorboards and rots them. Louvres or casements would protect the building. I should like the Minister to look into that matter and have it rectified as soon as possible.

I remember the Minister, a few years ago, bringing a photograph into the Chamber showing the condition of a school in his electorate. I could show him one that is probably worse—that at Bloomfield. Probably no other hon. member has seen it. It is very dilapidated. I know plans are out for a new building. Land has been obtained and a building will be constructed there.

Mr. Pizzey: That was only a provisional school.

Mr. ADAIR: It was a provisional school, but 54 children were attending it and they have been doing so under those conditions for at least the past three or four years. I should like the Minister to hurry the job and have a new school constructed there, together with a teacher's residence.

There is also a matter at Mareeba State School that I have brought before the Minister's notice. There is no playing ground whatever—or, at least, very little—for the 700 pupils attending that school. The buildings

have been extended onto the playing area, which has virtually disappeared. The Council has offered a strip of land that would be suitable as a playing field for the children, but it will entail considerable expense in bulldozing and levelling, and drainage for a septic system. I ask the Minister to try to expedite the transfer of this land from the council to the Department of Education and to have it levelled in time for the next school year.

Mr. Pizzey: Some relief has been given by the establishment of the high school. That has taken away all the bigger children.

Mr. ADAIR: Even so, there are 700 children attending the school at present.

The Department of Education should obtain and prepare this playing area. I do not think there should be any obligation at all on the school committee or the people of Mareeba to bear any of the cost of levelling or re-forming it. The entire cost should be borne by the department and it should be done as soon as possible.

Another school of which the Minister knows something is that at Port Douglas. The Minister for Education came with me to Port Douglas and saw the urgent need for a new school there. The present school was built many years ago. It would be one of the oldest schools in Queensland. The children there have no playground at all. The Minister pointed out a piece of land that would be suitable for a school and he took the matter up with the officers of various departments with a view to taking it over as school land. But again, nothing more has been done. I realise, of course, that it takes some time to effect a transfer of land.

Mr. Pizzey: You have a very good school at Mossman.

Mr. ADAIR: That is a good job, and I give the Government credit for it, but I represent the whole electorate and I am battling to get these other schools and improvements. I ask the Minister to have the land levelled and a building erected on it as soon as possible.

I stress the need for a new police station in Cairns. The existing structure is old and dilapidated and quite out of keeping with the other buildings of the city. I ask the Minister to inspect it and see if it is not possible to erect a modern building there.

Mr. GRAHAM (Mackay) (3.12 p.m.): It was pleasing to hear the glowing references to officials of the department by all hon. members who have taken part in the debate. We can say with all sincerity that the officers of the department from the Under Secretary to the lowest-paid worker are giving great service to the Government. The Department is doing very useful and necessary work in the erection and replacement of public buildings, and in planning the public buildings of the future.

It was pointed out that during the last 12 months the departmental programme was

expanded to meet the demand for additional school accommodation. It is somewhat surprising to hear Government members claiming credit for what has been done by the Nicklin-Morris Government. I do not detract in any way from what has been done by the department in the building of high schools, public buildings, hospitals and so on, but it has to be remembered that much of the work carried out by the present Government was planned by the Labour government. For instance, the Mackay High School had been planned for some years.

Mr. Low: They were in cold storage.

Mr. GRAHAM: They were not in cold storage.

Mr. Pizzey: You did not have a site for the Mackay High School, so how can you make that statement?

Mr. GRAHAM: I think the previous Minister had something to do with the erection of a new high school in Mackay. It had been under investigation long before the present minister took over his portfolio.

Mr. Duggan: The hon. member for Toowoomba East recently claimed credit in "The Toowoomba Chronicle" for land purchased for schools in South and Ramsay Streets, Bridge and Gladstone Streets and at Harristown, which I secured for the Government ten years ago.

Mr. Pizzey: I am talking about Mackay.

Mr. GRAHAM: It was discussed long before the hon. gentleman became Minister for Education.

Mr. Pizzey: Discussed.

Mr. GRAHAM: It was being investigated.

Mr. Pizzey: Where were the plans?

Mr. GRAHAM: It cannot be said that Labour governments made no provision for increased school enrolments.

Mr. Pizzey: They had not in Mackay.

Mr. GRAHAM: While I am prepared to give the Government some credit, I cannot give them all the credit for what has been done, because Labour Governments were just as mindful of their responsibility in the construction of schools as the present Government.

Mr. Tooth: There was no land in Ashgrove.

Mr. GRAHAM: I can take the hon. member to Mackay and show him that there is no land at Mackay unless the Government resume it. They had to do that for the high school.

I am prepared to give the present Government certain credit for what they have done there, but they are doing only what is expected of them. It is necessary for them to make provision for additional high schools and primary schools, and for additions to

existing schools to meet the increased attendances. We have seen the erection of a high school, and I am very pleased to see it there because it is essential for the education of the children. Throughout Queensland we see schools being built that require increased expenditure.

The Minister has said that the expenditure last year was 18 per cent. above that for 1958-1959. In all probability there will be a further increase next year because the growing population must create an increased demand.

A very pleasant aspect of school construction today is the modern type of building being erected. Greater consideration is now being given to the architectural side of school construction to provide better lighting facilities and improved ventilation. The time not far distant when the Government will have to give very serious thought to air-conditioning all school buildings, more especially in the northern part of the State where very trying climatic conditions are experienced in the summer months.

While I am speaking of the air-conditioning of school buildings, I might also mention the air-conditioning of public buildings. In many public buildings in the North, the staff are working under difficult conditions because of poor ventilation and faulty lighting. Air-conditioning in public buildings is becoming essential. It would be well for the Government to consider seriously the provision of air-conditioning in any new buildings, such as hospitals—not only schools—so that conditions can be made better for the people working in them. In almost every country in the civilised world today, air-conditioning is becoming a very important feature of building construction.

Another feature in building construction today is the thought given to painting. The department now paints both the interior and the exterior of buildings in more attractive colours than previously. As has been said, we must all agree that little or no thought was given to painting in days gone by. There were standardised colours for the outside, and standardised colours for the inside. Wherever we went we knew from the outside painting that a building was a Government building, but today a much better approach has been adopted and the buildings are now much more attractive and pleasant for those working in them.

Perhaps the Minister will explain something that concerns me. I am at a loss to understand why, upon his appointment as Minister for Public Works and Local Government, he issued a circular to all employees of the Department of Public Works. If he had been interested enough he would have known that under past Ministers, including the Hon. James Heading, all employees of the department have been recognised as very good workers, and that they have given all Governments very good service. As I have said, I am entirely at a loss to know why the Minister issued this circular on 1 July to all employees of the

department. He said nothing in it that the average employee of the department did not already know. He made some statements that call for comment, and the "Building Workers' Journal" for July of this year took strong exception to what he said. I believe the Minister had no need to demand a greater effort of the employees of the Department of Public Works; there was no occasion for it. I could understand it if there had been a reason.

Mr. Low: I do. They wanted a good gingering up.

Mr. GRAHAM: That is only your opinion. The time was when men of your calibre and past Governments of your political persuasion used stockwhips to get the extra pound of flesh out of their workers, and if you had your chance you would do the same.

Mr. Low: A fair day's work for a fair day's pay!

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member must remember he is to address the Chair and not a private member.

Mr. GRAHAM: The hon. member who interjected belongs to a party that possibly would go to extreme lengths again to get their pound of flesh out of employees. Let me quote from what the "Building Worker's Journal" had to say in its July issue—

"Building workers on the day labour staff of the Public Works Department have a record second to none for the economic production of work and do not need a threat from the Minister of possible dismissals to encourage them to make a success of day labour."

The Minister did say that only a certain amount of money was available, and that, unless these jobs were done within the estimate, dismissals would perhaps follow.

I have another complaint to make about the activities of the Government, and it has some bearing on the subject. In the Department of Public Works, certain employees are used on certain work at a certain rate of pay as long as the cost of the job, or the price of the job, is the same, but if the cost of the job is lower, they are paid at a lower rate. That indicates that the present Government are prepared to exploit their workers, to get the best out of them where possible, and to reduce their wages when it suits them. I refer to the appointment of foremen employed on Public Works jobs. In a letter to the hon. member for Belmont the Minister denied that the grading of foremen takes place but I know for a fact that in the department the foreman on one job was paid a certain rate and he did exactly the same work on another job but, because it was at a lower price, he was paid at another rate. If a man is capable of undertaking the responsibility of a foreman in the Department of Public Works, he should not be penalised when the work he is asked to do

on another job is not at the same cost. If a man's value to the department is determined purely on the cost value of the job, the best men will not be retained. There are some very good men in the Department of Public Works. I refer particularly to the work of the supervisor in Mackay, Mr. Boetcher, who has done very good work with his staff on the high school and on other works in Mackay. I assure the Minister that if he wants to retain in the department the men he already has and if he wants to make them happy and contented he should see that they have proper conditions and that they are properly paid. Those who accept the responsibility of controlling men should not be made to suffer a reduction in wages simply because they are put on to work of lesser value. I understand there is no provision for it in the award covering departmental employees. Where a man has been, and is, receiving a certain rate of wage for work he is doing, he should continue to receive that rate when he is taken to another job to do exactly the same class of work. There is no difference in the job. He is still in control of men.

Mr. Pizzey: Same responsibilities?

Mr. GRAHAM: Yes, and he gets a lower wage when the price structure is lower. It is a matter that is causing some concern not only to the men in Mackay but also throughout the rest of the State. The matter has been referred to the Minister from the Brisbane office; but as it applies throughout the State, I thought I should mention it.

I have little complaint about the work done by the Department of Public Works. However, there is one job in Mackay that is really urgent, a job that has been passed over not only by this Government but by former Labour Governments of which I was a member. I refer to the construction of a new cell block for the Police Department. The present one is in a bad position and in a bad state of repair, and I think the Minister will agree that something should be done about it immediately. A building adjacent to it, which is occupied by the watchhouse-keeper, has been listed for removal for many years. It know it provides accommodation for a member of the Police Force, but I can see no reason why it should not be removed. It is right on the footpath alignment and affords little or no privacy to its occupants. I think a new building could be provided for the watchhouse keeper in conjunction with the construction of a new cell block.

In my opinion, consideration should be given, also, to the erection of more public buildings in Mackay. Some of the present buildings are overcrowded. For example, I think there are 10 or 15 departments in the Court House alone, and more staff is being employed there because of the increase in work. If new Government offices can be erected in Rockhampton and Townsville, more should also be built in Mackay.

Mr. LOW (Cooroora) (3.29 p.m.). I wish to place on record my thanks to the Minister for a job well done. Since he has assumed office, he has certainly discharged his responsibilities very ably, and on behalf of those hon. members who, because of the limited time, have not had an opportunity of speaking in this debate, I assure the Minister that we all appreciate to the full the great efforts he has made in his administration of the Department of Public Works, the Department of Local Government, and the Department of the Valuer-General. I am sure that everyone appreciates the time and energy he devotes to the representations made to him from time to time by hon. members and his work in the interests of the people of Queensland generally.

The Minister can also feel very proud that during his term of office and that of the former Minister, this Government have endeavoured to lift the standard of accommodation in Queensland for public servants and those who are associated with Government activities generally. As a Government, we are regarded as the best employer Queensland public servants have ever had, and I say that without any apology or reservation.

Mr. Aikens: You fell through the floor of a police station on one occasion.

Mr. LOW: That is quite true, and I am lucky I am here. That was in the early stages of my Parliamentary career. Naturally, that police station building was attended to.

Many public servants have stated openly that they are now very pleased with the class of accommodation that the Government are making available to them. Previously they worked in dark and drab rooms that could only be regarded as dungeons or kennels. They had no fresh air. There has been a new approach to the subject of ventilation. In many instances public servants had to sit on boxes to do their work. Even the drivers of ministerial cars were compelled to sit on the steps of Parliament House like so many crows. Now they have comfortable seats to sit on, and they are treated like human beings.

Mr. Davies interjected.

Mr. LOW: These things are very close to home. The hon. member for Maryborough knows that what I say is true. On many occasions he has seen the drivers sitting on the steps of Parliament House like a lot of crows.

As the Minister wants to reply I shall refer only briefly to a book issued this year titled "Achievements—The First Term of the Country-Liberal Party Government". It is remarkable what we, as the Government, have achieved in the past three years. I read the book with great interest but I could hardly believe that everything referred to in

it was carried out in such a short period. It is a book of which we can be justly proud. In case any hon. member has not had an opportunity to read it I should like to table it because it contains details of everything that the Government have done and what they propose to do in the future. After reading the book I say that it is understandable that the Opposition have not been able to put up a case against the administration of the Country-Liberal Party Government.

The Minister has dealt with the ramifications of the department and sub-departments under his control. Early in the New Year he proposes to take a trip throughout Queensland—a fact-finding mission up the coast to Townsville, out to Mt. Isa, back to Longreach and Winton, through to Rockhampton, and home again. In the course of that trip he will take local government to the people of those areas and they certainly will appreciate his fine gesture and they will realise too that he does not spare himself.

I am very pleased to see in the Under Secretary's report—

Mr. Davies interjected.

Mr. LOW: I was trying to think of a suitable name to call the hon. member but I realised my Parliamentary responsibility—

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. LOW: I have not been insulting to public servants at all. I paid a very high tribute to Mr. Longland, who is the Under Secretary for Public Works, the Director of Local Government, and the Valuer-General and their staffs. I referred to their splendid co-operation with the Government ever since we took office.

I was very pleased to see that the Under Secretary's report contained a photograph of the new maternity hospital at Nambour. I had asked for it a long time. I am pleased to see at last a picture of that building in the report. Realising that the Minister wishes to reply to the very feeble attacks by the Opposition on him and his department, I will conclude by once again thanking him for his wonderful work and wishing him well in his office.

Hon. L. H. S. ROBERTS (Whitsunday—Minister for Public Works and Local Government) (3.35 p.m.): First of all, I should like to take the opportunity of thanking hon. members on both sides of the Chamber for the congratulations they bestowed upon me and the compliments they paid me and the various officers of my department. Already I have paid tribute here to the great work that has been done by the various officers of my department, and I specifically said "right down to the last labourer on the job."

On the introduction of these Estimates I spoke at considerable length and I have since consistently refrained from interjecting, although there were really very few matters in the debate that called for an answer. I

think all hon. members on both sides of the Committee will agree that at no time during my lengthy introductory remarks did I endeavour to play party politics. I deliberately refrained from doing so and endeavoured to keep the proceedings on a reasonably high plane. In the main, I would say that most other hon. members have done likewise.

Mr. Davies: Except the last one.

Mr. ROBERTS: Of course, there are one or two exceptions to the rule. Whilst the hon. member for Mackay was very moderate on this occasion he could not avoid saying one or two things that were not factual, so I shall first refer to the Mackay High School.

The Mackay High School was a brain-child of previous Governments for very many years, just as the Rockhampton railway station has been for 30 or 40 years. The hon. member for Mackay will no doubt remember that on the Queen's Birthday in June, 1958, the previous Minister of this department and his Under Secretary were in Mackay and made an inspection of the police station. I was with them, and so was the hon. member for Mackay. We inspected the police cells and had a look at land in South Milton Street with a view to resumption. Since the hon. member for Mackay spoke, I have ascertained that the resumption proceedings first commenced on 6 November, 1958; so that immediately blows up that toy balloon. I should add that we are now resuming land in North Mackay for the provision of a high school in that area.

It is well known that people in trouble have a practice of swinging round and speaking in a strain diametrically opposed to their original thoughts. The hon. member for Mackay has apparently adopted that practice. He spoke about the payment of foremen. Under Labour Governments rates of pay for foremen fluctuated according to the size of the job, but today they are permanently graded and retain that grade irrespective of the cost of the job. This policy was implemented by the Government in May, 1960.

I know the hon. member did not put forward his personal views. The views he expressed were put into his mouth by someone else. I should have been bitterly disappointed if my circular letter had not been referred to. I have here a copy of it and a copy of the Building Workers Journal to which the hon. member referred containing an article by one of the hon. member's Communistic coppers, Jack Hanson, the headline of which reads, "New Minister calls for Blood and Sweat." Anyone who read my circular letter would realise that he would not be entitled to use the phrase "blood and sweat" in dealing with it. I treated the article in the Building Workers' Journal with the contempt it deserved. The authors of the article had to find a stooge somewhere to bring the matter forward in the Chamber. No-one would fall for the statements in the article, even on a late Saturday afternoon.

I am not prepared to waste the time of hon. members by reading the circular letter, but may I say that I received not one, but hundreds of replies from responsible people to whom it was sent, and from parents of apprentices who also were appreciative of the letter. A number of people asked for an interview with me, and came to my office and discussed the matter with me. From those discussions and the correspondence I have received, I should say that my circular letter was accepted in the spirit in which it was written and was greatly appreciated.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition referred to the construction of the dam on the North Pine River and said he desired some information on the matter. The scheme envisages a major dam on the North Pine River. When first mooted it was a possible major augmentation of Brisbane's water supply. The matter now has a different complexion. The Pine Rivers Shire Council wants to take it over as a local water supply. Its desires are governed by certain extraordinary increases in the proposed consumption of water by Australian Paper Mills Ltd.

Australian Paper Mills Ltd. and the Redcliffe City Council are supplied by an existing scheme in the Pine Rivers shire, which was based on their requirements at that time. If those requirements had not been exceeded, the existing scheme would have served for many years.

Australian Paper Mills Ltd. now wants to increase its consumption from 1.64 million gallons a day, the existing demand, to 5.18 million gallons a day by 1966. By 1962 it wants a supply of 3.84 million gallons a day; thus the whole need to build this new dam urgently and to reserve the water for the Pine Rivers shire arises from the requirements of Australian Paper Mills Ltd. There is a minor increase in demand from the city of Redcliffe and local shire needs.

The preliminary estimated cost of the new dam, that is, the first stage, is £2.2 million. Filtration additions will cost a further £250,000.

The Pine Rivers Shire Council has requested that it be made the constructing authority for the dam. In considering this request, it was decided that the Under Treasurer and Director of Local Government should cause an immediate investigation to be undertaken as to the economic ability of the Pine Rivers Shire Council to undertake the scheme. The investigation has commenced and, among other things, information is being sought as to the specific terms on which A.P.M. Ltd. and the Redcliffe City Council will agree to purchase additional water produced by the scheme, and guarantee minimum annual payments in the event of their demands not reaching the estimated figure on which the scheme is designed. My department has undertaken the design and preparation of plans and specifications of the scheme, and this work is proceeding.

The hon. member for Burke spoke about the water supply in Cloncurry and its dire

needs at the moment. I should like to inform him that the council has advised my department that a preliminary report by its consulting engineers is being forwarded for examination. This report had not been received by my office yesterday.

We had a wild statement the other night from the hon. member for Townsville North. I have noted that he has not been averse to making some wild statements. He made a statement to the effect that Townsville has been getting a bad spin. Let me tell him through you, Mr. Taylor, what happened in the three years prior to this Government taking over, when a Government of his "kidney" were in power. The total expenditure on school buildings in the Townsville North electorate from 1 July, 1954 to 30 June, 1957 was £116,256. Since we have been the Government—that is in the three subsequent years—the figure jumped to £142,329. Expenditure on other buildings in the Townsville North electorate by the previous Government for the same period was £23,472. Since we have been the Government it has risen to £58,544.

In the Townsville South electorate the expenditure on school buildings in the earlier period to which I referred was £45,051, and in the latter period it was £86,491. The expenditure on other buildings in the Townsville South electorate in the first period was £50,754, whereas in the latter period it was £64,164. That gives a total for the Townsville area—Townsville North and Townsville South—of £235,533 for the period from 1 July, 1954, to 30 June, 1957, compared with £351,528 for the three years that we have been the Government. That is an increase of £115,995, or approximately 49 per cent.

Apart from additions and improvements to schools and other Government buildings, an amount of £237,404 has been allocated for expenditure on the following large projects in Townsville during the current financial year:—

	£
Hermit Park—New school building for infants	25,404
Wulguru—New State school	10,000
Pimlico High School	55,000
Townsville University Centre	100,000
Receiving depot—New building	5,000
Accommodation for Inspector of Motor Vehicles	2,000
Her Majesty's Prison	35,000
Ooononba Animal Health Station	5,000

The total estimated expenditure on these projects is £237,404.

I believe anybody would agree that either the hon. member does not know his facts or he deliberately endeavoured to mislead the people of the State. I prefer to suggest he does not know his facts because I do not think he would deliberately attempt to mislead the public.

The hon. member for South Brisbane and the hon. member for Kedron expressed great

concern over valuations. It shocks and surprises me to hear an hon. member with the qualifications of the hon. member for South Brisbane make such foolish statements as a child of 14 would not fall for half the time. The other night he made quite a mouthful of the increase in valuations in Brisbane from £63,000,000 to £73,000,000 since 1956. He called it an astronomical increase. Since 1957, approximately 20,000 new valuations in the city of Brisbane have been issued. This would account for an increase in the total valuation of the city. It has not been revalued since. New valuations are the result of considerable development in the city. The reason for some areas being valued two or three times is that the Act provides that they must be revalued every five years. In New South Wales they must be revalued every four years. However, though the Act has been in existence since 1916, some areas of New South Wales have not yet been valued. I have already told hon. members that very few areas remain to be valued in Queensland and that we hope to do most of them during this financial year. At the end of this financial year there will be a total of nine shires, with a total of about 8,000 valuations, still to be done.

Mr. Hanlon: Why has Mackay been singled out?

Mr. ROBERTS: It makes absolutely no difference whether an area has been valued once, three times, five times or 10 times. The only person concerned is the owner of the land in the shire. It has nothing to do with Mackay whether Mirani has been valued once, twice, or three times, and it has nothing to do with Proserpine.

Mr. Hanlon: What about land tax?

Mr. ROBERTS: That is a matter for the Land Tax Office. It has nothing to do with the hon. member. The hon. member for Baroona showed his complete ignorance in the matter but he is only a very young man and perhaps lacks the balance of some of his colleagues in the Assembly. He concocts a phrase that appeals at the time. He made some reference to the giving of valuation figures as from 1 June which he described as being politically dishonest but I have some figures here to show just how ridiculous he was. He should get some advice. The former hon. member for Hinchinbrook would be the man to whom I would recommend him to go for advice. I am not going to pick anybody else out at the moment.

The figures showing overtime worked are as follows:—

OVERTIME

Calendar Year	Overtime Commenced	Overtime Concluded	First Rolls Issued	Last Rolls Issued	Towns and Shires	Total Valuations	Total Overtime
1954	17-5-54	26-8-54	21-1-54	8-9-54	23	83,466	£ 1,291
1955	22-6-55	9-8-55	14-6-55	5-9-55	13	51,842	978
1956	9-7-56	4-9-56	28-5-56	19-10-56	15	27,713	922
1960	13-4-60	4-10-60	30-5-60	6-10-60	20	70,793	2,214

I ask hon. members to remember that 1956 was the election year, and that in 1960 the Balonne appeals were heard on 17 May, which caused a serious delay. Almost three times as many valuations were done in 1960 as were done in 1956, and another five towns and shires were valued.

I am sorry that I have insufficient time to go through them all and give the full picture, but I assure hon. members that it is there for everybody to see.

I am pleased and proud to say that I can tie a can to the tail of every question raised by the Opposition, because I have no fear and no doubt in saying that all sections of the department that come under my control, whether the Department of Public Works, the Department of Local Government, or the Department of Valuer-General, have all done a wonderful job in the past 12 months; during the five months that I have had control of them, they have done an excellent job, and I expect them to continue their good work.

At 4 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Under the provisions of the Sessional Order agreed to by

the House on 13 October, I shall now proceed to put the questions for the Vote under consideration and the balance remaining unvoted for the Department of Public Works and Local Government.

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

Department of Public Works and Local Government—

Chief Office	£233,243
Balance of Department, Consolidated Revenue and Loan Fund Account	£8,380,451

DEPARTMENTS OF PUBLIC LANDS AND IRRIGATION

CHIEF OFFICE

Hon. A. R. FLETCHER (Cunningham—Minister for Public Lands and Irrigation) (4.1 p.m.): I move—

“That £304,281 be granted for ‘Departments of Public Lands and Irrigation—Chief Office’.”

The vote represents a decrease of £9,556 on the appropriation for the year 1959-60, and an increase of £127 on the sum actually expended during that year. In previous years the salaries for members of the Land Administration Board were provided under separate schedules. It will be noted that in this Vote provision has been made to the extent of £9,270 for such salaries which are now charged against this Vote. At the same time the cost of the eradication of *Harrisia cactus* is now a charge against Loan Funds, and the sum of £50,000 which has been allocated for this work this year will not be a charge against the Chief Office Vote.

Taking into consideration the fact that members of the Land Administration Commission are now paid under the Chief Office Vote, the actual increase in staff is only one in number. By and large the amounts required for 1960-61 under the various headings are very similar to those appropriated for the previous year, except that the provision for the control of Giant Sensitive Plant has been more than doubled. Hon. members will understand why this is so. It is creating a very serious problem. The principal variations are directly associated with salary and wage increases, with resultant increased cost of operation.

I should like to take the opportunity to place before the notice of hon. members some aspects of the administration of the Department of Public Lands, more particularly as that department's Estimates have not been discussed for several years, and as Minister for Lands this is the first opportunity for me to discuss them.

The Annual Report of the Land Administration Commission sets out in great detail the activities of the department during the previous year. But I shall not bore the Committee by going over them amount by amount, or with a recital of the facts that are clearly set out. I remind hon. members that the Land Administration Board, which was constituted in 1927, was abolished as from 31 December last, and as from 1 January this year a Commission of three became charged with the administration of the Department of Public Lands. With that Commission the administration of the Department of Public Lands is in good hands. The relationship between myself and the members of the Commission has been a most happy and co-operative one. I am delighted with the way that we have been able to iron out our difficulties.

In the Department of Public Lands we regret that during the year the former President of the Land Court, Sir William Payne, through having reached the retiring age, had to be relieved of his office. Indeed Sir William Payne has become a legend in his own lifetime with regard to land administration. He leaves the service of the State and those who work on the land in Queensland, with the respect and gratitude of the whole of the grazing or land industry.

Another member of the Land Court who had a long association with land administration in Queensland also retired this year. I refer to Mr. McLean, another very worthy and well-respected man who gave outstanding service to Queensland during his term. To both of these gentlemen I say for myself and on behalf of all those who were associated with them, "Thank you for a job well done."

Mr. Wright has been appointed President of the Land Court in succession to Sir William Payne. He is a man of high standing in the community and one who fills the high post of President of the Land Court with distinction. The membership of the Land Court, including the President, has now been increased to five.

In spite of adverse seasonal conditions considerable progress in closer settlement was achieved during the past year. A total area of 593,194 acres of sheep lands and 772,932 acres of cattle lands were made available for new settlement. In addition, a total of 27,253 acres was opened under tenures appropriate for mixed farming. The total area opened for new settlement during the year was 1,393,379 acres. In spite of the seasonal conditions that I have already mentioned, this represents a larger area than that opened during any of the previous seven years.

Closer settlement is, of course, the most important function of the Department of Public Lands. Undoubtedly it is of tremendous importance to the State of Queensland. It is difficult because two things have to be kept in mind: Fairness to the lessee who leases land and a fair sporting chance for a new settler who comes in with not a great deal more than a big heart and high hopes, and has a great deal of difficulty before he can achieve what he sets out to do.

I should like to emphasise that since my coming to office there has been no radical change in policy as laid down by my predecessor and the practice over the past three years. I think the policy has been both fair and practical—and sympathetic—and I think that I can say that during my period of office I have had very many acclamations from those who are in a position to judge our closer-settlement policy.

The export income of Australia depends largely upon primary production and Queensland is an important part of Australia in this sphere. The increasing income from beef production places Queensland even further to the front of the other States in recent years.

Apart from the national interest in the wise administration of the lands of the State, it is essential to the development of rural Queensland that Governments encourage and press on with sound closer settlement to the best of their ability. I am most mindful of our responsibilities in this direction and, whilst I should recently charged with such responsibility, I should like to assure the Chamber that it is

a matter that will be pursued with a great feeling of responsibility. I feel confident that, with the guidance of the Cabinet and the assistance of my department, it will be successfully administered by this Government.

In a preliminary investigation and examination of this subject I have been a little surprised at the lack of a definite plan for the development of North Queensland through more intensive land usage. There are large-sized problems associated with land development in North Queensland for reasons that northern members will appreciate even more than those who, like me, come from the southern parts of the State, but there are possibilities up there. There is no question that these problems must be met if that part of the State—North Queensland—is to be progressively developed, because it has a wealth of natural attributes and we cannot dodge our responsibility for their development. It is, and always has been, my opinion that unless substantially more is done in Queensland, and in this case especially North Queensland, morally we do not deserve to hold it.

Much publicity has been given in recent times to the suitability of the coastal areas of the Far North for cattle-fattening under improved pasture conditions. The Food and Agricultural Committee, composed mainly of Federal parliamentarians, conducted a fact-finding tour of the northern regions and in general it reported most favourably on the attractions on the Far North. The members were very emphatic that there was a great potential to be realised and that if a suitable scheme was put forward by the State authorities for financial assistance from the Commonwealth Government, they would give it their wholehearted support.

During recent times warnings have emanated from economic experts that increased beef consumption, that is, on the home market, will seriously deplete our export surplus unless a definite boost is given to beef production. The sustained high beef prices of recent times with a reasonable indication that a buoyant market will continue—I think it will continue—have given prominence to cattle-fattening as a payable pursuit having a distinct bearing upon State and national economy.

My inquiries indicate that the value of Australia's imports is now approximately £925,000,000 a year. Against this we export goods to the value of approximately £926,000,000, of which 80 per cent. is rural production. It is expected that within 15 years Australia will reach a total population of from 13,000,000 to 15,000,000. To support this population on present living standards, the required increase in primary production for home consumption and for additional exports to meet the required additional imports will be of the order of from 50 to 60 per cent. of present levels. I am sure hon. members will agree that this situation is of tremendous importance to Queensland

and must be taken into account in the discharge of responsibilities for development of latent primary-producing resources.

From experience gained during many years on the land, I am quite satisfied that there is ample scope for Queensland to achieve a very substantial slice of this expanding primary production for itself. My administration therefore will be designed to expand rural production to meet the increasing demands for home consumption and export. I am quite satisfied that there is tremendous scope for further production in North Queensland.

I am fully aware that this region grows naturally heavy and light scrubwood timbers which are very valuable and which are very important to the State, and which should receive due protection in any scheme likely to endanger them. The timber industry plays a vital role in the State's economy, and this is one of the major problems that must be overcome in achieving more production in the North and, what perhaps is equally important, encouraging more people to make use of this very attractive part of the State. My personal inspections of the North have convinced me that there is more than enough land suitably endowed to support both the timber industry and rural production on a sound economic basis, with plenty to spare for other industries which in the course of time undoubtedly will follow in that region.

The contribution made to our economy by the sugar and timber industries and the rapidly expanding tobacco-growing industry in the North is considerable. With these things in mind I recently sent to the North a team of three men, one well versed in land settlement in all its aspects, another well versed in timber and the timber needs of the State, and the third an expert in agriculture, changing agricultural practices and developments in agricultural science in tropical areas. These men investigated over a period of a month or so a total of about 108,000 acres of vacant Crown land located within a seven-mile radius of Tully. They came back with the very recommendations that I expected.

In effect, they told me that forestry interests were important and adequate provision had to be made for those interests for both the present and the future; that store cattle from the North and the Northwest were available for fattening; that costs of establishing pastures would be heavy, and that a certain number of blocks should be opened for development along cattle-fattening lines, firstly to test the demand for them, and secondly to see how settlers get along in a new industry, as a sort of experiment.

Mr. Hilton: Did they give an estimate of how much it will cost for development?

Mr. FLETCHER: Yes, I can get the chapter and verse of their estimates of what was required, from an undeveloped block right up to development. They are formidable.

As a matter of fact, they are one of the worrying aspects of the whole thing. We do not doubt it can be done at a price, but whether that price is economical or practical, we are hoping it will be worked out by these men.

I think it was a most sensible approach to the question and their advice has been adopted. Two blocks have been opened and more will follow. If we do not find some insuperable difficulty or are not persuaded that it is unwise, more will undoubtedly follow. My Government have now accepted my recommendation that I send a further team of three into the North with the task of classifying the lands in this region so that the coastal North may have a clear basis upon which to develop its rural lands.

The task of that committee is to investigate all lands suitable for cattle-fattening that at present are substantially unimproved. State forests are not to be investigated as such, but lands that are more suited to the growth of timber than for cattle fattening are to be classified accordingly and consideration will be given to the inclusion of such areas within State forests. Areas set aside as timber reserves will also be examined and likewise classified.

This will be a tremendous job but when completed it will lay down for North Queensland a blueprint for future land usage and will permit of the further expansion of the timber industry along sound and permanent lines.

This is something that I feel is most important and I am sure hon. members representing northern electorates will agree with me in this approach to the development of the North, that is, taking due safeguards in establishing industries, and making provision for their future development.

Mr. Lloyd: Will one of those three men be a Forestry official?

Mr. FLETCHER: Yes.

A further point that cannot be overlooked in discussing this subject is the fact that the establishment of pastures in North Queensland for cattle-fattening purposes is costly, and I personally feel that Queensland can put forward a case to Federal authorities in this connection. I have already taken steps in this matter. The assistance of the Commonwealth in the provision of funds for the development of these lands will be earnestly sought and the co-operation of members of the Food and Agricultural Committee to which I previously referred will be enlisted.

Mr. Dufficy: Do you really think it is a possibility that you will get Federal assistance for that?

Mr. FLETCHER: In this world, anything is possible.

Mr. Dufficy: Do you think it is probable?

Mr. FLETCHER: I do not think I should worry the hon. member with my thoughts or worries.

Mr. Dufficy: After all, you are the Minister, and your thoughts are important.

Mr. FLETCHER: Not my worries.

Mr. Walsh: I know you are an optimist, but I do not think you are a super-optimist.

Mr. FLETCHER: Thank you.

It is important to realise the relationship between fattening and breeding areas. If cattle-fattening is to be embarked upon to any appreciable degree it follows that the demand for store cattle must increase.

The best place for increased production of store cattle is in the Gulf and Peninsula areas where such cattle are now being produced. The potential of these areas at the present time is not being fully realised, and turn-off could be considerably increased. Apart from such things as rainfall, transport facilities and more water improvements, the essential requirement to boost production is increased demand. There is no area in Australia perhaps where production can be stepped up more easily and with more certainty than the Gulf areas. Here, the annual monsoonal rain is more certain than in any other part of the Commonwealth and simply by the provision of additional fencing and watering points, a great increase in production could be easily obtained. The demand is the key to the future development of the area and therefore the development of successful coastal fattening areas will have a catalytic effect on the breeding areas.

While on this theme, I might mention that experience with brigalow lands has undeniably shown by practical demonstration that large areas of this country are capable of producing both winter and summer grains, hay and silage crops, and are also adaptable to introduced pasture. Rainfall averages are suitable for these crops and yields from the area are comparable in quantity and quality to the State's best. In my opinion some brigalow areas are an incomparable beef-producing asset of the State.

Mr. Walsh: Have you read that brochure that Charlie Russell circulated—"Why Land Settlement in Queensland is Lagging"?

Mr. FLETCHER: Yes.

Mr. Hanlon: Do you agree with it?

Mr. FLETCHER: Not altogether.

I am in the process of investigating available lands in the brigalow area with a view to securing the necessary funds to bring these lands into more intensive production by way of closer settlement. This, too, is a matter wherein the assistance of the Federal resources will be sought.

Another most important aspect of land administration is the operation of the free-holding laws introduced by this Government. To date over 4,000 lessees have made

application to have their holdings freeholded, 2,500 of which refer to town and suburban land and the balance to selections. The Land Court has handed down 2,623 decisions upon these applications and in 1,561 cases the lessees have elected to proceed with conversion. In respect of a further 300 of these cases, the period during which the lessees may elect to accept the conversion has not expired.

Mr. Dufficy: Have many applications come from the brigalow area?

Mr. FLETCHER: I could not tell the hon. member the exact number but I could find out roughly how many came from there; I know there are some.

Mr. Dufficy: I should be grateful if you could.

Mr. FLETCHER: I will keep that in mind. I have analysed the latest figures available, which cover a period of 12 months ended 30 June, 1960, and during that period the lessees of 292 selections had elected to convert their holdings to freeholding tenure. The total area of the 292 selections was approximately 84,000 acres and the total annual rental payable by the lessees was £2,861. The total unimproved capital value as determined by the Land Court was £283,560, which would be payable over 20 years. In respect of the 292 selections, therefore, purchase money to the extent of £13,091 will be paid each year for 20 years, when the selections will become freehold. In 34 cases the lessees elected to make lump-sum payments and conversion was effected immediately—of course, on the spot.

During the same period 702 residential, business and industrial sites were converted to freeholding tenure. These represented a total area of 1,367 acres and a total annual rental of £9,796. In respect of these leases the total unimproved capital value as determined by the Land Court was £293,469. This purchase price is payable plus interest at the rate of 5 per cent. over a period of 10 years. In 284 cases the lessees elected to convert to freehold immediately by payment of the capital value in a lump sum. These lump sum payments total £107,028.

Legislation introduced during 1958 which extended security to tenure to lessees who operated bona-fide studs has functioned successfully. This legislation has encouraged the establishment of the famous Faulkner "Bonooke" stud in Queensland, and I have been informed that this company will in the near future establish a further stud for the purpose of producing poll merino sires for the benefit of Queensland merino flocks.

Recent years have witnessed a tremendous upsurge in the development of Crown holdings. No doubt the drastic demonstration during recent years of the harshness of dry times is the direct cause of the demand for more water, particularly the harvesting of water on individual farms. Water facilities

completed in terms of lease conditions during the year totalled 800 at a cost of approximately £500,000, but this represents only a fraction of watering facilities provided during this period.

It is pleasing, also, to see the excellent work being done in the pulling of thousands of acres of scrub to permit the growing of grain and fodder crops and the more intensive utilisation of Crown lands, especially in the brigalow areas. During the year, approximately 550,000 acres were cleared in terms of lease conditions at a cost of over £500,000; but, here again, this is only a fraction of the overall timber-treatment work carried out during this period.

Undoubtedly there is scope for much more work in this field, and I would like to see much more effort on the part of some Crown tenants in the more favoured grazing and pastoral areas. It is irksome to see neglect in this matter in some of the more "handy" areas when regard is had to what good management and drive can achieve, and bearing in mind the fact that others, if given the opportunity, could use this asset to much better advantage.

Mr. Dufficy: Would they be people who enjoy leasehold or freehold?

Mr. FLETCHER: I am talking of leaseholders at the moment.

Mr. Dufficy: How are you going to deal with the freeholders? Are you going to compel them to undertake better utilisation, too.

Mr. FLETCHER: Very little freehold is underdeveloped in my area, anyway. There might be other areas that I should be glad to hear about.

Mr. Dufficy: You might later.

Mr. FLETCHER: I personally feel that the lessee who will not, or cannot, clear his land of useless vegetation deserves appropriate consideration when his stewardship comes up for review, as it does upon expiration of his lease. It is perhaps typical of human nature that we find these men are the most vocal and vociferous when the suggestion of a lesser area arises.

At the same time I intend to see that the more enterprising and industrious Crown tenant is rewarded for his efforts. Persistent claims have been put to me that good management has militated against lessees during past years in the practical application of closer settlement, which, if true, is a short-sighted approach and morally wrong. It is my aim to encourage development, and in the exercise of my discretionary powers in dealing with expired leases, due consideration will be extended, wherever possible, to the tenant who develops and improves his holding.

Mr. Dufficy: Irrespective of whether or not it exceeds a living area?

Mr. FLETCHER: Within my Ministerial discretion, yes.

During the year, legislation was introduced to deal with low-lying reclaimable lands or other lands difficult or expensive to develop for tourist, residential, or business purposes. The object of the Act was to encourage the development of such existing waste areas by enlisting the assistance of private enterprise.

One of the most forward of the developmental schemes under this Act is the five-part contract for the construction of the North Coast highway from Caloundra to Noosa. This road, which is already well under way, will open up a large area of the North Coast beach lands and is paving the way for tremendous development in the provision of residential and business sites.

After intensive investigations and negotiations this tremendous scheme of top-quality works has resulted from pooling the resources of the State, the local authorities and private enterprise. In this way we hope to provide attractive holiday amenities in an area that previously was the home of mosquitoes and sandflies.

At the present time something like 300 men are directly employed in this five-part plan, and contracts already ratified at this, the embryo stage of development, exceed £1,000,000.

The Near North Coast has been given the advantage of properly-planned development. The standard of subdivisional works, and the care and attention given to such things as parks, esplanades, reserves and shopping centres, are aimed at taking full advantage of modern town planning. Other schemes are under consideration, notably in relation to The Spit at Southport, Castle Hill and Rowe's Bay at Townsville, lands at Capalaba, Cairns reclamation scheme, Bribie and North Stradbroke Island, and several other areas.

In connection with access to the Barrier Reef tourist islands, the present jetty site near Proserpine is exposed to rough seas, and frequently its use is hazardous even when the conditions are not really very bad. The jetty was severely damaged two years ago and the repairs effected, although they have made it usable, would not ensure its survival if rough weather were to blow up in the near future. To provide a safe anchorage for small vessels going to the islands, a jetty is to be built at Shute Harbour, and this necessitates the construction of a road from Airlie. The new road 5.4 miles long is now in course of construction. It commences from the Council road about 1½ miles south-east of Airlie, and ends at the new jetty site. The road in itself will provide an interesting tourist attraction in addition to developing Shute Harbour, a most attractive and picturesque part of North Queensland.

A contract for £149,056 has been let to Thiess Bros. for construction work, and this is well advanced. In addition, the materials which will be supplied by the Department of

Main Roads will amount to approximately £20,000. Provision for four waterways is being attended to. The plans are being prepared. It is expected that the work will proceed on these structures soon.

I have already mentioned in relation to the development of the sheep and cattle industry the necessity for conservation of stock water in holdings generally, but particularly in the low rainfall areas in the West and Far-West regions. However, of equal importance is the provision of water on stock routes. To date over 700 stock-route water facilities have been established in Queensland. In the last financial year alone 39 jobs were completed, including the reconditioning of existing facilities. There were 24 projects in course of completion, and contracts were let for the construction of a further 35 such facilities.

In a State where movement of stock is such a common and necessary phase of the industry, either in marketing or shifting stock in times of drought to more favoured areas, these works are of tremendous importance. Works undertaken last year included the Hervey Range stock route, which provides the main outlet for cattle from the Upper Burdekin to the Townsville meatworks. The Co-ordinating Board proposes to continue with the maintenance of this stock route each year.

Hon. members, particularly those representing the outback, will hasten to agree with me that any form of access to the highly-susceptible drought regions is virtually nullified in its purpose unless stock water is available at strategic points along the route.

A major undertaking in this State is, I am happy to relate, well on the way to completion. I refer to the dingo barrier fence, which will have a total length of 3,500 miles. The remaining section of about 150 miles is well on the way to completion. It might be of interest to hon. members to know that on a sheep number basis of 20,000,000, the amount of £65,000 raised annually to finance the barrier fence represents a rating of approximately 3d. per sheep.

Hon. members will be aware that some people doubt the wisdom of constructing such a fence.

Mr. Walsh: I think you used to share that view when you were in Opposition.

Mr. FLETCHER: Never! I have always approved of it in principle, and I am on record as having said so when the legislation was introduced. Some people contend that it will never be sufficiently maintained to ensure its full effectiveness.

At the present time it would appear in some cases that little advantage is provided in localities where dog numbers in the fenced-in area are considerable, but, putting first things first, it must be conceded that the main barrier must be established if, in the long run, we are going to effectively contain and then destroy the dog. You have to

start somewhere and the main barrier fence is the only way it will ever be really well done.

In this way the State will be able to tackle in a practical manner the extermination—dog by dog, if you like,—of the dogs in the protected area. In so far as inspection and supervision of the fence is concerned, I point out that under the Co-ordinating Board, seven inspectors have been appointed to ensure that this aspect is well taken care of. Whilst an isolated few in the protected area do not take kindly to their obligations under the Barrier Fences Act it is heartening to note—and I have personally noted this—that the vast majority of land-owners give to the project their unqualified support and acclamation. Already there is evidence that, as the plan begins to materialise, sheep numbers are on the increase. Lambings have increased in many areas due, quite obviously, to the influence that the fence has had on the ingress of the dingo to the rich wool-producing parts of the State.

The Co-ordinating Board, in collaboration with the grazing industry, will give due attention to dealing with dingoes within the fence, piecemeal, as it is practicable to do it.

Within the department the Survey Office activities have been expanded to keep pace with development and action has been taken to modernise in stages the equipment used by this office. In our Survey Office during recent years there has been an ever-increasing demand for maps of a type that go further than the usual four-mile, two-mile, and 40-chain or parish series. The demand today is for maps showing the natural and artificial features of the various localities. This information is required for constructional projects and for general developmental planning. Full advantage has been taken of the rapid advance in mapping from aerial photography.

Since 1950 the air-photograph requirements of all State departments have been co-ordinated and co-related into one programme. This arrangement has not fully eliminated duplication and overlapping of aerial survey work by the various authorities, but it has resulted in a substantial saving of public funds.

The total area flown under contract to 30 June last was 171,538 square miles, which represents about one quarter of the State of Queensland. Provision is made this year for the sum of £27,500, which will provide air-photo coverage of another 15,000 square miles.

The information available as a result of this work is of tremendous advantage in that it may be used for investigations associated with geological-mapping, timber and water resources, surveys, soil-erosion control, road location, and other purposes. To take full advantage of this work modern stereo-plotting machines have been acquired at a cost of over £45,000, and the Survey Office has

been equipped with modern electronic distance-measuring equipment to further the usefulness of this type of mapping.

This work of the Survey Office is used extensively by the Main Roads Department, the Department of Irrigation and Water Supply, the Department of Local Government, the Department of Agriculture and Stock, the Co-ordinator-General, the Department of Forestry, the Department of Public Lands, and other authorities. In view of its importance, the Government have approved of the reorganisation and expansion of this branch of the Survey Office to meet commitments for large-scale mapping, under arrangements between the State and the Commonwealth, which were finalised last year, in relation to the development of east-central and east-northern Queensland. Already a field party is operating in the Herbert River basin in connection with hydro-electric and water-conservation potentialities in that area. An amount of £10,000 has been provided in this year's Estimates to recruit and equip a second survey party for this class of work.

I make special mention of the photographic section of the Survey Office, which is easily the largest photographic establishment maintained by the State. This section is doing a tremendous amount of work with equipment that unfortunately is reaching the end of its useful life, and it is proposed progressively to make sufficient funds available to provide new and additional units. During this year it is proposed to purchase a new enlarger and a further contact-printer for the processing of aerial photographs. It is also proposed to procure this year an auxiliary ammonia printing machine and next year a large camera for precision reproduction work, which will involve the outlay of approximately £30,000.

It will be seen from this brief outline that the Survey Office provides a highly technical and specialised survey and mapping service, and, to keep pace with the rapid progress of the State, funds allotted to the Survey Office this year total £397,103 compared with an actual expenditure of £312,512 last year.

My other department, the Department of Irrigation and Water Supply, is under the capable leadership of the Commissioner, Mr. Haigh, and to the extent of its financial capacity is continuing to play a part in the development of Queensland. I do not know any officer who is more devoted to his work and service to the public of Queensland than Mr. Haigh, and I pay him a tribute for his unflinching courtesy, help, and devotion to the job with which he is entrusted. I place on record the fact that our relationship has been most helpful and to me a very happy one.

Mr. Walsh: The Government have not given him much to spend this year.

Mr. FLETCHER: What he has been given he has spent very well.

Mr. Walsh: You know what the hon. member for Fassifern said—that the Government are cutting the throat of the Irrigation Department.

Mr. Burrows: The Liberals are doing that, not the Country Party.

Mr. FLETCHER: Perhaps it is not as bad as the hon. member thinks. Perhaps the efficiency of the department and the significant work it does with the funds available to it this year will mean that it will be endowed with additional funds next year.

Votes for the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission are provided within the Consolidated Revenue Fund, Trust Funds and Loan Fund. Within the Consolidated Revenue Fund the total provision is £429,409, an increase of £29,643 on the expenditure during 1959-1960. The salaries Vote under Consolidated Revenue sets out the total provision for salaried officers of £496,430, of which £270,030 is transferred to the Irrigation and Water Supply Construction Trust Fund in respect of officers engaged on Commission works and investigation. The total number of permanent officers provided for is 322, a decrease of 18 permanent officers in the number employed as at 30 June, 1960.

Three trust funds are provided for in connection with the operation of the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission—

- (a) Artesian Bores Working Account;
- (b) Farm Water Supplies Assistance Fund; and
- (c) Irrigation and Water Supply Construction Fund.

The Artesian Bores Working Account is a fund established to cover financial transactions of the Commission in respect of artesian trust areas, which are administered by the Commission. There are 56 such areas.

Expenditure of £21,500 is provided to cover interest and redemption on Treasury loans in respect of bore construction and for general maintenance of the areas, including bore-drain delving. The whole of this amount will be recovered by rates levied on the lands that are served in the areas.

Within the Farm Water Supplies Assistance Fund an amount of £150,000 has been provided for this year. We have reason to feel very happy at the results emerging since the introduction by this Government of the Farm Water Supplies Assistance Act. Since its enactment untold benefits have been bestowed upon landholders of the State. Under its provisions, landholders have available to them financial assistance in the carrying out of approved work, and, what is equally important, if not more important, is the fact that they can draw upon the technical resources of the Irrigation & Water Supply Commission. A landholder can approach the Commission, who will advise him of the possibility of implementing water conservation on his property. Landholders can obtain, without

any initial cost, information to guide them in any plan they wish to carry out for water storage, which is so vital to security for the man who earns his living from the land. Having had the assessment made for him, he can decide what type of storage he can embark upon within his financial capacity, bearing in mind that advances are made only for approved works.

Loans approved in 1959-1960 amounted to £123,026, but because of the time lag between approval of loans and actual construction work as arranged by the landholders, and consequent payment to the contractor, only £76,965 was advanced.

The popularity of the Farm Water Supplies Assistance Act has continued. A significant number of 580 applications for technical assistance was received during the past year, and 112 applicants also requested financial assistance.

Water is vital for the farmer and the grazier, but regrettably many do not become really alive to the necessity to make provision for the future until times of drought are upon them, which show up the problem in sharp relief. The recent dry spell is a clear indication of this. There has been a considerable increase during the past few months in the number of applications for assistance under the provisions of this Act. During October alone, 114 applications came to hand.

Much good work has been done since the inception of the Act, and the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission deals with applications with all the urgency and technical resources that it can dredge up in an urgent situation brought about by a drought such as we are now experiencing.

Mr. Walsh: I see you gave the Bundaberg-tobacco-growers the wipe-off.

Mr. FLETCHER: Not exactly. That interpretation would not be a fair interpretation of what I said about the Bundaberg tobacco-growers.

Mr. Walsh: That is what the local people think about it.

Mr. Dufficy: The local people would be good judges, of course.

Mr. FLETCHER: I think I would be the best judge of what I meant by what I said.

The Irrigation and Water Supply Construction Fund provides for the expenditure on the Commission's capital works and investigation, and salaries of officers engaged in that direction. The total allocation for 1960-1961 is £1,880,000, which is a reduction of £356,156 on the expenditure from the fund during 1959-1960.

Within this fund an additional provision of £59,551 above last year's expenditure was necessary due mainly to award increases in salaries of officers engaged on capital works and investigations.

The amount actually available in the construction fund for the carrying out of works

and investigations and the purchase and maintenance of plant is £1,544,000, which is £415,707 less than we expended in 1959-1960.

I regret that this year it has been necessary to curtail work on what must be conceded by any thinking person to be vitally important to the State, which, at present, is only partly developed.

Development by irrigation represents a very significant increase in our agricultural output. Water conservation for stock and irrigation brings in its train a secure livelihood for a large proportion of our population and provides a basis for population increase. In effect, it is an insurance policy for those who make their living from agriculture, grazing and cropping, in a land which has to suffer fairly regularly the ravages of drought.

I want hon. members to realise, however, that in the allocation of available moneys, priority treatment had to be given to other essential services, and the Government, I think reluctantly, have had to curtail the funds available for use by the Irrigation Commission.

Provision has been made in this year's allocation for the advancement of several main projects already under way.

An amount of £494,000 has been allocated to the work of extending the channels serving the Mareeba-Dimbulah irrigation area. As at 30 June, 63 miles of main channel and 20 miles of distribution channels had been completed.

Works proposed this year include the construction of 7½ miles of main channel and 10 miles of pipe lines in the Atherton Creek and the Granite Creek areas and distribution works, including a relief station in the South Walsh area.

The overall position at Mareeba-Dimbulah is a happy and satisfactory one. Generally speaking, tobacco farmers are doing fairly well. Last year there were approximately 1,000 farmers and share farmers producing tobacco in that area. Tobacco production there again increased substantially. The value of last year's tobacco crop was about £4,000,000—a very significant achievement for a new industry in an area that had previously contributed little or nothing to the State's wealth.

In the planning of farms in the Mareeba-Dimbulah irrigation area the Government, in conformity with their policy of adequate living areas, have taken action to ensure that farm sizes are sufficient to make the growers secure and there is little likelihood of any failures in that centre, apart from a calamitous drop in tobacco prices. New farms are being made available. Action is under way for the calling of applications for 19 new farms in the area and the closing date for applications will be some time in December. At least a further 20 farms are expected to be available for opening early in 1961.

The Moogerah dam, which is designed to serve a large area of rich agricultural land, is still in the course of construction. An amount of £370,000 has been included in this year's allocation for the work and it is expected that the dam construction will be completed this financial year.

An amount of £322,500 has been allocated within the Irrigation and Water Supply Construction Fund for further work on the Borumba dam.

An amount of £86,000 has been provided for the investigation of water resources and conservation works. This represents an increase of £13,000 on expenditure in 1959-1960.

Investigations include possible storage sites on the Burnett, Herbert, Logan and Albert Rivers, Callide, Sandy and Raglan Creeks, and Macintyre Brook.

Underground water investigations are provided for in the valleys of the Bremer, Bris-Burdekin, Burnett, Dumaresq, Logan and Albert Rivers and on the Darling Downs.

Investigation into the possibility of storage sites on various streams and learning more about the underground resources in places where suitable catchment areas and irrigable land are available are a very important function of the Commission.

There is no discounting the fact that, in a State that relies so much for its economic stability on rural production, droughts can cut very drastically into any prosperity we might achieve through other means in favourable seasons. There is little consolation in having at our command a buoyant beef market, for instance, when we see cattle dying in their thousands. If I did not know it already, my recent visit to the Channel Country convinced me that provision of adequate watering facilities within the very large holdings would cut tremendously regular losses of cattle in our frequent dry periods.

Mr. Walsh: Do you regard development in that area as a gamble, as you were reported as having said?

Mr. FLETCHER: I do not think I was reliably reported as saying it was a big gamble. The hon. member is referring, I presume, to the Channel Country?

Mr. Walsh: That is right.

Mr. FLETCHER: I was not truthfully reported as saying it was a big gamble. We need to spend money out there, without any doubt.

Some of our irrigation projects have not been a major success. I have already mentioned that Mareeba-Dimbulah is quite good, but I am not very happy about the Dawson irrigation scheme. I inspected this area quite recently and came away with the impression that the scheme there was not initiated on as sound a basis as it might have been.

Mr. Burrows: Are you talking about the Theodore area?

Mr. FLETCHER: Yes, the Dawson irrigation scheme. Some of the lessons learned indicate very strongly that the areas designed were too small. In some cases even the land was not good irrigation land. On the other hand, I was quite impressed with the lush pastures that I saw on the experimental farm at Theodore. It is very important that a developmental farm should lead thinking and assist in the development of an area such as that. The duty of doing something that will be of practical help to the men and women who in some cases have spent a large part of their lives there has exercised my mind and the minds of my advisers. We hope to be able to do something in the not far distant future for at least some of the people whose hopes have not been realised in these areas. At present, I have to admit that it looks to be a very difficult problem.

Mr. Walsh: Quite a number of farmers up there made a success of it—Gunn, James, and Freeman.

Mr. FLETCHER: I did not meet those particular people.

Mr. Walsh: I have visited their farms, and I know.

Mr. Burrows: They produced a lot of vegetables during the war.

Mr. FLETCHER: The war made it easier for them to make a living, but the demand for vegetables ceased when the war ended. Generally speaking they are too far from the markets, and I think it is a most unhappy situation.

Mr. Burrows: Did you go to Nathan Gorge?

Mr. FLETCHER: No. I know the plans for Nathan Gorge, and the cost of the dam there is rather intimidating.

Mr. Burrows: That was the original idea. The Theodore scheme was only a temporary scheme.

Mr. FLETCHER: Out at St. George, where the difficulties of distance from markets and the additional troubles associated with a new form of land usage are still being grappled with, we have now taken action to double land areas and increase water allocations. I have a feeling that the settlers there now have a reasonable chance of making a good living.

In an endeavour to assist irrigation-settlement farmers to acquire the techniques necessary to gain full advantage from irrigation farming, demonstration farms have been established in these areas. The Commission and the Department of Agriculture and Stock have done a certain amount of exploratory work in this direction, and officers of these departments feel that the demonstration farm is a valuable and necessary adjunct to these types of settlements, which are still feeling their way economically.

Some of the Burdekin areas are still having their troubles, although there, too, my

impression is that a fair standard of prosperity obtains for the practical tobacco-growers.

Criticism has been levelled at some of the Commission's works in other places. For instance, the Mundubbera Weir has been cited as being of little practical use. I do not agree with that.

Mr. Walsh: Who said that?

Mr. FLETCHER: There was something in the Press about it. Although the water available from the Mundubbera Weir was not fully utilised for several years after its construction, during the last two or three years the areas now authorised to irrigate from the Burnett River on the weir pool itself, and downstream to just below Gayndah, have increased to 1,450 acres. Production from this area is almost entirely citrus. From the beginning of September to the end of October, the Burnett Weir at Eidsvold has completely ceased to flow. During this period water from the weir pool and releases from the weir have maintained supply to the whole of this 1,450 acres.

Mr. Walsh: I think the Treasurer criticised that scheme.

Mr. FLETCHER: He could have. All the water in the Mundubbera Weir will be fully committed to keep this area in production.

Mr. Hewitt: It has been most valuable for the district.

Mr. FLETCHER: Most valuable.

Mr. Wharton: I think it will be more than committed.

Mr. FLETCHER: At least no-one in the area will deny that it is a most valuable adjunct to production in the area. The annual value of production from this area of citrus plantings would be in excess of £750,000. Had this water supply not been available the present crop of citrus would have been very severely reduced and, in addition, next year's crop inevitably would also have suffered.

The benefits obtained by irrigators have resulted in requests for further weirs upstream and downstream from landholders and the Councils of Monto, Eidsvold, Mundubbera and Gayndah. I know just how earnest these requests are, because during my recent visit to the area I met personally many of the landholders concerned and representatives of the local authorities.

The need for further conservation of water is fairly obvious. I might make the illustration by pointing out that some 60,000 acres, or about 40 per cent. of the total irrigated area of 155,000 acres, draw supplies from streams subject to pumping restrictions, and restrictions have been deemed necessary during recent dry times. If restrictions had not been imposed, men with large irrigation installations that had cost a great deal of money would have been left high and dry in a period critical to their production.

The value of production from the State's irrigated area exceeds one-sixth of the State's total agricultural production. That is a very significant figure. It will be seen therefore that it is important to the economy of Queensland and the prosperity of its people that the supply of water to this irrigated area be on a more assured and permanent basis.

Mr. Walsh: That is why I cannot understand the Government's cutting down on funds.

Mr. FLETCHER: If the hon. member dropped a note to the Treasurer possibly he could tell him in terms he would understand.

Mr. Lloyd: Is he running the Government, as usual?

Mr. FLETCHER: The Treasurer is the custodian of the State's funds, and naturally he would be in a position to give the hon. member chapter and verse.

I have covered the more responsible aspects of my administration. I await with interest the appreciative comments that I know will come from both sides of the Chamber. As a new Minister, I think I shall learn a great deal from the undoubtedly helpful comments that I see trembling on the lips of hon. members opposite.

In my opinion, the administration of land laws in Queensland is a most important and weighty responsibility. We are a primary-producing State, dependent to a very great extent on what comes out of the land in its various aspects for our standard of living, even our national solvency, and anything that helps me to be wise in land administration will be very welcome. I am sure that no-one will venture to offer anything but helpful criticism.

Mr. BURROWS (Port Curtis) (5.6 p.m.): At the outset, I should like to congratulate the Minister on his appointment to the position he holds. However, like every fair-minded Queensland and 99 per cent. of Australians, I like to see fair play in everything and I sincerely regret the circumstances that brought about Mr. Fletcher's appointment, much as we recognise his worthiness.

I think the Department of Public Lands is one of the most important departments—if not the most important, in this State.

Mr. Davies: They said the former Minister could not carry on because he was a decrepit hulk.

Mr. BURROWS: I sincerely regret that politics brought out remarks such as that, which I am sure were made in the heat of the moment. I am sure, although they were not made by any member on this side of the Chamber, that the man who did make them regrets doing so as much as anybody on this side regrets having heard them.

However, we are here to discuss land matters and I sincerely hope that the policy of the Government in land matters will not

become any worse under the present administration than it was under the last. I am satisfied that if the previous Minister had not been a fearless man and of strong will, he would have definitely been ridden into the ground, I might say, and we would have had a hopeless jumble in our land administration.

I have here a pamphlet that was sent to every member of this Committee. It attacks the Government's land policy. Those of us who have conducted election campaigns would have some idea of how much this pamphlet would cost to produce. It is certainly well got up and very extravagantly and expensively prepared.

Without in any way commending the Government for their land policy, I want to say that I do not agree with the author of this document, Mr. Russell, who entered this Parliament in the same year as I did, who moved on to the Federal Parliament, was later beaten in an election, and is now carrying on pastoral pursuits as well as other enterprises in this State. Mr. Russell has direct control over 600,000 acres of land in Queensland and is a very wealthy man. I have never had access to his bank account, but I should imagine that if I were in his position I would have very little to grumble at. His statements are peculiar, if nothing else, when it is realised that he owes his wealth to the land, that he came from the land—Queensland land—that he has operated under Queensland land laws, and that he has reached the stage when he has a very big interest, if not a 95 per cent. interest, in 600,000 acres of Queensland. Queensland, big as we know it is, has a total area of only 429,000,000 acres. If my arithmetic is correct, and if we dished out land in parcels of 600,000 acres, Queensland would be owned by only about 700 people. For that reason alone we must condemn Mr. Russell's attitude.

I read the document he produced. Hon. members will forgive me for reading it rather carefully. He voiced criticism of the present Government. But I came to the conclusion after reading it carefully—several times at least—that Mr. Russell has a very selfish outlook. While there is plenty of room for criticism of the present law and administration of the Act, I do not agree in any respect with the criticism put forward by Mr. Russell. He wants it both ways; he wants money spent on his property to be allowed as a deduction for income-tax purposes and, when his lease expires, he wants compensation for those improvements, not at cost or depreciated value but at the present inflated value.

I have a sympathetic bump on my head as large as that of the average person, but I could not raise even one little sob for Mr. Russell or his predicament and his argument with the Government over the way he has been treated. I think my tears could be better expended on much more deserving cases than his, and I think the money spent in production of this pamphlet

would have been used more wisely by him if he had given it to a city or country charity. The matter has been raised by way of interjection, and I think it is up to hon. members to express their opinions of it one way or another.

I shall draw attention to a passage in one of Mr. Russell's letters to the department. In the light of revelations earlier in the session about pressure being brought to bear on the Government in respect of their land laws, the passage has some significance. It reads—

"In the ordinary course of events, we would expect to get a residual home maintenance area of at least 25,000 acres (equal to about 4) at the expiration of the present lease (if, of course, the Act remains as it is)."

Mr. Russell, of course, is much better informed and is in a much better position than hon. members on this side of the Chamber, to know the intentions of the Government and the pressure brought to bear on them. Those of us who heard the sort of half-revelations made earlier in the session, if we put two and two together, realise that that statement has some little significance. That is the way in which it struck me. I do not think I am looking for the cloven hoof in everything I read.

In earlier debates on the Estimates, and in speeches during the Address-in-Reply and Budget debates, hon. members referred to the need to develop our cattle areas and the need for roads in the Channel Country to bring the cattle bred in those areas to market, and have spoken about the potential of the brigalow country and other lands. We cannot really blame the Cabinet for doing what it has done to our land laws when the hon. member for Rockhampton South, speaking as an authority, said that 10 beasts can be carried to an acre. We also have the hon. member for Tablelands, who reminds me of men around a camp fire seeing who can tell the tallest story, saying it was possible to turn off 11,000 head of cattle from 160 acres. If those are the men who are going to guide and influence the Government, we can thank God we are not in a bigger mess with our land laws than we are today. Those statements are too ridiculous and absurd to warrant criticism.

Mr. Beardmore: One of those statements was an obvious mistake. He meant 10 acres to one beast.

Mr. BURROWS: He meant nothing of the sort. He would not have known anything different if the former Minister for Public Lands had not said to him by way of interjection, "Why don't you talk on subjects you know something about?" In other words, he said, "Why don't you keep your mouth shut?" If the hon. member had to wait until he could talk on matters he knew something about, he would be speechless.

I would say the Minister is a very truthful person, but in the course of his speech today

he did what 99 politicians out of 100 do: he blamed a Press reporter for not reporting him properly. Often when people make a mistake they try to sneak out of it, or say they are badly reported, or it is just a mistake. Mistakes like that are costing us much time and effort and halting progress.

There are very often ill-advised projects for setting people up on the land, and they will continue unless the Government have somebody with experience of these matters who can understand and appreciate what is being considered. When Parliamentarians draw the salaries they draw, and have the responsibilities they have, they should be a little more accurate and have a little more respect for the facts of the case; they should not talk such ridiculous rot.

Mr. Low: God help Queensland if ever you are Minister for Public Lands and Irrigation.

Mr. BURROWS: That is the hon. member's opinion. It is bad enough for Queensland that he is even a member of Parliament. I still have enough faith in Queensland to believe that it can survive, despite the hon. member and those like him.

Mr. Low: It is the first time a grazier has opened the Opposition debate on the Estimates.

Mr. Hughes interjected.

Mr. BURROWS: When hon. members opposite get back to their own programme I will continue with mine.

Naturally, the Minister has quoted figures of amounts to be spent by his department. I remind the Committee that, owing to inflation, we must be very careful not to conclude that, because more is to be spent this year than last year or 10 years ago, a greater volume of work will be done. We have to discount those amounts considerably. Figures can sometimes be very misleading.

Basically the motive of any honest Government in seeking new areas to throw open for selection is to increase production, and I do not deny that that is the motive behind the present Government's desire to open up more land. But I warn them to pause and ask themselves if we are getting the full benefit from the land already selected. The Minister can particularly help in that because I understand the department has an insect that is capable of destroying the Noogoora burr. I can see three former graziers sitting on the Government benches and I do not think one of them would deny that Queensland's production from the land could definitely be increased by 5 or 10 per cent. if that insect were introduced and Noogoora burr successfully destroyed. I know the Federal Government can be blamed, but if a firmer attitude is taken and greater perseverance shown in the approach to the Federal Government in the matter better results may be achieved. Goodness knows, during the

election campaign people were told by members of the Country-Liberal Party Government, "We belong to the same family as the Federal Liberal-Country Party and we will get treatment of a kind that the horrible Labour Party will not be able to get." Here is an opportunity to do something that is relatively easy. Let us fly to it. Next to the destruction of the prickly pear, no better contribution could be made to the development of Queensland than destroying the Noogoora burr.

The Government are persisting in their freeholding policy and I think it is quite probable that we owe it to the former Minister for Public Lands and Irrigation that the maximum area that can be developed at one time today is not much greater than 5,000 acres. I think 5,000 acres is too much and I am critical of the Government on that. I sincerely hope that the new Minister will at least stand firm and resist the efforts of men like Mr. Russell who want to own the whole of the land of the State and exclude everybody else.

Mr. Ewan: You would not determine the worth of an area by acreage, would you? You are a practical man.

Mr. BURROWS: Not necessarily by acreage, but I am sure the hon. member will agree with me when I say that one does not need 5,000 acres of brigalow land for a living area. I have mentioned in this Chamber previously that one of the most successful farmers in the Monto district had brigalow land. It was in a very dry area, and the only way of getting water was by dams. That man, August Bulow, died only last year. He was chairman of directors of the butter factory, he owned a stud, and he became one of the most successful farmers in the area after going there, as one might say, with the backside out of his trousers. He had 160 acres. Sir William Payne, in his report, even published photographs of the Monto settlement, yet later in the report he talked about 5,000 and 10,000 acres being necessary for a living area.

Mr. Beardmore: It depends on where it is.

Mr. BURROWS: Where it is is another matter. The land to which Sir William Payne referred was closer to Brisbane than the Monto land. I ask the hon. member to explain that if he can.

We would be doing a settler a bad turn by giving him 5,000 acres of brigalow land, because it is too much for him to improve. The capital cost is tremendous. He can improve only 200 acres, and he has to pay rent and rates on the remainder. Unimproved land is a big handicap to any settler. Many more people have failed or "gone broke" on the land because they had too big an area than because they had too small an area. It is not the job of the Government to satisfy the greed of certain people, and this applies particularly to land. We get men

such as Charlie Russell, who is not satisfied with 600,000 acres, and when a block of land is offered for selection there are 2,000 applicants for it. We must remember that 1,999 out of those 2,000 will be disappointed.

Mr. Beardmore: You would still get a large number of applicants even if it was a piece of the Sahara desert.

Mr. BURROWS: I agree with the hon. member, but the Government must not be influenced by that. If you gave some people the whole of Queensland they would want a bit of New South Wales, too. Any hon. member with practical experience will know that.

I have had experience of keeping books for these people. When their rates and other costs are reduced to a unit cost basis, the disparity is tremendous. The costs in a factory are worked out on that basis. If they are producing motor cars they know that it costs so much to produce each car. If the selector applied that to his bullocks and said, "It costs 5s. a head for land, 10s. a head for rates, and so on," and then compared the result with his neighbour's costs, he would realise that he should be doing much better.

Mr. Ewan: You will concede that a man on 2,000 acres at Kingaroy could earn more than a man on 20,000 acres at Thargomindah?

Mr. BURROWS: Yes. But let us not go from the sublime to the ridiculous. The land round Miles and Chinchilla is on a par with the land in the Burnett.

Mr. Ewan: Some of it.

Mr. BURROWS: A man does not need 5,000 acres there. The hon. member knows how much condemnation there was of the land around Wandoan, which is now in his own electorate. It is a very different story today.

Mr. Ewan: Yes, but the Government altered things out there.

Mr. BURROWS: Yes, but the buyers now come over to the Dawson to get their cattle.

(Time expired.)

Dr. DELAMOTHE (Bowen) (5.30 p.m.): Concealed in a few sentences of the Minister's opening remarks, and given in 20 lines of the annual report of the Land Administration Commission is, I think, one of the best stories of achievement in land administration by any Department of Public Lands in Australia. I refer particularly to the story of the elimination of *Harrisia cactus* in the Collinsville area. It is a story that has never been told in full, and of which we, as the custodians of the land of the State, could well boast. Let me tell the Committee something about it because it is a story I know well of something that has happened in an area with which I am very

well acquainted. When the Department of Public Lands first became interested in this area—

Mr. Davies: What year was that?

Dr. DELAMOTHE: During the Labour Government's administration. I propose to give them due credit for their efforts.

When the Department of Public Lands first became interested, some 60,000 acres of country in the Collinsville area were infested with *Harrisia cactus*. Over the years the infestation had spread from one little plant that had been thrown on a rubbish heap. It spread and spread. Perhaps I should say that in the time of the previous administration it grew and grew like Topsy until eventually so much land was thrown out of use by its spread that something had to be done. It was a completely new problem that had arisen nowhere else. It had to be attacked on an experimental basis. I well remember what happened in the beginning because I treated many people for arsenical dermatitis. In the beginning, attempts were made to kill it off by spraying with arsenic-pentoxide. It had some desirable effect, but it also had a very deleterious side-effect. The highly-poisonous spray also got onto the grass in the vicinity. The grazier's cattle were poisoned and so there was raised in his mind a great opposition to further spraying of *Harrisia cactus*. That phase passed, and today we have a new method of dealing with it. Root injections of pentoxide by means of a power spray seem to have solved the problem, because it has been shown that the first root injection of the spray completely kills up to 80 per cent. of the cactus plants. When I tell hon. members that some of the plants would fill the Chamber they will realise that they are no small plant.

Since the beginning of the campaign, over 15,000 acres have been treated by the department's clearing gangs. In the last 12 months a new 1,500 acres have been treated, and in addition something like 1,100 acres of regrowth have been dealt with.

A side-effect of the eradication of this cactus has been the pulling and burning of the brigalow scrub—originally because they were places of harbourage of the cactus and because those scrubs that were not infested with the cactus were the harbourage of birds that spread it. They fed on the fruit and spread it around in other areas.

What is the position there today? I should like to tell hon. members because it is a good story. Today, the Department of Public Lands has eight gangs in that area doing nothing else but this root injection, clearing many acres. Besides the pentoxide injection, the men are experimenting in small plots with various of the many new sprays that have been developed by chemical companies, oil companies, and others. In addition, two of the companies that manufacture hormone sprays have been granted small areas of a few acres where they are experimenting with

hormone sprays with results that are extremely promising but that time only will prove.

As a result of Government action in introducing modern scrub-clearance methods—by introducing contractors to demonstrate to the local graziers the advantage, the ease, and the cheapness with which scrub-clearing can be done—some 5,000 acres of Crown land in the area was cleared as a demonstration and, so successful was it that today over 100,000 acres of brigalow scrub in that area has been cleared and the stage was reached last year when some thousands of acres were aerially planted with a mixture of sorghum allum and buffel grass for cattle-fatening.

The war on *Harrisia cactus* is still proceeding but victory seems to be assured. Before very many years have passed it will be but a memory.

Yesterday, thanks to co-operation between the past and present Ministers of Lands, I had the pleasure of inspecting the new Moogerah Dam and found it very interesting.

Mr. Newton: It is a very good job, is it?

Dr. DELAMOTHE: A beautiful job, well worth going up and having a look at. It will be finished by Christmas, so the hon. member should hurry to see it.

Mr. Newton: I have been up there plenty of times.

Dr. DELAMOTHE: The reason I mention it is that in my area—at the other end of the electorate on the Burdekin, where the best soils in Australia exist—we have a rather serious irrigation problem.

Leaving aside for the moment the arguments in favour of the Burdekin Dam, I refer particularly to the vast underground water supplies in the sugar-cane growing areas of the Lower Burdekin. Prior to 1935 they were regarded as unlimited and inexhaustible. In 1935 and 1936, due to a succession of failures of the normal wet season, the water supplies in those underground beds fell alarmingly in certain areas; so much so that, with pumps working and an extra draw down, salt water was sucked into some of them. That has never been repeated, but to day very much more water is being pumped than ever before. The average sugar farm in the Home Hill area is equipped with pumps of a capacity of 60,000 gallons an hour and they are used for up to 36 hours at a time. Hon. members can imagine the amount of water drawn off on the Home Hill side, where there are at least 240 farms.

This year has been very dry. The normal wet season did not eventuate. Last year after the early cyclone there was no further rain and the waters are again beginning to fall. Farmers in the area are now recalling the conditions in 1935.

I raise this particular problem because last year the Government, through the Department of Irrigation and Water Supply, started

an exhaustive investigation of the underground water beds for the first time, very important work with the number of people depending on the sugar industry in the area, and very important, too, because it is not known with certainty how these beds are replenished. To a degree no doubt they are replenished from flooding in the bed of the Burdekin River. No doubt they are replenished, too, from surface water in the big wet seasons, and, when the Burdekin overflows its banks, from that source. Those ideas have been put forward by various people in the area, but nobody knows how much water is there or how it is replenished, or whether in times such as this restrictive action should be taken.

The information being obtained is very important to an area that produces so much sugar-cane on which so many people depend. I hope that the Department of Irrigation and Water Supply will proceed with the research. I know it is doing so and that it is not stinted for money in that direction, but I hope it will be able to work a little faster, with a few more men if they can be found. That may be the stumbling block, but I hope the information can be secured at the earliest possible moment.

I do not want to delay hon. members unnecessarily, but I raise again the subject of the Burdekin Dam, of which Stage I has been completed.

Mr. Davies interjected.

Dr. DELAMOTHE: If the hon. member will let me make my speech without assistance, when it comes to his turn I will let him make his speech without assistance.

As I say, Stage I has been completed and there, through lack of finance, the scheme has bogged down. I said in an earlier speech that a completely new approach should be made to this very big and very essential irrigation project. As the Snowy River experts are now surplus to requirements in that area, I think either the State or the Federal Government, or both in co-operation, could well look at the idea of utilising some of this technical know-how to find a way not only of constructing the dam but also of favourably influencing the Federal Government to make available the large sum of money necessary for the completion of this project.

Mr. LLOYD (Kedron) (5.45 p.m.): I, too, should like to compliment the Minister on his elevation to the Ministry and his introduction of the Estimates on this occasion. No doubt he will have at least one more opportunity to introduce the Estimates for the Department of Public Lands unless, of course, some similar occurrence happens to him as happened to the former Minister and he in turn is also relieved of his Ministry. I hope the Minister will not be simply a "tame cat" administrator of the portfolio for those interests that have obviously been exerting considerable pressure on the Department of Public Lands over the past three

years. They have apparently gone into some sort of recess, but no doubt will be reapplying pressures at some later stage when the heat goes off. No doubt the Minister can thank the Treasurer, to some extent, for his elevation to the Ministry.

It is rather difficult to discuss completely the Estimates for the Department of Public Lands without making at least oblique reference to some of the allegations that have been made about interference with land administration in Queensland during the life of this Government. When these statements are made, naturally they give people much food for thought. The Department of Public Lands controls some 90 per cent. of the land estate of the people of Queensland and any interference with the trusteeship of that estate must naturally be treated seriously.

The charges that were made by the Treasurer about the former Minister were savage. We did think, at the time, that the former Minister had been sincere in his endeavour to implement, as far as he possibly could, the policy of closer settlement, and at the same time to protect the people's estate, as he told us. If that policy is to be altered in any way it will be very serious. I hope the Minister will pursue a good deal of the lands policy that was laid down by previous Labour Governments. We are hoping that there will be no wholesale alienation of the lands of this State, or the handing over of the Crown lands of Queensland to what may be termed the "hungry land-grabbers."

The Minister has mentioned the opening-up of unoccupied land, as I understand it, in the northern region of Queensland. If that is in the interests of providing better cattle-fattening facilities, and improved cattle production in the State, it is a praiseworthy project for any Government to undertake. However, if the land is completely unsuitable, as has been stated—I should have thought the Minister may have made some reply to that allegation—then it can be taken only as an attempt by some people, or some companies, to grab away from the Crown portions of land that could be used much better for other purposes.

From what the Minister told us this morning, we understand that already there has been one investigation and there is now proceeding another investigation by three senior officers, one from the Department of Public Lands, one from the Department of Agriculture and Stock and one from the Department of Forestry, and that the report will be sent to him. In view of the very serious allegations some weeks ago by the hon. member for Fassifern on the opening-up of some of this Tully land, if at any time it should be envisaged that that land will be opened up I should like the Minister, when he receives the report from the officers concerned, to allow all hon. members to study it and examine very closely the results of the investigations of those officers.

This matter is very serious. The land in question would normally be ideally suitable for forestry purposes. We all realise the tremendous inroads made into the forestry reserves of this State during the post-war years, and if the investigation into land usage proved that the land is more suitable for forestry purposes we should all know. Two areas have been opened up, but we have not been given the result of the original investigations that precipitated the opening up of that land. I want it to be very clearly understood that if the land is suitable for cattle-fattening, we have no criticism of its use for that purpose. It would seem that the unoccupied land of the State, amounting to some 12,000,000 acres, is mostly in the South-west or in the Far North, but there are some other lands—in the Mackay, Ingham and Tully districts—that previously have been unoccupied and that might be considered for cattle-fattening purposes. There has been no mention of other areas. The matter should be followed through, and there should be an investigation of all other areas of the State, including perhaps a great deal of freehold land. In the past, the Labour Government found that large areas of freehold land were not being used. We found that in the Rockhampton electorate when the Government created the Foleyvale grazing settlement for aboriginals, and on the central Queensland highlands where some 48,000 acres were resumed from private landholders to enable the Queensland-British Food Corporation to commence operations. That scheme, which hon. members opposite have from time to time called a wonderful socialistic failure of the Labour Government, has now been proved to have been one of the most profitable ever embarked upon.

Mr. Ewan: Private enterprise!

Mr. LLOYD: It proved to men like the hon. member for Roma that there was a chance for many of the areas of the State that were previously neglected by private holders to be cultivated and put under crops. It proved to men such as he that they could be used in addition to cattle-grazing and sheep-grazing, for fodder conservation purposes. Recent happenings on the Central Queensland highlands have vindicated completely the attitude of the Labour Governments of the past. When the scheme was abandoned, the Queensland Labour Government embarked on the cutting up of the land for closer settlement. On its winding up, the scheme has shown a profit to the people of this State and has given to the settlers of the area a great deal of the prosperity they are enjoying at the present time but which this Government are threatening to take away from them by the savage impact of increased rail freights.

Whatever Labour has striven to achieve, hon. members opposite have sought to sabotage and subvert. They claim that they are representatives of the people on the land, but in actual fact the primary producers have found that they did very much better under

the administration of Labour Governments in Queensland than under a composite Government that is being completely strangled by the big city interests with the Liberal Party of Queensland in control of the Government benches.

A great deal has been said by the Minister about the reduction in the Vote for the Department of Irrigation and Water Supply and I believe that, in outlining some of the reductions in expenditure this year, he could have been guilty of the greatest understatement of the century when he said there had been some small reduction in irrigation works. He added that it was necessary in the interests of expenditure in other activities. So far as I can see—and I feel sure that the Minister will agree with me—the work of irrigation is not merely to provide water for primary producers but it is also tied to the other matters of water conservation, soil conservation and flood prevention works. We cannot divorce the two aspects of governmental action in relation to water supply, because water supply, and water conservation are very closely linked.

From time to time over the past few years hon. members on the Government benches have praised the work of Mr. Laing, a former Irrigation Commissioner, who resigned from the State Public Service in 1947 or 1948 and transferred to the Snowy River project. I can well remember the attitude of the Premier, the former Minister for Public Lands, and the Treasurer at the time of the opening of the Tinaroo Falls Dam. It was stated then that the present Government did not believe in large dam-construction schemes, that they preferred to embark on the smaller schemes of weir construction, as they are doing now. Mr. Laing said at that time that it was useless for any Government to embark on small schemes of water conservation because siltation was one of the main problems accompanying such schemes. He said that first there had to be an analysis of the headwaters of the river systems in order to decide where the large expenditure was to be undertaken, and then the system of smaller dams, weirs, and irrigation channels could be expanded from that point. Only if we use that method can we hope to provide an adequate scheme of water conservation and flood prevention in Queensland. The savage reductions in loan fund expenditure on irrigation and water conservation by the Government in this financial year are indicated very clearly if we look at the co-ordinated plan of works and other development over the past few years. The figures are as follows:—

Year	Expenditure £
1954-1955 ..	2,088,406
1956-1957 ..	2,513,813
1959-1960 ..	2,212,008
1960-1961 ..	1,920,000 (estimated)

In other words, Mr. Taylor, the expenditure in this financial year will be less than that in 1954-1955.

I think those figures will give the Committee a real conception of the deterioration in expenditure by the Department of Irrigation and Water Supply within the ensuing 12 months, particularly when we consider it has been estimated by the Treasurer that during the year there will be an additional expenditure by the Government of £4,000,000 because of margins and a heavy increase in the basic wage during the interim period. To maintain the true valuation of the work undertaken in the year 1954-1955, we would have to reach a figure of almost double the expenditure at that time, whereas in actual fact there is a reduction. That gives credence to the statement of the hon. member for Fassifern some weeks ago that whereas the budgetary expenditure for this year was some £16,000,000 more than it had been two or three years ago, the actual expenditure on irrigation works was reduced. That discloses a serious state of affairs in Governmental spending.

Mr. Pizzey: From which Government department would you take the money?

Mr. LLOYD: There is the old question coming from the Minister for Education and Migration! He is endeavouring to imply that we would take it away from the construction of State school buildings. The Minister knows that not enough money is available under the education Vote for the construction of schools this year. If it is the intention of the Government to maintain a full works programme, it is their responsibility to insist that they receive sufficient money from the Commonwealth Government to enable them to undertake those works. Irrigation and water conservation are essential works.

If money is to be taken away from some other department what about the £500,000 to be spent this year on the Bribie Island bridge? Is that essential? Perhaps there are some other works in the co-ordinated plan of public works, as disclosed by the Co-ordinator-General, from which we could transfer money to the irrigation Vote.

Mr. Windsor: 1954 was a peak year for irrigation.

Mr. LLOYD: Hullo, the magpies are here again. That is nonsense!

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. LLOYD: Expenditure from all funds in 1957-1958 was £3,060,000; in 1959-1960 it was £2,665,000; there is further reduction in the estimated expenditure this year. Irrigation works are an essential factor in the development of the State. We cannot entirely accept the fact that the Minister for Public Lands has done his level best in planning the work for the ensuing year following the pressures that have obviously been applied to his and many other departments by the Treasurer in regard to their respective expenditures this year. I think it is necessary for me to point out that it is becoming increasingly obvious that the Treasurer is

becoming the leader of the Government, and that he is meddling like a dilettante in the expenditure of every Government department. His intervention has been responsible for the reduced expenditure on irrigation this financial year.

In a quiet way the Minister for Public Lands and Irrigation has criticised the Dawson River irrigation scheme. An examination of the figures in the 1959-1960 report discloses that the scheme showed a profit in that year. That is disclosed in the revenue Account, and it is, in fact a growing scheme. There was an expansion of the irrigation and also in production from that irrigated area. I do not necessarily say that it is a very efficient scheme; it surely is sufficient evidence for this Committee to know that it is actually allowing the growers within that area to expand their production.

I am sorry the hon. member for Tablelands is not here because I intend to say something about the activities of the Department of Public Lands as they affect primary producers. I think the Minister himself said that the tobacco-growers in the Mareeba-Dimbulah area are quite prosperous, that their production is expanding and that they are, in fact, producing some millions of pounds' worth of tobacco.

Many of these tobacco-growers, particularly those on the Barron River, are complaining bitterly about the treatment meted out to them by this Government. Whereas in the Clare irrigation project there was a charge of, I believe, £4 per acre-foot, for the water to irrigate those farms, and farms in many other areas where the water was piped direct onto the farming properties by the Department of Irrigation and Water Supply, what happened in the case of the Barron River tobacco-growers? They spent their own money in providing the pumping gear for their irrigation plants, and in some cases a mile, or more than a mile, of pipeline from the Barron River. The moment the dam was completed the water was declared as water produced by the Department of Irrigation and Water Supply and they were charged so much per acre-foot for the water that was taken onto the properties. They were charged the same as is charged to other producers to whom water is supplied direct to the farms. That is another indication of the harsh imposition of charges and taxes upon primary producers by this Government, and there are many members of the Country Party sitting on the benches opposite who realise it. The hon. member for Fassifern said several weeks ago that he at last had realised that primary producers in this State were much better off under a Labour Government than they are under a Government who are vacillating and are unable to provide primary producers with the incentive to expand production.

Mr. Ewan interjected.

Mr. LLOYD: They always seem to bale up a little, particularly the hon. member

for Roma. He will no doubt be speaking later on. He, after all, is one of those graziers who benefited so greatly from the policy of Labour Governments of the past. He was fortunate he sold out before the Treasurer imposed the harsh and rather vicious sectional tax through stamp duties on property sales.

Mr. Ewan: Are you aware that I suffered a loss?

Mr. LLOYD: The Treasurer would not be very happy about that.

Another subject I wish to mention relates to the Channel Country. I do not intend to speak at great length on this subject because I know very little about it. However, I have made a study of newspaper reports and I should say that there would be a great deal of merit in the extension of roads through to the Channel Country if we could convince the Minister that the tremendous amount of money that will have to be expended on their construction can be vindicated. I cannot myself say whether or not it is essential because I do not know enough about it. The Minister, on his return from flying over the country, seemed to indicate that he had some doubts. There seems to have been no mention of it at all from the Government side when speaking of possible assistance from the Commonwealth Government but rather statements concerning the treatment of these areas by the Commonwealth Government. They have not been able to assist us to any great extent with the construction of Channel Country roads. It is doubtful now whether they will extend to us any assistance with the project. But there is one assisting factor that is already in operation. I am speaking now of the grants made for Channel Country stock routes under the State Grants (Encouragement of Meat Production) Acts, 1949 to 1954.

Mr. Ewan: How much did they spend under that? You did not carry out the conditions.

Mr. LLOYD: The hon. member for Roma should keep out of this matter. Since 1949, of the total amount of £300,000 agreed upon as the expenditure on this project by the State and the Commonwealth Governments in equal amounts, £288,000 has been expended, leaving only £12,000 not spent.

Mr. Ewan: On stock routes.

Mr. LLOYD: The hon. member for Roma insists on coming into this discussion. In 1958-1959 the Government reduced from £16,000 to £6,000 their expenditure on watering facilities in the Channel Country under this scheme.

Mr. Ewan: Naturally.

Mr. LLOYD: Naturally, according to the hon. member for Roma. Then the Government suddenly discovered that expenditure on this work attracted a £1 for £1 subsidy from the Commonwealth Government, so

they increased the expenditure last year to £18,000. Surely that is an avenue that could be exploited by the Government. The amount of £300,000 is almost exhausted. The agreement made in 1949 is still operating. I am sure the water facilities in this vast tract of Channel Country are completely insufficient. A further approach could be made by the State Government for an expansion of the scheme. Even if the stage is reached when the Government are unable to undertake vast expenditure on the construction of roads in the Channel Country, they may get some consolation in the way of an expanded or further grant from the Commonwealth under the States Grants (Encouragement of Meat Production) Act.

(Time expired.)

Mr. RAE (Gregory) (7.27 p.m.): Mr. Taylor—

Mr. Thackeray: We will now hear the "ray of hope."

Mr. RAE: I hope to show I am more decisive in my views than hon. members opposite.

I congratulate the Minister on his appointment as Minister for Public Lands and Irrigation. He took over that portfolio from an equally capable and sound administrator in the person of the hon. member for Fassifern, who, I think, sowed the seed and laid plans which I am sure will be brought to fruition by the present Minister.

I was born and reared in the outback and have more or less lived there all my life. I know the area very well and think I can make a material contribution to a debate on the policy being implemented by the Minister and the very able officers of the department, men in whom I have every faith and confidence.

Much has been said about the land policy of the Government. I want to make it clear at once that I am a great sticker for the Payne report. Over the years that gentleman acquired knowledge without parallel. He enjoyed the confidence of men on the land, men who have battled to earn their livelihood from the soil and have experienced the many vicissitudes associated with the effective working of properties. He served the Government ably and well. It is a great shame that, having reached the age of 70 years, he is precluded from further service. I should say his advice would be invaluable to any Government and of great benefit to the people who are doing so much for Queensland.

In my contribution tonight I shall confine myself to one or two aspects of life in western areas that to me are very important. I intend to bring to the notice of the Chamber that we, as a Government, have decided upon a standard that possibly is not healthy, and indeed, without qualification, I say that when we look at the realities of the position, there

is urgent need for us to re-open the subject of additional areas. I say this because I am sure I know what I am talking about.

An Opposition Member interjected.

Mr. RAE: If the hon. member reads the report he will find that Sir William Payne does agree. I hope the hon. member will allow me to carry on so that I may give the full text of my story.

I refer to a certain page of the Payne report that deals with the area, and I wish to bring before the notice of the Chamber the need for giving very full consideration to these people west of Quilpie, Eromanga, Jundah, Julia Creek, Boulia and Thargomindah, which is an area where life can be very desperate. I find it rather hard to express the feelings of those who live there and have battled, and I find it hard to understand what they can see in it when they are handicapped by starvation areas.

Mr. Ewan: Aren't they mighty people!

Mr. RAE: They are. There is no question about that. They are the greatest people we have ever known.

I find it very hard to see how we can have any justification for saying we will not grant them additional areas. I would never know the reason for that: I think it is wrong. As the Government, we have pledged ourselves to do what is necessary and essential to bring into being a balanced form of life for the people in that area.

I quote the case of a man named Walker who lives at Panjee, near Eromanga, and who has for many years been running 2,500 sheep. Everybody must know that 2,500 sheep is nothing out there, but here is a man who could be described as a very sick person—possibly a cripple—who has battled it out. He has raised a family and done a wonderful job. We should look into these individual cases and see if we, as a Government, can do something constructive for these people because they have proved to us, and to former Governments, that they have a big heart, and are determined to carry on. Let us go with them, because they are rearing stocky sons of the soil that we are finding it very hard to replace in that part of the country.

On this subject of additional areas I should like to bring another very strong point to the notice of the Chamber. I fail to see what good any Government if they cannot provide something for these people that is attractive to both the banker and the broker. To my way of thinking, that is the first thing. It must be! It is the crux of the matter! A man who draws a starvation block out there—as has been done in the past—is battling along, shearing, fencing, yard-building and doing a thousand-and-one other jobs to provide a home for his family. Nothing was

done for him by the previous Government. I want this Government to do something for these people. I want positive action.

Mr. Graham: Haven't they done something?

Mr. RAE: They have, but much more has to be done.

Mr. Graham: What about the graziers who have died and left estates worth £100,000?

Mr. RAE: That is a different story. If the hon. member was conversant with the history of Queensland he would know that the fathers of those graziers were men of ability, thrift and courageous heart, who kept building up when those who were lucky enough to win small areas under the previous Government's administration were obliged to walk off. Those blocks were bought up by the bigger people, resulting in aggregations, which enabled them to leave what they left, and, I might add, in very rare instances. This State is very much on the up and up. I am certain that all hon. members will agree that, if we are to progress and develop the land in the right way, we must first of all provide something attractive to the financial institution that lends the money, that is, the banker or the broker. In many instances good blocks are going up but they say, "No, the margin is too close. We are not interested unless you have big money of your own." There are too many first-class men prepared to do a job if only they could get a small kick-off in some way—not very small, something good. I say to the Minister and his administrators, "If the blocks are good. They are attractive. They are an economic proposition. But if we are to open them up as unsound proposition we must remember the lot of those who won blocks under previous Governments and are now battling." If ever we do anything, we should do it on the generous side and so help the all-round development and those responsible for it.

Mr. Beardmore: An asset to the country!

Mr. RAE: They are. They are the greatest people. The hon. member for Balonne, a man of vast experience, would know exactly how sound it is to encourage them, to keep them on the job and to help them in every way that we as the Government possibly can.

Mr. Houston: You support the bankers who refuse to give those loans?

Mr. RAE: No. I do not wish to delve into that, but any proposition that is sound arouses the interest of the lending houses. You cannot expect to interest a lending institution if you simply say, "Here is a property that will run 3,000 sheep but I have no money." Why would the bank be interested? The banker does not know the man. On the other hand, he knows a property that will run 6,000 or 7,000 sheep, that is well watered, that has been subdivided in accordance with the conditions of the leases granted time and time

again to the big people, many of whom do nothing towards helping closer settlement, not one whit. That is the answer to the problem. We do not want a land full of peasants. We want a land full of people who can employ others, who can help the State, who can do so many things that are most important to us if we are to progress. The only way to do that is to do what we are doing today under the present Minister, a man whom I know to be capable and practical.

Mr. Lloyd: You're kidding yourself.

Mr. RAE: I am not kidding myself. The hon. member is kidding himself. The Minister will leave an indelible mark on the history of the State for the part he is playing in the advancement of the pastoral industry. Hon. members opposite had their opportunity but they did not do it; they could not.

This is a very serious problem and, despite discussions I have had with the Minister in which he has said that administrative costs would be too high and charges too great, I still say we should hearken to the needs of these people and to their plea to deal them a hand of comfort. They need it and we should do it.

I am not in favour of the wholesale granting of additional areas. I think they should be granted on a restricted basis and only where a bona fide case is made out, not where a man has bought a butcher's paddock expecting to be granted an additional area on which to sit back for the rest of his days.

In conformity with my remarks on the need for granting additional areas to only a few people, I think we should start right at the beginning, that is, with the big property as we know it today. Many of them undoubtedly lend themselves to closer development. Over the years they have had the benefit of clever management, and they have been controlled by pastoral directors who are no fools. They are bright boys; they know the score. I feel it is incumbent upon the members of the Land Administration Commission to see that the land is exhaustively surveyed and examined before a renewal of lease is granted. As I said before, where we have people such as Australian Estates and many smaller people doing a very good job, we will find that their land lends itself to closer settlement. But I fail to see why these big organisations that have held country for years and paid the same rates and rent as they were paying in 1916 should be allowed to continue operating when men on the inside areas round Taroom, Goondiwindi, St. George, Charleville and Cunnamulla, are being penalised. Cattle are at an absolute premium today, and I am fearful that we might make the same mistake as we did with the wool-growers. When things were good for them, why did not Labour administrations do something about the problem? We should take action when the time is ripe, when

graziers are in a position to meet the added costs and charges. That is my idea. Increased charges should not be levied on deflated prices.

Mr. Dufficy: You should do it today with the colossal meat prices.

Mr. RAE: I have suggested that scheme.

Mr. Houston: What do you have in mind for these areas once they become freehold?

Mr. RAE: I have nothing to say about freehold. I am speaking about my theory on these particular land matters. I do not want freehold at all. I am very happy with what I have at the moment. I am thrice blessed, and I am happy to go along in my own way. I am asking the Minister to see that everybody gets the same benefit and the same good fortune as I have had. Let us help those who have been a lifetime on the land and battled on through adversity.

Mr. Hilton: Would you say that the subdivisions in the Goondiwindi district are too large?

Mr. RAE: In the majority of cases they are too small. But I am not sticking my neck out for the Goondiwindi area; I know very little about it.

There is another important point that I should like to bring to your notice, Mr. Taylor. From my own observations, I know that in the western areas of Queensland, from Charleville to Winton, Middleton, Hamilton, through to Boulia, and from Dajarra to Carandotta, watering facilities for stock are of the utmost importance. I should like to see something constructive done to enable us to walk cattle across these areas when the seasons are favourable. They leave as fats, and we must get them to the meatworks as fats. They cannot be moved in 40- and 50-mile stages without water. They have to be walked by night and rested by day. A bore or two here and there would be a positive means of removing a very disturbing and worrying thought on the part of owners in that area.

I have for many years held an idea about land ballots. We all know that land-balling has been going on and will go on even more vigorously. I know that the department is very concerned about the qualifications, knowledge and ability of applicants, many of whom are young men who fought for us in the war. But how can anyone suggest that there is any justification in allowing a man to draw a first-class block at, say, St. George, when he lives in retirement in his home in Southport? Like half the applicants, he is greedy and avaricious. When he has a look at the land he says, "It is not good enough for me." Why should he be allowed to escape the whole issue scot-free? He should be fined the full limit of the amount of improvements on the property. He should be liable to a fine so compelling that he would

hesitate before putting his name down for a land ballot. He should not be allowed to jeopardise the chances of many good men. We have many excellent men and we need to keep them on the land. We do not want speculators or characters who come in only because they think it is a fantastic lucky dip or something from which they can wax fat in five or seven years. I cannot be in it! It is one of the most disturbing things I have ever known. There should be very strong grounds before a person is allowed to say, "I am not interested."

Mr. Davies: How do you manage your property?

Mr. RAE: The same as you manage Walkers' shipyards.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. RAE: To decide who is eligible for a ballot, I repeat what I have always said: no man under 21 should be eligible. It is ridiculous to allow anyone under that age to take part in a ballot. It allows the privileged few rich people to enjoy something that their fathers can give them. I am not saying that they would not be any good, but it is a wrong principle. They cannot vote until they are 21, and they should not be allowed to run a property until they are 21. And we should not have women in land ballots. I fail to see why any woman should be eligible for a land ballot.

I did not have the opportunity to hear the Minister's opening remarks today. From what has been conveyed to me I understand that he said he was going to call upon the Federal Government for financial aid for the development of the North as a cattle-fat-tening area. What a laugh! I harbour the thought that we can forget them. The Commonwealth Government would not even help us with the Mt. Isa railway. They would not help us with the roads. Imagine them helping us with the North!

We have to do these things ourselves. We are capable; We have done them all along the line and we will keep on doing them. That is the spirit, the only way we can hope to leave the indelible mark that I know this Government will leave on the path of progress in this State.

There is another disturbing thought—if I may ask the Minister another question—related to the appointment as a member of the Land Court of a Mr. Dodds? Is that correct? I do not know, but I think it should be aired. What are his qualifications? It is a very topical query at the moment and it is one that I feel should be aired. I am told that he would be a man with absolutely no experience of land matters at all. He was in the Northern Territory, but what would he know about land matters? It is no good our endeavouring to do anything constructive or positive unless we have men who know what they are doing. That is a basic essential.

(Time expired.)

Mr. BENNETT (South Brisbane) (7.52 p.m.): I, too, admire the courage of the new Minister for Public Lands and Irrigation, bearing in mind the difficulties he must be encountering on the advice and evidence we heard from the former Minister, the hon. member for Fassifern. I sincerely hope that, like the former Minister, he is able to withstand the attacks made by the Executive of the Country Party on the administration of his office and that he will not allow them to waste too much of his time as they "roll down" to Parliament House from time to time in an endeavour to dictate policy to him.

As all hon. members will know, approximately 90 per cent. of the land in Queensland is leasehold or, in fact, Crown land.

Mr. Gaven: 93 per cent.

Mr. BENNETT: 93 per cent, I am informed. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that we as parliamentarians, and the people of Queensland, too, should be quite clear on the method of making application for land tenures and leases.

I did hope that there was a uniform method of making applications and I should expect—and the people of Queensland would expect—that each particular application would be dealt with on its merits and that no applicant would have any preference over others.

Mr. Ewan: Are you suggesting they do?

Mr. BENNETT: The hon. member for Roma asks me if I am suggesting that they do have preference? I have evidence in my possession of an endeavour having been made to gain preferential treatment, and the tactics used, to say the least, were most irregular and call for severe deprecation by members of Parliament.

I should expect that, if their is one method of making application for the public, that self-same method should apply to any member of Parliament, or to any member of Cabinet, who may wish to make application for Crown land in this State and that no Cabinet Minister should be granted any privilege or preferential treatment over others who might be desirous of obtaining Crown land. I feel sure that the hon. member for Roma will agree with me, and his interjection is the very reason I wish to advert to this fact. I sincerely hope that the practice apparently adopted by the Deputy Premier and Minister for Labour and Industry will be stopped immediately. Furthermore I sincerely hope that Cabinet Ministers in future will be perfectly honest in their replies to questions in this Chamber.

I am glad to have the opportunity of speaking on Crown land matters. As a new and young parliamentarian I had hoped—nay, I had expected—that the Minister's replies to my questions would be honest and truthful, but I am perfectly satisfied that the Minister for Labour and Industry, in replying to my

question about certain Crown land at Mossman, was entirely erroneous, and was endeavouring not only to deceive me as a parliamentarian and a representative of the people but also to deceive his own Cabinet colleagues and the people of Queensland. In order that there will be no further confusion about the matter, I should like to deal with the wireless message.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! In the absence of the Minister for Labour and Industry, I must ask the hon. member for South Brisbane to withdraw his statement that he was deceitful to his Cabinet colleagues. That is a reflection on the integrity of the Minister, and I cannot allow it to pass unnoticed. I ask the hon. member to withdraw it.

Mr. BENNETT: I readily do so at your request, Mr. Taylor, and may I say that I regret that this discussion on land leases and land administration is taking place when the Deputy Premier is absent overseas, although so regularly is he jaunting round the universe like a Russian satellite that it would be difficult to pick a time to discuss these matters that coincided with his presence here. Furthermore, if I had been given the assurance that the Estimates of the Deputy Premier's department would be discussed, I would have waited readily for his return so that I could deal with the matter in his presence. But I was given to understand quite clearly and categorically that it is not his intention to introduce his Estimates during the current debate. This, therefore, is my only opportunity of correcting the wrong impression created by the Minister's answers to my questions.

Mr. Ewan interjected.

Mr. BENNETT: You raised the subject by way of interjection, so let me deal with it.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. BENNETT: I have here an exact copy of wireless message Serial No. 351/60 from the Commissioner of Police in Brisbane to the Inspector of Police, Cairns, dated 5 July, 1960. It reads—

"Message (and action taken):

"Advise local Lands Commissioner at Mossman that application for special lease of portion 62 County of Solander Parish of Alexandra is being made and is being forwarded to the Lands Commissioner by Kenneth J. Morris. Ask the Lands Commissioner if there is any way he is able to hold the lease for Mr. Morris. Advise me urgently by radio today.

(Sgd.) Bischof Commissioner."

"N.B. Message despatched at the request of Mr. Trueman, Commissioner's Office, who requests that the reply be passed to him immediately on receipt from Cairns. Original to Commissioner. Copies sent to Inspector Bauer, Records and File, C.C. Room."

The significant part of the message is the statement that the Minister is making an

application and the application is being forwarded; not that he has made it and that it has been forwarded, but that he is making one and that it is being forwarded. And the Commissioner, far exceeding his official duties, asked the Inspector of Police at Cairns to find out from the Land Commissioner "if there is any way he is able to hold the lease for Mr. Morris." No ordinary citizen in Queensland could get such service from any departmental head—let alone the Commissioner of Police—when dealing in land matters such as this. The story was made more significant by the fact that the Deputy Premier said—

"I was subsequently informed by a Cairns resident, not a Government servant nor a Police Officer, that, when it became known in Cairns that I was inquiring of a person NOT a Public Servant, nor a Police Officer, in regard to sea entry to this particular piece of land, a person,"—

he is very vague and indefinite—

"not a Public Servant, nor a Police officer, nor the Land Agent previously referred to, hurried to secure the land with the hope of re-selling to me at a handsome profit."

What a damning indictment to place on any bona fide applicant for Crown land. In an endeavour to justify his actions in this matter, the Minister claims an improper motive and illegality of approach for the land by this unknown man at Mossman. However, his very admission means that he discovered that this man in Cairns was anxious to obtain the land in Cairns and Mr. Morris therefore sent an urgent telegraph message, not through the ordinary channels, not through the channels of the Lands Department, but through the Commissioner of Police himself, in a vain endeavour to secure priority over the application that had already been lodged. In any case, he made the admission in his answer to the question that he knew that this application had been made, and he used the Commissioner of Police as an instrument to dabble in a land transaction in order to gain some advantage over an ordinary citizen, and a defenceless citizen at that.

Mr. Ewan: Excuse me—

Mr. BENNETT: Just a minute.

Because that citizen acted in good faith and adopted the normal channels that any ordinary purchaser or applicant for Crown land would adopt, he is maligned and defamed in this Chamber, where he has no opportunity of defending himself. I think the statement by the Minister was most reprehensible and does no credit to a Minister of the Crown who is the Deputy Premier of the State. There was nothing wrong with the methods or attempts of the man at Mossman, who merely made an ordinary application for the land.

Mr. Ewan: What was that application?

Mr. BENNETT: Well, according to the Minister's answer the acting land agent

returned his money—sent the money back to the Minister. All power to that acting land agent, Mr. E. K. Buchan. He was a man of character who showed fortitude in spite of the pressure that was obviously used upon him to set aside an application made in the proper way that he had already received. Thank goodness this Parliament was not subjected to the indignity of having to be told that the Minister gained some preference in the purchase of Crown land. The only reason that this Parliament was not subjected to that scurrulous history was that the local acting land agent, Mr. E. K. Buchan, had the courage, the intestinal fortitude and the good sense to reject the endeavours that were made by the Deputy Premier, and that is on the evidence provided by the Deputy Premier himself. I think it would be very embarrassing for many members on the Government benches if it were not that that acting land agent at Mossman acted in such a proper way.

Mr. Ewan: He would naturally give preference to the first applicant.

Mr. BENNETT: He would have to, particularly as he would have to deal only with the applications he had received. Surely no-one would expect him to act on a wireless message sent illegally and in contravention of the licence granted to the Commissioner of Police and the Police Force. Surely he has not to act on an illegal document that was sent at the direction of the Deputy Premier.

I sincerely hope that no further communications will be sent by the Deputy Premier in breach of, and in conflict with the terms and conditions of the licence granted to the Police Department by the Postmaster-General's Department. I was shocked and horrified to find in the Minister's reply the statement that he makes a practice of using the police wireless network. This was not an isolated occasion; on his own admission, and on the evidence he has provided, he makes a habit of doing it in his official capacity as a Minister of the Crown, and obviously on his own admission too, he must be using it for private purposes. The only excuse—and it is not even a plausible excuse; it certainly is not justifiable and should not be tolerated by this Parliament, and I hope it will be dealt with by the Postmaster-General—he gives is that the police wireless message is cheaper and quicker.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member raised a point concerning land. He is now drifting from that point and consequently I cannot allow him to continue in that strain. He must now confine his remarks to land matters.

Mr. BENNETT: I must obey your ruling, Mr. Taylor. There are many other aspects of that transaction with which I should have liked to deal, but I will dismiss my observations on the matter by expressing the sincere hope that the Deputy Premier will be called to task by the Premier and his Cabinet and

forced to correct the error of his ways in relation to land matters and the use of the police wireless network.

The hon. member for Gregory mentioned Mr. Dodds and queried his qualifications as a member of the Land Court. I suppose he could equally have queried the qualifications of the President of the Land Court. Let us start from the top. I suppose if the boss is not much good, one cannot expect the inferiors to be any better; otherwise they would be President of the Land Court. Mr. Percy Wright's only claim to fame is that he was able to gerrymander the electoral boundaries of the State of Queensland in such a way that he secured the tenure of office of this very dubious form of coalition government that we have at the present time. Far from having any qualifications on land matters, he has never been out into the country, I imagine. He has been hanging around Queen Street for most of his professional life.

Mr. Ewan: He has handled a lot of land Court cases.

Mr. BENNETT: That surprises me, because I am practising at the Bar and he is very junior to me. I know of very few land cases he has had. As a matter of fact, if the hon. member really wants it that way, there was a certain stage when Mr. Wright gave up practising at the Bar and went to work in a solicitor's firm for many years. Until this Government gained power, and not very long before the appointment of the Electoral Boundaries Commission, he reapplied for admission to the Bar, so, at the time of his appointment, in seniority in terms of the Barristers Act and the ethics of the Bar, he would be a barrister of one year's standing. He is the man who has been appointed President of the Land Court, and even the hon. member for Roma, in his quieter and saner moments when he is not putting on a bold front, would admit that that appointment was mainly a reward for the expert job he did to preserve the dubious hides of the Government in office at the time.

Mr. Ewan: I remember him practising in Warwick years ago as a solicitor handling land cases.

Mr. BENNETT: He may have practised as a solicitor, but at the time of his appointment he was a barrister and officially on the Bar list he would have been down at the bottom and would have been a barrister of one year's standing.

Mr. Ewan: The President of the Land Court does not have to be a barrister to be appointed to that office. Are you a Land Court advocate?

Mr. BENNETT: I entirely agree. I subscribe to that opinion. As a matter of fact, the previous President of the Land Court, to my knowledge, was not a barrister, nor had he any legal knowledge. But he had

the greatest of qualifications on Land Court matters and land business of the State, and that was the reason for his appointment. The submission that I am making is that, whether you are a barrister, a doctor, a land valuer, a cattle-truck driver out west, or a boundary rider or an ordinary station hand, if you have the necessary qualifications and experience in land matters you are entitled to be appointed as President or as a member of the Land Court. On the other hand, if the only great qualification you have is the gerrymandering of boundaries and being an expert in political chicanery and securing the return to office of most of the Cabinet Ministers in the Government, that is no reason why you should be considered for appointment to the Land Court.

Before I dismiss that appointment, I wish to say that I read with some degree of alarm that Vivian Rogers Creighton is being considered by this Government for readmission to the Public Service.

A Government Member: A good man.

Mr. BENNETT: It has been remarked that he is a good man. According to the Royal Commissioner, Mr. Justice Townley, at the particular time of dealing with his conduct as it related to his duties and responsibilities as a public servant, he did not share the opinion of the hon. member who interjected.

Mr. Ewan: You would not split on the policeman who told you about the message, would you?

Mr. BENNETT: Split on the policeman?

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. BENNETT: I understand that, much to the consternation of the vast body of public servants, an endeavour is being made to find some suitable task for Mr. Creighton, and it is even suggested in some circles that he will be reappointed to the Department of Public Lands as an industrial officer. The Government are making a great deal of play about the industrial development of Queensland in an endeavour to get industrialists to come to this State, and it has been suggested that Mr. Creighton will be appointed an industrial liaison officer in the Department of Public Lands and be in charge of leasehold lands that are available for industrialists. It has been suggested that he will have to confer and collaborate and work in close harmony and co-operation with the liaison officer for industry in the Department of Labour and Industry, Mr. Gair. Can hon. members imagine the two of them, Mr. Creighton and Mr. Gair, working in close harmony and collaboration at the suggestion and on the appointment of this Government, who are prepared, in order to save their political hide, to make strange bedfellows of people who were once bitter antagonists and protagonists and only a few short years ago had a great dislike one for the other?

It is going to be an extraordinary thing for the State of Queensland to find Mr.

Creighton, who was dismissed on the motion of Mr. Gair, working in close collaboration and harmony with him to sell Queensland to industrialists; Mr. Creighton going out to get the land and Mr. Gair going out to get the industrialists, and meeting, probably at Lennox Hotel, or somewhere such as that, on the expense account of the Government, in an endeavour to bring these industrialists to Queensland. It will be a very happy and extraordinary scheme! But coalition governments, as I mentioned in one of my earlier speeches in this Chamber, are prepared to make compromises on anything, and the Minister for Labour and Industry, in an endeavour to preserve his position, will try to arrange that alliance, doubtful and dubious as it may be, because I know that Mr. Creighton and Mr. Morris worked busily over in the West End area in an endeavour to unseat Australian Labour Party representatives in bygone elections. It may be that the Government can get all their former political friends to work against endorsed A.L.P. candidates as one home team so that they can further the aims and objects of their coalition government.

The hon. member for Gregory dealt with closer development. His remarks, of course, are completely in conflict with the annual report of the Department of Public Lands and the Land Administration Commission on closer settlement. In land development in Queensland, "applicants have come to regard as a right what was intended to be a privilege, practice has outstripped legislative intent and many importunate lessees press their cases, irrespective of merit, with vigour and persistence in the face of official disapproval, to secure this most alluring and valuable concession."

They are not my words; they are the words used in the report of the Royal Commission on Pastoral Lands Settlement (Queensland), one member of which was Vivian Rogers Creighton himself. What he said about graziers is nobody's business! Among other things, he said—

"Small holders with no claim to being graziers have been built up to standards of affluence by gifts of land greater in capacity than their original holdings. There are cases of two or even three additional areas being granted to one lessee."

And so he goes on. He describes the efforts, aims and objects of these greedy graziers and landholders who are not satisfied with making a decent living but who are ever pressing and persisting with their claims to get bigger.

(Time expired.)

Mr. WHARTON (Burnett) (8.17 p.m.): I congratulate the Minister on the way in which he introduced his Estimates. Seeing that he is a new Minister, I think he is all the more worthy of congratulation. I know of the splendid efforts he made to acquaint himself with the duties of his high office. The work he did is reflected in the report presented to Parliament.

The Public Lands portfolio is a job on its own. The addition of the Irrigation portfolio makes the Minister's task twice as difficult and I congratulate him on the way he has tackled his duties.

It would not be out of place for me to refer to Mr. Muller, because we realise that for part of the year under review the Department of Public Lands was under his jurisdiction. He also did a good job in his administration of the Departments of Public Lands and Irrigation after he took them over from a Government who had done virtually nothing in this phase of public administration.

I express appreciation of the interest the present Minister has taken in his job in travelling throughout the country. I shall refer only to my own electorate, where he visited Gayndah, Biggenden, Gin Gin and Bundaberg to see what the people required. He was interested in the local problems. He put before us certain irrigation proposals, and we hope that in the near future he will be with us again to discuss some of them further. Since his visit we have had more positive thinking about some of the proposals he put up and we hope to get further assistance by way of irrigation.

The annual report of the Land Administration Commission shows that during the post-war period 14,000,000 acres have been opened for new settlement. Twenty-four blocks of sheep country, totalling 593,000 acres, and 28 blocks of cattle country, totalling 772,000 acres, were opened for new settlement last financial year. These figures include blocks opened under the group provisions of the Land Acts. Settlement farm leases have taken in 25,000 acres made available under the group provisions of the Land Acts. Under the agricultural farm and perpetual lease selection scheme, one block containing 1,817 acres was made available under the group provisions of the Land Acts. It has been a period of progressive land settlement, which is all to the credit of the Government. Not only does it open the way to settling new land in the larger areas but it will lend itself to closer settlement.

I wish to refer briefly to the work done by the department in the control of noxious weeds—*Harrisia cactus*, *lantana*, *groundsel*, and others.

Opposition Member interjected.

Mr. WHARTON: I suggest that the hon. member, whose electorate I cannot remember, would not know a great deal about noxious weeds.

I commend the department on its work in the eradication of these noxious weeds, not only by poison but also by biological control, which, by the way, is one of the best ways to destroy them.

The groundsel pest problem is only in its infancy at the moment, but it is one that will loom large in the future. It should

be faced up to now before it takes control of some very good land on which it is becoming prevalent.

One aspect of Government policy on which I wish to comment is that of freeholding land. I mention it because it is enabling the freeholding of areas of up to 5,000 acres. They are large areas but in most cases they are quite effective living areas, and I compliment the Government upon their action. The most favourable aspect of it is that it permits a family man, even one on a small area, to freehold it.

Mr. Madsen: And develop it.

Mr. WHARTON: And develop it. Every man, I am sure, hopes to have his own home and this Government are enabling him to do so upon his own block of land. The Government's policy is important in that it allows the small land-holder, as well as the large, to own his own land.

I desire next to refer to the legislation of this Government as it relates to brigalow leases. I commend the Government for their action in that regard, because I believe that these leases with a 40-year term are a very suitable way of developing the State. Brigalow land is very valuable and lends itself to intensive farming as well as fairly large-scale cattle-raising. It also lends itself to improved pastures and the long term that has been made part of the lease is necessary because it is a fairly long-term plan of development. It needs quite an amount of money and, as I said, requires a fairly long term. This land, which lends itself so well to improved pastures, will ultimately also be suitable for crop-growing, which is an effective method of increasing beef production.

I should like to refer briefly to my own electorate and to mention some of the things produced there—in particular, cattle, dairy products, cotton, grain, pigs and calves. Those products are general throughout the area. In the Bundaberg district, of course, we have particularly the sugar-cane and tobacco areas. I mention Coalstoun Lakes for peanuts and, of course, citrus-growing in the Gayndah area.

I notice in the annual report of the department commendation of the variety of production in the area. I make that point merely because I think the best development of the land will come by using it for the purpose for which it is best suited. Whether it be citrus-growing land, grazing land or farming land, it should be used for the particular purpose for which it is best suited. The men who own the land know the methods most suitable for obtaining production from it, and if it is left to them the controversy over small or big areas will be settled. I personally believe in closer settlement, but in such a scheme the lands must be used to the best purpose. Crops must be selected according to the types of soil on the blocks. When the land is poor, of course, the selection must be comparatively large in size. That applies more particularly

when the block is far removed from transport facilities. People on such blocks require large areas. I should say they are doing a good job. Why cut up those areas and get a result worse than the result from the original area?

In land settlement, where the blocks are drawn by ballot, certain preliminary work is essential. The first job would be the fencing of the block. Watering facilities have to be provided, and timber cleared. The pastures must then be improved and cultivation undertaken. I merely mention these things to show that development is a fairly lengthy job. I admire the people who enter ballots, because before they can hope to develop the properties they might draw they must borrow a considerable amount of finance, that is, unless they personally have sufficient money, and it is hardly likely that any such person would have sufficient money to develop one of these blocks. The money must be borrowed to cover the cost of fencing, watering facilities, improvements generally and stocking the property. Not taking into consideration the effect of droughts, a selector would not make a penny for the first three years. Development of blocks is a very costly and long-range process. Much capital is required, and it is difficult to obtain.

I am surprised at the great number of people who enter the ballots for these blocks. Although I realise the truth of what was said by another hon. member, in my opinion many people enter ballots for blocks without realising what they may be letting themselves in for. It may take 10 years before a selector can see the light of day or get ahead of his overdraft, particularly if the block is in a virgin state. Those who are crying out for land might be well advised to purchase blocks where the pioneering work has been done and improvements effected at a lower cost than would be possible today. It would be better to buy such blocks than to draw a block and start developing it.

Mr. Beardmore: And buy a lot of hard work.

Mr. WHARTON: That is so. Some landholders would sell their blocks if they were paid for the improvements they have effected, and in many instances they did the work the hard way. They were the pioneers. Finance is difficult to obtain. In that respect I refer hon. members to the following passage from the departmental report—

“However, the question of the degree of the availability of long-term rural finance which is essential if new settlement is to be successfully established may be a matter of concern. Finance required on present-day costs to bring undeveloped land to the required stage of production combined with the high cost of stocking a new selection is substantial and it is to be hoped that future closer-settlement is not minimised by this limiting factor.”

I am concerned about the proposed restriction of credit for primary industries. In turn it will retard development of Queensland. I am not concerned about the restriction of credit for imports, because by providing such credit we are financing someone else's effort to supply goods for the State and the Commonwealth. I feel that finance is needed to develop this State. I say emphatically that we should not have credit restrictions on money for developing the land. It should be made available to any industries, whether primary or secondary, and not restricted as has been proposed. Whilst we can manage without imports, we cannot develop the State unless finance is available. In my view, the development of the State depends on adequate finance.

The provision of funds for efficient production does not tend to over-capitalisation. We often hear it said that if finance is made available for production we are over-capitalising it, but I submit that the people who go out into the country to develop it need some amenities so that they may have a better and more comfortable life out there. That is not over-capitalisation. I criticise the restriction of credit for primary producers. In trying to control the banks the Government have lost control of finance. Adequate finance is essential if we are to produce beef efficiently on an intensive system.

I refer to the Brian Pastures research station, which is sponsored by the Australian Meat Board and conducted under the auspices of the Department of Agriculture and Stock. I should like to mention some facts on sown pastures that produce quite a lot of beef. Sown pastures are a mixture of buffel grass and lucerne, green panic and lucerne, and Rhodes grass and lucerne. The mixtures are suitable on the black (basalt-derived) soils and on the scrub soils. The mixtures will persist for at least five years, and, with careful management, longer periods have been recorded. The planting time is from January to March. The seeding rates for forest soils are:—

Buffel grass ..	3 to 5 lb./acre and
	lucerne 1-2 lb./acre
Green panic ..	3 to 5 lb./acre and
	lucerne 1-2 lb./acre
Rhodes grass ..	3 to 5 lb. acre and
	lucerne 1-2 lb./acre

The seeding rate of grass depends on the quality of the seed, but good strikes have been recorded at 1 lb. an acre on new burnt scrub land.

For grazing management, the pastures should be grazed lightly during the first year, and rotational grazing two weeks on and six to eight weeks off ensures persistence of lucerne. The suggested stocking rate is 1 beast to 4 acres on a year-long basis.

I should like to refer to some of these experiments and say that with regard to the three mixtures I have mentioned, Rhodes grass and lucerne gave a gain for the year of 276 lb., green panic and lucerne gave a

gain of 341 lb. and buffel grass and lucerne gave a gain of 356 lb. as against 108 lb. for native grass. Those figures indicate quite clearly the advantages of intensive or improved pasture systems for beef production.

I make the point that good roads, tick control, good pastures and subdivision will make a valuable percentage increase in production of beef, thereby making the best contribution to a relief of the beef shortage that is now evident. Irrigated pastures, too, have played a very important role. I have mentioned several of those points and I do not wish to go further into them, but I must refer to irrigation because the Minister refers to it in his report. I compliment him on his speech on this subject and on his activity in helping to establish irrigation throughout the State. I compliment him also for the interest he took in this matter when visiting my electorate. I am sure the former Minister for Public Lands and Irrigation was very interested in land development and irrigation and water supply, and I commend him for the part he played. I am very pleased to see the present Minister carrying on in the same way. As I have mentioned before, the farm water supplies scheme provides an excellent method for producing crops and pastures, and it is of great benefit to the people who are able to use it. But if all the people who could and will use it, do so, we will be in difficulties once more with water. While that scheme is a stepping-stone to bigger schemes, and while we have it with the budgeting restricted to £500,000, as soon as the farm water supplies scheme gets under way we will be short of water and will have to build storages such as the one I saw at Moogerah only yesterday. That is an excellent scheme. It will impound a great quantity of water to be fed to the better lands farther down. I commend the former Minister for Public Lands and Irrigation, Mr. Muller, for the part he played in seeing that those with the know-how to use the water will have an adequate supply for the future.

My experience shows that citrus fruit cannot be produced without irrigation, and I refer to the important part the Mundubbera weir has played in this field. Considerable areas of citrus above and below the weir are irrigated by the waters that build up above it and by those that are let down to the lower reaches as far as Gayndah in dry areas. We know that if we have a really dry time we will be short of water there again so it behoves the Government to plan storages now to provide an adequate water supply to those who are already doing the job. Many more will come in, but those who are doing the job efficiently now should be catered for.

There are many places along the Burnett that lend themselves to irrigation. As the farm water supplies service grows, so will the need for other storages for the slightly larger schemes such as at Moogerah. A great deal has been done with irrigation but much

remains to be done, and I hope the Government will plan to meet the statesmanlike development of the State by a substantial irrigation Vote over a number of years. I stipulate "over a number of years" because it is long-term planning. Men have to be trained and equipment bought, and it is wrong to see good men and good equipment not being effectively used. I say "statesmanlike" because I know of no better way to develop and populate the State.

It is a national matter, an undertaking that will benefit the whole Commonwealth, and it is one in which the co-operation of the Commonwealth could be sought. It could be the means of saving the dairying industry, which is being thrown to the winds by a committee who listen to professors rather than to the men who have built up a great industry. It behoves the State to reject any action on the Federal level that will jeopardise our great dairying industry and the people who make it. The obvious alternative is to make readily available to those able to use it that great facility—water.

Hon. A. R. FLETCHER (Cunningham—Minister for Public Lands and Irrigation) (8.39 p.m.): I think it is a good idea, before too many of my notes accumulate, to say something about those remarks, commendatory and otherwise, that have already been passed by hon. members. I thank the Committee for being, in some cases at least, constructive.

My friend from Port Curtis led the debate from the Opposition side, rather surprisingly to me because I had not realised, or had not remembered, that he had increased in status and had become a landowner in his own right. I presume he was accorded the honour of leading the Opposition debate for that reason. Perhaps he has not been a landowner long enough to have really learned all the inner facts of life about owning land. Perhaps he will increase his status with experience. Certainly, I did not need his sympathy on the matter that he mentioned, that is, having to withstand the graziers, who, he said, would be making a non-stop attack on me. I could produce documentary evidence to show that there are men in the community who think the boot is on the other foot and that the landowners of this State deserve all the sympathy in dealing with me. I do not think that is true, but I have letters in my possession that seem to indicate that it is so.

The hon. member for Port Curtis made reference in one part of his speech to one August Bulow, who he claimed was an outstanding example of how one can succeed on a small area of land. He said Mr. Bulow was a successful landowner who became an adornment to the dairying industry and chairman of directors of a butter factory, before he passed on to his fathers, and that he had done all that on 160 acres of land. It did not seem to me to be possible for him to have done what was claimed for him on 160 acres, so I asked one of my officers to

find out if it was true. Although it is fairly correct as to the area originally owned by Mr. Bulow, at least long before his death he had the benefit of the use of a good deal more land than was suggested by the hon. member for Port Curtis. In 1924 Mr. Bulow took up an area of 149 acres—near enough to 160 acres—of good scrub and forest land. In 1930 he was granted an additional area of 230 acres—again good scrub land—making a total of 379 acres. In 1944 he purchased an area of 159 acres and some roads—also good scrub land—and in 1951 his wife purchased an area of 389 acres—also good scrub land. His family still continues to use these lands. The Bulows are a very fine family, and their efforts could well be emulated by others in their avocation, but they have a total area of 927 acres, not 160 acres as alleged. However, considering my experience of the hon. member, he got about as close as he usually gets in this sort of thing.

Mr. Windsor: 600 per cent. exaggeration.

Mr. FLETCHER: Not exactly.

The hon. member went on to speak of the need to pause and consider whether we were getting full production from the old settlement before going in for new settlement. He hazarded the suggestion that Noogoora burr was cutting down our productive capacity by a very large percentage, and in some way or another he blamed the Federal Government. I do not think his percentages were correct, nor do I think his deductions were particularly accurate, although I think in that case they were a bit closer to being correct than they were in Mr. Bulow's case.

The hon. member for Bowen, Dr. Delamothe, spoke of *Harrisia* cactus, a matter that he knows something about. The Department of Public Lands takes a good deal of credit for the destruction of what has turned out to be a very noxious weed. Like most noxious weeds, it came in under our guard. It slipped in as an attractive plant to put in someone's garden, and it turned into a noxious weed that takes advantage of the moist shady conditions of scrub lands and makes them completely useless. The plants are very hard to kill. I have one that was given me two years ago hanging in my back storeroom from Millmerran, and it does not look any the worse for it. Every time we get a wet spell, that piece of *Harrisia* cactus puts out a new shoot. It does not get anywhere, because it is hanging on a wire, but I am quite sure that if it was on the ground and the weather was wet for a few weeks it would soon grow again.

Harrisia cactus has to be destroyed by fire or poison. It is a very difficult and expensive problem. With his genius for being practical, the former Minister got down to the best way of dealing with it by invoking the co-operation of men with land in the area who were

willing to clear the scrub, and then burn and re-grass. Already the Government's practical approach through the Department of Public Lands is bearing fruit. I do not claim that it is under control, but it is very largely under control, for which the former Minister and the officers of the department are to be complimented.

The hon. member for Bowen mentioned the underground water supplies in the Burdekin delta and the worries in the last few years when it was found that they could be pumped out in a very dry year, and that salt water could be pumped in from the sea—I presume that is where it came from—unless there was a sufficient supplementary supply flowing in at the top end. We have taken this matter seriously, and this year we have allocated £8,800 for the continuation of the investigations that have been going on for some time. We are hopeful to ascertain facts relating to the water supply, such as where it comes from and how it is replenished. Indeed, it is a very interesting study. Speculations have been made about whether we might divert flood-water from the Burdekin River to depressions around the delta so that by its absorption the underground water supplies could be replenished.

Mr. Bennett: The salt water that was pumped out in 1935 was only in one or two places.

Mr. FLETCHER: I am not saying that it was pumped up everywhere. It is worrying even if it is found in only one or two places, especially if you are the man in the one of the two places. It is childish to suggest that it is not worrying because it occurs at only one or two places. If it occurs at one or two places one year it is likely to occur at three or four the next year, and then maybe five or six the following year. These are the first symptoms. You do not say, "It is only at one or two places. We can write off those farms and ignore the fact that it may be worse in the next big drought." You find out what is causing it and, if possible, do something about it.

The hon. member for Bowen spoke about the Burdekin Dam. Of course, that is a tremendous project that would cost a great deal of money. He has suggested that we should again approach the Federal Government in the hope of getting financial aid to get it started. We would like to, and probably will in the long run. But the hon. member probably has not had the opportunity to learn that the soil types around the Burdekin delta are not as suitable as we used to think they were. The non-tobacco growing soils are not very good for anything that we know of at the moment that is responsive to irrigation. We are continuing to make investigations in the hope of coming up with some of the answers. If we could find the answer, even if it is a suitable type of legume to grow as a grass for cattle-fattening, the area would be a gold mine. The investigators, who thought they were on the verge of finding all the

answers, are still worried. I was up there not very long ago so I have a first-hand knowledge of their worries. It is not easy soil to cope with. Even if we had the money at the present time to proceed with the Burdekin Dam I think it would be unwise to go ahead with the proposal immediately, when in a few years' time we might be reproached for spending a great deal of money without sufficient prior investigation of the resources of the land on which the water would be used.

The hon. member for Kedron, too, offered me his sympathy and again I say that I do not need it. If I had wanted that sort of help I would have got it somewhere else from someone who could have done me more good. I do not think that I need any particular sympathy. I am quite capable of keeping my conscience clear in these matters.

I do not blame the graziers so much for what they do. Some of them are greedy, some of them are lazy; but most of them are jolly good fellows. When they come to me I do not think, "Are these chaps greedy or lazy? Do they want something for nothing?" I think, "Do they have a case?" Very often it is a very good case and I say, "You have a point there." In some cases they have. That sort of thing is human nature. If a Minister for Lands is capable he takes those things in his stride. I do not think for a moment that I am going to be bullied. I cannot be bought and I will not be bullied. But I can be persuaded. If anybody can persuade me that something is good it shows that he has something I have overlooked—some argument that possibly I should have considered but did not. If anyone can persuade me, he is welcome to. There is no way of doing it other than by persuasion.

The hon. member for Kedron suggested it would be a good thing for me to carry on the "good old Labour policy." Perhaps some aspects of the Labour policy were good but some of them were not so good and I have found, in the administration of my department, traces of where they were not so good.

I am not going to labour that point. Why should I waste my time here belabouring what was perhaps not an ideal policy? My job is to carry out my own policy and to make sure that mine is as good as I can make it.

The same hon. member mentioned the northern areas and rather belaboured the point that we should look after the interests of forestry and the timber industry. Surely he heard me answering questions and surely he heard me in my original address assure this Chamber that those very things are being done. We embarked on the scheme in the North as responsible men, and the very first thing we did was to send a committee to look at these lands. That committee included a member of the Department of Forestry, a man who could be

depended upon to keep the department's point of view very much to the fore. It was the practical thing to do, yet hon. members opposite keep on harping about the alleged dangers of doing something because it might cut across the State's forestry interests. I can assure them that that has not happened. Surely to heaven the common-sense approach is to send men with both aspects of the matter firmly within their grasp—an agricultural expert and a forestry expert—and to take their advice when they give it.

Hon. members can take it for granted that these things are part of the general consideration. When we look at the lands in the North it will not be as purely cattle-fattening lands but as lands suitable for forestry, for cattle-fattening, or for something else, and we hope, as I said before, to lay down a pattern that will be of use to us from now on.

The hon. member also sympathised with me on what he called the cutting down in my allocation for irrigation. I am sorry about that. I am more sorry than anyone opposite and I say that with the knowledge that it is perfectly true. But there was nothing that this Government could do about the fact that you can draw only a quart out of a quart-pot. The very things that were cited by the hon. gentleman as a sort of hallmark or yardstick in deciding how much money we needed this year, with rising costs, were the things that made it impossible for us to go on with the programme we had hoped to go on with. All hon. members know what has happened with primary education, secondary education, University education, and all the other things that had to be given priority. That meant that I, in my position of Minister controlling irrigation have less to spend. I am just as sorry about that as anybody else is. I put up as hard a fight as I could, but under the circumstances I had to admit that, even if I had sole control of the allocation, I would get close to the same figure.

Mr. Bennett: They took advantage of you as the junior Minister.

Mr. FLETCHER: They did not take advantage of me. A quart-pot holds only a quart, and, if more is taken for one purpose, less is left for another. It was a matter purely of priorities and, having decided on priorities, it was found regretfully that the position had to be as it is. It was a matter of "if I get more, you get less." We can ask the Federal Government for money. That is what the hon. member suggested, but at the same time he laughed loudly when another hon. member made the same suggestion, as if to say, "What would be the use of that?" I think he or some of his colleagues in fact made the suggestion. What is the use of their suggesting that we approach the Federal Government when at the same time they laugh at the same suggestion by other hon. members and ask, "What would be the use of that?"

Mr. Newton: Don't you think it would be a good course?

Mr. FLETCHER: Of course it would be a good course, but there was nothing more I could do about it. The allocation had been made beforehand. I am quite willing to put forward a case for matters under my control, but this matter was not under my control.

The hon. member for Kedron referred to some of the earlier irrigation projects and tried to justify some that had been started in the days of Labour Governments. He said that I had said I was not very happy about the Dawson Valley scheme but that on the other hand my report mentioned a small profit from the administration of that scheme. The hon. member said it was £10,000. Even if it was £10,000, that in itself is no indication of the living standards or prosperity of the area. If the hon. member cares to visit the area, I predict with certainty a change in his viewpoint. The present scheme is not a happy one. It has not resulted in fortunes for some or even decent living standards for many. If I could wave a wand and wipe out the whole scheme and start again, I would do it. Difficulties arise in starting again or making readjustments in a restricted area or to a scheme that has been started and is now a going concern. No land is available for re-allocation, and it is very difficult to make readjustments.

Mr. Hilton: What about the Gibber Gunyah area?

Mr. FLETCHER: I do not think the Gibber Gunyah area is very good, but as the settlement is newer, or closer to its beginning, and more land is available we may possibly be able to make readjustments, as we shall do if it is possible. It is a pity to throw good money after bad or to do again the things that experience has shown to be wrong with the original settlement. The trouble with the hon. member is that he does not know enough about these settlements.

Mr. Mann: He did not know the area was so restricted, or he would not have made the remarks.

Mr. FLETCHER: He charged us with being unreasonable in charges for water. He referred to the treatment of Barron River farmers. He said the charge for water at Clare was £4 per acre-foot and for the Barron River farmers £4 per acre-foot. In fact, the charge for pumping from the Barron River was fixed at £4 per acre irrigated, equivalent to £2 per acre-foot as compared with the charge at Clare for 1959-1960, £5 per acre-foot, and for 1960-1961, £5 10s. In this matter again the hon. member did not know enough about his subject.

He also said that we had not spent a great deal on stock routes in the Channel Country. The total amount available in that fund, with the exception of a few thousand pounds, has been expended. The hon. member said that

we should get more money for this purpose, and we would be happy to get it. The money in the fund was used as wisely as possible.

The hon. member for Gregory knew what he was talking about, and that is refreshing in this Chamber. He spoke of Sir William Payne in commendable terms, for which I thank him. He also spoke on something that I take a very great interest in—additional areas. Additional areas were not wiped altogether in the last session of Parliament. The Government expressed the opinion that preference should be given to new settlers, with the provision of additional areas from those odd bits of land that were left over, in many cases, when areas were resumed from the original lessees and cut up subsequently for ballot. That is what is going on. I am in a position to know that what the hon. member for Gregory said is absolutely true. There are people out in the Far West—west of Quilpie especially—who are in a pretty bad state, especially since the price of wool has dropped. They are in great difficulty. Indeed, some of the people there have been given relief, even in the short time I have been Minister, I think we should continue to do that wherever it is possible. Some of them have a very hard time maintaining themselves. I have been out there and I know how difficult their position is.

We should do what we can, not only for the sake of the people, but for the sake of the land. When there is not enough land it leads to over-stocking, which is very bad for the land. Quite lately, I have noted that where men are hard-pressed to make a living, they are more inclined to overstock than people in comfortable circumstances. Overstocking has always been the greatest enemy of our western lands.

My notice has been drawn particularly to the deterioration of some of our western lands, and it can all be traced back to the effects of over-stocking. In all justice we can hardly blame the poor beggars, who are barely making a living, for putting on a few extra hundred or a few extra thousand sheep which, in their opinion, will keep them and their families in comfort.

Mr. Ewan: They were given too small an area.

Mr. FLETCHER: That is what I am talking about. They were given an area that was too small.

Mr. Bennett: Were they necessarily struggling along if they could afford to buy a few extra thousand sheep?

Mr. FLETCHER: If by that interjection the hon. member is suggesting that they have tons of money, it shows he does not know anything about it.

Mr. Bennett: I have been out in the sheep country.

Mr. FLETCHER: That is about all. The hon. member knows as much about sheep by being out for just a few moments in the sheep country as he knows about the love life of the trochus shell merely by swimming occasionally in the Bay.

Mr. Bennett: For your information, there is no trochus shell in the bay.

Mr. FLETCHER: While the hon. member for Gregory was speaking there were interjections from the other side that indicated that he was espousing the cause of the wealthy graziers. What a fatuous suggestion! The interjection was, "What about all those wealthy graziers who have died?" What about all the ones who are not wealthy and who have died without being mentioned in the paper? It is useless taking as a criterion the wild reports in the paper about someone who left £120,000, when he is an exceptional example of what has happened out there. He is the odd man out. Think of all the people who are flat out to get some reasonable security for themselves and a reasonable education for their children.

Mr. Bennett: Most of them are flat out on the way to Surfers Paradise.

Mr. FLETCHER: If a couple of dozen are, we must not lose sight of the 500 or more who are not. To suggest that they represent the fair standard, merely because a few wealthy graziers live at Southport, is stupid. I think we are entitled to something more reasonable and more responsible and more in accordance with the facts of the case than a silly interjection like that.

What the hon. member for Gregory said about the lot of the grazier in the Far West who has too little land was good, especially of the long-standing grazier. I have seen many of them lately, patient men with bowed backs, who have done their own work for donkeys' years, who have never been able to afford very much in the way of education for their kiddies or holidays for themselves, and if I could again wave the wand I spoke of I should do it straight away, I hope I will be able to do it, at least for some of them, before I get out of this job.

Mr. Houston: Do you agree with the hon. member's preference for leasehold tenure over freehold?

Mr. FLETCHER: I did not hear him say that.

Mr. Houston: He said it. He said that was his opinion.

Mr. FLETCHER: He is entitled to his opinion.

Mr. Houston: I am asking you if you are of the same opinion.

Mr. FLETCHER: In some cases I think freehold is very good. I have freehold and I would not exchange it for leasehold, but I think very many leaseholders would not exchange for freehold if they had to pay the

cost of freeholding. There is a very good case for both types. Certainly, most men—and this includes many Labour men—would like to have freehold if they have a living allotment or a small farm. There is something inherent in human nature—and I presume many hon. members opposite are in this category, too—that once a man has his bit of ground and builds on it he likes to feel, "These are mine. I am going to work like blazes to put on these improvements and my children are going to have them after I have gone." It is a very good thing, too; it makes the world go round.

Mr. Houston: What would have happened if years ago all this land had been freeholded and you wanted to bring the areas down to living areas?

Mr. FLETCHER: I do not know because I am not a seer. I do not think that is a fair question.

Mr. Houston: The same thing will apply in 20 years' time.

Mr. FLETCHER: I probably would have found a way. There is such a thing as land tax, which can break up big aggregations of freehold land. Freeholding is not half as vicious as our opponents would have people believe. It is often a very fine thing and frequently it leads to closer settlement far more quickly than leaseholding. Any number of men have said to me, "If only this land at Emerald that we were given in 5,000 or 6,000-acre blocks were freehold, we should be able to sell it to our sons and our brothers and our neighbours. We don't need it all but we are not allowed to sell it now."

Mr. Bennett: They can still put their sons on part of it if it is a whole lease.

Mr. FLETCHER: Yes, they can, but they would rather do it by selling it to them. Then it is theirs and they do not have to worry about it.

Mr. Newton: Whom did they get those 5,000 and 6,000-acre blocks under?

Mr. FLETCHER: Under Labour.

Mr. Newton: I thought they did not get any big blocks under Labour?

Mr. FLETCHER: The hon. member did not hear me say that. He is just being provocative.

Mr. Newton: No, your own members said that.

Mr. FLETCHER: There is no need to argue with my own members. If the hon. member will just listen to what I have to say he can argue with them afterwards.

The hon. member for Gregory spoke of big properties and expressed the hope that they would be cut up when and where possible. That is our policy. Where possible we are going to put men on blocks where they have a fair chance of making a living, blocks

capable of supporting them and their families. Of course, some of those men will not be successes, but we hope that most of them will be. It will be our task to see that they get the best possible chance.

The hon. member made the very good point, too, that this is not a bad time to cut up beef-producing areas because the high prices of beef at the moment give a man a fair chance in that most difficult period that he has to face after he has drawn a block—when he has to develop it. Very few men drawing blocks realise what a difficult job it is to develop a block, especially in these days of restricted credit; it is a major task.

Mr. Graham: That is why you have 3,000 applications for every block you throw open!

Mr. FLETCHER: That has nothing to do with the fact that it is a very difficult job.

Mr. Graham: It cannot be very difficult if you get 3,000 applicants for each block.

Mr. FLETCHER: That is not the test. It means that there are 3,000 courageous men who are willing to take the chance. It is our job to see that it is a fair chance.

Mr. Graham: The farmers and graziers should get the Victoria Cross, according to you.

Mr. FLETCHER: I will not bother with interjections such as that.

The hon. member for Gregory was courageous enough to say, "I have drawn a block, and I am happy to have drawn it. I want the other men who are ready and willing to go out onto these blocks to have the same chance as I had." He knows what price has to be paid, but he thinks it is worth it because he has an opportunity of making a future for himself and giving himself security, a modest competence, and independence.

Mr. Newton: Did he get a good block?

Mr. FLETCHER: I do not know what that has to do with it.

Mr. Newton: It has a lot to do with it.

Mr. FLETCHER: He applied for a block and he was lucky enough to draw one. I have some sympathy for his attitude towards those who draw blocks and then decide not to take them up. I think people who go in for ballots should know what they are letting themselves in for, and they should decide beforehand that if their name comes up they will take the block. They have been allowed to get out of their obligations without penalty, and I think the hon. member for Gregory has made a good point there. I think it should have the effect of bringing about a more responsible approach.

Mr. Hilton: Very few people who draw a block would not take it up.

Mr. FLETCHER: Some of them have not.

Mr. Hilton: Very few.

Mr. FLETCHER: Whether or not they are few in number, there have been some. One of my neighbours recently decided not to go on with his block because he was scared it was too big a job for his small capital.

Mr. Bennett: How many miles away was your neighbour?

Mr. FLETCHER: It does not matter how far away he was. That has nothing to do with the point.

The hon. member for Gregory also suggested that men under 21 years of age and women should not be allowed to enter for ballots. That might be a responsible point of view. Once one has drawn a block, it takes a good deal of work and courage, and also a good deal of money, to develop it.

Mr. Newton: Don't you believe that a lad of 18 or 19 could handle a block of land? They can work for farmers and manage farms quite capably.

Mr. FLETCHER: The hon. member has the distinction of knowing nothing about that subject. If he cannot follow it, I will explain it to him afterwards.

Mr. Lloyd: He is old enough to fight for his country.

Mr. FLETCHER: What has that got to do with it?

Another matter mentioned by the hon. member for Gregory was the appointment of Mr. Dodds as a member of the Land Court. In justice to Mr. Dodds, I think I should tell the Assembly a little of his background. He is a Queenslander by birth and training. He is a barrister of the Supreme Court of Queensland.

Mr. Bennett: He never practised.

Mr. FLETCHER: He is on the roll of practitioners of the High Court of Australia—

Mr. Bennett: He has never practised there, either.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. member to please stop interjecting.

Mr. FLETCHER: It would not matter if it was worth listening to. He is a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Laws of the University of Queensland. He qualified in law in 1943, whilst still in the A.I.F. in New Guinea, and he was admitted to the Bar in Queensland in 1944. He attended a school of military law and transferred to the Australian Army Legal Corps with the rank of captain, and he was stationed at Victoria Barracks and in Townsville until 1947. He was demobilised and transferred to the Reserve of Officers.

Mr. Graham: Where did he get his land experience from?

Mr. FLETCHER: Would the hon. member be patient?

After demobilisation he worked for a time with Frederic B. Hemming & Hall, solicitors in Brisbane. In 1948 he joined the Queensland Solicitor-General's office, where he served as legal assistant and assistant Crown Prosecutor until 1954. He was then appointed magistrate and Master of the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory. His experience, particularly in the Queensland Solicitor-General's Office, I think has fitted him in some respects for the position. He appeared for the Minister in the first compensation matters after World War II., under the War Service Land Settlement Acts, in respect of the Johnstone sugar lands. These cases were heard by Mr. Payne at Innisfail. He also appeared before Mr. Payne in respect of sugar lands at Mackay. In valuation matters he appeared before the Land Court and the Land Appeal Court when principles were laid down in respect of the valuation of assignments in sugar lands under the Valuer-General's Act. He regularly represented the Commissioner for Main Roads, the Commissioner for Railways and the Commissioner for Housing in the Land Court on compensation matters for acquisition under the respective Acts. He appeared for the Valuer-General in Bundaberg, Rockhampton, South Coast, Gatton and Darling Downs and in the suburban and industrial valuations of Brisbane. Before the valuation committee headed by Mr. Justice Sheehy he appeared as junior to Mr. Ryan, the present Solicitor-General, on behalf of the Valuer-General. In 1953 he accompanied the present Valuer-General to Sydney for the purpose of conferring with the New South Wales Valuer-General on certain aspects of valuations administration. When in Darwin he constituted the local court of full jurisdiction. In this court he heard all rating appeals under the Northern Territory local government ordinance. He is a well-respected gentleman.

Mr. Bennett: How many years was he actually in the Crown Law Office?

Mr. FLETCHER: I could not answer that offhand. However, if I required any further recommendation of Mr. Dodds I would say that it is clear to those who have heard the hon. member for South Brisbane that he must be a very fine gentleman, because the hon. member does not like him.

Mr. Bennett: I did not say anything about him. It was Wally Rae.

Mr. FLETCHER: The hon. member did.

Mr. BENNETT: I rise to a point of order. I made no comment about Mr. Dodds. It was the hon. member for Gregory.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the Minister to accept the hon. member's denial.

Mr. FLETCHER: If the hon. member for South Brisbane did not say anything about Mr. Dodds, I am surprised. I sat here and listened to him!

Mr. Lloyd: It was about Mr. Wright.

Mr. FLETCHER: He spoke of Mr. Wright and Mr. Dodds.

Mr. Bennett: You must be getting tired.

Mr. FLETCHER: I apologise if the hon. member did not mention Mr. Dodds, but he certainly mentioned Mr. Wright. Had I any qualms about Mr. Wright's qualifications before, I have none now, because again by the same criterion as I applied before, if the hon. member does not like him he must be a pretty good man. The hon. member wasted 25 minutes of our time. We were supposed to be debating the Estimates of the Department of Public Lands and Irrigation but from what I could hear he said nothing about them. He spent 25 monotonous minutes muck-raking with regard to a quarrel he apparently has—a quarrel with the rest of the people in the universe—and no part of it had anything to do with the matter before the Committee.

Mr. Newton: He silenced all of you over there.

Mr. FLETCHER: I think everybody got sick of it. I tried very hard to find some point in the whole of his 25 minutes' discourse that had anything to do with me and to which I could say, "In respect of your knowledge of what you are talking about, this is my point of view or these are the facts."

Mr. Mann: Should the Minister for Labour and Industry apply for land through the Police Commissioner?

Mr. FLETCHER: The hon. member for South Brisbane was no more worried about the land than was the hon. member for Brisbane.

Mr. Mann: Do you think it is the correct procedure for the Minister for Labour and Industry to apply for land at Mossman or somewhere else in the North through the police?

Mr. FLETCHER: That has nothing to do with my Estimates.

Mr. Bennett: You know it is very improper.

Mr. FLETCHER: The matter is simply that Mr. Morris apparently wanted to buy a piece of land up there that had been offered for auction and nobody had bid for it, as sometimes happens with blocks at Broadbeach. Nobody makes a bid, and, no bid having been made and the land having been passed in, it is available to anybody who will pay the first year's rent. Mr. Morris apparently heard of one of these pieces of land and decided that he would buy it. It turned out that he was too late; somebody else had applied.

Mr. Bennett: He said he heard somebody else was in for it.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I want to draw the Committee's attention to "Rule of Practice" on page 64 of the Standing Orders, The rule says—

"A member is not permitted to prosecute a quarrel with another member arising out of debates or proceedings of the House, or any Committee thereof."

I should like to point out to the Committee that I allowed the hon. member for South Brisbane to make reference to a matter of Crown lands. Subsequent to that I stopped the hon. member under that Standing Order from pursuing the subject, which has already been concluded. I trust now that the subject will be discontinued.

Mr. Duggan: I hope the Minister is not going to offend against that regulation.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. FLETCHER: Nothing would be further from my thoughts and I sympathise with the hon. member for having had to listen to the diatribe that we heard.

The hon. member for South Brisbane also mentioned that he had heard rumours about Mr. Creighton. I am not responsible for those. In any case, I deprecate the idea of dragging up old, unfortunate history and of mentioning what Mr. Justice Townley said about this gentleman. I remind the hon. member that Mr. Justice Townley said other things about other men at that time and it is not becoming of any of us to drag it up at this stage. I leave it at that.

Mr. Bennett: Is he going to be appointed, or not?

Mr. FLETCHER: That is not a matter on which I would be likely to answer the hon. member.

There was really nothing said that calls for an answer. I thank the hon. member for Burnett, who refreshingly knew something about his subject matter, for saying that he feels that I have done the right and proper thing by going up into his area and seeing it for myself. That is only fair and I am very happy to return the compliment, because he made it very easy for me to see everything while I was up there.

He made a particular point in regard to freeholding and he put the same viewpoint as I have put. There is something in us all that prompts us to want something we can call our own. In those circumstances this freeholding policy is a good thing and the proper thing to encourage the expansion of the land industry about which we all have been saying through the years we have to do something.

The same hon. member made the point that the brigalow area is good. He said what I know to be a fact, that is, if you can grow grain, you can grow pigs. It is the sort of culture that allows itself to branch out into many aspects of primary production. Any land that is capable of growing good grain is

capable of growing good livestock. The brigalow area is a veritable goldmine waiting to be exploited.

With me, the hon. member is worried that finance is restricted. It is very difficult to finance and develop a block under modern conditions and with financial restrictions as they are. Anybody who enters a ballot should do it with the knowledge that it is going to be a hard job from the start. Much work, and many years of it, and much money are required to get land into production, and anyone not physically and mentally equipped for the task should not enter a ballot. Except in rare instances, a person who wins a ballot has the job ahead of him, and it is one that only the courageous and the well-equipped should undertake.

The hon. member is worried about the fact that we have had to restrict expenditure on irrigation. As I said before, so are we. I know that in the Burnett area round Gayndah, and in the river and creek systems, there is much land that could be developed with irrigation. It would bloom like the green bay tree. I hope that some day, arising from the investigation we are conducting at the moment, we will be able to recommend a scheme that will be adopted and that enough loan money will be available at that time to put the scheme in hand.

I think I have commented on, even if I have not adequately answered, those hon. members who raised points that I thought called for comment.

Mr. TUCKER (Townsville North) (9.26 p.m.): I congratulate the Minister on his elevation to this portfolio—one of the most important having regard to the tremendous areas of leasehold in Queensland, a position that does not exist in other States.

Although the Minister has held his portfolio for only five months, I have always found him to be particularly courteous and approachable, and I thank him for the way in which he has received my representations.

I listened with interest to him tonight as he gave details of the various new electronic measuring equipment and photographic equipment that will be or has been, installed in the Survey Office. As I was formerly a draftsman and computer in the Titles Office, I worked very closely with officers of the Survey Office. All of them are tremendously keen. I think hon. members generally realise their tremendous worth to the community. Officers of the Survey Office are some of the most skilled and dedicated of Queensland's public servants. That can be said also of officers of the Department of Public Lands. I pay a tribute to the Land Commissioner in Townsville, Mr. Dendle, and his officers, who are very keen on their work and most approachable.

The Minister referred tonight to the Tully lands. He got a little flurried, and

with a frown on his face said that we should not continue to harp about the Tully lands. A.L.P. members are concerned about that area, and have every right to be apprehensive, because it is only a few short weeks since the former Minister said he had sent officers to the Tully area and that none of them had submitted a report favourable to the opening up of that land. He added that he had personally visited the area and could not see anything favourable in the proposed scheme. The fact that the former Minister became an ex-Minister overnight does not make him irresponsible, nor does it destroy his ideas. We must accept them and, taking them in conjunction with the reports given to him by his officers, surely it is to be expected that we would be apprehensive. Hon. members on this side of the Chamber are the Opposition, and we are expected by the people to act as the Opposition. We have every right to ask questions and to keep "harping," to use the Minister's word, about the subject. We are entitled to ask why the former Minister held one view—and it was supported by officers—and a few short weeks later several blocks were thrown open. We are entitled to seek the reason for the complete reversal of policy by the Department. I do not intend to labour the point very much longer, but I, and my colleagues on this side, feel that we must continue to ask questions about these matters, irrespective of what the Government or the Minister thinks about them.

As I listened to the Minister, I was considerably relieved in my mind with his explanation concerning the Tully lands. We have been told that a three-man commission has been set up; that is a very sound idea. I will concede that to the Minister. With a forestry officer on this three-man commission, I am sure that many hon. members felt relieved because he would be able to consider particularly the question of forest lands. This matter has been exercising our minds all the time. As I moved through the Tablelands in the Mulgrave by-election I met many people who were very worried about forestry. The other day the hon. member for Tablelands expressed that worry also. I do not know whether the present hon. member for Mulgrave had that worry in his mind when he asked his question. There are many people in that area, and in the Ingham area who to my knowledge have asked about it, and they are worried about the apparent reversal of policy which became evident not so long ago. It is quite possible that the three-man commission may report that these forest lands should be left alone, and quickly defined and allowed to grow, so that the areas may be exploited in the future and the timber taken from them.

I place great store on the opinion of the former Minister for Public Lands and Irrigation, Mr. Muller. Whatever the real reason was for his dismissal, we must admit

that he stuck to his guns, in his belief that the development of these forest lands would be bad for the community. He said it would be criminal to destroy them.

The Minister said that the three-man commission has been appointed and that its members will report to him. I hope he will table the report when it is made available to him so that the members of the Opposition may read it and see exactly what is recommended about these lands.

The throwing-open of only two blocks for experimental purposes displays a very cautious and commendable attitude. It should test the economic practicability of the scheme, not only from the point of view of laying down pasturage, but also the possibilities for cattle-fattening. The heavy rainfall in this area has always raised a doubt in my mind about the practicability of the pasturage of the land, and the laying down of the pasturage and its continuity. With 180 inches of rain a year, leaching of the soil is a possibility that strikes me, and the pastures could turn sour with the heavy rainfall. Those are the thoughts that come to our minds, especially when we have been associated with the land and with pastures. In the areas where we have heavy rainfall over a long period, quite often the pastures turn sour and the cattle will not eat them, although they may look lush and wonderful.

There are many cattle diseases that occur under very wet climatic conditions. We know there are diseases and pests that thrive in the very damp and wet areas. We know also that quite often, in damp and wet areas, it is very difficult to keep the dip mixture on the cattle to get rid of the pests and pestilences. The cattle may be dipped in the morning and in the afternoon there may be five inches of rain, and it is all washed off. These things have been exercising my mind, and my colleagues' minds, for the last few months, and we have been asking ourselves and other hon. members about them, but have received no satisfactory answer. That is why we continue to harp on the subject. From the two experimental blocks we should learn the true story. We should find out the kind of people to put on the blocks and how to go about them and our minds should be at ease. If they work we can throw the land open and be sure we will not lose, as we might have done had we thrown it all open *holus-bolus* at the beginning. It would have been a disaster if we had thrown it all open at once and the cattle-fattening project had proved to be a failure. We should then have been faced with the problem of what to do with the settlers.

In the main the land is virgin scrub land; it is not really forest land. Not so very long ago I was speaking to a very notable man about it and he said that when virgin scrub land is turned over it is quite often very acid and it never proves very satisfactory for pastures. I will not mention

his name because I should not care to have it bandied about the Chamber. However, the answer will be forthcoming in the next few years. The Minister said the two experimental blocks will cost a great deal of money, but we will learn much from them.

The real irrigable land lies in the Burdekin Valley. The Minister said tonight that the Burdekin Valley scheme was not practicable at the moment because certain of the soil was not considered to be favourable. In 1950 an extensive survey was made of the land and surrounding areas and of the availability of water for irrigation, and a report was prepared. The scheme appeared to be a tremendous one and we in the North anyway thought it very desirable. It certainly could not be regarded as a tin-pot scheme, or as others in some northern areas term them, a pot-boiler scheme. Pot-boiler schemes are those where small weirs are put across the land, which eventually silt up and are no longer of any use to anybody.

Once again I ask the Premier—and I will not be denied, and I think many of my colleagues in the North will not be denied—to do everything in his power to focus the Menzies-McEwen eye on this vast and great project, the Burdekin scheme, if for no other reason than that the important angle of its contribution to Australia's defence should not be overlooked. By increasing the population and productivity of the area, the State's defences must be built up, which is always of paramount importance to North Queenslanders.

The Burdekin scheme is a great multi-purpose scheme—for irrigation, hydro-electricity and flood mitigation. At least two of those come within the ambit of the Minister's portfolio. It would develop the great water resources of the Burdekin and its tributaries. The three main purposes behind the scheme are—

1. The growing of food and other agricultural and horticultural products;
2. The generation of hydro-electric energy; and
3. The mitigation of flooding.

It will utilise the waters of the Burdekin River and its tributaries. The Burdekin, of course, is one of the main rivers in Queensland, draining an area of 50,000 square miles. It would not be necessary to spend the £29,000,000 that it was estimated to cost originally—I think it has increased now—immediately. It could be brought into production gradually, and large areas of land that offer great possibilities for development could be brought into the scheme, also. I think the Minister will agree that along the Burdekin River there are vast areas of suitable land, and we read the other day that one firm had purchased a large area of land and intended to irrigate the pastures and bring it into production for beef fattening.

Apart from the first two purposes, the prevention of flood damage to the towns of Ayr and Home Hill in the Lower Burdekin Delta is a matter of importance, and it would certainly diminish the effects of the tremendous floods that are experienced in that area at certain times during most years, though not in all years.

What is the potential of this area? The report in 1950 showed that 350,000 acres could be irrigated, which is a tremendous area of land. When one flies over the Delta area, it is obvious that, although there is some sandy land that cannot be used, a large area of land is being used at present, and one feels proud of what has been done already.

Looking to the North, where the dam would be placed, one can visualise what could be done in that area. The initial report stated that 350,000 acres could be brought into production. It also stated that the area could support 50,000 people, apart from consequential increases in populations in nearby towns and cities such as Townsville, Home Hill, Ayr and even down as far as Bowen. The primary products that could be produced on this particular land would be worth somewhere about £20,000,000, and the hydro-electric power could be worth £3,000,000. The market value of the 350,000 acres was reliably estimated to be £12,000,000. As with all great schemes—the Grand Coulee project in the United States, for example—full development could be spread over a number of years, and the scheme envisaged that. The Burdekin scheme could yield substantial benefits from the outset if it envisaged first a weir so many miles up the river and then the building of a dam. It could be implemented gradually, progressively, and steadily, and certainly would not require an initial outlay of the amount that it was estimated would be needed to bring the full scheme into operation. It could be changed to meet the ever-increasing demand for power and irrigation of the people who settled on the land. That would enable capital charges during construction to be reduced to a minimum. Food production would begin immediately, and it was hoped that this would mitigate to a certain extent the cost of the project. The hydro-electric scheme would allow the scheme to be revenue-producing at an early date. The original dam, which was envisaged as being 99 miles from the mouth of the Burdekin River, would conserve water from 44,100 square miles of catchment area.

Let me elaborate a little further on the catchment area. The annual rainfall in the area is 23 inches, with some variations. With a dam wall of 150 feet and a crest length of 3,040 feet, 6,584,000 acre-feet of water could have been stored. To express that as something we can envisage, it would have been 16 times the volume of Sydney Harbour, or three times the capacity of the Hume Reservoir on the River Murray. It would have been appreciably greater than the combined storage

of the seven dams in the Snowy River project. The capacity would have provided a daily output of 5,400 acre-feet even in the worst drought period. This is equal to a flow of 17,000 gallons a second. The immensity of the project can be envisaged, and the tremendous advantage it would have been to the Northland both for irrigation and hydro-electric purposes. It would have been sufficient for the firm generation of 80,000 kilowatts at 50 per cent. load factor and for the yearly irrigation of 350,000 acres without any restriction at all from the water being taken from the dam. The operation of the hydro-electric scheme in conjunction with the thermal power station at Townsville would have given great flexibility to the system.

I shall not labour the hydro-electric scheme, but referring to the scheme as a whole I point out that by the use of aerial photography, gradient and reconnaissance surveys have already been carried out. A topographical survey of the Burdekin Falls ponded area has been made. An appreciable area of the potentially irrigable area has been gridded and contoured—an irrigable area of 350,000 acres. The construction of a weir was envisaged 79.2 miles from the mouth of the river to give the first water for irrigation. The power for the first irrigation project would have come from the Townsville Regional Electricity Board. As the dam wall was built up hydro-electric power would have taken over and the water after passing through the turbines would have flowed down the river to be used in the irrigation scheme.

Although the Minister says that it is doubtful whether certain crops would flourish in the area, if he likes to look at the report made on the scheme he will find that on experimental stations a number of crops were tried, and the figures are there for all to see. The ones tried and proved were wheat, maize, sorghums, grazing oats, cow peas, peanuts, sunflowers, linseed, cotton, jute, and assorted vegetables, not forgetting, of course, sugar.

I noted also that, with regard to those assorted vegetables, a man named Edgell reported that he would have been prepared to start vegetable-canning had the project got under way. So particular use could have been made of those vegetables if we could have got a canning plant in Townsville or in Bowen, or somewhere else in the area. The potential of the place is tremendous. Although there are sandy soils, there are heavier types of soil in the main valley floor, and so there is great potential for the right production.

With regard to beef-fattening, a large part of that irrigable land—a matter of 350,000 acres—certainly could have been irrigated. It has been proved possible by the fact that already companies have seen fit to buy part of that land and have persisted with it even though the flow of the Burdekin at the moment is very small and in some places might have stopped. They are prepared to do it and say they can make an economic possibility of it.

The Burdekin area is much more suitable than the Tully land for cattle—fattening, because the rainfall is much lower and the climate is more conducive to that purpose.

(Time expired.)

Progress reported.

The House adjourned at 9.53 p.m.