

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Assembly**

**THURSDAY, 26 OCTOBER 1961**

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

**QUESTIONS****THEFT FROM MAIN ROADS WORKSHOP AT  
SOUTH TOWNSVILLE**

**Mr. AIKENS** (Townsville South) asked the Minister for Development, Mines, Main Roads and Electricity—

“Will he inform the House of all circumstances in connection with the theft of wheels, tyres and tubes from the South Townsville workshop, as mentioned on page 163 of the Auditor-General’s Report, including any punitive action taken and restitution made?”

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

“The mechanic in charge of the Workshop observed on August 9, 1960, that certain items had been removed from a scoop. The matter was reported at once to the police who advised on October 13, 1960, that enquiries had been made without success.”

**THEFT FROM TOWNSVILLE UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE**

**Mr. AIKENS** (Townsville South) asked the Minister for Public Works and Local Government—

“Was any action taken against the person or persons responsible for stealing clocks, fans and seats, valued at £52 19s. 6d., from the Townsville University College and was any form of restitution made?”

**Hon. H. RICHTER** (Somerset) replied—

“Police investigations in this matter failed to recover the missing property or to establish the identity of the person or persons responsible for its removal. Consequently no action was taken against the person or persons responsible and no form of restitution was made.”

## REDUCTION IN PRICE OF MILK

**Mr. GILMORE** (Tablelands) asked the Minister for Justice—

"In view of the report in 'The Courier-Mail' of a reduction in price of milk to the dairy farmer of 1½d. per gallon by the Commissioner of Prices and in view of the drought conditions in many dairying areas, particularly the dairying district of Atherton Tableland, will he ensure that any reduction does not apply to North Queensland?"

**Hon. A. W. MUNRO** (Toowong) replied—

"I appreciate the concern of the Honourable Member in relation to this matter. It is, however, necessary for me to point out that the matter of determination of maximum prices is entirely one for the Commissioner of Prices in terms of the powers vested in him under the relevant legislation. It would be improper for me to endeavour to influence the Commissioner in the determination of a maximum price for any particular commodity."

## DISMISSAL OF CROWN EMPLOYEES

**Mr. BAXTER** (Hawthorne) asked the Premier—

"(1) How many employees have been dismissed by the present Government from the respective State Departments under their control from June, 1960, to the current date?"

"(2) How many of these employees were entitled to and received (a) full Long Service Leave payments and (b) pro rata Long Service payments?"

"(3) How many of the dismissed employees were in the Government service group of eight years to nine and three-quarters years, when their services were terminated?"

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

"(1) There is a wide field of Crown employment involved in the question of the Honourable Member which covers those employees engaged in various parts of the State concerning some of whom records are not available in Brisbane."

"(2) The answering of this question will require a detailed examination of the records of all Departments and great difficulty will be experienced in some cases in obtaining the particulars. In such circumstances, it is not proposed to ask the Departments concerned to undertake the lengthy task which would be involved in obtaining replies to this question."

"(3) It is obvious that this question has been framed with a view to ascertaining whether the services of Crown employees are deliberately terminated immediately prior to their completing ten years of service so that the pro rata cash payment of long service leave might be avoided. The Honourable Member can be assured that this is not the case."

## VACATION OF HOUSING COMMISSION HOME BY SURVIVING TENANT

**Mr. SHERRINGTON** (Salisbury) asked the Treasurer and Minister for Housing—

"(1) Is it the practice of the Housing Commission in cases where a home is occupied by a married couple, and one person becomes deceased, to send a note of condolence within ten days together with a request that the widow or widower vacate the premises?"

"(2) If the answer is in the affirmative and it is Government policy to request that these persons relinquish possession of such houses, will he give consideration to providing alternative accommodation by way of single room flats and give notice only after a suitable time has elapsed in order to avoid undue mental distress to persons placed in these circumstances?"

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

"(1) No. The Housing Commission is not aware of any case where a letter of condolence with a request to vacate was sent to an occupant of a Commission home. A letter is sent to the spouse of a deceased tenant requesting her to call at the Commission's office in order that (a) a tenancy agreement in her name may be completed and (b) in a case where a rebate of rent may be involved, she may be advised of the position regarding rebates and the completion of a rental rebate application."

"(2) Where, for any reason, the number of occupants of a house is reduced to one, the Commission endeavours to arrange for the occupant to vacate the premises and accept tenancy of a smaller house unit of the Commission or seek private accommodation. In many cases the occupant co-operates with the Commission and vacates the premises. In no case has a good tenant been forced to vacate."

## CLOSURE OF CAIRNS RAILWAY WORKSHOPS

**Mr. ADAIR** (Cook) asked the Premier—

"With reference to advice received from him in reply to my representations, following a telegram from the Mayor of Cairns concerning the recommendation to close the Railway Workshops and his intimation in the letter that he proposed discussing the matter with the Minister for Transport, will he indicate whether a decision on the matter can be expected in the near future?"

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

"I desire to inform the Honourable Member that this matter is still under the close examination of my colleague, the Minister for Transport. In due course, any official announcement on the subject will be made by the Minister."

TRANSPORT OF FODDER FOR STARVING STOCK  
IN CAPE YORK PENINSULA

**Mr. ADAIR** (Cook) asked the Premier—

“Owing to the severe drought conditions now existing in Cape York Peninsula, the possibility of numbers of cattle dying of starvation and the fact that fodder is transported by boat and four-wheel drive vehicles at excessive cost to this remote area, will he give favourable consideration to granting to graziers there some form of assistance on the transport of fodder?”

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

“I refer the Honourable Member to the answer given to his previous similar question of September 20, 1961, by my colleague the Honourable the Minister for Transport. As no doubt the Honourable Member is aware, the Government already subsidises a shipping service to the Peninsula, Thursday Island and the Gulf, the present rate of subsidy being £30,000 per annum. Whilst I have the utmost sympathy for the unfortunate plight of graziers in this locality and in many other drought-stricken areas, I regret to say that the Government is unable to extend further assistance as suggested by the Honourable Member.”

CONSTRUCTION OF NEW ABORIGINAL MISSION  
STATION, WEIPA BAUXITE FIELD

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

“As the Weipa Bauxite Field has been operating for approximately four years and regardless of the fact that much publicity has been given to the development being carried out by the Company less than eighty men are employed on the field, has he any knowledge when work will be commenced on the construction of the Mission on the proposed new site and also when can it be expected that large scale development will be commenced?”

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

“It is not correct to state that the Weipa bauxite field has been operating for four years. Whilst intensive field prospecting work has been taking place during that period, it was only when a firm announcement was made jointly by Consolidated Zinc and the Kaiser interests in November, 1960, that Comalco was able to begin concrete planning for the large scale development which will take place. Throughout the period of prospecting the work force was maintained at between thirty and forty men, and since November, 1960, this

has been increased, as required for work which can be undertaken, and Comalco has spent considerably more than required under the Agreement. With the letting of the contract in June, 1961, for the dredging of the necessary shipping access channel, the first major step in the development of Weipa commenced. This dredging, which will cost more than one million pounds, is an essential preliminary step and until it is completed and large ships have access to Weipa from about June, 1962, large-scale movements of materials to Weipa are not economically possible. In the meantime the Company is doing all preliminary work that is possible, and it proposes to make a start on the construction of the new Aboriginal Mission Village across the Embley Estuary in the first half of 1962 after the conclusion of the wet season, and coinciding with this would be the commencement of the construction of the new township. As I know that the Honourable Member is aware of the dredging now proceeding and the necessity therefor, he must also be aware of the impracticability of large-scale materials being landed by alternative methods.”

ORDERS FOR RAILWAY SLEEPERS

**Mr. BURROWS** (Port Curtis) asked the Minister for Transport—

“(1) To what extent have further orders or contracts for the supply of railway sleepers been reduced?”

“(2) How many individual suppliers have been affected?”

“(3) Can any indication be given as to when resumption of intake will take place?”

“(4) Will any resumption of intake be on a rationed or limited basis or can all those, who have lost their livelihood as a result of Departmental action, regard it as only a temporary measure?”

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

“(1 to 4) It is necessary from time to time to review the intake of sleepers as deliveries fluctuate according to weather conditions and other circumstances. The favourable weather conditions for timber cutting which have been experienced throughout most of the State over recent months resulted in accelerated deliveries and made it necessary as from the end of September to reduce the monthly requirements by 9,104. I am unable to say how many individual suppliers have been affected. The position will be further reviewed in March next when the intake for future requirements and the method of ordering will be decided, having regard to the circumstances then existing.”

## ARTICLE IN A SUNDAY NEWSPAPER

**Mr. AIKENS** (Townsville South): Mr. Speaker, may I ask you, on a question of privilege, in view of the allegation of blackmail made against a member of this Assembly by a Sunday newspaper, is there any way that this Assembly can investigate or determine the matter and, if necessary, bring the person concerned, before the Bar of the House?

**Mr. SPEAKER:** Order! The hon. member for Aspley has already raised the matter by giving notice of a question for tomorrow.

**Mr. AIKENS:** I merely thought the question should go to you instead of the Premier.

**Mr. SPEAKER:** I shall be pleased to look at it.

## PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the table:—

Order in Council under the Labour and Industry Acts, 1946 to 1960.

Regulation under the Weights and Measures Acts, 1951 to 1958.

Order in Council under the Justices Acts, 1886 to 1960.

Orders in Council under the Co-operative Housing Societies Acts, 1958 to 1961.

Orders in Council under the Racing and Betting Acts, 1954 to 1960.

Orders in Council under the Stamp Acts, 1894 to 1961.

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

Orders in Council under the Irrigation Acts, 1922 to 1961.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION 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) (11.17 a.m.): I move—

“That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to amend the Workers' Compensation Acts, 1916 to 1960, in certain particulars.”

The Bill deals mainly with the payment of compensation to injured seamen employed on intrastate vessels, the appointment of additional medical practitioners as alternative members of the Cardiac Board and the contribution by share-farmers towards the payment of workers' compensation premiums.

As regards compensation for seamen, I inform the Committee that for many years John Burke Limited, a Queensland shipping

company with vessels plying interstate as well as intrastate, sought a reduction of the premium charge under the Workers' Compensation Acts in respect of seagoing employees. It was claimed that the company was separately liable to pay compensation to injured and sick officers and seamen under Commonwealth Statutes and awards as well as to pay premiums under the Queensland Acts.

The company subsequently took legal action in the matter and the effect of the resultant judgment was that the State Government Insurance Office has the right to charge premiums only on the earnings of seagoing employees on intrastate ships. Consequently, it is considered desirable that the Acts be amended to make the position quite clear. We will collect premiums on the wages of employees who are entitled to the benefit of workers' compensation insurance.

The amendments, which were drawn by senior counsel, follow the judgment. Claims by employees on interstate ships are matters for the Commonwealth award. Those employees have rights under that award. Employees on “Queensland ships” will be covered by the Workers' Compensation Acts of this State.

Previously there had been a duplication of cover, but only one benefit was possible. Employees were protected under the Commonwealth industrial award, and, in addition, workers' compensation premiums were charged under the Queensland Acts.

**Mr. Duggan:** Is it clearly defined which ships are Queensland ships and so on?

**Mr. HILEY:** I am using Queensland ships as distinct from interstate ships. A Queensland ship is a ship that plies purely in Queensland waters.

**Mr. Duggan:** Do they transfer those ships occasionally to interstate runs?

**Mr. HILEY:** If they do, the wages are dissectible, and that portion of the wage is no longer subject to Queensland workers' compensation premiums. If an accident occurred in the course of an interstate voyage they would be protected under the Commonwealth Act, and would not come under our Act.

**Mr. Aikens:** Have the Commonwealth Government got a Workers' Compensation Act that is even remotely similar to ours?

**Mr. HILEY:** This protection does not arise under such an Act. It arises under the Merchant Shipping Award, which is an award of the Commonwealth Court. It lays down a complete code of compensation for injuries sustained by such a worker in the course of interstate transactions.

As the Committee will be aware, in 1960, under the provisions of the Workers' Compensation Act a Cardiac Board consisting of

three members was appointed to consider the technical aspects of compensation appeals on heart cases. It has been found that under the present arrangements, board members, who are all very busy specialist practitioners, cannot devote sufficient time to meet more than once a week. To give some relief, and to enable more frequent meetings to be held, if required, it is proposed to appoint a panel of six additional medical specialists to assist in this work as alternate board members. At present, with three board members, if one member is not available, the board cannot be constituted. Under the provisions of the amendment, we will be able to go to the first alternate member, and if he can do it, then we have a board. It is our intention to speed up materially the hearing of these cases. There is a lag at present. I answered a question in the House some time ago about this lag and I am very anxious to run it down and get quick determinations. Members of the panel may be called upon at any time by the chairman of the board should any of the permanent members be unavailable. At present, if one of the permanent members of the board wants to go away on holidays, a board cannot be constituted. We want to appoint these six additional members so that we can hold board meetings.

Concerning the payment of workers' compensation premiums by share-farmers, it will be remembered that in 1959 the principal Act was amended to provide that workers' compensation premiums may be deducted by the owner from the payments due to the share-farmer so long as the premium is shared in the same proportion as the proceeds of the farm are divided between them, and that the share-farmer makes a prior agreement in writing authorising such deduction. However, because verbal agreements are entered into between the parties concerning the sharing of farm proceeds, it has been found difficult in practice to have agreements in writing made in relation to premium charges. To overcome these difficulties it is proposed to repeal as from 1 July, 1962, that provision in the Act which requires the prior written agreement of the share-farmer. It will mean that in future the cost of the workers' compensation charge will be one of the expenses shared by the parties to the share-farm agreement, in exactly the same proportion as they divide the proceeds under the agreement. The payment will be treated the same as rates and similar charges.

There are several other minor amendments of a machinery nature that I will explain in Committee, if necessary.

**Mr. DUGGAN** (Toowoomba West—Leader of the Opposition) (11.24 a.m.): Quite frankly, I do not see that there is very much we can argue about at this stage. It may be that the Minister may have to give us some clarification on some points later on. I think he gave a full explanation on the first matter that I raised which was by way of

interjection, about seamen on interstate and intrastate ships. It seems to me that the matter does not require any elaboration.

The provisions relating to the composition of the Cardiac Board seem sensible and necessary. Perhaps someone erred when the Act was drafted and overlooked this contingency. However, corrective action is now being taken and I trust that a great deal of trouble has not occurred.

**Mr. Hiley:** If anyone is to blame I am.

**Mr. DUGGAN:** The Treasurer has come in for his share of criticism in the Budget debate so I will not attack him on this matter. He is taking steps to rectify the trouble and I think they are very sensible. Compensation in heart cases has been the subject of debate previously in the Chamber and the Treasurer has adopted the attitude that it would probably be better for all concerned if we set up a panel of specialists whose opinion would be virtually final. I suppose it can be said to be a fairly sensible approach to the problem. Naturally those whose applications for compensation are rejected by the tribunal will challenge the fairness of the system but that would probably apply in any case.

As the Treasurer well knows, there are no cases more difficult to determine than heart cases. In almost every instance, whether the person has a congenital heart condition or whether it is otherwise entirely due to circumstances outside of his work, the person who becomes a heart case and is not able to work always attributes his inability to work to some accident that allegedly happened at work. When his application is rejected, he still holds a very strong belief that the Insurance Commissioner has acted unjustly.

I have seen some of the reports from time to time and there is no doubt that the medical evidence from the panel seems to be overwhelmingly in favour of the Commissioner. I have always taken the view that I have not discovered any evidence that the Commissioner tends to disclaim financial responsibility if the medical evidence reasonably supports a claim. I do not think he shelters behind the fact that the amount involved would constitute an additional charge. As long as the supporting evidence is fairly substantial he seems to view the application sympathetically and objectively.

Very often one of the difficulties confronting applicants for compensation, particularly in country areas, is that there are not what might be regarded as heart specialists handy. It is very difficult for the general practitioner to pit his knowledge and skill against a specialist and he is often reluctant to furnish an accompanying certificate. Though he may be of opinion that there is some merit in the claim for compensation he does not want to

subject himself to the possible embarrassment of having his views rejected by the so-called specialists. I can assure the Treasurer I have had cases along those lines. I have seen definite evidence of a reluctance on the part of a general practitioner to support in writing views he has expressed orally to the person who has sought his advice. Sometimes I think it is a lack of courage and a reluctance to antagonise the patient. Very often the medical practitioner will tell the patient quite frankly that his disability is attributable to an accident that occurred at work, and, no matter how much evidence is provided by specialists to the contrary, that person is still inclined to the view that the initial advice given by the medical practitioner is correct. I suppose that is a very human feeling.

To illustrate the point, I can recall in the days of petrol rationing when I had numbers of people coming to me and asking me to support their application to the controlling office in Brisbane, and telling that the local policeman had strongly supported their claims. When I came down here and checked the written evidence I found that it was against the applicant. It would not matter what I said to him he would still hold the view that the local policeman had supported him. That applies with equal strength to some of these heart cases. Notwithstanding the evidence given by the tribunal, some doctors encourage the belief that the Insurance Commissioner should fairly bear the cost. However, I cannot suggest any fairer method than the one suggested and, while I naturally sympathise with people whose capacity to earn a livelihood is reduced and would like to help them in every possible way, I cannot in conscience say that I can suggest a fairer method than the one operating at the present time.

The third principle in the measure—dealing with share farmers—seems to be a sensible administrative arrangement to deal with the problem. One point that strikes me concerns the share farmer who himself employs labour. What would be the relationship there? He virtually becomes an employer. In many cases the arrangement is that the owner of the farm asks the share farmer to operate it. In the great majority of cases no doubt he would be the sole person working on that farm. In cases where the farm was sufficiently large, at some period of the year—during potato picking, onion picking, or some other farm operation, for example—the share farmer would have to employ labour. I do not know whether the premium that he would have to pay would come out of general funds. It occurred to me that although the share farmer virtually comes under the classification of an employee in terms of the existing Act, in fact he becomes an employer for a certain part of the year. I have no doubt that a second policy would have to be taken out to cover the people employed by the share farmer.

**Mr. Hiley:** I think there would be little doubt that the second premium, the share-farmer's own policy to cover his employees, would be one of the business expenses of the share farm.

**Mr. DUGGAN:** I should think so. The Treasurer's statement here this morning would lead us to believe that the new provisions have been introduced as a result of experience. Consequently, I do not think they should be opposed.

**Hon. P. J. R. HILTON** (Carnarvon) (11.31 a.m.): I think that the provisions of the Bill outlined by the Minister are sound, but there is one question in my mind relating to share farmers. I have some knowledge of the agitation that this vexed question has caused in the past. From the Minister's explanation, I understand that the premium will now be paid according to the verbal arrangement entered into between the landholder and the share farmer. There are probably more share farmers in the tobacco-growing industry than in any other primary industry. As a result of what has happened in that industry, in many cases no profit has accrued to either party to such an agreement. The verbal arrangement, of course, would be that the share farmer would obtain so much of the proceeds, that the land holder would provide so much of the working expenses, and so on. But if there is a verbal arrangement covering the possibility—and it is a real possibility—of no profit accruing to either party, who is responsible for paying the premium then?

**Mr. Hiley:** They would still share it in the agreed proportion, because the share farmer is still covered. He may receive no profit from the enterprise, but there is still a risk and he is covered.

**Mr. HILTON:** I want to know whether the payment of the premium is still mandatory and the share farmer is covered.

**Mr. Hiley:** Yes.

**Mr. HILTON:** If that is so, the landholder will have to assume full responsibility. The verbal arrangement could be, "If something happens, I get nothing and you get nothing." If it is still mandatory for the landholder to insure the share farmer, he will have to bear the whole cost of the premium.

**Mr. Hiley:** In that case it could not be recovered because there is nothing to recover it from. If it is as bad as you say, the share farmer will go.

**Mr. HILTON:** But he may be injured severely, or even be put out of action for the rest of his life.

**Mr. Hiley:** He is protected.

**Mr. HILTON:** I want to be sure that he is still covered.

**Mr. Hiley:** He will be covered.

**Mr. HILTON:** I want to ensure that his position will not be jeopardised because he has entered into a verbal agreement and no profit has accrued to either party. If it all hinges on a verbal agreement, difficulties could arise. I think a careful legal examination of the position should be made. I want to ensure that an unfortunate share farmer who receives nothing for his year's effort is still protected.

I think the addition to the panel from which the Cardiac Board may be constituted is a good idea. However, complications may arise because there is such a wide difference of opinion from time to time even amongst specialists. Certain specialists may be required to examine a man over a period before the board can come to a final conclusion. One of the specialists who has been conducting an examination over a period might be replaced by another and the conflict of opinion between the two might jeopardise the interests of the applicant. If the panel of specialists is to be enlarged, the Board meetings should be conducted in such a way that there will be no disadvantage to the applicants through differences of opinion among medical specialists. That danger should be eliminated as far as possible.

**Hon. T. A. HILEY** (Chatsworth—Treasurer and Minister for Housing) (11.35 a.m.), in reply: I shall have the matter about the tobacco share-farmer who earns no profits, carefully examined. My present concept is that the law insists that the share-farmer shall be covered for workers' compensation whether there is a profit or not. He must be covered. All that the Bill does is to give the owner who is responsible for arranging the insurance cover the right to recover a proportionate share. If there are profits the farmer takes it out of the joint enterprise, if there are no profits he has no right of recovery. He will never collect because there is nothing from which to collect. Even if it is an uneconomic enterprise, at least during the few weeks that the man stays on, there is an effective cover. The owner must insure his share-farmer. If in fact there are no profits that man will not remain very long. He has no reserves and no resources; he has to go elsewhere to keep himself, his wife and his family.

I come now to the second point. The Cardiac Board is charged with two responsibilities. The first is to determine whether the heart condition is the result of work. Did it arise out of work in which the applicant was engaged? That in the main will be a compressed examination; it will not drag on and on. The second responsibility is the determination of the measure of disability. That is where the Board will have to watch a man, sometimes for months, to determine whether he makes a very good recovery, a partial recovery, or

whether he is permanently incapacitated. I shall have the matter investigated and advise hon. members at the second reading stage. I do not know whether it is possible each time we constitute the Board, not by A, B, and C but by A, B, and D, to say that it be, as it were, earmarked to deal with a particular case as it goes on. Even then you run into complications. When you are ready to review a case heard by A, B, and D, A may be on holidays; he may have died. What do you do then? It looks as if in spite of some hazards in changing the constitution of the Board you might be in a worse position if you tried to insist when a case was under review, to see how a man reacted to rest and treatment for two or three weeks, that it must be dealt with by the same Board every inch of the way. In doing that perhaps you would run into the type of difficulty in an exaggerated form that these proposed amendments are designed to overcome. However, I will have the matter examined and then I shall be able to say more about it at the second reading stage.

Motion (Mr. Hiley) agreed to.

Resolution reported.

#### FIRST READING

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

#### SUPPLY

##### RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE—ESTIMATES—FIRST AND SECOND ALLOTTED DAYS

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

##### ESTIMATES-IN-CHIEF, 1961-1962

##### DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

##### CHIEF OFFICE

**Hon. H. RICHTER** (Somerset—Minister for Public Works and Local Government) (11.41 a.m.): I move—

“That £273,762 be granted for ‘Department of Public Works and Local Government—Chief Office.’”

It will be noted that the total amount appropriated under Chief Office is £40,519 in excess of the amount appropriated for the financial year 1960-1961 of £233,243. However, a further sum of £6,061 was appropriated for 1960-1961 in the supplementary Estimates, making a net increase in the provision now requested of £34,458. This increase is occasioned mainly by the fact that additional provision has been made to meet increased expenditure for salaries due to an increase in the number of officers whose salary is being paid from Consolidated Revenue, and also to meet basic wage increases granted by the Industrial Court.



The increase in the appropriation now required for the Salaries Vote is partly offset by a decreased provision in the total requirements for Contingencies sub-division.

In the past the salaries of temporary public servants were charged to the Contingencies Vote, but provision has now been made for these officers under the Salaries Vote.

At this stage, I am reminded that the hon. member for Bulimba, a day or two ago, said that since June 1960 there had been 150 more clerical and architectural and other administrative staff put into my department. That is not so. If he refers to pages 25 and 97 of the Estimates of the probable ways and means of expenditure for the year ending 30 June, 1962, he will see that the total number of persons for whom provision is made, to be paid out of the Loan and Revenue Votes, is 556, compared with 505.

**Mr. Houston:** I will answer that later on. You have to look at last year's Estimates too, and compare the figures.

**Mr. RICHTER:** It was 505 for the preceding year.

The additional staff we are hoping to employ comprises 23 architects, four quantity surveyors, one supervisor of works, 11 engineering staff, 10 clerks and two clerk-typists. It will be noted from the Under Secretary's report that as at 30 June, 1961, there were 63 private architects listed with the department for issue of work, and four quantity surveyors. It follows that if we are able to obtain additional architects and quantity surveyors, the commissioning of private professional men will decrease accordingly. I think that explains the position.

Similarly, it will be noted that the department has established its own sites section and it is a very good section indeed. It is doing a very good job. It will eventually assume responsibility for design and inspection of earth works and other matters related to the development of building sites and ground improvements generally. This work has been previously undertaken by the Department of Main Roads and, to the extent that we are able to obtain the engineering staff I have referred to, so will the performance of this work by the Department of Main Roads be reduced.

There has been a shortage of clerical staff for some time in certain branches of the department and in some of the country offices. This shortage has necessitated at times the working of considerable overtime. If the Public Service Commissioner's Department is able to make additional clerical staff available, it will be appreciated that there will be a corresponding reduction of overtime payment. This is a very necessary step.

Increased provision is now required for the Contingencies Vote, fares, freights, printing and stationery.

In moving this resolution, it is appropriate to review the work of the department for the

last financial year. I do not propose to go into any great detail as particulars of the department's activities may be gathered from a perusal of my Under Secretary's report, which has been tabled in the House.

**Mr. Hilton:** As long as you tell us you have all the money you want to spend.

**Mr. RICHTER:** All the information is to be obtained from the Under Secretary's report.

When speaking of these Estimates for 1960-1961 the late Lloyd Roberts referred to the fact that building expenditure for the year 1959-1960 by the department was the highest on record.

I would now inform hon. members that for the past financial year building expenditure surpassed the 1959-1960 record by £940,000 to a new total of £7,457,705. In addition, this expenditure was 80 per cent. higher than in our first year of office in 1957-1958. This is indicative of the heavy programme of building construction undertaken by my department throughout the State over the past year.

The phenomenal increase in my department's responsibility is evidenced by the fact that over the past decade or two total building expenditure has risen from £491,623 in 1940-1941 to £1,729,702 in 1950-1951 and to a total of £7,457,705 in the year just ended. In 1940-1941 it was less than £500,000, ten years later it was £1,750,000 and today it is £7,500,000.

My department is one of the main constructional authorities for the State. Amongst other things, it has the responsibility for the design and construction of new Government buildings, the maintenance and upkeep of existing buildings and the supply of school and office furniture.

To carry out the building programme of the department, it was necessary to maintain a balance of construction work by both contract and day-labour.

The maintenance and repair of existing buildings continued to receive the closest attention, limited only by the availability of Revenue Funds for the purpose.

A high percentage of Government buildings are of timber-frame construction, the maintenance costs of which are comparatively high. Buildings constructed in the first decade of the post-war period now require regular attention to maintain them in good condition. Because of this the maintenance of public buildings continues to be an important feature of the department's activities.

In this regard, expenditure on the maintenance and repair of Government buildings for the past financial year totalled £824,047 as against £879,014 in the preceding year. The decrease in expenditure was due solely

to the fact that during 1960-1961 maintenance work on buildings had to be curtailed to confine expenditure from the Consolidated Revenue Fund within the limits of the total appropriation. Expenditure in excess of the amount appropriated for Services—Public Buildings had to be met, and this was financed partly by expending less on buildings than the amount appropriated for the purpose.

From a perusal of the annual report presented by my Under Secretary, it will be noted that expenditure on State public buildings—exclusive of expenditure recouped by other departments—in the last four years of Labour's office, from 1953-1954 to 1956-1957, totalled £12,255,828, or an average of £3,063,957 a year, whereas under the four years of this Government, expenditure on buildings totalled £22,887,145 or an average of £5,721,786 a year. It will thus be noted that in four years of office we have spent nearly twice as much on public buildings as Labour did in their last four years of office. This is not due to any inflationary monetary values but is indicative of the Government's recognition of the need to provide a standard of accommodation and facilities for the Public Service in keeping with the State's development.

I remind hon. members that during the period from 1957-1961, the basic wage rose from £12 1s. a week to £14 4s. a week. That represents a rise of approximately 17½ per cent., but despite that, we have been able to do twice as much work with less than twice the expenditure.

**Mr. Hilton:** Obviously the increase in the basic wage plus other increases has affected the cost of your buildings.

**Mr. RICHTER:** I think the hon. member must agree with me that if there is an increase of 17½ per cent. that would be relative throughout industry, but we have done twice as much even though there has been an increase of 17½ per cent.

In my short term of office I have broadly covered the whole State in official visits, for one reason or another and I am repeatedly complimented on the work of the department, for the new look given to Government buildings, schools and offices alike. The new approach to painting schemes, ventilation and lighting, have earned the commendation of the people in a great many centres and this work is spreading and continuing.

Due to the very large increase in enrolments at both primary and secondary schools, a considerable portion of the spending in the past financial year was on the provision of accommodation to meet educational requirements, particularly at secondary schools. Of the total expenditure on buildings during 1960-1961, of £7,457,705, an amount of £4,145,388 was expended on educational establishments.

This year's secondary school enrolments in Queensland reached record figures and at the beginning of the 1961 school year had increased by some 6,300 taking the total enrolments to almost 33,000 compared with 15,000 in 1957. The total enrolment in all State schools now exceeds 240,000, which exceeds that of 1950 by almost 90,000.

Despite this continued growth in the schools' population, no child in Queensland has been denied a place in a State school by reason of the fact that the Department of Public Works has failed to provide reasonable accommodation. Since 1 July, 1957, 1,827 classrooms have been provided.

A sum of £3,685,000, or more than half of this year's spending from Loan Fund will be on educational buildings. This sum includes £1,395,000 on primary schools, £1,883,000 on high schools and technical colleges, £370,000 for sundry educational works and £37,000 on Gatton College.

Apart from those primary schools that were under construction, important works programmed for early commencement are the erection of new primary schools at Mt. Gravatt South, Musgrave Hill (Southport), Rathdowney, Dinmore, Gympie South, Dalby (first section), and Parramatta (infants).

It is expected that a start will be made on the major work of remodelling the School for the Blind and Deaf in Brisbane.

In readiness for the 1962 school year, approval has already been given for the erection of the first section of new high schools at Inala, Cleveland, and Brassall (Ipswich), while provision has been made for the commencement of a high school at Chinchilla.

Extensive additions are planned at a number of high schools and, for technical college purposes, provision has been made for several workshop blocks at various centres.

Additions at an estimated cost of £187,000 are planned for the new University centre at Townsville.

A recent examination of Commonwealth statistics discloses that the average enrolment per school in Queensland was 144 pupils in 1958 compared with the Commonwealth average of 192 pupils for that year. If schools had been provided by the State at the Commonwealth average of 192 pupils per school, it would have been necessary to provide and maintain 390 fewer schools.

A pupil in a small school does not demand greater classroom space than does a pupil in a large school, but it is not practicable to design and erect schools of various sizes to meet the immediate or near future classroom requirement of a particular district. For example, it would not be practicable to erect a building to provide just sufficient classroom space for, say 15 pupils.

Apart from classroom accommodation, it is necessary to provide at all schools, regardless of size, separate E.C. or W.C. buildings

for male and female pupils and for the teacher. Grounds must be securely fenced for the protection of pupils and property and must be cleared and placed in reasonable condition for play purposes. In addition, shelter, either by partially enclosing and paving under schools on high stumps or by erecting a play shed, must be provided for the use of pupils before school and during play periods. Other standard provisions include library facilities and storerooms.

Such items provided at a small school would serve equally well without enlargement, a school with a much higher attendance but reduction in size is impossible or impracticable.

So that pupils in the larger country towns may receive secondary education, buildings suitably equipped are being provided. The buildings include classrooms, commercial rooms and science laboratories as well as buildings for instruction in manual training and domestic science. The accommodation provided at many centres would serve a much larger number of pupils than the number enrolled, but it would be impracticable to reduce the size of the buildings.

It has been found necessary to provide residences for head teachers at a large number of country schools and further residences are being erected each year. If the population were more concentrated, as it is in other States, the number of residences required would be considerably fewer. Because of its dispersed population, Queensland has to meet costs of construction and maintenance of school buildings in excess of those that other States have to meet in providing accommodation of a similar standard.

Even though the department has to meet these extra costs, the cost to the State for buildings per head of school population was less than half that of any other State in 1958, and it can generally be accepted that my department erects and maintains buildings required for school purposes at a much lower per capita cost than do building-construction and maintenance authorities in other States.

In addition to providing the buildings necessary to meet educational requirements throughout the State, provision has also been made to meet the urgent requirements of other departments.

Renovations and extensions to the new police headquarters building at North Quay are well advanced, and the building should be ready for occupation by the Commissioner of Police, his staff, the C. I. Branch, the Traffic Branch, and other sections of the department, during the current financial year. Work will continue on the erection of the new police station at Rockhampton, foundations for which are at present being prepared. It is expected that new police stations will be erected during the year at Kilkivan and Burketown and a commencement made on new buildings at Stanthorpe, Ayr, and Home Hill.

Work has commenced on the superstructure of additions to the courthouse at Longreach, and it is expected that the erection of a new courthouse at Blackall will be begun. A tender has been accepted for the construction of a new government building at Mareeba.

Major work to be undertaken for the Prisons Department is the establishment of a new medium security prison at Wacol. A contract has been let for the erection of cell accommodation, whilst planning has been completed for a kitchen and dining block, bathrooms and toilets.

For the Department of Health and Home Affairs, major works for which provision has been made are the erection of the first section of the Psychiatric Hospital at Cherm-side and the start of a new maternity hospital at Kingaroy.

In regard to Public Service accommodation generally, it is expected that the Commonwealth Taxation Department will move from the Taxation Building during the current financial year, thus releasing the building for complete State use. This, together with the Health and Welfare Building for which financial provision has been made, will make possible a major reallocation of Public Service Accommodation, and this is at present receiving the attention of the Public Service Commissioner.

Work has commenced on the establishment, at an estimated cost of £81,500, of an artificial insemination centre at Wacol for the Department of Agriculture and Stock.

Approval has also been given for an expenditure of £67,334 for the erection of a forest-products experimental yard at Rocklea.

Provision has been made for the allocation of £40,000 to be paid to the Wheat Industry Research Council towards the cost of constructing a research centre at Toowoomba. This sum will be recouped from the relevant Trust Fund to the Government over a period of up to four years.

An amount of £70,000 is also being provided towards the cost of the construction of a paediatric unit at the Brisbane Children's Hospital for University purposes.

Consideration is being given to air-conditioning in western and far northern areas, and a survey has been made of existing buildings in these areas to assess the needs. Following this survey, a priority programme for the air-conditioning of buildings will be established.

Following a report and recommendation made by a special committee set up for the purpose of examining the housing position of public servants in the country, the Government have taken further positive steps to provide residences for Crown employees who are required to reside in country centres. The initial programme provides for the construction of 50 houses a year.

This provision is exclusive of residences to be provided for head teachers of primary schools, police residences and residences at experimental stations, construction projects, prison reserves, mental hospitals, institutions, and the like. To carry out the proposed building programme satisfactorily, my department will continue the policy of day-labour organisation which, together with a judicious use of contract work, has proved effective for the expeditious prosecution of works authorised in most parts of the State.

Branches of the department are set up in those centres which offer the best facilities for decentralisation. We are aiming at further decentralisation and we hope to accomplish that in the very near future.

The metropolitan area, and the adjacent North and South Coast districts, are controlled by district supervisors operating from Brisbane, with district offices at North and South Brisbane, and in the Central district.

Further afield, district supervisors are assigned to specific districts with headquarters at Toowoomba, Maryborough, Bundaberg, Rockhampton, Mackay, Townsville and Cairns. Offices also have been established at Charleville, Barcaldine and Cloncurry.

Consideration is being given to the re-arrangement of existing districts to enable the establishment of an additional district office.

A further step in the decentralisation of departmental activity has been the appointment, in recent years, of district architects in Central and Northern Queensland. These offices have been created at Rockhampton and Townsville respectively for the purpose of a gradual and orderly decentralisation of the department's technical services. The extension of this activity by the appointment of an additional district architect is being examined.

Under the control of the Chief Engineer, a sites section was recently established, which will assume responsibility for the design and inspection of earth works, associated surveys and other matters related to the development of building sites and ground improvements generally. In this regard it is proposed to undertake progressively the works previously performed by the Main Roads Department on my department's behalf.

The Valuer-General's Department comes under my portfolio. As there has been quite a deal of woolly thinking and peculiar statements made about that department I shall explain the position. The following, from a correspondent of "The Courier-Mail," is an example of such woolly thinking—

"The Valuer-General does not consider the great hardship he is causing by imposing higher rates on the people, especially pensioners. It would do Mr. Menzies and members good to be on the age pension

for 12 months; they would then have a bit of feeling for their not-so-fortunate people."

The Valuation of Land Act was passed in 1944 but was not proclaimed until 1 July, 1946. Following the Premiers' Conference in 1916 all States agreed to establish a valuation department, but New South Wales was the only State that immediately implemented that decision. In New South Wales the Valuation of Land Act was passed in 1916. It is acknowledged as the valuing authority for that State, being favourably accepted by the public as such.

In 1950 Tasmania established a Valuation Branch with an Act very similar to our own, while recently Victoria has established a Valuer-General's Department. In New Zealand the Valuer-General's Department has been in existence since 1906.

The Queensland Valuation of Land Act is modelled broadly on the Valuation of Land Act of New South Wales. The basis of valuation for rating and taxing purposes in each State is the unimproved value, which is the capital sum which the fee-simple of the land might be expected to realise if offered for sale bare of improvements; that is to say, the market value in its unimproved state.

In Queensland there are 131 local authority areas, including cities and towns. The Valuer-General's Department has now valued 116 local authority areas and by 30 June, 1962, it is expected that it will have valued 123 areas, leaving eight areas still to be done. The latter areas are in the far-western part of the State.

The total number of valuations in the State comprising freehold and leasehold lands is estimated at 570,000 when the whole of the State is completed. It is anticipated that the whole of the State will be completed by 1963-1964.

Prior to the amending Act of 1958 which was brought in by this Government, the period of valuation was a fixed period of five years, but in order that the balance of the State might be valued as quickly as possible, the Valuation of Land Act was amended to provide that a valuation shall have a currency of not less than five years or more than eight years. The enactment of this provision enabled the Valuer-General to value 27 additional new local authority areas since the beginning of 1959.

In order to meet local authority requirements and equitably carry out revaluation work in each of the valuation districts, it is necessary for the Valuer-General to prepare a planned programme of work for a number of years ahead. If such programmes were not drawn up and adhered to as far as practicable, it would be impossible for the Valuer-General to fulfil all requirements.

The function of the Valuer-General is to provide a fair and reasonable valuation upon which rates and taxes are levied. He is not

concerned with the amount of rates or the amount of tax levied on his valuation. That is the function of the local authority and the Government. He must, however, carry out the provisions of the Act impartially in accordance with the market, and I am satisfied, since I have been Minister in charge of the Valuer-General's Department, that the Valuer-General takes a reasonable view of the sales evidence and does not base valuations on unduly high sales. Ample evidence can be produced to support this view. I can produce that evidence.

Owners who are dissatisfied with their valuation have ample redress under the Valuation of Land Acts in that, firstly, they can object to the valuation and subsequently confer with the Valuer-General on a without-prejudice basis in an endeavour to settle any differences. They are perfectly free to do that and, as it is a conference without prejudice it will not be used against them.

Later, if they are dissatisfied with the Valuer-General's decision upon the objection, they can appeal to the Land Court, and thirdly, if still dissatisfied with the Land Court's decision, they can appeal to the Land Appeal Court. One could not get anything more democratic than that. They are given all those avenues if dissatisfied.

Since the department commenced operations on 1 July, 1946, it has made 820,376 valuations of ratable properties up to 30 June, 1961, comprising a total ratable unimproved value of £482,381,576. This total ratable unimproved value was adjusted through objections and all Appeal Courts by only 0.83 per cent.

The total number of objections received was 51,005 or 6.22 per cent. of the total number of the valuations made.

Adjustments to valuations by reason of objections represented 0.68 per cent. of the total ratable value.

The total number of appeals lodged was 4,251, which represents 0.52 per cent. of the total number of ratable valuations.

Only 1,097 appeals or 0.13 per cent. of the total number of valuations were actually taken to court or were outstanding up to 30 June, 1961.

Adjustments to valuations by reason of appeals represented 0.15 per cent. of the total ratable value.

The foregoing figures speak for themselves and indicate that the department has achieved a substantial measure of success in supplying equitable and uniform valuations throughout the State.

I agree that mistakes have been made, but we have provided the machinery for rectification of mistakes. Anyone can make mistakes. The Valuer-General's Department has made mistakes and has admitted them, but the right of appeal is given, first

by way of conference with the Valuer-General, then by appeal to the Land Court and further by appeal to the Land Appeal Court.

The other department in my portfolio is that of Local Government. I am extremely happy in this department, having had some previous experience in local government.

The Department of Local Government is divided into two broad branches—

(a) The General Administrative Branch which deals with the administration of the local government law; and

(b) The Town Water Supply and Sewerage Branch which acts in an advisory and supervisory capacity in connection with the undertaking by local authorities of town water supply, sewerage, storm-water drainage and swimming pool projects.

In administering the local government law, the department's policy is to tender general advice to local authorities and to exercise a general oversight over them to ensure that the law is observed. The department does not attempt to dictate the policy of local government—that, of course, is the proper function of the elected representatives of the people.

One of the functions of the department is to exercise supervision over the finances of local authorities. In this behalf it advises the Co-ordinator-General of Public Works on the financial ability of local authorities to undertake loan-subsidy works submitted in the annual programme of capital works, acts as adviser to the Treasury on questions of local government finance, and recommends the payment to local authorities of subsidies granted for capital water supply, sewerage, stormwater drainage and swimming pool projects.

**Mr. Aikens:** I bet the finances of the Townsville City Council must be causing you some concern. Have you had a look at its indebtedness?

**Mr. RICHTER:** I understand they are very much better since the hon. member left the Townsville City Council.

The department also exercises the general reserve and overriding powers of the local government law. It is responsible for the issue of proclamations, Orders in Council and other instruments under the Local Government Acts, and the approval of by-laws by local authorities. Another important function is the examination and approval of town-planning schemes made by local authorities. Town planning is becoming an important phase of local government administration and it is mentioned that, during the last 12 months, town-planning schemes prepared by the Cairns, Ipswich and Mackay City Councils and the Gatton, Murilla and Stanthorpe Shire Councils have been the subject of examination by the department. Moreover, during this period, ministerial approval was granted to resolutions passed by a number of local authorities

for the preparation of town planning schemes. These schemes will require examination by the department after the local authorities concerned have undertaken the preliminary procedure prescribed by the Local Government Acts.

A number of other miscellaneous, but nevertheless important, functions are also undertaken by the department. One such function is the examination and certification of local government clerks, engineers and overseers. For this purpose, examination boards are set up by regulation under the Local Government Acts to examine and certify candidates seeking certificates of competency as local government clerk, engineer, and overseer. Hon. members will appreciate that the standard of service rendered by local authorities is dependent, in no small measure, on the standard of efficiency of their officers and it is accordingly essential that the efficiency of local government officers be maintained at a high level.

The Picture Theatres and Films Commission also falls within the administration of the Department of Local Government. The primary function of the Commission is to prevent the over-supply of picture theatres in any locality thus leading to undue competition and economic waste. The Commission is required to investigate and determine all applications for new or additional picture theatres.

**Mr. Houston:** You won't have any worry there now.

**Mr. RICHTER:** Not very much, but there are still places where they wish to build new theatres. Generally speaking, in the City of Brisbane there is no worry at all.

If a favourable determination is made, the applicant must satisfy the provisions of the local government law and the local authority by-laws as to the standard of building, and the safeguarding of matters of public health, and safety in the use of buildings before the premises may be used as a picture theatre.

The examination and licensing of plumbers and drainers is another function of the department. This function is handled by the Plumbers, Drainers and Gasfitters' Examination and Licensing Board which is constituted under the Sewerage, Water Supply and Gasfitting Acts, 1949 to 1960. The Acts provide standard water supply and sewerage by-laws for the State and all house plumbing and house drainage work performed in any local authority area has to be carried out in conformity with the requirements of the Standard by-laws.

The Acts also provide for the constitution of a joint committee, the primary function of which is the examination of design of all fixtures and fittings for use in connection with water supply and sewerage schemes. No fixture and fittings may be installed by

a local authority unless they have been submitted to and approved by the joint committee. The joint committee comprises representatives of the Brisbane City Council, the State Health Department and the Local Government Department, the chairman of the committee being the engineer in charge of the Department of Local Government.

The town water supply and sewerage branch of the department exercises general oversight over local authorities in connection with water supply, sewerage, stormwater drainage, and the provision of swimming pools. Under the local government law, the local authority is the authority charged with these functions, and the department, with its technical staff, acts in an advisory and supervisory capacity. In certain cases, generally in the more remote areas where the services of an engineer are not available to the local authority, the department also acts as consulting engineer to the local authority.

Whilst the provision of water supply, sewerage, stormwater drainage, and swimming pools is a function of local government, the Central Government pays a subsidy to local authorities towards the capital cost of all such schemes and also guarantees all loan raisings. The Treasury depends on the department to ensure—

1. That each water supply, sewerage, stormwater drainage, and swimming pool scheme is sound from an engineering viewpoint;
2. That the scheme is economically one within the financial ability of the local authority; and
3. That it is constructed in accordance with the design approved by the department.

Excluding the city of Brisbane, 190 towns at present have reticulated water supply. A further 43 schemes are at present under construction, whilst preliminary reports have been prepared, or are in the course of preparation, for an additional 56 proposals. The figures relating to sewerage schemes are—

20 cities and towns with existing sewerage; and

22 cities and towns wherein sewerage is presently being constructed, including nine cities and towns in which major augmentation works are in hand. A further 17 cities and towns have working plans completed or in the process of completion and 40 cities and towns have had preliminary investigations completed. These figures relating to sewerage exclude the city of Brisbane.

The estimated cost of water supply proposals under investigation by the department is £9,775,094 and sewerage proposals, £4,161,898. Working drawings are presently being prepared for 56 water supply proposals estimated to cost £7,662,073. Plans have been completed but construction has not yet

commenced on 52 water supply and 12 sewerage projects estimated to cost £757,116 and £1,647,571 respectively. There are at present under construction 191 water supply projects estimated to cost £12,416,927 and 60 sewerage projects estimated to cost £12,872,163.

Since I have held the Local Government portfolio, I have had the pleasure of addressing the annual conference of the Central Queensland Local Government Association at Rockhampton, the Western Queensland Local Government Association at Barcaldine, the North Queensland Local Government Association at Cairns and the Local Government Association of Queensland in Brisbane. I have also toured the North Western, Central Western and Southern portions of the State. During my attendance at these conferences and whilst on tour I have taken the opportunity of meeting the members of local authorities and their officers in the various centres. I have discussed their problems with them. I have observed their work right in the fields in their own areas. Let me add that, from what I have seen of the work of local authorities, both since my appointment as Minister and previously, I know that local government in Queensland is under capable administration and the Government are fully conscious of and grateful for the part that has been played and is being played by local authorities in the development of this State.

A real spirit of co-operation exists between local authorities and officers of the Department of Local Government and I feel that the efficient working of our local government system owes much to this spirit of co-operation. Local authorities may be assured of the continuance of this co-operation in the future.

**Mr. Davies:** Will the Minister comment on what co-operation exists between his department and the Commonwealth Treasury?

**Mr. RICHTER:** That has nothing whatever to do with the Estimates I am presenting to the Committee.

I wish to conclude by expressing my very sincere appreciation to Mr. Longland, Under Secretary, Department of Public Works, Mr. Smith, the Valuer-General, and to Mr. Sewell and Mr. McNamara of the Local Government Department, for the assistance they have given me personally as a new Minister.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I desire to inform hon. members that on the Chief Office Vote I propose to allow a full discussion on the whole of the ramifications of a department (Consolidated Revenue, Trust and Special Funds, and Loan Fund Account) and then to confine the discussion to each particular Vote.

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

**Mr. HOUSTON (Bulimba) (12.31 p.m.):** I congratulate the Minister on his elevation to Cabinet and also on the presentation of his Estimates. I am sure hon. members all realise that it is no easy task to work out the Estimates for such a complex department as this. We look forward to the reports from the various sections so that we can analyse last year's results and try to get a picture of what will happen in the future.

I thank the Minister for the assistance that he has given me during his short term as Minister for Public Works and Local Government, and I also thank members of his staff for their assistance. It has been my privilege to meet many officers of the Department of Public Works particularly, and I have found them to be very capable officers, ever ready to assist. At times I have given them my views and they have given me their views, and each of us respects the views of the other. The departmental officers have the final say, and I do not want to take that right from them or to fight them. I appreciate the courtesy of the officers with whom I have had dealings, the manner in which they have received me, and the number of times that they have acceded to requests that I have made to them.

Of all departments, probably the Department of Public Works and Local Government is closest to the people. It looks after local authority matters, and local authorities, as we all know, deal with the every-day affairs of our people. They deal with health, building permits, sewerage, gutters, drainage, and many other things, and the correct supervision of the work of local authorities is most important. There are very few occasions on which hon. members have to go to the officers in charge of the local government department. However, when we do, we find that we receive every courtesy and our problems are solved for us.

The Department of Public Works also plays a big part in providing amenities for public servants. I admit that, over the years, people employed in the Public Service have had their conditions improved. Conditions deteriorated during the war because of lack of finance and a shortage of employees available to carry out the tasks. It is pleasing to see that, as the years pass, working conditions in more and more Government departments are being brought into line with the regulations covering working conditions of employees in private enterprise. I hope that that progress will continue.

In introducing his Estimates, the Minister referred to figures relating to the number of employees on both the inside and outside staff. In the Chief Office, it is estimated that there will be an increase of 10 clerical employees—from 62 to 72—and also an increase of 10 on the engineering side—from 23 to 33. The main duty of those

paid out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund is the maintenance of existing buildings. I want that point to be clearly understood. Their wages and salaries are not paid out of loan funds. Their main purpose is to keep buildings in good repair. On the clerical side they are responsible for ensuring the efficient operation of the Chief Office. On the Loan Fund side it is an entirely different matter. That is money that is being spent to provide new capital works. It is there that we have the progress in the construction of new school buildings, court houses and other public buildings. The number of architects has been increased by 16, assistant architects by two, architectural assistants by seven; five draftsmen will be appointed this year as against none previously. There will be 10 more cadets. It is very pleasing to see the increase in the number of cadets. It is in the training of our young folk that we get the efficient officers of the future. There are four more surveyors and 32 more on the clerical side. I am making that point not merely with the idea of objecting that there is more employment on one side than another, but we need to look at the balance. I mention those facts to bring me to the point where I must once again disagree with the Minister. In an earlier statement I referred to 151 more employees on the administration side. In the Estimates for 1959-1960, 147 employees are shown for Chief Office; in 1960-1961 the number is shown as 163; this year we jump to 196. The Minister will notice that according to the Estimates for 1960-1961 there were to be 163 employees for that year, yet the Estimates for 1961-1962 show 185 employees for 1960-1961. Obviously that figure includes 22 temporary employees not accounted for in the previous year's Budget. In the Budget debate I drew attention to the fact that the Minister for Education and Migration had included temporary employees in the number of persons shown in the Estimates. I think it is a bad principle to cover temporary employees. It can give a wrong impression. In some cases temporary employees may not have been employed for any great length of time at all. On the education side, with which I am perhaps more conversant, some of them worked perhaps only one week in the whole year. Just how long these temporary employees have worked, the Minister for Public Works has not indicated, nor do his Estimates. That 151 extra employees is made up of 49 paid out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund and 102 from Loan Fund expenditure. As the Minister pointed out there will be a big reduction in the vote for Contingencies. The Minister's explanation is that he is doing away with temporary employees and the overtime paid through that Vote. Naturally, we have no objection at all to dispensing with the services of those employees if, by so doing, we increase the number of people fully employed. If we reach a stage where we

have too much work for the permanent employees to handle it would be right to ask other people to do it for us.

There is an estimated reduction of expenditure on maintenance of State schools, of £18,000; on technical colleges and high and intermediate schools, a reduction of £3,000; on courthouses and police buildings of £10,000; on hospitals, £5,000 and on other buildings, of £19,000. The overall reduction in estimated expenditure this year on maintenance of public buildings approximates £54,000. I am not very happy about that at all. As buildings become older, we should expect them to require more maintenance. I hope that this cutting down of the estimated expenditure from the actual expenditure last year, by £54,000, will not mean that, for the sake of expediency, some of our public buildings are to be allowed to deteriorate. That applies particularly to schools. I believe it is absolutely essential that school buildings be kept up to a proper standard.

Last year some of the money appropriated for maintenance of these buildings was used for other charges such as water rates, gas charges, sanitation charges, cleansing charges and so forth.

There was a transfer of money in that respect, and naturally, the Budget had to be balanced but I feel that it is a step in the wrong direction to cut down on maintenance of public buildings. I should far rather see something else curtailed. Once an asset is allowed to deteriorate, if such deterioration is allowed to go far enough, the asset could be completely lost.

The Government claim that they have maintained the high standard set by previous Labour administrations in regard to public buildings and I should not like to think that that standard is now to be lowered.

Dealing with expenditure, the amount of Loan Funds estimated for the construction of State schools this year is £10,000 below actual expenditure for this purpose last year. The amount estimated for construction of technical colleges and high schools is £126,000 less; for courthouses £128,000 less. I am very pleased to see that the estimated expenditure on hospitals is £68,000 more, on Gatton College £25,000 more and on other projects £100,000 extra. The overall position shows a reduction of approximately £71,000 in relation to construction of new buildings. There again I feel that that is something the Government should look at more closely particularly as there will be a reduction in the school-building programme.

That is in spite of the fact that the Minister for Education and Migration has before him a recommendation to advance eighth-grade children at primary schools to high schools in a reasonably short space of time. I should imagine that, within the next couple of years, we should embark on an extensive building programme of secondary schools in readiness for this extra influx of children



from primary schools. I think the estimate is that, perhaps in three years' time, there will be virtually double the number of children transferring from primary to secondary school in the one year because, at that time, Scholarship holders will come over and, in addition, all children past the seventh grade at primary schools.

I suggest that the Government and the Minister try to get money from somewhere for this purpose. It is not my job to tell them where to get it and I certainly appreciate their problems, but I think that we cannot allow anything to interfere with our school-building programme because the education of our young people is essential to provide our future engineers, draftsmen and so on.

I take this opportunity of saying a few words about the high standard of workmanship set by employees of the Department of Public Works. Over the last four years I have had the privilege of coming in close contact with these men, of inspecting their work and, in some instances, the adverse conditions under which they work. I am aware that at times they have been put on jobs months after they should have been started and told to have them completed by the commencement of the next school year. I add my thanks to them for their very fine work, and I congratulate them on their sincerity of purpose in getting the jobs done quickly. The standard of their work is a credit to them. My only regret is that some employees have to be paid off from time to time. I urge the Minister not to allow himself to be talked into giving out jobs on private contract. Whatever the type of work, it can be done cheaper by day-labour than by private contract. If in some instance it is thought it cannot be done at lower cost by day-labour, I suggest to the Minister that he look for the reason inside the department. It is a simple matter of arithmetic. The Department of Public Works is not interested in making a profit. It merely wants to get jobs done well. The private contractor, however, whoever he is has to show a return for his outlay of capital. That is logical. But in the interests of retaining good employees, and of having jobs done well and at the cheapest possible price, I suggest that the work of the department be done by day-labour in preference to contract.

At the start of this year the department found it necessary to pay off a number of employees. I asked the Minister what number were paid off, and I think I indicated then, that I was not particularly happy about the fact that it was necessary to pay them off at all, or the fact, that in order to reduce the wages bill, only tradesmen and members of the working force were affected. It seemed strange to me that 270 tradesmen or assistants were paid off and not one member of the clerical staff was dismissed. I am not against clerks; I know they have a very essential job, but both clerical and

outside staff are paid out of loan funds, and if 270 members of the outside staff are dismissed, the work of the clerical staff in making up pay and time sheets is reduced. In those circumstances it is hard to understand why the full clerical staff was still required. I had hoped, if there had to be a reduction in staff, that a balance would have been struck between the two sections and that the dismissals would not have been confined to the one section.

**Mr. Richter:** I mentioned the overtime position earlier.

**Mr. HOUSTON:** The Minister said that the clerical staff were working overtime while these men were in employment. I realise that that could be the answer. On the other hand, it is quite often found that a man in charge of the office who has to make the decision does not like to put off those members of the clerical staff with whom he is on intimate terms. That is only human. He would say, "I would not like Tom or Bill to go." If he has to pay off someone, he would rather pick a man who is only a number to him. I suggest that the Minister and his officers should look into this matter to make sure that all sections are affected equally if payoffs are inevitable.

I am deeply worried about Mr. Longland's report, on the number of apprentices who finished their apprenticeship training last year and the small number who entered apprenticeship training this year. Last year 100 apprentices completed their apprenticeships with the Department of Public Works but this year the intake was only 62. Unless we can alter that trend, and train more apprentices, we will be in trouble in the years to come. In my opinion, the Department of Public Works must play its part in training apprentices for the future. We cannot rely on other people to train apprentices for us. Quite often it is an advantage to an apprentice to change his place of employment after he completes his apprenticeship, so that he can get further experience. I urge the Minister to investigate the cause of this trend in apprenticeship training, for we must have a sufficient number coming on, and in my opinion the men in the Department of Public Works are second to none as teachers of apprentices.

I turn now to schools and school committees, and suggest that school committees should be advised that when they have work to be carried out they should give the Department of Public Works an opportunity of doing it in preference to letting it out on contract. All the schools committees I am interested in use the Department of Public Works to carry out building work because they know that the work will conform to the high standard set by the department. By adopting this method committees ensure that the work can be brought on when there is no great urgency in the works

programme, and thus men will not be put off. By using their money, and the subsidy granted to them during the carry-over period, school committees and the Department of Education will save money.

I am greatly concerned about teachers who are transferred to country schools when they have only a relatively short time left to serve in the department because of their approaching retirement. This matter has been brought to my notice recently on at least four occasions. Teachers had hoped and prayed that they would not be transferred so that they would not have to decide whether they would accept higher responsibilities and increased wages or stay in their own homes. This is a big problem for teachers who can be transferred for only three or four years.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I think that is the responsibility of the Department of Education.

**Mr. HOUSTON:** Yes, I know. However, the money for building public buildings comes from the Estimates of the Department of Public Works. I suggest that money should be made available from the Department of Public Works for the erection of at least one residence at each major school to be used as a staging residence for teachers on transfer. At all times a teacher would occupy the house. When one teacher was transferred from the school another would take his place. The house could be similar to those built by the Housing Commission. If my suggestion were adopted teachers on transfer would not have to worry about housing costs. At this stage I do not wish to argue whether teachers should, or should not be, transferred under certain circumstances.

The Minister mentioned the appointment of an officer on the engineering staff to consider on-the-site recommendations about work that would normally be carried out by the Department of Main Roads for the Department of Education and the Department of Public Works. I have met the officer and found him approachable and easy to get along with. Closer co-operation among the departments should speed up the work of laying down bitumen and so on.

**Mr. HERBERT** (Sherwood) (12.56 p.m.): I compliment the Minister on his elevation to Cabinet rank and on the presentation of his first Estimates. I am sure it will be the forerunner of many more.

I should like to make some special comments on expenditure on schools by the Department of Public Works. This year marks an historic point in public works activity. For the first time Loan Fund expenditure on high schools has exceeded expenditure on primary schools. According to the 1960-1961 report of the department, £2,113,599 was allocated for secondary school work, excluding the Queensland Agricultural High School and College at Gatton, and

£1,806,238 for primary school work, which represents quite a considerable balance in favour of secondary schools. This indicates a trend that will continue particularly with the implementation of the interim report we have already received on secondary school education. It will mean that for many years we will have to spend far more on secondary education than we are spending at the moment, so the figure will be well ahead of the amount spent on capital works for primary education.

It is worthy of note that in 1959-1960 we spent £2,279,184 in the primary division and £1,545,656 in the secondary. So the tremendous increase in the expenditure on secondary schools is already quite obvious.

Last year 293 extra high school rooms and 156 primary school rooms were provided. In the reports to come the difference will be even more accentuated in favour of the high schools. For one thing, when the eighth grades move into secondary schools that will leave some vacant rooms or allocation to lower grades but will also mean a corresponding increase in the number of rooms required at secondary schools.

The department will be faced with a tremendous problem to keep up its present extremely high standard in high-school buildings. The entire department is to be complimented on the present standard of school buildings both primary and secondary. Secondary schools in particular are a credit to their respective areas. Their appearance is a credit to the men who designed them, to the workmen who built them and to the departmental officers who supervised the work. Although it is not in my area I feel sure everyone will agree that the Kedron Teachers' Training College is a distinct improvement on the old dogtrack that was there before. Almost every suburb of Brisbane is now graced by an attractive high school. At Corinda High School the Department of Public Works has taken advantage of the natural condition of the area to make a very fine school. This shows a considerable change in the department's methods of planning. In the last couple of generations, when the department acquired ground for a school they bulldozed every living thing off it and built the school on the clay. In the post-war years there has been a change in the attitude of the public, and this has been reflected in the work of the Department of Public Works on school grounds. Corinda High School is a fine example of this. In one of the oldest settled parts of Brisbane, decorative trees planted 100 years ago have been incorporated in the school grounds, giving a very fine background for the school. Although the school building is only about two years old, the grounds give the appearance of being much older.

I repeat a suggestion that I have made previously in the Chamber—that when an area is acquired for school purposes, or for any other Government use, for that matter,

it should be planned for tree-growth at the time of acquisition. Even if the area is not to be used for a decade, or even if the use to which it will be put has not been finally settled, trees should be planted so that there will be at least partly-grown decorative trees there when it is used. Very often any attempt at beautification of the grounds is left until after the building is completed. Corinda High School is unique in having these trees in the grounds and having such fine surroundings for the school.

Another feature of the report on which I should like to comment is the continuation of the heavy expenditure on septic and sewerage installations in schools. To any right-thinking person, this is absolutely necessary, and it is pleasing to see that the department continued this work. Last year septic or sewerage installations were completed at 66 schools or were under construction. In the previous year, when the peak was reached, there were 72; in 1958-1959, 66; in 1957-1958, 49; and in 1956-1957, 46. If we can maintain that rate, most of the bigger schools that are unserviced at present will soon have some sort of septic facilities. The question is of particular interest in my area, which is one of the outer suburbs of Brisbane and is unlikely to receive local authority sewerage for some time. We must provide septic systems for the schools in the area. It is particularly heartening to note that Corinda State School will be receiving this facility next year, in conjunction with the new swimming pool that is being built in the area. I should like to see Oxley and Darra included in next year's Estimates for septic systems. Not only are those schools big schools now, but the numbers there are increasing rapidly, and I think the potential of schools should be considered. With the removal of the eighth grade from our primary schools, many schools will be well below their actual capacity. The Education Department may have to give consideration to closing some of the inner city schools and using them as high schools or technical colleges. The removal of the eighth grade in many cases will make a considerable difference to the classification of the school, and the question of whether it should still exist in that area will arise. The removal of that grade will reduce even further the amount of money that has to be spent on primary schools. In the next two years we should see tremendous expenditure on secondary schools, not only to accommodate the bump of students now moving on to Senior, but to make provision for the huge influx in 1964 when the new system should come into operation.

**Mr. O'Donnell:** What about preparatory grades?

**Mr. HERBERT:** Desirable as the preparatory grades may be, our first task is to make provision for the extra year at the end, when the leaving age is raised from 14 to 15 years. It would be absolutely

impossible for the State's finances to stand the strain of providing extensions at both ends of the education tree. In reply to the hon. member for Maryborough, who is interjecting, I point out that the present Government have spent far more on educational facilities than his Government ever spent. The present Government are to be complimented on the magnificent job they have done, particularly in the field of secondary education. Any youngster in Queensland can now take advantage of secondary education facilities, which certainly was not the position when we came into office four years ago.

I wish to deal now with the equipment and furniture in Parliament House that we inherited when we came into office. This is a matter about which various hon. members have expressed views in the past. Now that I have had an opportunity to look at many Houses of Parliament in the British Commonwealth I can say that I have seen no Parliament House so badly furnished as this one. Never have I seen seats provided in a House of Parliament like the ones we have here, yet at times we have to sit in the Chamber for over 12 hours in a day. It is no wonder many hon. members spend time out of the Chamber. If hon. members were provided with proper seating accommodation and desks within the Chamber we might have greater numbers in attendance for longer periods. In the past there has always been a reason why desks could not be installed in the Chamber. After seeing some of the Houses, both within and without the British Commonwealth, I say that there is no reason why this Chamber could not be fitted with better seating accommodation at very little cost. Desks are necessary for hon. members who want to use documents. At the moment there are only the small desks available from which hon. members address the Chair. Any competent architect could draw up plans for the installation of 100 desks, thus allowing for possible future expansion should at any time it be deemed desirable to increase the number of members. It would not be an extravagance to provide better accommodation in the Legislative Assembly. We do not require anything of a very elaborate nature, particularly in view of the State's finances at the moment. If we continue to say that it is too expensive we shall never get the job done. It has to be faced up to eventually. We know the tremendous amount of money now required to be spent on the replacement of the verandas, whereas if money had been spent on maintenance in the past the present heavy expenditure could have been avoided.

In the Budget debate I mentioned the different types of instruments used for recording votes in other Parliaments. I do not think they are necessary here. With our numbers we can satisfactorily count a division under the present method. I think the architects of the Department of Public

Works could give consideration to the complete rebuilding of the interior of this Chamber. Some of the other parts of the House could be reconditioned, but this Chamber in particular should come in for some consideration this year.

**Mr. NEWTON** (Belmont) (2.25 p.m.): In introducing his first Estimates the Minister touched on a number of important aspects of his department. That is a step in the right direction, something that could be followed by other Ministers when introducing their Estimates. They should elaborate more on the various departments under their control.

Because of phone calls and other matters to which I had to attend I did not hear the whole of the Minister's speech, but I know he touched on the very important subject of local government which I feel is becoming more and more important because it is getting closer and closer to the people.

Many matters have been debated in this Chamber from time to time, and particular attention has been directed towards enabling every citizen to own his own home. However, immediately the subject is opened up it is found that many problems associated with it have to do with local government, particularly in relation to home owners' commitments.

The Minister drew attention to the harmony existing between the Local Government Department, himself as Minister, and the local authorities. Time will prove how long that harmony will continue. Probably the most important subject that he mentioned was land valuations, which also comes under his control. I am particularly interested in this subject especially as a result of certain letters that I have received concerning the Valuer-General's Department. Most people from whom I have received the letters want to know the effect that the valuations will have on them. Their concern is perhaps best demonstrated by a paragraph in a letter that I received from the Holland Park Progress Association. The letter is headed, "New valuations, Coorparoo Division," and the first paragraph, which is the most important one, reads—

"At the last meeting of this Association the new valuations which have been assessed for properties in the Coorparoo Division were discussed. As you are no doubt aware these new valuations are considerably higher than those obtaining hitherto. Residents, therefore, are rather apprehensive about the probable effect that these will have not only on the rates payable to the Brisbane City Council, but also in regard to increased liability for the payment of Land Tax and also the payment of probate and other duties."

That will perhaps demonstrate the discontent that exists concerning these valuations.

**Mr. Richter:** These valuations are not taken for probate purposes.

**Mr. NEWTON:** I am pleased to hear that. I have raised the matter on behalf of the Holland Park Progress Association to give the Minister an opportunity to reply.

**Mr. Hughes:** It should not have any effect on local authority rates. That is up to the local authority.

**Mr. NEWTON:** I understand that also. I am pleased to have that interjection from the hon. member for Kurilpa but when new valuations are made local authorities generally take the bit between their teeth and increase their rates. A local authority can achieve the same result by reducing the rate in the £1, but, when we have a combination of Government and local government interest in a particular field, the tendency always is to put the blame on to someone else. Hon. members frequently get instances of it. We take up a certain matter with the Government, only to be told that it is the responsibility not of the Government, but of, say, the Brisbane City Council or some other local authority.

**Mr. Coburn:** That is because they are not clearly enough defined.

**Mr. NEWTON:** That may be so.

The report of the Under Secretary of the Department of Public Works for the year ended June 1961 is well presented. It covers a number of points that have been raised in the Chamber by way of questions. Some questions were asked earlier in the session, and the information in the report brings us up to date on those subjects.

I am concerned about technical colleges in Queensland, but I have not been able to ascertain the intentions of the Government either in the Under Secretary's report or from the Minister's speech. In my first speech in the chamber on the Address in Reply I referred to the Brisbane Central Technical College. I know the position there and I have a fair knowledge of technical colleges throughout the State. The report reveals that very little has been done up to June 1961, and I did not hear the Minister mention the subject this morning. Industry and employers generally are demanding a higher standard of education for students and apprentices. To give them the necessary education in highly mechanical techniques we must have the requisite accommodation and equipment. From time to time we have spoken of daytime training of apprentices. At the moment insufficient accommodation is available at technical colleges. I gave proof of that in my previous speech about the Brisbane Central Technical College. Unless the Government provide adequate facilities and accommodation, technical colleges will not be able to give students the standard of education required by employers.

Unless a vigorous technical college programme is pursued, daytime training will never be possible, and I think it is essential in the interests of apprentices and students.

I turn now to a subject that has not been touched on in the Chamber previously, the Ipswich Road and Hamilton Government workshops. I am not referring particularly to the Hamilton establishment, because, if I remember correctly, it is a post-war shop, but the Ipswich Road workshop has been in operation for a considerable period and has turned out work of a very high quality. Magnificent work has been turned out by the machinists and joiners employed at the Hamilton shop. My attention has been drawn to the fact that during recent years, with the introduction of time and motion methods, orders have been given to step up production. I do not know who gave the orders. They have been told to produce the furniture to equip class rooms in the slap-happy method used in outside industry. Every hon. member in the Chamber who has been in a class room and looked at desks, seats, tables and chairs made years and years ago knows that they were built the right way by tradesmen joiners and machinists. Each hon. member knows that they have not been just slapped and glued together. We all realise what a serious effect this direction will have on articles produced in the future. As the Parliament, we are responsible to the public to see that the goods turned out in our workshops are of a high standard and will stand up to the wear and tear in primary schools and secondary schools. I ask the Minister to investigate this complaint.

I have seen a great deal of work done by tradesmen in the workshops, and it is of a very high standard. Some of the best joiners in the State are employed there. There is not a great deal of joinery work done in outside industry today although it is coming into vogue again because many buildings today are getting away from standard ideas. For many years after the last war most joinery was turned out to a standard pattern, but the Department of Public Works turned out joinery of a very high standard that was built to last.

The Minister who has taken over this portfolio has a tremendous job ahead of him. One of his most important jobs is maintaining and renovating Government buildings. Unless maintenance is carried out when necessary, buildings will deteriorate, and eventually repairs will be more costly than if they were carried out when they were first needed. I have no objection to the renovation of the inside of buildings. It is important that ministerial departments and other Government departments should be remodelled so that the people working in them may have the high standard of accommodation which we, on this side of the Chamber, would wish them to have. However, I am worried about the expenditure on the exterior of some Government buildings. Brick and hard-plaster

buildings, in the main, look after themselves, and require a minimum of maintenance. However, when windows and doors are exposed to the weather they occasionally need painting so that they do not deteriorate, but I believe that this work is being attended to too often on some buildings while other buildings do not get the minimum attention.

There are a number of problems in my electorate concerning State and primary schools. Since I have been the member for Belmont I have drawn attention to the state of affairs at the Belmont school on a number of occasions. I have here some of the correspondence that has taken place between me and the Department of Education. In all instances, my inquiries have been directed to the Department of Public Works. On 20 August last I asked the Minister for Public Works and Local Government if consideration had been given to providing additional accommodation at the Belmont State School as requested by the Department of Education on continued representation made to it during the previous 12 months. The Minister's reply appears on page 93 of "Hansard," and he said that a request was received from the Department of Education in November, 1959, for the replacement of two existing classrooms at the Belmont State Schools by two new classrooms of modern design but he did not make it very clear just what the department's intention was. As one who knows the area and who has lived there since 1946, I am amazed that the matter was not raised earlier by the supervisors of the Department of Public Works, who visit the schools regularly. When I raised the matter I received a letter from the Minister for Education saying that it had been referred to the Department of Public Works on 29 August, 1960. I raised it again early in March, 1961, and the Minister for Education replied on 10 March, 1961, that he was again asking the Department of Public Works to do something about it. The last letter I had from him said it had again been referred to that department on 18 August, 1961. Each of the letters from the Minister indicated that the department's officers agreed that improved accommodation was needed.

I cannot understand why so much money was spent on a beautiful fence round the school property, enclosing a large area of reclaimed land, instead of first providing adequate accommodation for the pupils and the teaching staff. I do not know whether representations were made by my predecessor but my approach would have been the usual approach of this Government and of previous Governments, namely, school buildings first and fencing and other works later if needed.

I have received a letter from the Department of Education agreeing to the provision of a further classroom and other accommodation at the Gumdale State School. Unfortunately the school has a temporary classroom under it. The building has been

up for a number of years and its layout is not suitable for that temporary classroom. It is true that the more modern schools planned by the Department of Public Works and built since World War II lend themselves to temporary accommodation beneath if required, but the height of the floor from the ground at the Gumdale School is much less than in those modern school buildings.

The projected change in the education syllabus in Queensland will seriously affect the programme of the Department of Public Works and give the Minister many headaches. With the increased demand for classrooms in secondary schools the Minister may have to provide further temporary accommodation at some of the primary schools till the full effect of the change in the syllabus is seen. If it is necessary to provide temporary accommodation for more than six months, let us put some sort of ceiling in the classrooms. I do not think it is in the best interests of the health of the children to be in temporary classrooms under the school when other children are tramping into classrooms overhead. You know how children march, Mr. Taylor. Like good Australians, they put everything into it. Even with tongue-and-groove flooring that has been down for a number of years, dust gets through from the classrooms above and falls onto the heads of the children in the temporary classrooms below.

**Mr. Coburn:** The obvious thing to do is cut out the marching.

**Mr. NEWTON:** The effect would still be the same if they were walking. Something must be done about it.

The Upper Mount Gravatt school is on the boundary of my electorate, and a fire occurred there recently. Government members have often told us in this Chamber how the Government have done away with temporary accommodation in primary schools. I say here and now that unless they watch what they are doing there will be more temporary accommodation than we know what to do with. Before the fire occurred at Upper Mount Gravatt State School there were six temporary classrooms under the school, one of which was actually the medical room. Because a primary school has not been provided between Broadwater Road and Dawson Road, I should say that 80 per cent. of the children in my electorate attend the Upper Mount Gravatt State School. It is very difficult to work out what the intake of the school will be each year. If a school is not provided soon in the Broadwater Road-Dawson Road area, we will never get rid of the temporary classrooms at Upper Mount Gravatt State School.

The school at Mount Gravatt East is adequate for the requirements of the area, but new subdivisions behind the school have been approved by the Brisbane City Council and there is sure to be a big influx of children from them. I am faced with the same problem that the hon. member for

Sherwood was faced with and which he raised many times in the Chamber—getting the schools that are necessary in an area in which great development is taking place. It is still taking place in the Mount Gravatt area, because the Housing Commission is erecting a number of houses in the area at present and is resuming more land for further building.

I am also worried about the position at the Cavendish Road High School. Before I became the member for Belmont, I understand that representations were made for the building of an administration block at that school. Possibly this had to be deferred so that classrooms could be provided to cope with the intake of children each year. There are now 1,530 pupils at that high school, and I understand that the intake next year is expected to be over 300, so it seems that the administration block will have to go by the board again if sufficient classrooms are to be available.

I also wish to pay a tribute to the workers, foremen, assistant supervisors and supervisors of the Department of Public Works, and to the Under Secretary of the department. Whenever I have had to take up some minor problem with the Under Secretary, within a very short time I have received a letter from him saying that attention had been given to whatever was required at the particular school I had mentioned. As a carpenter I must pay tribute to the good work done by the day-labour force, particularly on primary and high schools.

**Mr. Houghton:** Do you believe in the registration of carpenters?

**Mr. NEWTON:** That is a subject I intend to speak on at some other time. I will not be sidetracked by the hon. member at the moment.

The report of the Department of Public Works indicates that there has been a drop of about 700 in the number of personnel employed by the department. That is one department that has assisted greatly to overcome the unemployment problem. I know that to be so from my own experience in the building trade during my party's term of Government.

(Time expired.)

**Mr. COBURN** (Burdekin) (2.51 p.m.): Before commencing to discuss matters associated with the Estimates now before the Committee, I desire to extend to the Minister my heartiest congratulations on his elevation to Cabinet rank. He has been allotted a particularly important portfolio, which places upon him the responsibility of administering the Departments of Public Works and Local Government. His wide experience, integrity (which I am sure nobody doubts or questions), keenness to make a success of all tasks he undertakes, industry, application to duty, and courteous manner of dealing with all persons with whom he comes in contact gives us a confidence that he will discharge efficiently

and with credit to himself, and benefit to the State, all responsibilities which devolve upon him as the head of the department.

**Mr. Houston:** Do you want something?

**Mr. COBURN:** Nobody ever spoke more true words than those to which I have just given utterance.

The growth in size and importance of the department becomes apparent when we study the report of the Department of Public Works for the year ended 30 June, 1961, furnished to the Minister by his Under Secretary, Mr. Longland, and presented by the Minister to Parliament. Expenditure on buildings, for which that department was responsible, during the last financial year amounted to the very substantial sum of £7,457,705, compared with an expenditure of £6,516,917 in the preceding financial year. It represents an increase in expenditure of 14.4 per cent. The major expenditure by the department, I am very pleased to see, was on the construction and maintenance of State schools, State high schools, technical colleges and other educational establishments; it amounted to 55.6 per cent. of the total building expenditure. The provision during the year of 449 classrooms at 103 schools, both primary and secondary, has almost succeeded in solving the schoolroom accommodation shortage that was so very obvious a few years ago. The hon. member for Maryborough is interjecting. He can talk about his own electorate; perhaps it is not quite so well represented as mine. In my electorate schoolroom accommodation is adequate at every school, with one exception, for the next 10 years. The exception is the Ayr High and Intermediate School where a physics room and a teachers' room are urgently needed, but which, I have been informed by the Minister for Education and Migration who has made representations to the Department of Public Works, cannot be provided in time for the commencement of school in 1962, as funds are not available.

During the last year that Home Hill was included in the electorate I represent, four new classrooms were completed, and the head-teacher of the school at that time informed me that classroom accommodation at Home Hill for the normal increase in enrolments, would be sufficient for at least the next 10 years.

It is regretted that the Minister has been obliged to inform me that, owing to insufficient funds being available, it will not be possible for his department to commence construction of the proposed new police station at Ayr during the current financial year. The present building used as a police station is a wooden structure, more than 60 years old, that was originally used as a courthouse. It is easily the most unattractive building in the main street of Ayr, and, as it was not designed as a police station but as a courthouse, it is unsuitable for the purpose for which it is now being

used and the members of the police force who are working in it are working under uncongenial conditions. It is very sincerely hoped that the necessary finance will be allocated during this financial year to make it possible for an early start to be made on the construction of a new police station.

When it is known that the expenditure on State public buildings was £1,831,326 15s. 7d. in 1952-1953—nine years ago—and was £7,197,270 14s. 6d. during the last financial year, 1960-1961, it is readily realised what a tremendous expansion has taken place in the State's building programme.

**Mr. Davies:** Not nearly enough.

**Mr. COBURN:** It is 293 per cent. more than in 1952-1953, so, if it is not nearly enough now, what was it like in that year? Considering that the expenditure on State public buildings was £5,365,943 18s. 11d. more in 1960-1961 than it was in 1952-1953—which represents an increase, as I told the hon. member for Maryborough, of 293 per cent. over the period of nine years—it must be easy for anybody to evaluate the added importance that this great department has assumed.

Great as has been that expansion, with the implementation of the proposed educational scheme, the expansion will be accelerated considerably when we do away with the Scholarship examination, which has been the greatest bugbear in our educational system that I know of, and children are allowed to proceed from eighth grade to sub-junior without having any barrier to stop them. More children will take advantage of secondary education than ever did before and the greater number who will do so will require increased accommodation. Therefore, the vote, instead of being £7,000,000 will have to be increased enormously to meet the requirements of that greater number who will be partaking of secondary education because of this great, revolutionary educational scheme. It is the best thing, I think, that has ever been done in education in my memory, and the Department of Public Works will be called upon to make provision for the greater classroom accommodation that will be required. Other very pleasing features of buildings for which the Department of Public Works is now responsible are the greatly-improved design and colour schemes. Instead of the dark stone paint that was used on every school, we now have well-designed buildings painted in bright, attractive colours, buildings in which it is a pleasure for the children to do their work, buildings unlike the hot-boxes in which we taught for many years and felt sorry for the child over in the corner without any ventilation, with the hot sun streaming on the wall and creating a very high temperature. The new design introduced in recent years and the new colour schemes are both a tremendous improvement on anything we had before they were adopted.

One matter the Minister might look into is the conflict that takes place between various departments in connection with buildings. Since 1947 negotiations have been going on between the Ayr Hospitals Board, the Department of Health and Home Affairs and the Department of Public Works in connection with the provision of Nurses' Quarters. The Ayr Hospitals Board has an architect, a man named Freer. He draws up a set of plans, which he submits to the Department of Health and Home Affairs. The Department of Health and Home Affairs then passes those plans to the Department of Public Works. The Department of Public Works finds fault with some of the suggestions made by the architect, and back the plans go to the Department of Health and Home Affairs and then back to the architect at the Ayr Hospitals Board. He makes certain alterations and again sends down the plans, and so the whole process goes on. The negotiations have been going on since 1947, but we have still not reached the stage of having sketch plans completed. Negotiations during ten years of Labour Government and four years of the present Government. The same old scheme has been and will continue to be in operation. It is costly, cumbersome, and frustrating. It denies to those who would be housed in the new nurses' quarters the conditions to which they are entitled. I think at least one of the departments should know exactly what is required for buildings in each area where hospitals are built. The delays are annoying and add to costs. There should be one authority to say what the design should be and just exactly what provision has to be made.

I have a great deal of correspondence about this matter. The architect even had a telephone conversation, which was taken down verbatim. It only goes to show how impossible the situation can become when things might easily be fixed up.

I do not know whether I would be right in asking the Minister to intervene in connection with the representations that have been made by the Ayr Shire Council for the removal of the drill hall in Ayr so that a very attractive Town Hall with local hall accommodation can be provided. A large corrugated iron building used as a drill hall is right in the middle of the township of Ayr.

**Mr. Richter:** Owned by the Federal Government?

**Mr. COBURN:** Yes. It occupies one of the best sites in the main street. If the Ayr Shire Council was able to acquire that land it would build a Town Hall, something that the town requires very much indeed. The Council have been unable to get the Minister for the Army to agree to remove the drill hall to a site that the Council is prepared to make available. I am interested to find out if the Minister for Public Works

and Local Government is prepared to give support to the representations by the Council to the Minister for the Army to accede to the Council's request so that the town may be beautified and an amenity can be provided for the greater happiness and convenience of the people of Ayr.

From the report of the Department of Public Works I notice that a system of general inspections has been introduced. I understand that this means that the Under Secretary, with the Superintendent of Works, and probably an architect, visits areas from time to time to see what is required by way of maintenance of public buildings, and to find out where the most urgent maintenance work is required so that the buildings may present a better spectacle to the public. That is an excellent idea. The Committee would see just what was required and would be able to set priority for the undertaking of the work.

When the Ayr Hospital was originally built it was jerry-built. Nobody could be proud of its construction. A parapet was put on it, but evidently, because of insufficient cement, sand, or aggregate, it began to crumble. Great lumps of concrete masonry began to fall. One of the places where the parapet was crumbling was directly over the place where out-patients sat while waiting to be attended by the doctor. The secretary of the hospital board wrote to the Department of Health and Home Affairs about the danger, and asked that the work be undertaken urgently. Unfortunately, it was not undertaken urgently, but it has since been done. The danger would have been immediately apparent to members of an inspection committee, if they had seen it, and I am certain that they would have ordered something to be done to remove the potential danger. Falling masonry could have injured someone, or could have even caused someone's death.

Local government within the Commonwealth of Australia, as everyone knows who is interested in it, is facing many difficulties of major significance. Unless these difficulties are overcome there is a very real danger that local government will be unable to continue effectively as an integral part of the machinery of government of the Commonwealth. A local authority is a democratic instrument of government which invites maximum participation by the people themselves in self-government and in deciding those things that are good for themselves in a corporate sense—that is, as a community, and good for themselves as individuals. Because local government is good for the people, we want it to stay. Whereas prior to the first World War local government was mainly concerned with roads, footpaths, kerbing and channelling and recreation, today local government is called upon to deal with human values as well as purely material things. Important groups have grown up emphasising the need for child care and health centres for women, community



libraries, youth centres, and cultural centres of all kind. There is a demand also for action by councils for increasing land productivity, destruction of noxious weeds, arresting of soil erosion, and the initiation of flood-preventive measures.

Increased local amenities in the country must be provided by way of water supply and sewerage, all most significant to the general health, happiness and well-being of the people.

These new demands have created enormous financial problems for local government and local government is being tested against its capacity to satisfy these needs. They are clearly local government functions. Most of the local authorities find that they have reached the limit of their power to tax the people yet they find that, if they are to perform the functions that are rightly theirs and that are necessary, they must have other sources of revenue.

Local government is not unmindful of the financial difficulties of the State and indeed of the Commonwealth, but local government also is conscious of the fact that taxation in the aggregate has virtually reached the limit that the people can pay and it is quite impossible for local government to increase rates to the proportions needed—even though they were equitable—under present conditions, and still survive. What is needed is not more taxation (including of course local government rates) but a better distribution of the aggregate taxes now collected by the Commonwealth, the States and local government. That is not to say that each authority has not meritorious services on which to spend its funds but that the time has come when regard must be had to the relative merits of the task or service in whatever governmental field it may be. We see in such a planned distribution of available funds a solution of many of the present difficulties.

Local government needs a rating revenue within the Commonwealth of at least £50,000,000 to £60,000,000. That is exclusive of the revenue from public utilities. It must be obvious that local government financial needs in relation to the total national income of over £1,000,000,000 are almost negligible and the continued disregard of local government financial needs cannot properly be related to financial considerations.

The idea would be that the Commonwealth as the taxing agency should make provision in its budget for at least £50,000,000 to £60,000,000 for distribution to local authorities. That would be theirs by right, not something to be taken from them by the State Government in the process of coming from the Commonwealth Government.

Something of that nature is done in connection with the distribution of the petrol tax. It is distributed to the various local authorities in proportion to the population and area covered by each.

Although I have not worked out any particular formula in detail by which this could be done to keep local authorities solvent and make it possible, by giving them the finance they need, to carry out all the works required to be done within their area, it would be a simple matter for the officials of the Treasury to devise a scheme by which the collection could be provided for in the Budget in the form of taxation and the money distributed equitably on a formula to the various local authorities within the area. If that is not done, a good many of these local authorities will either become bankrupt or will have to fail to do those things required to be done within their area. I do not think it is unreasonable to ask the Commonwealth Government to include them when the distribution of funds from taxation is made. It seems to me that in most local authority areas the landholder is now paying the maximum rate that he can be expected to pay. Unless some support and relief are given from Commonwealth funds out of taxation—a grant, not a loan—I should say that the difficulties of local authorities will become insurmountable.

**Mr. DEAN (Sandgate)** (3.16 p.m.): The report of the Department of Public Works is very important. Even if we only glance very briefly through its pages and see the wide and comprehensive scope of the department's operations in the previous 12 months, we must feel very proud of the work of the Under Secretary and the other officers of the department and those responsible for the compilation of the report. Although the number of pages in it is not great, the report contains much information about the work of the department, and the pictorial section tells a story in itself.

I think some hon. members opposite are a little uncharitable when they take full credit for the work of the Department of Public Works. Some credit should be given to former Governments because long planning is necessary on many of these projects. I admit that the schools that have been erected by the department are a credit to them and a credit to the architects and draftsmen. In my own electorate of Sandgate we have some very fine public buildings. However, my commonsense tells me that they were not designed last week, last month, or 12 months ago, but are the result of long-range planning.

I agree with what other speakers have said about cadets and apprentices, but I should like to deal specifically with the item in the report relating to apprentices. I know that the Minister takes a very serious view of the problem of providing tradesmen and artisans for the future, but he will have to take strong action to build up their numerical strength for future projects. I should like to see more apprentices in the Department of Public Works so that men will be available for projects of importance in the future development of the State. I know that private enterprise faces a similar problem,

so it is no light task for the Minister. I ask him perhaps to exert a little pressure in encouraging more apprentices to join the Department of Public Works.

I have been worried recently about the weakness of the system of employing outside labour for jobs carried out by the department. I draw the Minister's attention to this matter and suggest that he should discuss it with his Cabinet colleagues.

From time to time men report for work but because of past misdemeanours, perhaps light gaol sentences, they are debarred from working in the Government service. I have not checked closely myself, but I have been informed by a person on whose word I rely that that does occur. Private concerns are asked to give men a chance to rehabilitate themselves in society yet they are denied an opportunity of employment within the Crown service. The hon. member for Brisbane confirms the truth of that. I think it is very unfair. After a man has served his sentence and paid the penalty for his misdemeanours I cannot see why he should have to carry the stigma forever. It is a matter that should be looked into. A discharged prisoner is entitled to a living. If the Government ask the outside employer to employ him they should be prepared to set an example. It might be wise to treat each case on its merits. I am not saying that every man who offers himself for employment in the Crown service should be accepted, but surely there are many that could be accepted. They should not all be rejected merely because they have served time in prison. I have heard criticism from outside employers because the Government are not prepared to set an example.

Obviously if the necessary finance is not at the disposal of the Department of Public Works much work will remain undone. The most distressing part of it is when work stops on uncompleted jobs and it is not known when work can be recommenced. I understand that work on a school in my area will have to be shut down for some time, without any indication of when it will be recommenced. Unfortunately, a very heavy burden has been placed on the department in replacing the serious losses caused by the disastrous fires at the Sandgate school. It is uneconomic to stop work on a job and recommence later.

A certain amount of fear has been built up in the minds of some of the tradesmen in the employ of the Department of Public Works because they do not know where their next job is going to be. I understand that for many years they have been told where their next job would be as their current one was nearing completion. If they could be given some indication that at least their work would be continuous for so many months, looking at it from the psychological point of view I think the Minister would get a better job done because the men would be happier. If a man feels that he is going to be put off or has no prospect of continued employment after the

job on which he is working finishes, he may not exert himself to the fullest extent to complete the job. I do not, for one moment, say that he will shirk the job he is on but I do not think that he will, as I say, give of his best to finish his present job and thereby place himself on the labour market. I feel that there could be passive resistance from some employees in that regard. I know it sounds wrong to imply that some men would be dishonest enough to do that but, if a man has a wife and family and thinks, "If I speed myself up in this job, when I get through I may be out of a job because I have no indication of where my next job is coming from", it is possible that he may adopt that view.

Many of these employees have expressed to me the wish that they be given some indication as to where their next job will be after the one on which they are working is completed. I refer the request to the Minister for what it is worth. I think he should consider it because, as I say, there is no substitute for a happy and contented employee, in whatever sphere he may be working.

**Mr. Richter:** You will appreciate that work cannot be made available in an employee's particular district.

**Mr. DEAN:** They are quite happy about that. So long as they know that they are going to a job they are content to go to it. However they might feel that they would like to be near home, they will be satisfied to go anywhere rather than be out of work. They would be much happier if they knew there was another job coming up. I stress the point that they are not saying that they are not doing their bit or are adopting a go-slow process, but, my own view is that it is possible some could passively resist to some extent.

As I said earlier, the State schools are a credit to the Department of Public Works and to those responsible for their erection. One particular school in my area, the Sandgate State High School, could well become one of the premier high schools in this State, because of its situation and architectural qualities.

One disappointing aspect of the report is that the Main Roads building, unfortunately through lack of funds, will have to remain as it is. I should have liked the department to go ahead with plans for a new building. The staff working in this department at the moment do so under very difficult conditions and it is all the more to their credit that they do such a fine job. I sincerely hope that the next Budget will give some indication of improving the situation by providing for the Department of Main Roads a modern building more in keeping with that being provided for the Police Department. I think the police building will be a monument to the State. It is unfortunate that such a building is required for this purpose but since it is,

it is right that it should be in keeping with other public buildings and of a high standard.

The last speaker gave a long dissertation on local government. I thought he would have said something that I think he should have said in this respect—that many people would like to destroy local government. I am not going to develop that subject. I would be out of order in giving a long dissertation on the ramifications of local government. I thought the hon. member would make the forthright statement that certain people in the community would be only too happy to destroy local government, the oldest form of government and a very important one.

I hope we will get an addition to the Sandgate State School, but before it is commenced I trust that something can be done to improve the playground. At the moment very little space is left on which to put a building of any size, owing to the great erosion that has taken place. The school committee has asked me to make further representations and again bring to notice the fact that the schoolground is in a deplorable state. I ask that vigorous reclamation work be undertaken to restore it to its proper condition. Members of school committees spend many hours on State school activities, and I think we should show our gratitude and encourage them by effecting improvements that are so essential and desirable for the proper and full education of the children. The grounds badly need levelling. Conditions for the staff and children are becoming increasingly difficult. Comfort and convenience are essential to proper educational activities.

I am pleased with the generous help given by the department during the year to the Maternal and Child Welfare Centre. The employees of the Department of Public Works are to be commended on the high standard of workmanship of the additions to the centre on Flinders Parade. I hope the Department of Health and Home Affairs in the coming year will be able to allocate funds to the Department of Public Works for the erection of a modern clinic at Sandgate, in keeping with the requirements and standards of the district I serve. The present clinic is in a shocking condition and cannot cope with the demands made on it.

Police work is a very important function of administration. I trust that in the near future the Department of Public Works will get the necessary allocation for the construction of a modern police station. At the moment the officers are working under intolerable conditions. A great improvement in facilities is required.

To sum up my remarks on this important department, I sincerely hope that money will be found to keep all of the present employees in work and to provide employment for many

more. While the demand for buildings is very great, the demand for employment is even greater.

**Mr. RAMSDEN** (Merthyr) (3.35 p.m.): As these are the first Estimates that the Minister has presented to Parliament I take this opportunity of congratulating him and wishing him well in his office of Minister for Public Works and Local Government. The hon. member for Sandgate asked hon. members on this side of the Chamber to take cognisance of the work done in past years. I suppose he meant that a great deal of work had been done by the Department of Public Works in past years, and he is probably right.

I should like to support the remarks of the hon. member for Sherwood concerning the equipment and furniture in this Chamber.

**Mr. Mann:** He went overseas.

**Mr. RAMSDEN:** He went overseas and when he returned he gave us the benefit of his knowledge. I have no doubt that the hon. member who has interjected would not have any knowledge to give us if he made a similar trip.

The hon. member for Sherwood said that in his travels he had not seen any Chamber as badly equipped as our own, and I accept his statement as being substantially correct. I draw the attention of the Minister, and his officers in the lobby, to the sorry history of Parliament House over the past 25 years. Although Parliament is the supreme institution of Government it spends less on itself than is spent on any government department. Even 25 years ago a Select Parliamentary Buildings Committee had the idea that this Chamber should be remodelled with individual desks. Mr. Speaker was authorised by the committee to visit the other States of the Commonwealth to see the parliamentary chambers and other relevant matters. He visited the Commonwealth Parliament to find out all that he could about the matter, and there the matter rested for another 12 months. Then, 24 years ago this month, the committee again gave further thought to the subject, driven, no doubt, by other hon. members who felt there was some merit in their case, and this time they went a little further. In fact, they got very hot; they almost did something. They had quotes taken out for the re-arrangement of the Chamber and for the extension of the seating platform for members' seats. The quote for that item was £226.

**Mr. Bromley:** You can go to sleep on them.

**Mr. RAMSDEN:** Yes, I can go to sleep, but I do that best when the hon. member speaks.

The next quote was for fixing individual desks for hon. members. These desks were to be fitted with revolving and tilting chairs.

**Mr. Mann:** A scandalous waste of public money.

**Mr. RAMSDEN:** I am interested to hear the interjection of the hon. member because the Labour Party was in office at the time. His Government had a predominance of seats on the select committee.

**Mr. Mann:** A most scandalous waste of public money.

**Mr. Davies** interjected.

**Mr. RAMSDEN:** Might I point out to those hon. members who are interjecting that there is no need to worry. Adequate provision is made for them in the report of the Department of Public Works. On page 8 he will find the sum of £3,633 set aside specifically for additional bull accommodation.

The quote for the provision of individual desks at that time was £1,758. At the same time quotes for a third item were sought. In 1937 they went to the trouble of getting quotes for the installation of an automatic electric division board which was to be connected to the individual desk of each hon. member. That was to be installed at a cost of £510. So it called for a total of some £2,494 in 1937 to make this Chamber roughly the equivalent of the Council Chamber in the City Hall. The Premier of the day intimated that there were no funds available for the purpose and so the matter was dropped.

In 1938 it was again considered and plans for individual desks for hon. members in the Chamber and details of the electric division board system were put into the Parliamentary Library for hon. members to study and take note of. It was suggested at that time that a deputation from both sides of the House should wait on the Treasurer and ask him for the sum of £2,500 to do the job, which, in spite of the interjection of the hon. member for Brisbane, the hon. members of that day thought was essential.

The matter was raised from year to year. Then there was a break of three years and it was not until October, 1941, that the subject of individual desks was again raised and new sketches obtained.

In 1945 it was again raised together with the subject of a lift for the House.

In November, 1946, the committee and the powers that be ruled out the idea of a lift because the cost involved was too great. That is the very argument we have just heard from the hon. member for Brisbane by way of interjection. The quote for the lift in November, 1946, was £5,240, but the House in its wisdom procrastinated so long that ultimately when we became the Government, and had the lift installed it cost three times that sum—£15,110.

**Mr. Bromley:** It was still unnecessary, anyway.

**Mr. RAMSDEN:** I am quite sure some hon. members opposite appreciate the convenience of the lift. I venture to suggest that had the committee, had Parliament, and had the Department of Public Works, in 1937 done something about accommodation in the Chamber they could have got away with it for £2,494. On the comparative figures I have just quoted for the lift the identical job today would cost between £7,000 and £8,000.

In March, 1950, the Speaker of the House wrote to the Department of Public Works and asked that one of the three plans that had been submitted be proceeded with. Nothing further was heard from the department or anyone else about that. They produced three plans—plan A, plan B and plan C.

**Mr. Bromley:** The Ramsden plan.

**Mr. RAMSDEN:** I intend to ignore irrelevant and stupid interjections.

Plan A provided for 75 individual desks and chairs in the Chamber, 36 on the right and 38 on the left. The two side doors at the rear of the Chamber were to be removed, and in their place were to be fitted windows identical with the others in the Chamber.

Plan B, one of the alternative plans, provided for the same number of desks and chairs. However, instead of having 36 on the right, it had 38 on the right and 36 on the left. Again it required the removal of the two side doors at the rear of the Chamber. In both Plan A and Plan B the centre table was to be 4 feet 2 inches away from the dais. That was to give the necessary space in the Chamber for the allocation of individual desks.

Plan C, which was the plan recommended by the Committee and the plan that the Speaker asked the Department of Public Works to proceed with, provided for 37 individual desks and chairs on each side of the Chamber, seating for the Speaker, and seating for two visiting officials up where we now have the visitors' gallery. This plan provided that the centre table should be 3 feet 9 inches away from the dais, and it also provided for the replacement of the two side doors by windows.

Those plans were placed in the archives of the Department of Public Works on 9 November, 1949. I mention that history because the hon. member for Sandgate asked us to think of the work that had been done in the past. From that date they have remained in the dusty archives of the department, although the Speaker asked that plan C be proceeded with. The matter has been raised from time to time, and I am again putting it before the Committee.

I am not going to be merely critical; I am going to make a constructive suggestion that I hope will be considered by the Minister and his officers and by the Treasurer. Not only is the accommodation bad in this part of the Chamber where hon. members

sit, but it is shockingly bad in the public galleries. I make a plea that if nothing can be done for the members of this Assembly, at least, as a start, we do something for the convenience of members of the public who from time to time come here to listen to what is going on and to follow debates in the Chamber. Members of the public who use the galleries complain that the seats are uncomfortable, that the rails are too high and they cannot see anything, and that in many cases they cannot hear anything. I suggest that not least amongst the members of the public whose interests I am trying to further today by making these remarks are the members of the "Hansard" staff and the Press. Their gallery certainly needs some attention.

So much for this part of the House. Let me now direct my attention to the Parliamentary Library, another very necessary part of Parliament. Here we have the same history—a very sad and sorry history it is—going back to 1900. In 1900, just 61 years ago, the cry was raised that there was a lack of proper storage space and facilities for the books and the staff of the library. The matter has been raised year by year by every Library Committee that has ever been appointed, and it has been raised during our period in office. So far, over all those years, no adequate solution has ever been found. For 50-odd years in regard to the Parliamentary Library and 25 years in regard to the Chamber the old cry has gone out. The answer has always been the same: "Yes, we realise these things want doing but we have just not got the money to do it now." As a result of this inactivity—I will not call it "lethargy"—a great quantity of valuable Queensland material has been destroyed because of the lack of accommodation. Indeed, it is a literary tragedy that has occurred because many of the books and records that existed in this Parliament have been destroyed over the years as a result of the lack of accommodation. They no longer exist anywhere else in the world. They are completely extinct. I make the plea to the Treasurer and the Minister for Public Works to try to plan ahead. I am not asking for the impossible. I am not asking for it to be done this year. Although more staff are required for an increasing amount of research work necessary to keep hon. members properly informed—judging by the interjections we hear they need to be properly informed—there is no accommodation in the House to take them. I know that comparisons are odious but I should like to draw attention to the fact that £200,000 was spent in centenary year on additional accommodation at the Public Library. Although the Public Library, which is not a lending library, does not possess the important function of informing the members of this Parliament, it had that amount spent on it. I refer again to what I said

at the beginning, that as a very important function of government we have less spent on us than on outside institutions.

Once again, by the use of the odious comparison, I refer to the fact that in the United States of America the Congressional Library's function is so recognised that they require at least 3,000 on the staff. They have a collection of books exceeding 8,000,000. I am not suggesting that we even think of emulating that, but I am saying that the library and its function has a very important place in the congressional system of the United States. Surely it is open to some query that the highest body in the land—Parliament itself—should receive the worst treatment by comparison!

I suggest that we should plan for at least 50 years ahead. If the present rate of growth is maintained Queensland's population 50 years hence will be approximately 4,500,000. That would require an increased representation in the Queensland Parliament which, on a proportionate basis, would probably bring us to about 120 members.

In view of all this it is not unreasonable to think of a library staff at Parliament House of some 30 or 40 persons, 50 years from now. That means a great deal of additional accommodation and planning for the Department of Public Works. Without going into details, suffice to say that we will need at least four times the present library space in 50 years' time. There is no exaggeration about that.

I said that I was going to make a constructive suggestion as I do not want to be merely critical. Had it been realised 50 years or even 25 years ago that these things would be necessary in the days to come, and had provision been made year by year to put aside so much in a trust fund or a sinking fund, call it what you will, we should have had the money available to do the major jobs that have now become necessary. In our private lives, if we want some item of essential furniture, something that is absolutely necessary such as refrigerator in our homes, we must make provision for the outlay of substantial capital to get it. I suggest that the Treasurer and the Minister for Public Works and Local Government give some thought to the creation of a sinking fund or trust fund for the purpose of building up sufficient finance to do the necessary work required on this House.

Since I may have appeared highly critical, I wish to assure the Minister that my criticism is not of him. I am criticising what has happened over 25 years and I want to express my personal appreciation to the Department of Public Works for the work they have done to the Ascot State School, painting, new roadways and conveniences; for what they have done to the Breakfast Creek Police Station—the first major improvements for some 30 years, with

which the staff are exceptionally happy. I want only two more jobs done and I shall be perfectly happy myself. One is more toilet facilities for girls at the Ascot State School and the other is to have the Newstead Opportunity School painted so that their classes will be in a much brighter environment than they are at the moment.

I hope, upon reflection, that what I have said this afternoon will receive some consideration from the Treasurer and the Minister for Public Works and Local Government.

**Mr. BENNETT** (South Brisbane) (3.57 p.m.): No doubt it is always possible, with the passage of years, to improve living and working conditions and expend money on renovating buildings. No doubt this Chamber and its facilities could be improved in many ways but I think this a most inopportune time to say that there should be a great deal of expenditure on the improvement of this House. In spite of adverse conditions and difficulties it has functioned well for many years. We should not do it at a time when unemployment is so bad and the Treasury is so devoid of funds.

**Mr. Ramsden:** The burden of my complaint was what was left undone for 25 years.

**Mr. BENNETT:** I do not think it is always advantageous to delve into ancient history in dealing with problems that beset us at the moment. We should make decisions on the conditions of the time. This is not an opportune time to spend large sums of money for the comfort of parliamentarians in this House—while conditions are very bad throughout the State.

**Mr. Hughes:** Didn't you complain about not having sufficient space to interview people downstairs?

**Mr. BENNETT:** I have not made any complaints, certainly not to the hon. member for Kurilpa. Should I wish to make any complaints, they will be made to the proper authority, who has the common sense to understand them and the power to improve them.

It is true that many public buildings not only in this city, but throughout the State, need improving, not the least of which are the Supreme Court, and the Magistrates Courts. Those Courts are working under obsolete conditions. The Magistrates Court building is nothing more than a rabbit warren completely unsatisfactory for the administration of justice. And what of the Full Court, sitting in Supreme Court No. 3, everyone huddled together? By the time the three judges, counsel, the Press, and the witnesses are in the room there's virtually no space—other than perhaps one or two forms—for members of the public.

Many public buildings are in need of improvement, and should no doubt have priority over the suggestion put forward by the hon. member for Merthyr. As a matter of fact there is no lift in the Supreme Court or the Magistrates Court building. Our aging judges and magistrates are forced to use the stairs, at great risk to their health and their heart conditions. Certain litigants and persons interested in attending courts, perhaps in their 80's have to be carried upstairs. Those buildings should be considered before we spend any money to make members of Parliament more comfortable.

**Mr. Hughes:** Didn't you complain when you entered Parliament about not having sufficient space to interview your constituents?

**Mr. BENNETT:** I could have made such observations on the working conditions of Parliamentarians, but it does not follow, and it is illogical to claim, that I think money should now be expended on the improvement of those conditions before worse conditions elsewhere are overcome.

**Mr. Windsor:** You are condemning the very thing you condoned.

**Mr. BENNETT:** I do not wish to be insulting to the hon. member for Ithaca, but he would not have the intelligence to understand the purport of my argument.

I do not want to waste the 25 minutes available to me by speaking only of working conditions in this Chamber or better accommodation here, because many other public buildings throughout the State have a much higher priority than Parliament House. The fundamental reason why the argument of hon. members opposite should not be pressed at the moment is that in the country, and outback areas of the State, many men are out of work, and improvements should be effected first in those areas in order to provide them with work.

I want to refer to local authorities and local government. Local government has reached the crossroads in Queensland—and perhaps in Australia, but we are dealing with Queensland. Owing to the pressure of finance, local government is in a very parlous condition, and unless something of a practical nature is done immediately by the Government the future of local government could be most uncertain.

**Mr. Coburn** interjected.

**Mr. BENNETT:** On 16 October, 1957, a deputation from local authorities met the Treasurer and asked him to review the whole system of local government finance in Queensland. No doubt the Treasurer at the time promised he would make inquiries.

**Mr. Houghton:** Don't you think that they should have representation on the Loan Council?

**Mr. BENNETT:** I certainly do. Local authorities do the spade-work of government, and always have done not only in Queensland but in all democratic countries. Those who serve in local government should be rewarded for their efforts, their sincerity and the time they spend on their work. I suppose most local government representatives in country areas would get little if any monetary reward or remuneration, but I think their efforts should be recognised by the State and the Commonwealth, by giving them representation on the Loan Council and other national and State bodies that are directly, or even indirectly, concerned with the welfare of local government. Those representatives could bring to such deliberations and gatherings good ideas and considered thoughts. Their presence would lend weight to the discussions and information available to such bodies. Representation of this nature would give local government representatives encouragement to carry on with their work. On 16 October, the Treasurer was asked to review the whole system of local government finance. The time is long overdue when he should report to Parliament and to the Local Government Association the result of his deliberations on the rearrangement of local government finance, and the raising of further funds. He referred to the Federal Government's obligation to local governments and said that in America, sales tax was a source of municipal revenue. Of course, in Australia, it is not available to local governments because it is a Federal tax. If local government representatives get the opportunity to sit in conference with Federal Ministers and Members they should argue that sales tax should be made available for local government purposes as is done in America, if they are not prepared to make other moneys available.

State parliamentarians and the Government may consider that local government responsibility is a burdensome one. It does become burdensome for the Government. However, should local governments fail or cease to carry out their duties and responsibilities the burden that would fall on the Government would be tenfold.

**Mr. Hughes:** Local authorities sometimes take on unnecessary burdens such as electricity and transport.

**Mr. BENNETT:** I could not disagree more with the hon. member for Kurilpa if he refers to electricity when he claims that local governments take on unnecessary burdens. I do not know how it works out in the country, but the electricity department of the Brisbane City Council is a great revenue spinner. It has helped to offset the adverse transport results for many years, and if it—

**The CHAIRMAN:** I should like the hon. member to tell me how his remarks are related to the Estimates of the Department of Public Works.

**Mr. BENNETT:** It is related to local government. The Electricity Department has been a great money spinner for the Council and it will be a sorry day for the Council if that department is taken away. If the department charged the fees commensurate with other electricity undertakings in the State even greater profits would be made. It cannot be truthfully or sensibly argued that the Electricity Department of the Brisbane City Council has been a burden. It has been argued that the loan raising programme is interfered with because local authorities have electricity undertakings and a large proportion of loan money has to be made available for electrical development.

**Mr. Hughes:** They are searching for £4,000,000 for the next 18 months.

**Mr. BENNETT:** No doubt a certain proportion of the loan raisings has to be made available for electricity undertakings, but by the same token, if the local authority did not have electricity undertakings, the loan borrowing programmes would be proportionately curtailed by the Loan Council. The local government's responsibility for raising money for electricity undertakings is taken into consideration by the Loan Council. Immediately the Brisbane City Council loses its electricity undertaking the Australian Loan Council will cut down its loan borrowing programme. It cannot be argued that the Electricity Department is a burdensome department because of its loan-raising obligations or that the council is unable to lift its peak of loan raising because it has an electricity department. I have had some association with the responsibility of going South to raise loan moneys for the Brisbane City Council and I know that we can best "sell" our loans to Melbourne and Sydney investors by saying that the money is needed in the main for electrical development. They are not interested in water supply and sewerage or other civic undertakings, but they are always interested in electrical development because they think it is a good security with a rosy future.

**Mr. Hughes:** That opinion is not shared by Alderman Jones.

**Mr. BENNETT:** I am telling the Committee my experience.

In order to assist local authorities in their present difficulties serious consideration should be given to subsidising the fare structure for children attending schools and universities. Obviously education is a very important Government obligation. Bearing in mind the need for secondary and tertiary education and the Government's strict obligation to assist local government, they should shoulder their responsibility by subsidising children's fares. It is unfortunate and very illogical for the Government to say, "Yes, if they are using the railway system, or in the country, if they are using bus transport, we are prepared to subsidise children's school fares but because the Brisbane City Council

has more money at its disposal we are not prepared to assist children using its transport."

The Department of Local Government is so important to the welfare of the State that the portfolio could be regarded as being next in importance to those of the Premier and the Treasurer. So important is it that the Minister should not be impeded by any other ministerial obligations. Furthermore, as the department is so urgently in need of help, succour and assistance, the Director of Local Government should not be burdened with any further obligations. Therefore there should be a reshuffle of portfolios so that the Minister in charge of local government can concentrate his attention on local government and its advancement throughout Australia, so that the voice of local government throughout the nation will be stronger than it is now. To do that he needs the assistance of a full-time Director of Local Government, one who is not charged with such important obligations and duties as the Under Secretary to the Treasury.

I do not know the reason for the absence of a report from the Department of Local Government. I understand that none has been printed and as far as I know none will be. I do not know whether that is because the Government regard the department as unimportant and one that should not be required to produce a report, or whether they regard it as being one of some importance but think that with their dual roles the Minister and the Director are so bogged down with pressure of work in connection with other departments that they have not the opportunity to produce a local government report. Whether it is for one or other of those reasons, or partly for both, the Government should give serious consideration to placing more importance on the affairs and activities of local government so that it can be restored to its former position in the field of Government.

The Local Government Department and the Minister should consider well the fees that are extracted from the Brisbane City Council and other local authorities. I have not taken out the figures for other local authorities, but the following fees are to be paid by the Brisbane City Council in one year:—

|                                                                        |         |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
|                                                                        | £       |
| Valuation fees . . . . .                                               | 22,040  |
| Audit fees . . . . .                                                   | 7,500   |
| Precepts for Fire Brigades . . . . .                                   | 95,860  |
| Electricity Commission fees . . . . .                                  | 57,600  |
| Transport Commission fees . . . . .                                    | 38,500  |
| Registration fees . . . . .                                            | 22,000  |
| Superannuation and Staff<br>Provident Fund Contri-<br>bution . . . . . | 174,650 |

The total fees payable by the Brisbane City Council to the State Government amount to £616,060. Valuation fees are for a generally-recurring five-year valuation, plus incidental valuations.

**Mr. Richter:** On a 1946 basis.

**Mr. BENNETT:** Yes, on a 1946 basis. If I have time, I propose to deal with valuations. The purpose of land valuation is to obtain a comparative value of all the land in a local authority area or a shire so that an equitable rating can be imposed according to that comparative value. Apart from keeping the relativity accurate, I cannot see the wisdom of embarking on a complete local authority revaluation in order to bring land values up to the values set by high-pressure salesmen.

In my own electorate of South Brisbane, as at 31 December, 1956, the value of South Brisbane was £5,343,140. As at 30 June, 1961, the value had risen to £5,816,780, which meant that in four and a-half years the valuation had increased by £473,640, or 8.86 per cent. For a similar period, the value of the whole of Brisbane, at 31 December, 1956, according to the Valuer-General was, £63,239,042, and as at 30 June, 1961, the value was £71,061,932, or an increase in four and a-half years of £7,822,890, or 12.37 per cent. Obviously that increase of £8,000,000 in four and a-half years was determined by the land sharks who bought land and cut it up for subdivision. They set the pattern of values for the whole of Brisbane. I do not see why the Valuer-General and the Local Government Department have to follow the valuations set in those subdivisions by high-pressure tactics. On the contrary, I think the only obligation of the Valuer-General and the Local Government Department is to keep the comparative values of the land accurate so that the rates received for individual allotments will be comparatively fair and reasonable. There is no doubt that on the South Coast, the North Coast, and in the city of Brisbane, and in other parts of Queensland, speculative subdividers have for too long dictated the unimproved value of the land. It is an artificial value. For too long they have dictated the planning and development of this and other cities. It is a shocking shame that Government departments are forced to follow the iniquitous example set by men who are not interested in the welfare of the State or cities, but only in their own selfish welfare.

**Mr. Richter:** How would you overcome that? What would you ask the Valuer-General to do?

**Mr. BENNETT:** Over the years he has been making general revaluations of the shires he has always had a basic value. If one piece of land is worth so much in a particular area, all the neighbouring allotments have either a greater or lesser value. In the case of a subdivision the valuation of allotments should be on the basis of existing values placed upon the subdivided block.

**Mr. Richter:** In other words, if you cut up a dairy farm worth £2 an acre, you value the allotments accordingly?



**Mr. BENNETT:** No. Let us suppose that a dairy farm is cut up into 32-perch allotments. In order to avoid a complete revaluation of the whole town or city, the correct way is to determine the value of a 32-perch allotment similar in location, soil, area, and with similar amenities.

(Time expired.)

**Mr. SHERRINGTON** (Salisbury) (4.22 p.m.): I congratulate the Minister on the presentation of his first Estimates, not that I congratulate him on the material contained therein, but I think he has acquitted himself well on his first occasion. It is quite obvious that he has been well coached in the art of presenting Estimates so that they do not disclose the true picture.

**Mr. Windsor:** Don't you give any credit?

**Mr. SHERRINGTON:** The hon. member poses as a true Christian gentleman, yet on a recent occasion I have heard him make a most unchristianlike attack on the workers. I hope that my remark will silence him.

It is obvious that the Minister has not presented a true picture because he says that his Government have spent £3,000,000-odd on classrooms. They have spent that amount but it does not give the true picture of what was obtained by spending it. He said vehemently that his Government had done more than Labour Governments had done. Let me point out that in 1956-1957 the sum of £2,098,842 was spent in providing 298 primary-school classrooms and 71 high-school classrooms, a total of 369 classrooms.

**Mr. Hodges:** Which Government?

**Mr. SHERRINGTON:** If the hon. member does not know which Government were in power before 1956-1957 I am afraid there is little hope for him.

If you divide the number of classrooms into the total cost, it shows that the average classroom cost about £569 in those days. This year the Government have spent a total of £3,919,837 on school buildings of various types to provide 449 classrooms. If the total amount spent is divided by the number of classrooms the cost per room is £873. It is futile for the Minister to come into this Chamber and say that such-and-such a sum has been spent in providing for so many classrooms, when one considers that in 1956-1957, 369 classrooms were provided, only 80 less than the 449 provided in 1960-1961. But, the 449 classrooms provided in 1960-1961 each cost the Government on an average £304 more than those provided in 1956-1957, the additional cost for the extra 80 classrooms being £1,829,995.

So, I repeat, it is futile for the Minister to say, "We have spent £3,999,000 on schools", because that does not present a true picture. When one takes the trouble to break the figures down as I have done, the only thing it proves is that, due to

inflated costs since the advent of this Government to office, we are paying a great deal more for educational facilities today than we were in 1956-1957. Hence my opening remarks that it is evident that the Minister is well skilled in not presenting a true picture of the situation.

This Government have claimed that the modern trend in school building has developed since their election to office. They have been quite vehement in their contention that pastel shades for classrooms have been introduced by them. It is once again obvious that they are grossly misrepresenting the situation. I challenge the Minister and the Government to state the date on which pastel colours were first used in the painting of classrooms.

I have here the 1957 report of the Department of Public Works which contains pictures like this of the High School in Townsville, designed and erected by a Labour Government. Here is a picture of the State school at Moorooka, of modern brick and glass construction, started long before the advent of this Government to office.

So, it is completely falacious for members of the Government to make use of this Chamber to publicise something that is completely untrue. It is quite evident that, when hon. members opposite claim that they have been responsible for the revolution in school building, they have not perused the reports of the Department of Public Works in the years prior to their election to office. In that regard we have further proof that the Minister and the Government are completely adept in the presentation of arguments which do not convey a true picture.

Government members have complained of the hard seats in the Chamber and have asked that something be done about them. On many occasions I notice they have very little difficulty in sleeping peacefully on these so-called hard benches.

While on the subject of Parliament House, I pay a tribute to the workmanship of employees of the department who are at present reconstructing the verandas. The standard of their work and their rate of progress are deserving of the highest praise. As a matter of fact, I understand that an opinion was sought from private contractors about the work when it was first mooted, and that they would not tender for the job because they thought too much might be involved in overcoming hidden faults that could not be seen before dismantling was done. As a consequence, the work is being carried out by the Department of Public Works. If any hon. member wants proof of the good workmanship of the department's employees and the very good progress under the day-labour system, he has only to inspect the repair work on the verandas.

I have always been in favour of day-labour. Since they assumed office the Government have been getting away from the principle of day-labour for Government work.

I have asked questions on several occasions about the number of departmental employees who have been dismissed. I find from the report of the Under Secretary that in the period from 1 January to 30 June this year, 727 employees were dismissed.

From my experience on school committees I know the policy of the Government is to give repainting work and even the erection of chain wire fences to private contractors. Only recently I was requested by a school committee in my electorate to make certain inquiries. The only thing holding up the connection of electricity to the school was the provision of what is known as a concentric cable mains box. When I got in touch with the person in the department who handles such matters I was amazed to learn that he was getting a contractor to carry out the job. It would cost only a few pounds. The significant point is that the Government are getting away from the employment of day-labour.

Let us see what the 1956-1957 report has to say on the matter. It refers to the very good work carried out by day-labour. On the erection of hospitals, the report says—

“Many of the works carried out by day labour are in districts where skilled building trades labour is not available. This necessitates building tradesmen employed by this Department leaving their homes, in many cases for extended periods, to carry out works, frequently in remote districts. The Department is fully appreciative of the public spirit shown by these building tradesmen in these cases.

“It has been found that the resources available to the Department of skilled building trades labour in certain districts, have been insufficient to enable early construction of buildings urgently required. In these cases, the Department has availed itself of the contract system, with satisfactory results. In some instances, there has been difficulty in securing satisfactory tenders. The general principle in making use of the contract system is to supplement the day-labour organisation, not to replace it.”

I believe that the policy of the Government is operating in reverse at present. The Government are not just augmenting the day-labour force by using private contracts in cases of necessity. They are gradually wiping out the day-labour force by letting out the maintenance work on school buildings to private contractors.

**Mr. Richter:** You know that is quite wrong, don't you?

**Mr. SHERRINGTON:** From what I have seen, I would not say it is wrong at all. From the number of repaint contracts being carried out by private contractors, it is true.

**Mr. Richter:** Your statement is quite wrong, and you know it.

**Mr. SHERRINGTON:** The Minister is at liberty to prove it to me, but I know what is going on from the number of private contracts that are being let. The Minister's report shows that several hundred fewer men are being employed. However, it is open for the Minister to prove that I am wrong.

I will read a little further from the 1956-1957 report. It states—

“The day-labour system has had particular value to the Department. In many cases, buildings were urgently required for school accommodation. Working to standard plans, such accommodation has been provided by day labour in much less time that would have been necessary for the calling of tenders and carrying out works by contract. In other cases, particularly in the more distant centres where contractors were not available, works have been carried out by day labour at a much earlier date than would otherwise have been possible. The standard of day labour has on the whole been entirely satisfactory, and the Department is indebted to those members of the building trades who have worked long distances from their homes for considerable periods.”

**Mr. Richter:** Do you appreciate that as at 30 June, 1961, there were 2,221 tradesmen and labourers employed, and at 30 June, 1957, there were 1,742?

**Mr. SHERRINGTON:** The Minister can quote those figures, but I also know that these figures show there are 700 fewer men in six months.

**Mr. Richter:** That does not count at all.

**Mr. SHERRINGTON:** That does not count! Seven hundred men do not count at all!

**Mr. Richter:** Not if you put 700 on and take 700 off.

**Mr. SHERRINGTON:** The Minister will have the opportunity of answering me later but I am giving my views now.

The Government have claimed that they were the salvation of Queensland education yet the Minister said this morning that he was hampered by a shortage of architectural staff and as a result he had had to call on private architects to help him out.

Again in the 1956-1957 report of the Department of Public Works we find this statement—

“For a number of years, the work of the Architectural Branch has been hampered by the shortage of technical officers, and output of working plans in particular could not have been maintained except for the extensive use made of the services of Architects in private practice.”

The record of the Department of Public Works shows that, in spite of the claims of this Government, they have done little

more for education than Labour Governments did. I pointed out quite early in the piece that this year they have constructed only 80 more classrooms than were built in 1956-1957.

I want to pay particular credit to those engaged in the construction of schools. Several jobs are in progress in my electorate and the foremen and workmen take a very keen interest in their work. At the Serviceton State school, of which I had the honour to open a new wing recently, I was all praise for the efforts of the workmen and their foreman, Mr. Bird, to have the new wing completed in time for the official opening.

The standard of tradesmen's work in the department is of the highest. With their years of experience the men know just what is required on the job. So this Government, as did previous Labour Governments, will get the very best work and the very best value for their money by the fullest use of day-labour forces.

I have not time to deal with the subject of revaluation, which I should like to deal with, but, like the hon. member for South Brisbane, I think it is time that a new formula was arrived at for the valuation of property. In the few minutes remaining to me I should like to cite the case of a piece of land in Coorparoo purchased in 1941 with a valuation of £140. The valuation rose in 1955 to some £550 and now it is £1,250. In 1941 the basic wage was £4 7s. and, applying the proportion the new valuation bears to the 1941 valuation, that would give the purchaser of the land a basic wage of £46 10s. a week. The basic wage must eventually be tied to land valuations. In the main, persons purchasing land in the undeveloped parts of the city do so because the land is reasonably cheap. After they have been there a few years, land around them is sold at inflated prices, and this position has become worse since controls over the sale of real estate were relaxed. Fantastic prices are now being paid for land and, consequently, land values are inflated greatly. Finally, people who have built a home in the area and done without amenities for a number of years are forced to leave because they cannot afford to live there. Land values must not be set at the level of prices being charged by real estate agents, particularly since the relaxation of control on land sales.

**Mr. SULLIVAN (Condamine) (4.47 p.m.):** To reply to the accusations of the last speaker, the hon. member for Salisbury, in regard to dismissals in the Department of Public Works, I should like to refer hon. members to the remarks of the Treasurer of the day in 1956. He said—

"I might add, for the information of hon. members, that in addition to the 400 building workers about to be dismissed, since 1 July last it has been necessary,

owing to shortage of funds, to effect the following reductions in the number of Crown employees—

|                      |       |
|----------------------|-------|
| Forestry .. .. .     | 416   |
| Irrigation .. .. .   | 508   |
| Public Works .. .. . | 300   |
| Railways .. .. .     | 500." |

**Mr. Morris:** When was that?

**Mr. SULLIVAN:** That was in 1956 under a Labour Government. Although the previous speaker was keen to criticise the Government for what may have been done in the last 12 months, he was unwilling to reveal what took place when a Labour Government were in office.

In rising to speak on the Estimates for the Department of Public Works and Local Government, I should like to congratulate the Minister on the way in which he presented them. I also pay a very high tribute to the former Minister, the late Lloyd Roberts, who during part of the period under review held this portfolio. All hon. members will agree with me, I am sure, that during the short time he was in office he showed that he had the drive necessary for such an important job. I congratulate the hon. Harold Richter on his elevation to Cabinet rank. He is well equipped for this particular portfolio because he is an engineer in his own right, and this must be of great assistance to him when he has discussions with his departmental officers on public works. He has had a very long and varied experience as a councillor and shire chairman, which must stand him in very good stead in dealing with the affairs of local government. We are very fortunate indeed to have had a man with such credentials take over this portfolio.

With the hon. member for Toowoomba East I had the opportunity of accompanying the Minister on one of his tours through the North-West and Central-West, when we saw at firsthand what was being done by the Department of Public Works in those regions. I thank the Minister for the invitation. Being a conscientious member I did not go just on a holiday tour. When I was asked my advice on certain matters I endeavoured to be constructive. It gave me, and I am sure, the hon. member for Toowoomba East, an opportunity to assess the needs of the people in parts of the State with which I had not previously been conversant. The Minister is to be admired for undertaking such a trip. This morning he mentioned that he had visited other areas in the North and attended local authority conferences. He referred to the Barcaldine and Longreach local authorities. He saw for himself at firsthand what was required. He met the people and gained for himself a greater appreciation of what is required of him as a Minister.

The Minister has already given the figures and I shall not weary the Committee by repeating them, but wherever one goes

throughout the State there is evidence of the good work of the Government in the short time that they have been in office. The first Minister for Public Works and Local Government in the Country-Liberal coalition was the Hon. J. A. Heading, followed by the late Hon. L. H. S. Roberts, and now by the Hon. H. Richter. They and the officers of the department have done a magnificent job which is appreciated by the people. When you talk to the people you become aware that they feel that at last something is being done.

In an earlier speech I referred to the condition of the police station at Cloncurry. No doubt its renewal is 20 years overdue. The Minister in charge of police is signifying agreement. I have no doubt that the hon. member for Burke would agree also. So much of that type of work needs to be done, but it cannot all be done at once. At Longreach there is a police building that the Minister in charge of Police called a beautiful building. I would use the word "magnificent" in describing it. It is a magnificent building and the police officers there are very appreciative of what the Government have done for them. I understand the Minister in charge of Police will open it shortly. He will receive a very warm reception—not the type of "warm" reception he receives here at times—when he visits Longreach to do so.

It may be said that I should be looking after matters nearer home. I hope the time is not far distant when the people in Cloncurry will have something similar. People in those areas are entitled to good treatment by Government departments.

I now come a little closer to home. I should like to thank the Department of Public Works for the jobs they have done in the Condamine electorate. Many improvements have been made to school buildings in the short time I have represented the electorate. I really appreciate what has been done. That is borne out by the figures quoted by the Minister when he said that in this year approximately £7,500,000 had been spent on public works throughout the State, an increase of 80 per cent. on last year. That will give hon. members some idea of what this department is doing.

I should like to mention specifically one instance at Macalister, in the centre of the Jimbour Plains, some of the richest agricultural land in the State. Over the years the department was unable—I do not know whether it was because of lack of representation or not—to provide a school house at the Macalister school. A married teacher with a young wife and family was stationed there. They were required to live in a house that a wheat farmer had more or less considered unfit for his share farmer, or the man working his farm. It was there; it was accommodation, and for a period the school teacher was required to live in it. I shall call it a "dwelling." I do not

think it warranted the name of "house." As a result of representations by me to the Minister in charge of education and the then Minister for Public Works and Irrigation, I am very happy to report that, within a period of a very few months, we have now a beautiful home for the school teacher and his wife and family.

The department is to be commended for the style of both houses and schools that are now being built. They have changed their plans, and the type of building now being provided in these areas is very commendable.

**Mr. Davies:** We put up those types of dwelling before your Government attained office. We have photographs here to prove it.

**Mr. SULLIVAN:** In answer to the interjection by the hon. member for Maryborough, let me say that if those buildings were put up they were not put up in the localities where reasonable accommodation was not available. As a former school teacher, I think the hon. member for Maryborough should appreciate the fact that the Department of Public Works is going out into these areas and providing homes which he, if he were transferred to such an area, would be pleased to live in. In the past it was something unfit for a farm worker to occupy. Difficulty was experienced in my area over the years in getting extensions to school buildings. The Jandowae State School is a big school with an enrolment of approximately 400, plus a high school top with an enrolment of more than 50. A certain amount of credit can be given to the headteacher for bringing to the notice of the Minister for Education the need for certain improvements. It would appear that over the years certain things were required, but for some reason they were not done, although they were approved by the department. The transformation of the Jandowae school in the past two or three years is almost unbelievable. It was a shabby, old-style building, painted with the dull paint customarily used on public buildings. Today the group of buildings that stand out in the area are those of the State High School. I thank the Minister and the Under Secretary, Mr. Longland, for the work done there recently, following on representations to me by the headteacher and by me in turn to the Minister for Public Works. I do not want to specify them, but some of the conditions should not have been tolerated in a school of that size. I am grateful for the fact that they have been remedied, just as I am grateful for the other improvements including the bitumen-surfaced parade ground.

This morning I received a letter from the Chinchilla Hospitals Board asking me to make representations to the Department of Public Works for approval of the drawings and specifications for work at the Chinchilla hospital so that it can be included in the allocation for the Department of Health and

Home Affairs next year. I hope I am successful in my representations to the Minister as the situation at Chinchilla is rather serious. An amount of approximately £70,000 is needed to bring the hospital up to what the Board thinks is the necessary standard.

The Dalby Hospitals Board is also seeking approval of plans that I understand have been submitted for the maternity wing of the Jandowae Hospital. I hope they are approved so that the work can be covered in next year's allocation. The Department of Public Works built the first wing of the Jandowae Hospital, which is now the general wing. The people of Jandowae are very proud of it, and the Department of Public Works, too, can be very proud of it. I look forward to the completion of the hospital in the next 12 months.

In the few minutes still available to me I want to refer to the Department of Local Government. I pay tribute to the men who give time to this work. They are doing a magnificent job throughout Queensland. I do not have to leave my electorate to find that out. I can see it in the shires of Chinchilla, Wambo and Kingaroy. The men are doing a wonderful job and voluntarily giving up a great deal of their time. The people of Queensland must be appreciative of the work they are doing.

The Local Government Department seems to work most harmoniously with shire councils and the officers of the department believe that local authorities do not get the credit to which they are justly entitled.

When I accompanied the Minister on a tour of the Central-west and North-west, we were met by the shire councillors. From what I saw I feel confident that the relationship between the Local Government Department and the shire councils in those far-flung areas is very harmonious, and that the local councils fully appreciate the calibre of the Minister who has taken over this portfolio. The Minister's outlook must be influenced by the many years during which he was associated with local government; he has a full understanding of the problems.

I conclude on that note, with the hope that perhaps at some later stage I may be able to refer to the Valuer-General's Department. I take this opportunity of congratulating the Minister on the presentation of his Estimates.

**Mr. ADAIR (Cook)** (5.7 p.m.): I take this opportunity of congratulating the Minister on his appointment to his important portfolio. I believe he will try to carry out the duties associated with it in a fitting manner.

I sincerely hope that when he is allotting money for the different areas he will give the Cook electorate special consideration. It seems to me that in recent years my electorate has become the Cinderella electorate of the State. Hon. members can

see on one page of the report a picture of the new hospital at Sarina. When I was travelling from Cairns to Brisbane the other day I looked out of the window of the train and I saw this beautiful building on top of the hill. I was told there was no doctor for the hospital and therefore it had not been opened. If hon. members look further down the same page they will see a photograph of the new high school for Malanda, and underneath it, the new high school at Caboolture. The last photograph on the page shows the Bowen high school. I could paint a very fine picture of those four buildings. However, if I were to bring down photographs of the schools at Bloomfield and Port Douglas, and the hospital in Mareeba, hon. members would see a very different picture. All the new hospitals and high schools I have referred to are in Country Party electorates. I hope the Minister will give special consideration to electorates of members of the Opposition, especially mine, as I represent a far-distant area, crying out for new schools and buildings. The Mareeba hospital is a very old and dilapidated building, yet Mareeba is one of the most prosperous towns in the State. The return from tobacco growing is over £5,000,000 a year, quite apart from the cattle industry and other industries in the district. The hospital is a disgrace to the area and I see no provision in the report for any additions or improvements to it. I should like the Minister to see for himself the urgent need for either a new building or at least some renovations. Mareeba is a very prosperous area and its hospital serves a large outback district including the population of Dimbulah.

The Mareeba Court House is another disgrace to the area, yet the report mentions proposed additions to it. Talk about broom-cupboards! Anyone seeing the offices of the magistrate, the C.P.S., and others, would wonder how they could work in them. People wishing to get to the counter in the C.P.S. office have to queue up on the veranda and be admitted one at a time to the office. I urge the Minister before work begins on the old court house, to sell the building for removal and construct a new one.

The school at Port Douglas is the old original building built in the early days when Port Douglas was the port for the Tablelands. The site was excavated out of the side of a hill and the children have no playground at the school. To go to the toilet on a wet day they have to slide downhill. Even on an ordinary day the lights have to be turned on for them to see in the classroom. Three years ago I was promised that a new school would be built where the police station and the court house are now. It is an excellent site and the school should receive first priority for construction as soon as possible. Would there not be a scream if we had such a building in Brisbane? Because it is in a remote area

represented by an Opposition member no interest is taken in the requirements of the district.

I have made several representations for a school at Bloomfield. At the moment they have only an old, dilapidated house. It is not properly ventilated, and when it rains the children have to go into a corner of the building to avoid the drips coming through the roof. Imagine what a scream there would be if we had a school like that in the metropolitan area. I have been promised on several occasions that something would be done about it. I will admit that out of the 53 children who attend the school 50 are coloured, but they are entitled to school buildings equal to those in the metropolitan area.

I have many other complaints. I have also been promised a school at Whiterock. It is only two years since I was given that promise, but the way things are going I believe it will be another two years before it is even begun. I ask the Minister to see that the school is built as soon as possible. The ground has been surveyed and is ready for the building.

The population of Mareeba has risen. With the building of new classrooms at the primary school, the old buildings have been extended over the playing area and the children now have very little playground. The school committee has been trying for a considerable time to get an area of land adjoining the school, but the department is taking its time in securing that extra playing area. I ask the Minister to look into the matter and have the grading and levelling of the new ground done as soon as possible.

The Minister's portfolio also covers the Local Government Department. I have made several representations to that department about sea erosion at Machan's Beach. There is no other department that one can approach for assistance. If one makes representations to the Department of Harbours and Marine, one is referred to the Mulgrave Shire Council, which controls the area. I recently attended a meeting of the people at Machan's Beach. The chairman of the shire council was present and he was asked whether the council could do anything about the prevention of the erosion. More than 20 houses are threatened, and the sea has come right up to the fences. The chairman advised the people to shift their homes and said that the council could not do anything about it. I know what a problem it is to prevent sea erosion. A considerable amount of money would have to be spent to prevent the erosion at Machan's Beach. The Council have provided over £500, but it is not enough. They have been asked to apply for a loan for which they would get a 20 per cent. subsidy from the Government, but what is 20 per cent.? The time is coming when the Government will have to give some assistance to shire councils to combat sea erosion. The residents of Machan's Beach are working hard every week-end putting in groynes. Saturdays and

Sundays carriers are carting filling onto the beach to try to prevent the erosion. Very little assistance is being given by the Mulgrave Shire Council. Other beaches are also being eroded. I am afraid that there is no way in the world that the residents of the area will get the necessary assistance from either the Government or the local authority.

The Cook shire is now administered by Mr. Gallop. I think it is the largest shire in Queensland—48,000 square miles—with a revenue of about £15,000 to £17,000. The Government appointed an administrator because the Council found it difficult to carry on with the revenue they were receiving. I believe that Mr. Gallop will do a good job. I trust that the Federal Aid money he receives—£35,000 for this year—will be used in the right direction. I know that he is opposed to building the road from Bloomfield to Daintree. Most of the money will be spent on a road from Cooktown to Laura. I hope that he does not spend the money foolishly. The residents of Cooktown will have no say in how it is spent. That is one of the major objections to the appointment of an administrator for the area; the people will have to rely on one man who has control of the available money.

Through the Press and over the radio the residents of Coen are crying out for water, but no assistance whatever is being given by the administrator or the Government to help them sink wells. At Kelly, I saw the pastor in charge of the A.I.M. hostel, which provides board and lodging for nine children to enable them to attend school at Coen. The only alternative for these children would be tuition by correspondence. This A.I.M. hostel is giving an excellent service but the pastor of the Methodist Church who is in charge of it, has had to dig a hole to obtain water. I applied to Mr. Gallop for some assistance for the residents of Coen and for this hostel to enable them to get a water supply, but so far no assistance has been forthcoming.

Thursday Island is being administered by Mr. Macnamara, a very capable man with considerable experience in local government work. The same position exists there. Mr. Macnamara is doing an excellent job and so is Mr. Allen, the Shire Clerk, but with the amount of money made available by the Government to be spent in the area, it is impossible to carry out the work that should be done.

At present there is a very acute shortage of water on Thursday Island. There would not be any at all at present if John Burke's boat and other boats did not bring it there. The time is fast approaching when the Government will have to spend a considerable sum of money to have water brought from Horn Island to Thursday Island, to provide a secure water supply for Thursday Island. It will cost a considerable sum to bring it from Horn Island which is three and a half miles from Thursday Island. However, it will have to

be done eventually, no matter how the Government view the position. There is an acute shortage of water on the island every year. It is not a position that is peculiar to this year. It happens every year at about this time, and I ask the Minister to have Mr. Macnamara examine the matter to see what can be done to assure a permanent or, at least, a reasonable supply of water for Thursday Island.

I should also like to mention accommodation for nursing sisters on Thursday Island. These sisters are living in homes at the moment. There are good quarters for the coloured nurses. They were constructed by the Department of Native Affairs with Torres Strait islanders, but the nursing sisters have very poor accommodation. Plans and specifications have been drawn up for the construction of quarters for them, but I believe the Minister for Health and Home Affairs claims that the expenditure would be too great and he does not intend to proceed with the building. In order to get good, trained staff to remain at Thursday Island we must provide suitable quarters. I cannot imagine that the sisters will remain there very long unless good quarters are provided.

I now want to deal with the teachers' residence at the Redlynch school. Every dwelling in the Far North—with its heavy wet seasons and tropical rains should have casements or louvres around the verandas. I have asked previous Ministers, including Ministers of the Labour Government, to have casements fitted around the verandas of the Redlynch school residence. On all occasions my request has been refused. In the wet season the rain floods onto the veranda, rotting the floorboards. If casements were fitted, the damage would not occur and the teacher living in the residence would get great comfort and satisfaction.

(Time expired.)

**Mr. TUCKER** (Townsville North) (5.32 p.m.): I congratulate the Minister on his elevation to Cabinet rank. I have already personally congratulated him but I want to do so publicly. I have found him to be very courteous and easy to approach. Of course, he has the backing of a very efficient staff and I believe he would be the first to agree with that statement. In Townsville also we are blessed with an extremely efficient staff of officers headed by Mr. Gilbert. Others I must mention are Mr. Dick Payne and the district architect, Mr. McNamara. They are very easy to approach and deserve the tribute I pay them. They are at all times courteous, helpful and efficient and I give them full marks for that. In addition to being efficient officers of the Department of Public Works, they are also very good public relations officers. Very good relations exist between the department and the people of Townsville and the officers of the department are responsible for that state of affairs.

As an Opposition member I must on occasions be critical. At times I must be critical of things that are happening in the Department of Public Works in Townsville. I would not be carrying out my duties properly if I did not do so. Although at times I may have to be critical of them, I want it to be known that if the occasion should arise I would be just as tenacious in defence of them as I am critical of them on other occasions.

Townsville is situated in the tropics and the long summer months at times can be very trying. I heard the Minister mention air-conditioning, and I now present a strong case for the air-conditioning of all Government buildings in Townsville, as soon as practicable. I am sure that the Minister knows of the great strides that are now being made in air-conditioning in Townsville, although some years ago it was considered to be a novelty.

**Mr. Richter:** Would you include the whole of the North?

**Mr. TUCKER:** Let other hon. members speak for themselves; for the moment I speak for myself.

I repeat that some years ago it was a novelty to have air-conditioning in Townsville, but lately the idea has caught on and now many banks, business houses and other buildings have had it installed. Managers and staffs alike are becoming very conscious of it and are aware of how it steps up efficiency in hot and humid climates. We have those conditions occasionally in Townsville, although for the greater part of the year the climate is wonderful. I ask the Minister to give special consideration to the areas deep in the tropics. Just a little while ago, by interjection, he asked if I would include the whole of the North. I agree with him, but I am referring specially to Townsville today and I ask him to see that air-conditioning of Government buildings is given No. 1 priority.

My argument is strengthened because Townsville is now the second city in the State as revealed by the census figures just released. Because it is the second city in Queensland it must have more public buildings and more public servants than any other city in Queensland, except Brisbane. We have a very strong case for an immediate start to be made on the provision of air-conditioning, which certainly steps up efficiency and provides better working conditions.

The Minister said that he was continuing with his day-labour force. We have very skilful and dependable tradesmen in Townsville. The Department of Public Works rests on the solid foundation of good, dependable building tradesmen and it is for that reason that the superstructure of the Department remains firm.

The Townsville City Council has proved that work can be carried out more economically with day-labour than by contract.

A few months ago I saw the Deputy Mayor at a meeting and he told me that they could carry out work much more economically with day-labour. We must remember that smart and snide practices creep in under the contract system. Someone is always trying to catch the departments and councils for an extra pound.

**Mr. Sherrington:** They are interested in profit-making.

**Mr. TUCKER:** That is right.

When we have a day-labour force in the Department of Public Works we can practice economy, and at the same time help to create employment, which is always in our minds in Townsville, where there is so much seasonal unemployment. The day-labour force is vital to us and to Queensland. It is Labour policy to use it to the utmost and it has always proved itself. I am glad to note that the Minister intends to continue it. He should stick with it because those people are the salt of the earth and they will maintain the high standard of the Department of Public Works.

I draw attention to the superintendent's quarters at Her Majesty's Prison, Stuart. These matters are of importance to us because hospitals, prisons and various other public buildings belong to us. On 1 September, 1961, the Department of Public Works advised the Justice Department that approval would not be given for an improved standard of accommodation for the superintendent at the prison. The superintendent, Mr. Sochon, had asked for new quarters to be built for him while other homes for prison officers at Stuart were being constructed, or alternatively, for a bedroom to be added to the existing home. He was told by his department that the Department of Public Works had not approved his application. He pointed out that his home had only two bedrooms, and a veranda not closed in, and it was inadequate for his growing family of a boy and a girl. His family was embarrassed. So I ask the Minister to reconsider the application. If the Minister thinks it is impossible to build a new home—and with money tight it would be a big outlay although it would be the best solution—I ask him to consider adding a bedroom to the existing home. That would not break the department but it would help the superintendent. To reinforce my argument I point out that other prison officers have very good accommodation—and I am grateful for it because I think it is very necessary. However, the ordinary prison officer joins in the social round only if he feels like it; if he does not feel like it he does not have to. The superintendent is in a different category altogether. He and his wife are expected to keep good relations with the local populace in the interests of prison welfare, if for no other reason. In fact, the superintendent is obliged to look after public relations. He is invited out from time to time and that hospitality must be returned or otherwise

people will look sideways at him. So there is a good deal of what I call obligatory entertainment. His present home is very small, and when he and his wife invite people there who have shown them hospitality, people who take an interest in prison welfare, they cannot entertain them correctly. I do not ask that the superintendent be provided with a palace. However, he has certain obligations to live up to, and if he is expected to carry out public relations work, he has a very good case for being given additional accommodation.

Originally the superintendent's quarters at Her Majesty's Prison, Stuart, were on the left-hand side of the prison gates. There were seven rooms in that accommodation aggregating 1,400 square feet, and that excluded a hallway, a sleep-out, verandas, and a bathroom, so it was rather spacious. I know that a former superintendent was moved to the present quarters for personal reasons, although I do not know what they were. After hearing the case that I have made out this afternoon, I think the Minister will move to correct this position.

I have discussed with the Minister the lack of sewerage at the Belgian Gardens State School and have ascertained that the Education Department has submitted plans for the toilet block and additional accommodation to the Department of Public Works. The Minister has said that this work must wait. Again, I am not putting this forward in a nasty way because I know that the Minister has many problems on his hands. I know, for instance, that there is a pressing need for new classrooms throughout Queensland, particularly in my own electorate. I pressed very strongly for the erection of new classrooms at the Pimlico High School, and my request was recently granted. However, the provision of sewerage is vital in the tropics, and I do not think the installation of sewerage at the Belgian Gardens State School should be deferred any longer. It is almost a year since I asked a question in this Chamber about the installation of sewerage at the school and was told that steps were being taken to put it in. The whole of the Belgian Gardens area is sewered and has been for about 12 months. The only buildings that are not connected to the sewerage system are the state school and the head master's residence. Hon. members will realise the feelings of the parents of the children who attend the State School. The children are sent from sewered homes to a school that is still relying on old E.C. toilet facilities. After waiting for a year, the parents think something should be done. We do not seem to be able to get any further, and I raise the matter now because I believe it is vital. I have been very patient, but I think something should be done now. Plans have been approved. I ask the Minister to reconsider his attitude so that advantage can be taken immediately of this civilised amenity. I further point out that at the present moment 96 Housing Commission flats are being erected in



Bundock Street, Belgian Gardens. Some of them are almost completed. It is obvious that when they are completed there will be a great influx of children into the Belgian Gardens school, if not this year, certainly at the beginning of next year. I have been informed by the Treasurer and Minister for Housing that something should be done about the matter because early next year the tenants will be occupying the flats. It is reasonable to assume that attendances will rise once the flats are occupied, when the cleansing problem will be aggravated further.

The Department of Public Works reported unfavourably on the reclamation of some land for school playground purposes. I think that it is appropriate to mention that matter while I am talking about the expected influx next year following the occupation of the flats. The present playground area is very small and restricted. The report was based on false premises, being based on the idea that the pipes under the road would not take the runoff from Castle Hill, therefore it would not be possible to drain the area. I live very close to that area and I know that the pipes under the road certainly will take the runoff. For years they have taken the runoff from Castle Hill quite easily. Therefore I ask the Minister to call for another report on that drainage problem from his department in Townsville. I reflect on no-one when I say that the report is based on false premises. It is quite possible that someone up there misled the officer who made the report. Now that the Minister realises the true position I hope that he will do something about it. The land in question could be reclaimed by the laying of drainage pipes in front of the headmaster's residence. The report also said that the land was very steep. Again, that is incorrect. There would not be a fall of more than 1 in 30. The area that needs reclamation is on only a very gentle slope. It is very necessary that it be included in the playground area for the reasons I have advanced. I should be grateful if the Minister would look into the matter and call for another report on the drainage problem at that school.

**Mr. BROMLEY (Norman) (5.55 p.m.):** I should like to congratulate Mr. David Longland, the Under Secretary, on his clear presentation of the annual report of the department. Seldom have I seen a report that sets out the particulars of the various departments in such fine and understandable detail.

The Minister said, in answer to my question, that more people were now employed in the Department of Public Works than there were, I think, in 1957. He may be right, but genuine as he might be in some respects, he is not genuinely sympathetic towards the many employees who have been dismissed from his department in recent months. They have been dismissed; the Minister admitted it.

The Minister said that although the department was letting more work out to private contractors, it was still providing employment. That is quite true; it does provide employment. It is also true that with the continued reduction of work done by day-labour in the department, teams of competent day-labour workers are being broken up. Day-labour teams in the Department of Public Works have played a tremendous part in keeping down costs. They are united teams who know the correct and quickest way to carry out the work, particularly the building of schools and other public buildings. One cannot help thinking that, with the increase in contract work and the inevitable increase of costs, school buildings will be an ever-increasing drain on available loan money.

Although the Minister is partly right in saying that the letting of outside contracts has not abolished all employment in his department there are many carpenters, plumbers, bricklayers, painters and other skilled men, and labourers in the department who have a feeling of insecurity in relation to permanent employment. The Minister should do as much work as possible within the department, thus providing permanent employment for its employees.

Because, perhaps, of the credit squeeze many apprentices in the building and allied trades, in private employment, have been dismissed just prior to finishing their apprenticeships. In some cases the dismissals occurred only one day before the expiry of their probationary period.

I know it is the 64-dollar question, but I should like to ask: where will they get other jobs? The boys would have been kept on if they had been apprenticed to the Department of Public Works. Owing to the credit squeeze and general economic policy of the Federal Government, however, their employers have gone broke and consequently these unfortunate young men in their teens are walking the streets looking for jobs. With the conditions now prevailing no employee feels safe in his job. The Minister said that employment is created by private contract work, but work done under contract with the Department of Public Works is of a temporary nature and employees have no guarantee of permanency of employment.

I want to refer briefly to some of the schools in my area and the miserable amount of money spent by the department on their maintenance and improvement. I am not saying the Minister is to blame for this state of affairs, but unfortunately the allocations for schools in my area have not been nearly as much as allocations for schools in other areas. I lodge my complaint in the hearing of the Minister and hope he will pass it on to the Minister for Education.

The playground of the Buranda Infants' School is being broken up by heavy milk-delivery trucks. I am informed by the

Parents and Citizens' Committee that neither the Department of Education nor the Department of Public Works will repair the damage. One reason given, I understand, is that the Department of Public Works used last year's allocation to erect a fence across the oval of the Buranda Boys' School. I asked for the erection of the fence and I am pleased the work was done. It is a one-rail type, although originally the idea was to have a safety fence to protect children at the Buranda Infants' School from possible harm when they were crossing the top of the oval during a sports meeting or cricket match. I am informed by the committee that the information it received was that the quota of money for the Buranda Infants' School had been spent. I do not know if the department means that the quota was used up in the building of the fence. If it does, I point out that the fence was built not on the grounds of the Infants' School but across the end of the oval in the grounds of the Buranda Girls' School and the Buranda Boys' School. There is quite an unusual setup in the Buranda school area. In one street there is the Buranda Boys' School and in another street the Buranda Girls' School, and to get to the Buranda Infants' School one has to traverse various by-way streets, across the railway bridge and then down to the Infants' School, but all the schools are in the one area. When we are thinking about this, we must remember that the oval is for the use of the two secondary schools. Very little has been done by the Department of Education, or the Department of Public Works, to improve the school grounds. The Minister for Education and Migration in answer to a question I asked informed me that only £193 13s. 7d. was spent on the Buranda Girls' School last year. In my opinion, that is a miserly pittance. In 1960 the Minister for Education and Migration agreed that it was necessary to have a set of steps leading from the girls' school to the oval. I forwarded the letter to the Parents' and Citizens' Committee and they were very pleased about it. The Minister said that the Department of Public Works would quote for, and do the job, and then the Department of Public Works said they were handing the request back to the Department of Education. It was just a case of passing the buck from one department to the other. The Department of Education told us in a letter that they would not carry out the work as a total State responsibility. I have ventilated this matter previously, and I am doing it again because the children need steps leading down to the oval. In rainy weather it is dangerous for anyone going down to the oval.

As I said, I forwarded a copy of the letter refusing to do the work to the school committee and I was told they were not happy about it. One day they were happy because they had a letter telling them the

job was being done and within a short period they received another letter telling them the job would not be done. They were happy one day and the next day they were bowed down with sadness. The teachers, the parents, and the children are unhappy. I should like the Minister for Public Works and Local Government, and the Minister for Education and Migration to come out to Buranda and see how dangerous it is to get from the Buranda Girls' School down to the oval. I may be asking a little too much, but I will even drive them out in my own car. The school grounds are also in a very poor state. There is no other way for the children to get down safely from the school grounds to the oval. It is very upsetting for me and for the children and the teachers. The women teachers wear high heel shoes and they are not made for gallivanting down mountainsides. One of the exits from the school can be reached only by that path.

I am bringing this to the Minister's attention because I believe he has a genuine desire to help the children and to help me in my electorate. I should not be at all surprised if he came out and had the matter fixed up.

I will not give details of other miserable pittances meted out to schools in the Norman electorate because they are already recorded in "Hansard". I point out, however, that £292 was spent on the Buranda boys' school and £193 13s. 7d. on the Buranda girls' school. Compare those with allocations to schools in other areas. I do not deny those favoured schools their good fortune but in comparison the schools in my area have been given a raw deal.

The Minister dealt briefly with valuation of land and I feel it incumbent on me to touch on that subject as it affects my electorate because I have received scores of phone calls, letters and personal calls in protest at valuations in Coorparoo, East Brisbane, Stone's Corner, and other areas of South Brisbane. All have protested bitterly at the Government valuations and the possibility of increased rates through those increased valuations. There have been public meetings held at Stone's Corner at which various speakers have expressed fears that the increased land valuations will bring about an increase in rents through landlords passing on increased rates. I would have attended the meetings had I not been absent at a conference in Adelaide at the time. Many people have indicated to me that they would protest strongly.

**Mr. Richter:** How will the valuations increase the rate?

**Mr. BROMLEY:** I did not say they would increase the rate. I said there was a possibility that the increased valuations would increase rents. Take one instance I know of where the valuation of one block of

land was trebled while that of the block next door was only doubled. The current council rate is 1s. 4½d. in the £ and even if it is dropped to 5d. or 6d. in the £ the householder whose valuation was trebled will have to pay more in rates than his neighbour.

**Mr. Richter:** The other person will pay so much less.

**Mr. BROMLEY:** I know, but is that fair and equitable?

**Mr. Hughes:** There will be very little variation in actual practice.

**Mr. BROMLEY:** It might be all right for the person paying the lower rates. Good luck to him. He will probably be very happy. But his next-door neighbour will be very unhappy. I think there could be some amendment to the Act.

While no doubt the Valuer-General does his best, many of the valuations have been based on high prices paid by departmental stores and oil monopolies, and also by so-called land sharks for areas to be subdivided and sold so that they can make outlandish profits at the expense of the people.

I have spoken before in this Chamber of the great menace that Norman Creek is to the health of people living in the area. It is a breeding ground for rats, snakes and disease. Even after the storm the other night, one can see the mess out there now. With the complete wiping out of subsidies to local authorities, I do not think the people in that area will have much chance of getting the creek cleaned up. The health of the people is the Government's responsibility, and I appeal to them to allocate money to the Department of Public Works to enable it to clean up Norman Creek from its mouth right through to Stone's Corner. It is in a shocking condition. Irrespective of what the Act says about tidal waters and the tide being in or out, this is still the Government's responsibility. Money spent in this way would not be wasted. It would certainly be put to better use than it would if a suggestion by an hon. member opposite were accepted and better seats were provided for hon. members to go to sleep on.

**Mr. Windsor:** You speak for yourself.

**Mr. BROMLEY:** I am speaking for myself. The hon. member has just awakened to hear me say something about seats and his conscience makes him think that I am speaking about him. I think the matter should be given urgent attention. We should not worry about providing better conditions in this Chamber when work such as this is needed.

The State is expected to maintain a huge works programme, and we all hope that it will be maintained. The Commonwealth Government are not assisting, and I do not think any hon. member would argue with me about that statement. The Commonwealth Government receive more revenue from taxation every time incomes increase, and I think Queensland has a strong case

for increased loan allocations because the development of the State's great potential would benefit national prosperity.

I have very little time left, so I shall conclude by posing this question to the Government: what is the answer—progress or poverty?

**Mr. ARMSTRONG (Mulgrave) (7.34 p.m.):** First, I offer my sincere congratulations to the Minister on attaining Cabinet rank. I have no doubt that he will discharge his duties in a very responsible manner, with satisfaction to himself and a great deal of advantage to Queensland. I know we can look forward to receiving from him the same deal that we have had in North Queensland since the Government took office. We are particularly fortunate in having a man of the Minister's calibre in this portfolio.

**Mr. Houston:** Did you vote for him?

**Mr. ARMSTRONG:** It does not matter who voted for him; he got there. I do not think hon. members opposite should talk so much about voting when we think of some of the things that took place over the years.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! The hon. member must address his remarks to the Chair.

**Mr. ARMSTRONG:** I am sure Mr. Richter will fill the office with great credit to himself because he has had a good deal to do with local government. His portfolio embraces matters that are very important to local authorities in Queensland. Hon. members will have noted that he took the first opportunity to travel over the State, at no small expense to himself, to get first-hand knowledge of the requirements of the various local authorities and to acquaint himself with some of their problems. I had the opportunity and privilege of spending a little time with him. Most of the local authorities in North Queensland are comprised of energetic people. They took every opportunity to explain all their problems.

**Mr. Davies:** When he comes back to Brisbane he robs them of subsidies.

**Mr. ARMSTRONG:** That is a different matter. I may deal with that later if hon. members opposite will keep quiet for a while and give me a chance.

Many local authorities throughout Queensland will be happy to know that the Minister has had a good deal of experience in local government work, which will make their task immeasurably easier when they come to put their problems before him. I am confident that he will do all in his power to assist them. I know that he faces many problems. For weeks now I have been sitting in the Chamber listening to all the problems put before him. Sometimes I have nearly found myself in tears about the poverty that is supposed to exist throughout the length and breadth of the State. As I proceed I hope to dispel a little of that gloom, which is perhaps

brought about through ignorance or through not having the opportunity to observe what has taken place in the State during the term of the Nicklin-Morris Government.

I express my thanks to the Minister and his officers for the courtesies they have extended to me whenever I have had occasion to interview them. I refer not only to departmental officers in Brisbane but also in Townsville and Cairns. I have found them most helpful with all the problems I have taken to them; I have received sympathetic consideration. For that I am grateful as I am sure are the people whom I have the honour to represent.

The Minister is fortunate in having the services of some very competent officers, men who do an exceedingly good job. I have had the opportunity to observe some of the work they have done. The State is getting very good value from them.

**Mr. Bromley:** Do you prefer day-labour to contract?

**Mr. ARMSTRONG:** Give me a bit of a go! You made your speech.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order!

**Opposition Members** interjected.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order!

**Mr. ARMSTRONG:** When I want the hon. member's assistance I will call on him.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! The hon. member is not obliged to listen to the interjections. He is addressing the Chair and I should like him to continue with his speech. In the meantime I would remind certain hon. members on my left that the heckling they are engaging in is disorderly behaviour. I am a little tired of it. I shall deal with the hon. member who disobeys my ruling.

**Mr. ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Taylor.

I should like to have a little to say about schools and public buildings generally throughout the State, particularly in North Queensland. I do so particularly as we have heard so much about the neglect in recent times of that part of the State. In my electorate—and this applies to every electorate in North Queensland and, I should say, the rest of the State—this Government have endeavoured to live up to their responsibility.

**Mr. Wallace:** Where?

**Mr. ARMSTRONG:** All over the State, with respect to repairs to buildings at least. Hon. members will recall that a few years ago it was very difficult to get a school or any public building painted. At times we did get repairs done but it was almost impossible to get the building painted. I have been associated with school committees for many years, and on many occasions I endeavoured to get something done to brighten the buildings up, but it was next to impossible.

**Mr. Davies:** Who was your parliamentary representative then?

**Mr. ARMSTRONG:** Probably one of the hon. member's friends. Since this Government took office there has been an entire change of policy in this regard.

**Mr. Newton:** Where?

**Mr. ARMSTRONG:** There has been in my electorate. Perhaps the hon. member has been asleep and has not seen the change. I have some 25 or 26 schools in my electorate and it gives me much pleasure to see what is being done with them. Not only are our schools painted but the school-teachers' residences are painted inside and out. We have got away from that old standard stone colour of days done by. As a matter of fact, for many years a lot of them did not have any paint at all and, when they did, it was always the same drab colour. Today, they are somewhat in keeping with residences owned by private enterprise and private people. It has always been my belief that the Government should give a lead to private enterprise instead of dragging behind them as we have done for many years in this State.

**Mr. Davies:** You are reflecting on the administrators of the department.

**Mr. ARMSTRONG:** If my memory serves me right the departments are very much the same now as they were under Labour Governments and I do not think the hon. member's statement is fair. This is a matter of Government policy and the administrators are doing an excellent job in implementing it, even if the hon. member does not think they are.

On behalf of the people of my electorate I pay tribute to the Government, the Minister and his predecessor for what we have obtained from them during our short term of office. I feel sure the treatment will continue. To cite one particular example, for the last 30 years Babinda has fought for a C.P.S. residence. Representations were made through various bodies without avail and the stage had been reached where people thought it was hopeless. During my short term in this Parliament I have been successful in getting that residence. It is a standard type of Government building of which, as I mentioned a while ago, we can be proud. There is, however, one matter I should like to mention to the Minister through you, Mr. Taylor. When these buildings are being erected in places such as Babinda, which probably has the highest rainfall in this State, a little more care should be paid to the situation of the house or, alternatively, the extending of the veranda. This particular residence in Babinda has been built with the veranda facing the weather side, the south-east. When this type of building is to be erected in the wet areas north of Townsville, some thought should be given to the enclosing of the verandas. The buildings are in a warm climate, and there is always a certain amount of rain, not only during the wet

season but also in the winter months. On some occasions south-easterly weather drives the rain across a veranda and has a tendency to rot the floor and the foundations and to deprive the resident of the pleasure of opening doors. The slight changes needed to combat such conditions could be carried out without any great expense. Not only would it save the department money in the years ahead, but it would also make the residents happy. When we get good employees we should look after them.

I give the Government, and particularly the Department of Public Works, a good deal of praise for the manner in which they have attempted to overcome the lack of septic systems and adequate water supplies in schools. As I said a moment ago, I have quite a number of schools in my electorate, some of them only one-teacher schools; nevertheless, if there is any place where we should endeavour to do away with the old type of lavatory, it is the school. In that respect the Government have been doing a good job and I think Opposition members will admit it. There are a few schools still to be attended to in my electorate. Water supply is one of the problems we come up against from time to time, and it is a difficult one. In this matter the Departments of Education and Public Works overlap to some extent, and I think it would be beneficial if they could sort out the problem. On the one hand the Department of Public Works will allow schools to dig wells, but on the other hand the Department of Education will not grant permission, its rule being that if a school wants a well it has to be dug outside the grounds. In my electorate there are four or five schools where the situation is impossible if the problem cannot be overcome.

I have made some suggestions to the Minister for Education and his departmental officers and I hope we can overcome the difficulty so that this very desirable amenity can be provided at the schools, particularly those in the area I have the pleasure and privilege to represent.

Almost 12 months ago the first high school in my electorate was erected at Malanda. I feel sure the people of Malanda expect me to thank the Minister and his officers for their efforts. The foreman in charge of the job was one of the best in the State, a very energetic man, full of drive, able to command respect and get the best from the workmen. He built the school in remarkably short time. Of course, he ran into weather difficulties which we have to cope with from time to time in North Queensland. Stages of the school have still to be completed. During the course of erection of the school we received the utmost co-operation not only from the foreman on the job but also from the department in Cairns and Townsville. When the students were shifted from the State school to the new high school, the home science and some other classes were

left behind. A manual block of fair size was erected in the new high school. The matter was brought to my attention by the committee and I promptly got in touch with the architect in Townsville and the home science class was transferred into the manual block. Everyone was quite happy about it, but we still have a problem in the playground. We are short of an oval although we have a beautiful site. I should like the Minister to try to do something about it. There are no facilities at all for the students to use in their leisure time.

Local government is the form of government closest to the people. I believe that in this State we are particularly well off in administration in the various local authorities because there is very good representation in many instances. There are some councils that do not enjoy good administration but fortunately they are in the minority. I do not want to mention them tonight.

**Mr. Davies:** Can you mention one or two?

**Mr. ARMSTRONG:** No, not now.

In the past few years local authorities have done an excellent job under extremely difficult conditions which are getting worse all the time. The last member of the Opposition who spoke referred to the problems that have to be faced, which are very real, and in the near future we will have to give a good deal of thought to them. They have a fairly wide scope for the work they do in providing amenities for the people. They are putting in sewerage schemes and water schemes. It is heartening to take a trip through the State and see the interesting amenities that have been provided in recent times. We find that very attractive halls and libraries have been built along with many other buildings which, we know, are very costly. However, it is neither fair nor reasonable to expect a man who owns a piece of land to find the money for such projects even though they are very desirable. We are fast approaching the time when we will be rating some of the primary producers and others off their land.

It is necessary for the State Government and the Federal Government to give a great deal of thought to the means of financing these important bodies in the future.

**Mr. Davies:** They won't get much more out of them.

**Mr. ARMSTRONG:** We are getting a bit more than the Opposition got when they were the Government.

In the last few years a little assistance has been given to the local authorities under the Federal Aid Roads Grant which has been of great help to many councils throughout the State. It is wonderful for them to get money with which they can develop some of the areas in the shires that have not already been developed, and to do it with free money. However, although the help they

have received from this source has been of great assistance, they need further help, but I do not know how they can get it.

With the growth of tourism in North Queensland, and people coming from this State and other States to enjoy the many amenities that the local authorities have put on the beaches, and various other pleasure resorts in their areas, the shires in North Queensland and the City Councils are doing all they can to try to develop the tourist industry still further. I hardly think it is fair for the primary producers and for the private citizens who own their own homes. It is this Government's policy to encourage people to purchase their own homes although some of our predecessors have accused us of seeking to make small capitalists out of them.

Local authorities are grateful for the co-operation they have received from the Department of Local Government. It is customary for them to send down delegations from time to time to discuss their loan and other programmes and they have always had the utmost courtesy extended to them from the various Ministers and departments.

One problem that is worrying many local authorities in sugar-growing districts is that posed by tramlines on public roads. You will be conversant with the problem, Mr. Taylor, as you lived in one of those areas for many years. Years ago when the mills were built and the tramline systems put in there were very few motor cars and very few roads. The tramlines did not present much of a hazard then, but today with the ever-growing, fast vehicular traffic they are proving very dangerous on some main roads and in some towns in particular.

In Gordonvale, for instance, the tramline runs right across the highway but that will not worry us very long because, since we came into office, we have erected a bridge there and early next year the main road will by-pass Gordonvale. For many other towns the problem will remain. It is also a matter of concern to main roads and traffic authorities. Tramlines are vital to the life of many of those townships and the local authorities and the sugar interests should get together with the department on it and make every effort to plan to avoid the danger that exists. The other day I read in the paper of a suggestion by one local authority that reflecting tape be put on every truck so that it would be seen readily even by the driver of a fast-moving vehicle.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! I must point out to the hon. member that that matter has no relation to the Department of Public Works or the Department of Local Government. However, the hon. member has now exhausted his time.

(Time expired.)

**Mr. O'DONNELL (Barcoo) (7.59 p.m.):** I congratulate the Minister on his elevation to Cabinet rank. I have had a brief acquaintance with him but in the time that I have been here he has extended to me courtesy and kindness, which I deeply appreciate. He is a man of conscience and enthusiasm. I should not like him to think that any criticism I make tonight is of him personally. My criticism will be objective, and directed at the political administration of which he is a part.

During the time that Labour Governments were in office in Queensland, which was almost 40 years, they laid a solid foundation in public works. It is clearly evident in the Barcoo electorate how Labour Governments considered the needs of the people, whether in the field of education, the development of a hospital system, or the construction of Government buildings to serve the people who had business to transact with Government departments. Of course, time has an effect on buildings, and today there are many buildings throughout the Barcoo electorate that are in need of repair or which are totally unsuitable for the functions that they are now performing.

I have had considerable experience with the Department of Public Works. For 27 years I was a head teacher at various schools and, naturally, I had correspondence with the department and received visits from district supervisors. Sometimes the results of my representations were favourable; sometimes they were not.

**Mr. Windsor:** They have been favourable in the last four years.

**Mr. O'DONNELL:** I am not now referring to the last four years, but I shall come to them in due course.

I have come to some conclusions as a result of my experience. I think district inspectors of the Department of Public Works should carry out inspections of Government buildings and advise the officer-in-charge of them of any disrepair that exists. I say that because from time to time we have people in charge of Government buildings who are not competent to assess their state of repair. They may see an obvious fault in the structure, but one that is not so obvious may easily be passed over. From time to time, also, we have negligent officers in the Public Service who do not regard Government buildings with the respect with which they should be regarded. A man with knowledge of the various forms of construction would be competent at least to give an annual report on the state of the buildings in his district. It would certainly be of great assistance.

I should also like to say at this stage that, as a head teacher, I appreciated the Government's introduction of the system that enabled me to report maintenance needs and repair jobs direct to the district supervisor. I thought that was a great help.

Instead of having to pass through the old-established channels of the Director-General or, in later days, the Regional Director, it gave us an opportunity to carry out immediate repairs, which, if left unattended, would have been a source of annoyance for some considerable time until official permission came through.

I have been concerned, particularly in the last four years, about delays experienced not only in my case at the Capella State School but also at other schools in the Barcoo electorate. I refer particularly to the extension to my school that became necessary on account of increased attendance. It must have taken me almost two years before the work was commenced. Before anything was done representations were made to the hon. member for Mackenzie—the school was in his electorate at the time—the Director-General of Education and finally the Premier. Eventually after one of my staff and later myself, had spent over 12 months in uncongenial surroundings under the school, we had the iniquitous state of affairs of having to work in competition with workmen of the Department of Public works.

The Capella State School now requires another classroom. I made application for it in February this year. The only official notification has been a letter from the Regional Director of Education stating that the matter had been passed on to the Department of Public Works for approval. I strongly protest against such delays. When adequate notice is given quicker response should be forthcoming. I realise that there has been a great expansion in education throughout the State, and I appreciate it. However, at times the delay is over the odds. When children have to work under unsatisfactory conditions the head teacher is not only worried about the children's welfare but is subject to frequent complaints from their parents. That does not help at all.

Very often it is suspected that the shelving of a job is the result of somebody else's greater influence in having the Department of Public Works divert its work force and finance to another job in preference to one that is possibly more urgent. Sometimes that suspicion is well-founded. Then, of course, we are subject to what is known as political influence.

**Mr. Nicklin:** That is not a very fair statement to make.

**Mr. Richter:** Are you going back many years?

**Mr. O'DONNELL:** No, not very far. I should like now to comment on the situation as I have seen it in my recent tours throughout my electorate. As I previously mentioned, many of the installations that were put there by Labour Governments are now in a state of disrepair. Some of the Government buildings, I might add, do not fit in

with the surroundings at all and offer a sharp, shabby contrast to what is being erected by the local authorities and by people in private enterprise.

The Minister cannot deny that he has visited Emerald and seen the setup at the police station. He knows also that on the other side of the C.P.S. office, which is next to the police station, there is a very attractive shire office. At the end of that street, within 12 months, there will be an admirable civic centre, and between the civic centre and the local authority's office—two attractive buildings—will stand this derelict police station and C.P.S. office which can be regarded only as a fair building. That is what is facing the Department of Public Works in this one instance where our State Government offices are shabby contrasts.

I am not denying that good work has been done in certain sections. I know that the Barcaldine police station is an attractive building, yet what a contrast it is to the C.P.S. offices on one side, and on the other side the Department of Public Works' headquarters, which are, of course, allied with the administrative office of the Department of the Public Lands.

So, one can pass through the electorate and see the same thing everywhere. Representations have been made in certain instances and, again I agree, in Blackall we are to see an improvement. There will be an improvement at the C.P.S. office and at the police station, I hope, very soon.

Admirable progress has been made by private enterprise in Blackall. It is a very attractive town generally, yet up in its back-blocks are these poor types of Government buildings!

One can, of course, state very emphatically that some people impress upon one that such repairs are not needed. On the other hand, there are people who go to the other extreme and say that something should be constructed, when an examination reveals that only a repair job is necessary. I have adopted a balanced attitude towards this problem and, wherever a person has made a complaint of any kind, I have taken the opportunity to visit the building in question to see what was required. I remember an occasion when I went to Blackall and met a very prominent gentleman who has a very solid Country Party background. He impressed on me the great need for new nurses' quarters. I went to the nurses' quarters and found the building was quite fair. With repairs it could be turned into an extremely serviceable unit. I have been fair in my criticism, as in coming to my conclusions I disregard anything that verges on what I think is an over-statement or an under-statement. However, I must express the opinion that the Department of Public Works should display a little more foresight. I give as an example the houses

allotted to detectives. Their occupation has unusual aspects and, therefore, houses that would be suitable for teachers, clerks of petty sessions and so on may not be suitable for them. A detective can be called away from his home and may be absent for two or three weeks. He may have to leave at a moment's notice. In one instance to my knowledge the detective's residence has an ordinary wood stove. He has applied for a Rayburn combustion stove and hot water system combination. He has been told that, as the house was erected only six years ago and the wood stove was installed at that time, he will have to be satisfied with it. I have said that he can be called away at a moment's notice. His wife, in those circumstances, may be put in a difficult position. There may not be sufficient cut wood. All she has by way of a hot water system is a departmental chip heater and, as they have a young family, hot water is urgently needed. I think the Rayburn stove with the combination hot water system is a necessity. The suggestion was made to this person that an electric hot water system could be installed. The high cost of electricity is a disadvantage with an electric system. I am not mentioning these things to discredit the Department of Public Works but to illustrate my point that it should use foresight and should have some appreciation of the difficulties to be encountered. The department would then have a contented public servant in the area. I understand consideration is now being given to the installation of slow-combustion stoves and hot-water systems in Government residences. I was unlucky in that respect as I received a wood stove six months before the decision was made. The unfortunate teacher at that school will have to put up with it until it wears out.

I should say that at least four schools in my electorate have accommodation problems or will have them in the near future. I urge the Minister to take action as soon as possible to expedite the building of extensions so that the children and teachers may proceed with their important work under the best conditions.

I was disappointed at not hearing that the Government intend to build a separate high school at Emerald. In a district such as that, where development is going ahead rapidly, the department should get land or see that land is made available for the establishment of a separate high school. If any town in that area is to develop it will be Emerald. Whenever extensions are carried out a problem is created with the old and the new, side by side. The Department of Public Works should investigate any faults that may be in the old structure so that repairs may be effected and the school, as a unit, will then be a suitable example of the work carried out by those people and will be attractive in the eyes of the community. That is an important point in my mind. The extension is attractive and well painted, but the old section is

often left unattended. I have noticed that repeatedly. Once I inquired why it was done and was told that we were unfortunate that the extension was carried out when the Department of Public Works had retrenchments. Retrenchments are very upsetting and disappointing at any time, but when they are carried out before the job is completed they can be very disappointing and disturbing to the people affected.

I have gone into considerable detail in my criticism of the Department of Public Works, but I have done so because I believe that by bringing these matters to the attention of the Minister he may give them considerate treatment in the future.

In my opinion, the Government should set a standard in the community. The Department of Public Works has a widespread organisation and an excellent work force. Let us see that all the work undertaken throughout Queensland may be examined by the people without fear of criticism of Government utilities.

(Time expired.)

**Mr. HUGHES** (Kurilpa) (8.24 p.m.): I rise to support the Estimates before the Committee, believing them to be constructive and portraying in figure form a picture of the State and its future progress. At the outset I congratulate the Minister.

**Mr. Graham:** This is a moving story.

**Mr. HUGHES:** Yes, of course it is the usual story.

**Mr. Graham:** I said, "It is a moving story."

**Mr. HUGHES:** If the hon. member had been diligent enough to study the Estimates there could emanate from his lips nothing but praise, with the possible exception of one or two minor justifiable criticisms on some small matters. I have heard so much sophistry from some of the Opposition members in the chamber that it may have a serious effect on the final analysis of these Estimates. In the main there has been a commendation of the Minister and his department yet with it all there has been an occasional suggestion of criticism, mostly put forward in a way meant to be constructive.

**Mr. Graham:** You have not enough money to put a roof over your head.

**Mr. HUGHES:** The hon. member will not have any money himself in two years' time because after the next election he will be out looking for a job.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order!

**Mr. HUGHES:** I commend the Minister for taking a keen personal interest in his job. I have personal reason to commend him for his frankness and for reposing confidence in the members of his committee. By their frank and searching analysis of



various matters the members of the committee are able to be of great help to him. I commend the Minister, too, on his frankness with other members of Parliament and on the way he takes into his confidence those who are able to be of such help on matters affecting the progress of the State.

In the short time at my disposal I will mix compliments with criticism because I regard this as a fact-finding debate. While the Minister may not agree with all that I say I put forward the submissions believing them to be worthy of consideration.

I have some general commendatory remarks to make particularly about school buildings. We have seen in the past few years a marked change in the planning and architecture of State primary schools and high schools. In the past so many of our schools were eyesores, painted a drab slate brown. They had an uninspired layout and the light and air reaching the classrooms left much to be desired. That has largely been remedied by a new approach to design, particularly in State high schools. There have been enough of them built in recent years to prove the point now that the Government have been able to overcome the problems associated with the tidal wave of students following the immediate post-war period. Modern school buildings are attractive in appearance, painted in light, pastel shades, with greater window areas for light and air. Generally speaking the workmanship in school buildings is good.

However, in some cases the school grounds in which new buildings are erected demonstrate a lack of liaison generally in the planning-to-completion stage. It seems to me that the department draws up the plans and prepares the ground, lays the foundations of the school and commences building. Then with the intensity of building operations the accent seems to be put on having the buildings completed and occupied. More cleaning up and finishing off is needed either during the course of the building operations or at the end of them. Too little is done in the way of landscaping the surroundings of the school. While we must keep aesthetic considerations within economic bounds we must consider the safety and general convenience of the children and of their mothers who put in a great deal of voluntary time at school tuck-shops and in many other ways. They are of great assistance to the educational programme of the State. For their general welfare and convenience the department could well run a searching eye over this aspect of the programme of the Department of Public Works. I have in mind the Yeronga State High School, although it is not in my electorate. I know just about all there is to know about this school from the laying of the first brick. At that time I was an alderman of the City Council, and I had a lot to do with providing sports grounds for the school, which recently had its second speech night. The Minister for

Health and Home Affairs, in whose electorate the school is situated, and I recently attended a fete held at the school. We were taken on an inspection of the grounds by the principal. Although the deficiencies in the grounds were not unknown to us, we saw them in company with the Principal and the members of the School Committee. There is a particular part from the road to the school that the children must traverse. It is on a downward slope, and because of the contour of the land and the washing of water, particularly storm water, the ground is scoured. It is a claypan area, and it is obvious that the scouring causes not only tremendous inconvenience but also some danger to the children. Great work has been done by the Department of Public Works in building the school, but there has been a lack of liaison and thought in laying out and landscaping the school grounds. As this affects the prestige of the department and causes inconvenience to the children attending the school, I think further detailed consideration should be given to the problem in subsequent building programmes.

I should like to make particular reference to the Blind and Deaf School. I am a member of the committee at that school, and have been for some years, and I have also taken a very active interest in many committees associated with the blind and deaf. Some of the buildings at the school are amongst the oldest in Brisbane and are in a state of decay and one is a temporary building. I know that the department is investigating this matter, but there is a real need not only for maintenance but also for capital works for the future. Enrolments at the school are increasing. One reason is that the Oral Deaf Pre-School Association is doing magnificent work in taking to the country, facilities that will enable parents to train their children in pre-school years for entry into the school. As the numbers are increasing, it is even more necessary to carry out maintenance. I believe it would be preferable to implement plans to remodel the school generally. In the process the institutional type of buildings and accommodation could be abandoned and rooms of a much more friendly, private and family type could be provided. The children are housed and fed at the school. It is a boarding-school, not a day-school. So that full and proper consideration can be given to the question of spending money from the Public Works Vote on these buildings, I think I should point out that the present enrolment at the school is 160 deaf children, and 50 blind children. Members of the school committee, and those who have studied the subject, believe that this number will double in 10 years. One reason for this belief is the steady and general increase of 17 per cent. in Queensland's population. That is going to be one of the factors. Medical science today saves many lives. Meningitis cases can be saved but not before blindness or deafness may occur. Premature

children, 2½ lb. babies, are put into oxygen tents. The excessive use of oxygen can cause blindness. The condition known as retrolental fibroplasia can also bring on these defects for which the department must cater. Provision must be made not only for the budgetary allowance but also a sum of money for the urgent maintenance of the buildings. The oreomycin drug has been known to cause deafness. Many new drugs, until they are proven, may save lives but unfortunately some of them may sometimes cause deafness or blindness.

**Mr. Davies:** You are on the Department of Health and Home Affairs Vote!

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! That is the second time the hon member for Maryborough has attempted to carry out the duties of the Chair. The Chair will decide when the hon. member is in order and when he is not.

I should be glad if the hon. member for Kurilpa would relate his remarks more closely to buildings over which the Department of Public Works has control.

**Mr. HUGHES:** Thank you, Mr. Taylor. I know that you are being indulgent because I am dealing sincerely with a very serious matter that affects the welfare and the lives of young people in the community. I am dealing with the urgent maintenance that is necessary on these buildings and the need for additional expenditure on new buildings. My remarks are related to the Estimates of the Department of Public Works in that way. I am pointing out the urgency of the matter because of increased enrolments. The disease rubella or German measles is always with us, although not today in epidemic proportions. Again that can cause physical defects for which we need more accommodation. We now have children in the school from Mt. Isa and other parts of Queensland because there are now greater opportunities than ever before. With this specialised form of education we are able to help, but we need accommodation. There is much more to be done. The children are not taught just the three R's; they are taught how to grow properly into adulthood. They are taught how to occupy their leisure profitably, and they are fitted for jobs in later life. The matter has been brought before the Director-General of Education. I understand that it is now before the architects. Mr. Costello is investigating it. However, as yet we have had no indication of when building is likely to commence. I am hoping that the Minister will take notice of what I am saying and give some indication that this matter is not only being attended to as a matter of urgency but is also being treated with sympathy. Many of the buildings date back to 1892 and because of that there is this need for urgent maintenance.

There is a tremendous amount I should like to say but obviously time is going to

prevent my touching on important matters relating to local authorities and the Valuer-General's Department. The hon. member for Townsville North made mention of the day-labour system. He said "that it had proved itself and he asked the Minister to stick with it." There is a place in the scheme of things for both day-labour and contract. I believe there is a place for both and it is necessary to provide a basis of comparison. This practice is most successfully applied in the Brisbane City Council and although we had, at one stage, to fight hard to introduce this particular scheme, on a 60/40 basis it has proved itself with much noticeable effect. It has sparked the initiative of top officials; it has pared needless expense of work programmes, galvanised into action those associated with planning and supervision, and noticeably reduced the cost of departments dealing with road-making, drainage, sewerage and sundry jobs. They find they have to compete with private contractors, that is, day-labour versus free enterprise.

**Mr. Houston:** Do you think that day-labour should be able to do it for less than it can be done on contract?

**Mr. HUGHES:** I believe they should compete with one another. How else are costs of day-labour to be effectively policed? I believe the best thing that could be done for this State is to work on a basis of day-labour competing with free enterprise.

**Mr. Houston:** How do you think they are going now?

**Mr. HUGHES:** I am not saying they are going down.

**Mr. Houston** interjected.

**Mr. HUGHES:** The hon. member need not talk to me about unemployment. The hon. member for Condamine pointed out today that in 1956, under a Labour Government, there were wholesale sackings in this department, regardless of the welfare of the men's families or anything else.

**Mr. Walsh:** That is not true.

**Mr. HUGHES:** It is recorded in "Hansard," the official record of the proceedings of this Parliament. It is also recorded in the hypothetical utterances—

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! I ask the hon. member to get back to a discussion of the Estimates of the Department of Public Works.

**Mr. HUGHES:** I should like the time to deal properly with members opposite in this matter. They would be more than sore and sorry. Let their sophistry discontinue when hon. members opposite address this Committee.

I have one or two matters that I wish to bring before the Minister's notice. This matter of public building involves the principle that we should support Queensland

industries, Queensland tradesmen and workers and Queensland contractors. I believe we should do that.

I should like to cite one particular case, the Wacol gaol contract. In 6½ years of public life this is the only occasion on which I have experienced a breach of faith in an undertaking given to me while I was investigating a matter. In this matter the contract to supply and build went to a southern firm, Morella Construction Company. In preference to local contractors, I believe the local contractors were more than competitive. The principle involved, which I wish to bring to the notice of the Minister, is that all things being equal, with firms of stability and experience, contractors in this State should have the benefit of a 5 per cent. preference thus providing work for local workers, companies and industries. We have this preference now in relation to the purchase of materials and it has proved a good one. It was introduced by this Government as an aid to industry and Queensland has benefited. To a great extent it has meant more stability for industries and it has stopped smaller industries from being pushed aside and asunder by monopolistic interests and overseas concerns. It has provided incentive to smaller employers and contractors.

I commend the suggestion to the Minister. It has proved a beneficial policy to Queensland in other directions and I believe it could be applied with further beneficial results to the State, to private enterprise and to contractors on public works. I have heard of a number of such cases. The hon. member for Cook mentioned one in the Chamber not long ago. It provided further proof that my suggestion is worthy of consideration by the Minister.

Queensland is the clearing house for southern goods. That is apparent from the fact that the head offices and factories of firms operating in Queensland are in the southern States. Money is flowing from Queensland to the southern States and we should do everything we can to bring those industries to Queensland. I commend the Minister for Labour and Industry for his virility and initiative in this respect. The facts and statistics bear out the good job he has done. But further incentive should be given to industry to come to Queensland, and it can be provided by the Ministry of Public Works. New industries would bring with them a stabilised economy and a greater amount of employment. The incentive could be provided if the suggestion I made was adopted.

I could speak at great length on local government and matters affecting the Brisbane City Council. They were touched on today by the hon. member for South Brisbane. He said the Brisbane City Council had problems. He was certainly right. The problems have never been as great as they are today owing to the fact that Brisbane

is burdened by a Labour administration and already they have savagely increased tram and bus fares.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order!

**Mr. HUGHES:** I know I would be out of order in dealing with that subject at length, although I should like nothing better than to debate it from the public platform. However, I think I would be permitted while on the subject of expenditure by local authorities to discuss Brisbane City Council matters such as electricity and transport and undertakings financed from loan funds. It cannot be denied that the Brisbane City Council is a gigantic octopus. It is time some of its arms and other than domestic responsibilities were dissected from its body.

**Mr. Newton** interjected.

**Mr. HUGHES:** I said that while in administration as an Alderman of the Council, as the hon. member knows. Having regard to the socialistic trait of the Brisbane City Council, I hope every opportunity will be given to the citizens of Brisbane, when the new town plan is prepared, to register their protest if they think they are aggrieved. I hope it will be displayed for some months for their examination. The Minister should look into the matter of the town plan. We find that a special committee has been set up to deal, rather illegally, I suggest, with applications for subdivisions and for the use of land in other ways. These matters are not being dealt with in accordance with the ordinances of the Brisbane City Council. If ever the public of Brisbane suffered injustice, they are suffering injustice now. Owing to the illegal set-up they are being frustrated and delayed.

(Time expired.)

**Mr. WALSH** (Bundaberg) (8.49 p.m.): Apparently the hon. member for Kurilpa intended to discuss some important matters related to the Vote. After listening to him I find difficulty in dissecting the important matters from the unimportant matters. The hon. member may have had some experience in the little chamber of the Brisbane City Council, but in this Chamber he must realise that a time limit for speeches is imposed and that, if he has important matters to discuss, he should deal with them first. It is no good the hon. member's blaming the Chairman or anyone else in the Committee if he fails to discuss matters that he thinks are important. It has become customary, apparently, over a period of years, for hon. members to rise and congratulate Ministers on their appointments. I have never indulged in that because in the first place I do not think they should be there. Apart from that, since they are the Government, they are called upon to make a selection to fill a gap caused in the Ministry. I am not saying that their

selection was an unwise one. As a matter of fact, I think the Minister has shown many qualities in the sphere of his own organisation that may prove worthwhile in his office as a Minister in the years to come. I will go a little further, even though I may be accused of trying to flatter him. I will not do that, but I will throw some "bricks" at him on occasions if I think there is justification for it. I believe he will administer his office in a very efficient way. In the course of the debate I think I heard someone say he was a man to whom you could talk, that he was easy to approach, and so on. If he does not get an inflated head, or a superior approach, he will go a long way with the average member of Parliament and the community generally. Those qualities are very important in a man who succeeds to public office, particularly if he himself may have been a humble person. He must not overlook the community that he mixed with when he was humble and I think the Minister for Public Works and Local Government may come into that category.

The Department of Local Government that comes under the administration of the Minister is not usually looked upon as a glamour department. It is not a revenue-producing department and, unlike some other departments that have a closer appeal to the everyday sections of the community, it is subject to a certain amount of criticism because of the administration it has to undertake on behalf of other departments. For instance, education, public buildings generally, the Valuer-General's Department, probate and succession, and many other activities of Government. As a result, there are many phases of the administration of the department that become the centre of criticism. I wish to deal with the Valuer-General's Department, for a start, but not so much with the position of the Valuer-General, or any other officer, because I appreciate that trained public servants are expected only to administer the law as it is laid down by Parliament. If the officers of the department are giving effect to the law as laid down by Parliament, who are we to criticise the personnel of the Valuer-General's Department? He has been subjected to a great deal of criticism. I am surprised that even at this early stage of the debate, hon. members such as the hon. member for South Coast, and the hon. member for Albert—who have to much to say from the public platform about the administration of this department—have not risen to ventilate their feelings about the administration of the department.

**Mr. Gaven:** I will do you over on Tuesday.

**Mr. WALSH:** At least I have brought the hon. member for South Coast into it, or Gold Coast, or whatever he calls it.

We should always remember that Public Service officers are employed to administer

the law laid down by Parliament, and if there are any complaints about the effect of the administration of the law, Parliament is the place to level criticism at the administration of the Government, and the Cabinet. Cabinet has to take the responsibility for amending the law when it is necessary.

It is unfortunate that the Press seem to give a good deal of publicity to the unfavourable comments by the President of the Land Court or some other member of the court. I can recall some time back the valuations that were appealed against, in the Balonne area I think it was. The Press report would give the impression that the valuers who were in the employ of the Valuer-General's Department were pulled to pieces by the court. When the court decision was handed down it was found that almost without exception the court had accepted the values that had been submitted by those officers. Where the valuer is wrong, certainly the Press should direct attention to the criticism by the court or its members against the activities of that officer; but if the court is prepared to accept the values submitted by the officers the decent thing should be done in the public interest, and the fact that the court adopted their valuations should be publicised in the same way.

Recently, in a case in Gatton, a Mr. Harland had his name dragged across the pages of the Press. He was asked the question: did he fail to take into consideration a certain phase of the principles that would be considered in arriving at that valuation? He admitted that he had failed to do so, only for the reason, I suppose, when it became finally known, that the failure of the water facility, as it was ultimately proved, was not known at the time he made the valuation. How unfair can you be. How was he to know that, two years before, when he was making his valuation?

I want to make some reference to the South Coast. A great deal of noise has been made by the hon member for South Coast. I commend him for the fight he puts up, even to the extent of being prepared to go into the witness box and be pulled about by court members, lawyers and so on. More credit to him as the hon. member for the electorate. But why all this noise? Why do not the Government face up to their responsibility? After all, the Labour Government were faced with a similar problem here in Brisbane. And this is where the so-called experienced hon. member for Kurilpa, who was a member of the Brisbane City Council, should be informing his Government or his party of these things. When the Brisbane City Council of which he was a member had zoned various areas into industrial areas, particularly West End, it was found that the man who owned a home in that area was being valued on an industrial basis because he was within the industrial area. The

Labour Government at the time amended the law to make it practicable for the valuer to determine the valuation of that property on a residential basis so long as it continued to be occupied for residential purposes.

**Mr. Hughes:** And rightly so.

**Mr. WALSH:** Why is not the hon. member drilling that into the heads of members of the Cabinet and the Government?

**Mr. Hughes:** Do you think I am silent on the matter?

**Mr. WALSH:** I do not know. The hon. member does not discuss Caucus secrets, not that he would know much about them. At the same time, following that up, how could you justify the position of a dairy farmer on the South Coast, a man earning his living from rural pursuits, having his property valued on the basis of what Chevron might pay or what the Commonwealth Bank might pay for a particular allotment? I understand that a decision has been given in favour of the property-owner in that case.

**Mr. Gaven:** That is right.

**Mr. WALSH:** The hon. member for South Coast confirms it. If the Crown sought to pursue that, it would be very interesting to see what the decision of the High Court would be having regard to the interpretation of the law, because the only category I know that has been listed for discrimination in valuation is the one relating to industrial areas as against residential areas. The simple thing would have been for the Government to extend the categories in the Valuation of Land Act to cover a situation such as the one that arose in relation to the dairy farm on the South Coast. The Act could then be given effect to by the Valuer-General's Department on a State-wide basis. Why blame the Valuer-General or his officers for sticking to the law? After all, whatever valuation they finally determine is open to challenge in the Land Court on a legal basis. That is the position, irrespective of whether it suits the hon. member for South Coast or the hon. member for Albert, who have been in rebellion against this principle.

**Mr. Gaven:** What is the value of the city of Bundaberg?

**Mr. WALSH:** The value of the city of Bundaberg has been determined in exactly the same way as the value of the South Coast has been determined. Their valuations have gone up, some of them are paying more rates, and a few appeals have been lodged. As I see it, I think that the principle of uniform valuation has been to the benefit of the State as a whole and eventually it will be accepted, as it has been in New South Wales and other States for many years past. I hope that the Government will face up to their responsibility in that connection, because it seems to be a simple provision. I do not want

to keep harping about the hon. member for South Coast and the hon. member for Albert, because they are only two of the people who think they can get the Government to upset a well established principle, a basis of valuation that has been accepted in every State in Australia, particularly following the *Spencer v. The Commonwealth* case decided by the High Court many years ago, and in other countries, too. Any government would be very foolish to endeavour to upset that very sound principle that has been determined, but it is still open to the Parliament, if the Government have the courage to bring down amending legislation, to amend the law to meet the situation on the South Coast.

**Mr. Gaven:** If you go on, nobody will want to own any land.

**Mr. WALSH:** I have heard many squeals about the valuations. I think one of the things that is overlooked when people decry the Valuer-General's Department is that for eight years, under the National Security Regulations, values of land were pegged in Queensland and in every other Australian State. Consequently, allowing for the small percentage of blackmarketing that may have gone on in spite of those controls, there was a lag of eight years to catch up in valuations. Take my own case. If I buy a property here, the only bit of dirt that I own, and I buy it at a valuation of £300, in a matter of only two years after the lifting of price control the valuation has risen by 130 per cent. I am not squealing, because I realise that many other people were in the same boat.

I am not getting on the side of the monopolies and, unlike the hon. member for Kurilpa, I am not going to leave the important problems till last. There are a few problems relating to my own electorate that I wish to raise. Firstly, I suggest to the Minister that he might consider removing the administration of the Valuer-General's Department from Maryborough to Bundaberg.

**Mr. Gaven:** It would be better to get rid of it altogether.

**Mr. WALSH:** I do not advocate that, but I think there is good reason why the administration of the department should be moved from Maryborough to Bundaberg. Anybody with any common sense must know that there is a greater number of parcels of land to be valued in a closely-settled area such as the Bundaberg area, where there are farmers, sugar farmers, dairy farmers, pineapple-growers, and so on. In addition, the population of Bundaberg is approximately 3,500 more than the population of Maryborough, which would affect home ownership. I realise that Parliament approved of Maryborough being the centre long before I became the member for Bundaberg. Strangely enough the schedule to the Valuation of Land Act provides for the centres where the administration

shall be. Consequently, if you want to move any administration from one centre to another you have to amend the Act. That is the position. I do not know why that should have been. It was done in a Labour Government's time, true, but I cannot be responsible for any hanky panky that went on between the then political representatives for Maryborough and Bundaberg.

Some time ago I made representations for the removal of the Land Commissioner's office to the Bundaberg courthouse built under the supervision of the Department of Public Works. I asked the Public Service Commissioner to examine the proposal on its merits. Eventually it was determined that it should go to Bundaberg. I found way back in 1924 a recommendation that it should have been there. I use that only as an illustration to show that the same injustice may have been done to Bundaberg with the Valuer-General's office.

I drew to the Minister's notice the fact that there was a rumour circulating in Bundaberg that the local office of the Department of Public Works was likely to be closed. I give him credit for getting onto the matter very quickly. He assured me that there was absolutely no likelihood of that happening. I realised the pressure was on again from some source to see whether they could get the department or the Minister to close the Department of Public Works office at Bundaberg. There could not be any justification for that.

I drew the attention of the Under Secretary to the possible subdivision of the area of land on which the magistrate's house is erected. It is a very old-time residence with a large area of land around it. It had been brought to my notice that the department had apparently directed that it be tentatively planned to see how many allotments they might get out of the area, say, for the purpose of building homes for public servants. When I looked at the pegging-out it made me realise that eventually we might get back to the West End type of planning where the allotments are so small that a man can shake hands with his next-door neighbour out of the window. I do not think that a Government department should be encouraged to proceed along those lines, particularly in an area like Bundaberg that is so beautifully planned, with wide streets, wide allotments and widely spaced homes. It would not be to the credit of the Government if they proceeded with that plan. However, the Under Secretary was able to assure me that it was not likely to happen, that it was only a tentative plan. I ask the Minister to get his officers to keep their eyes open to ensure that the Department of Public Works cannot be charged with allowing any part of Bundaberg to develop into what might be termed a slum area.

My attention has been directed to the cost of clerical appointments. It is part of the overall departmental increase. Since the

Labour Government went out of office departmental and general expenditure has increased by £11 per head in four years. The Cabinet may make a great boast that public servants have been better provided for; I have heard hon. members on this side of the Chamber giving the Government credit for doing something better than we may have done. I have never made any bones about it: I do not intend to be a party to building up a public bureaucracy—that does not apply to clerks—while I find a fellow on the road humping his swag. If the Government think they can get any credit for presenting a document to Parliament showing an increase of £11 a head, in a period of four years, in departmental and general expenditure, I do not accept that as being sound government. One increase I see here is in the number of clerks from 44 to 47. The appropriation for 1960-1961 was £46,326 and expenditure was £46,685. This year, for an increase of three clerks, there is required £56,137, or an increase of £9,500 over last year's expenditure.

Looking at some of the other departments, purely for the purposes of comparison, I see one with an increase of three in staff at a cost of £6,000; another with no increase for £3,000; another with an increase of three for £5,700. I do not know whether they operate under different awards for each of the departments but there is certainly a great disparity between the figures.

Hon. members here may speak about school buildings and public buildings generally, or the ramifications of the Department of Public Works, but I think that we should examine these administrations that have been built up with very comfortable conditions. It is not that they should be begrudged, but I am cognisant of the fact that there are thousands of people outside without any guarantee of security in employment, particularly in the wages section of governmental activities.

Whilst the Minister may be able to give a satisfactory explanation here, somebody has to give an explanation as to why there is a disparity between the cost of various departments showing similar increases in staff. In some cases no increase in staff is shown but there is a substantial increase in expenditure. Automatic increases and matters of that nature come into the picture. That is true. But, we still have to keep an eye on these matters in this Parliament, and draw public attention to them, because this is the only place where we can get a re-hearing on matters of this nature.

I should like to pay tribute to the general structure of the Minister's department. Any department that has the services of Mr. Dave Longland, has an officer about whom they should have no cause for complaint. He gave good service to previous Governments and he will give it to this Government.

Mr Macnamara has had wide experience of local government. He probably thought

I was a tough taskmaster. Nevertheless, I always valued his advice and guidance when I administered this department.

All in all, it is not a glamour department. It is somewhat restricted in its activities, because of limitation on loan funds due largely, I suppose, to the failure of the Federal Government to consider the requirements of Queensland. The Minister has, of course, to make some sort of apology for his counterparts in the Federal sphere of Government.

**Hon. H. RICHTER** (Somerset—Minister for Public Works and Local Government) (9.14 p.m.): The debate has been quite agreeable and I should like to thank hon. members on both sides of the Committee for their contributions. Most of the speeches have been constructive and very open.

**Mr. Davies:** The Minister is not closing the debate?

**Mr. RICHTER:** No. There were several speakers with very clouded views on certain matters, in particular, on the employees engaged by the Department of Public Works. I think I should clear that up. I thought I had done so when I initiated the debate this morning. I felt I had made the position perfectly clear but I now feel I must correct some of the misstatements that have been made. Let me repeat that additional employees were engaged by the Department of Public Works in order to provide extra accommodation for the commencement of the 1961 school year. After the school buildings were occupied the services of these extra employees had to be terminated. I admit there have been dismissals during the Government's period of administration, but I point out that 2,221 tradesmen and labourers were employed by the Department of Public Works at 30 June, 1961, compared with 1,742 at 30 June, 1957, under a Labour administration. The extra employees engaged by the department during the second half of 1960 knew they were to be temporary employees. That was made clear to them and they took the job under that condition. Those in the permanent work force referred to by several hon. members retained their jobs, and approximately 500 more men were still in employment at 30 June, 1961.

**Mr. Hanlon:** Then how did a man with three or four years' service get "the bullet"?

**Mr. RICHTER:** It depends entirely on efficiency.

**Mr. Hanlon:** We could say that about Ministers.

**Mr. RICHTER:** That is the way it is going to be. I think the hon. member for Condamine replied to the speech of the hon. member for Salisbury.

**Mr. Sherrington:** I do not think he would be qualified.

**Mr. RICHTER:** He did it very well indeed.

The department aims to stabilise the work force. I believe that is very important. I agree with the suggestion that has been made.

**Mr. Houston:** Can we take it from that that you believe the work force we have at the present time in the Department of Public Works can look forward to continuity of employment?

**Mr. RICHTER:** As far as possible we try to maintain a permanent work force, but work is not always readily available in the area where an individual lives. We cannot order work so that there will be continuity of employment at, say, Sandgate or some other place, and so men have to be put off. But we are endeavouring at all costs to stabilise the work force. I think we will get better work from a better class of workman if we can assure him of continuity of employment.

**Mr. Newton:** Very sound.

**Mr. RICHTER:** I agree, and that is what we are trying to do, as far as possible. As I said before, however, it is very difficult. I thought I had explained the next point. The hon. member for Bulimba and, I think, the hon. member for Bundaberg had something to say about the increase in the office staff.

**Mr. Walsh:** I referred to clerks particularly.

**Mr. RICHTER:** The suggestion was that as the outside work force is reduced so should the work of the office staff be reduced. That is not logical. Administrative and office staff must plan ahead for future work. The Committee knows that a proposal has been put forward for an alteration of the education system. It will entail expansion of the building programme, and forward planning for this work must be done. I think the hon. member for Bundaberg would realise that.

**Mr. Walsh:** I agree with the planning part, but I want to know how three clerks cost £9,500 extra.

**Mr. RICHTER:** The three clerks would not be responsible for that.

**Mr. Walsh:** That is what is shown.

**Mr. RICHTER:** Not for the three clerks. That is the overall adjustment. The hon. member simply took the number and divided it into the figure, which is quite wrong.

The hon. member for Norman referred to the Coorparoo valuations. I think he has displayed ignorance about land valuations. Surely he does not expect the Valuer-General to place a fictitious value on a certain block. He must know the sale value is governed by the Act. He said that many objections would come from Coorparoo, and again he displayed his ignorance.

**Mr. Bromley:** That is only your idea. You are not in touch with the public out there. You are living in an ivory castle.

**Mr. RICHTER:** I happen to be in touch with the public because the hon. member forecast that there would be many objections.

**Mr. Bromley:** I did not forecast; I was told by the people themselves.

**Mr. RICHTER:** The hon. member does not know that the time limit for lodging protests expired several weeks ago, and he does not know that the total number of objections that came in from Coorparoo represented about 6 per cent. It is all over. He said that home-sites were based on the price paid for petrol-station sites and shop sites. That is not so. Valuations are based on comparable home-site sales only.

It was rather pleasing to find that the hon. member for Belmont, unlike the hon. member for Norman, understands that the Valuer-General is not concerned with the amount of rates, or the amount of land tax levied on his valuations. He made it quite clear that taxing was the function of local authorities and the Land Tax Department and I thank him for his contribution. The hon. member mentioned Probate and Death Duties. The Valuer-General's figures are not used for this purpose but they may be taken as a guide. He must realise that it would not be practicable to do so as valuations are made by the Valuer-General every five years as a minimum, and every eight years, as a maximum. It is obvious that in many cases the Valuer-General's figures would be out of date for the purpose of assessing death duties although they could be taken as a guide.

I thank the hon. member for Burdekin for his remarks and I tell him that some of his suggestions will be considered.

The hon. member for Townsville North complimented the department on the balance maintained between day-labour work and contract work. We try to maintain the balance. I believe he has answered the extravagant statements made by his colleague the hon. member for Salisbury. He did not agree with him at all.

The hon. member for South Brisbane referred to the valuation of subdivisions that occur during a period of current valuation. New blocks are valued in accordance with the existing values of comparable land in the area, and not as he says, on the sale price on that particular date. They are valued on the current valuations of comparable properties in the area. That answers the question he is asking.

**Mr. Bennett:** I can assure you that if a man has a parcel of land in Brisbane and he sells only one block from it, the remainder is revalued in proportion to the sale value of the one block that he sold.

**Mr. RICHTER:** Not on the sale value.

**Mr. Bennett:** It is.

**Mr. RICHTER:** No, it is not.

**Mr. Bromley:** You are displaying your ignorance now.

**Mr. RICHTER:** I am not displaying my ignorance at all. That is the way the Valuer-General operates and that is the way he would be expected to operate. Immediately there is a fresh valuation the current price comes in.

The hon. member for South Brisbane said that the Valuer-General based his valuations on high-pressure sales. Brisbane has developed tremendously in the last five years. There has been a great growth of population and consequently values have risen. It must be remembered, too, that there has been a great development of shopping centres and industrial areas and a tremendous increase in prices over those areas. This has not been brought about by speculators, as has been suggested, though they could have had some slight influence on the overall position. But the Valuer-General does not take those into consideration. If he has made a mistake, as the hon. member for Bundaberg pointed out, the landholder has the right of appeal. He can first of all object. Then he has the right of appeal to the Land Court and then he has the further right of appeal to the Land Appeal Court. Could it be any fairer than that?

**Mr. Bennett:** The Land Court goes on comparative sales, too.

**Mr. Walsh:** Any valuation the valuer makes he has to sustain in the Land Court.

**Mr. RICHTER:** Yes, and he has to sustain it in the Land Appeal Court.

**Mr. Houston:** How much would it cost to go to court?

**Mr. RICHTER:** Very little in the Land Court. I do not know. I have not been there. But it is the cheapest court.

**Mr. Houston:** That is relative, too.

**Mr. RICHTER:** A further matter about which there is confused thinking is local government finance. Let us look at the conventional sources of revenue of local government in the State. They can be classified as follows—

(1) Rating of unimproved capital value of land—to meet the general costs of local government;

(2) Service charges, which, generally speaking, are not related to land values—to meet the costs of undertakings such as water, sewerage, cleansing, electric light and the like; and

(3) Miscellaneous fees—to meet costs of licensing and other controls such as building permits.



There are certain indirect revenues in the sense of easing what would otherwise be a direct burden on local government. These take the form of grants of all kinds—

(1) Subsidy paid by the State to local government towards the capital costs of certain works;

(2) Financing of road works by the State under the Main Roads Act by which the substantial part of capital and annual costs of roads declared under the Act are met by the State;

(3) Grants made by the State to local government from the proceeds of charges collected under the Road Maintenance Acts; and

(4) Grants made to the State by the Commonwealth Government as Federal Road Aid grants and distributed by the State to local government.

One thing that shows up very clearly is that it is quite wrong to suggest that the cost of all services of local government falls on the back of the landowner. It is clear that a substantial part does.

But there are many alternative ways of raising revenue. If we object to raising revenue by the rating of land, what other avenues are there? I think the hon. member for Townsville South suggested an income tax, with the Federal Government as the taxing authority paying so much back to local authorities. Another hon. member suggested a sales-and-purchase tax. That method is used in the United States of America at present. Some countries rate on the improved value or the annual rental value of premises. Local Government rating on improved values is a practice that is adopted in England and Wales, and I believe the South Australian system is somewhat similar, but there is a world trend against this today. England has been seeking a more equitable system for some considerable time. One basic difficulty in the system is that the more a property is improved, the higher the rating becomes. Thus, if a farmer or a grazier builds himself a better house, or subdivides his land for better management, improves his pastures, ringbarks, and so on, his rates are increased. On the other hand, a man who neglects his property and does nothing with it gets a premium in lower rates. The same applies to the owner of a factory. Every piece of new plant that he installs increases his liability for rates. The position becomes so unfair and so unequal that artificial measures have to be taken to cure it. I believe that the system has little to offer us.

A tax on income was used for many years in the Scandinavian countries. Here the central Government levied an income tax and then added to it in each local authority area a rate of tax fixed by that local authority. The net result of the system was that income tax was lower in the richer areas and higher in the poorer

areas. There was also the difficulty of businesses with branches established in various areas, and the system was finally abolished as impracticable.

Grants in aid from the central Government's revenues are a traditional source of funds in England. However, I think we must remember that in England there are only two forms of government—central government and local government. In consequence, local government controls services such as police, education, hospitals and the like, and the grants in aid are more towards these activities. Here there is a grant in aid towards capital works by way of subsidy, far greater than by any former Government, and certain special aids towards annual costs under the Road Maintenance Act and the Main Roads Act. There is one important point to remember. If local government is to depend on revenues raised by another branch of government (for which that branch bears all the odium), the questions arise—

(1) The extent to which the taxing branch of government will interfere in the sphere of local government; and

(2) The responsibility of any branch of government not primarily responsible for raising its own revenues.

The other suggestion was for a sales-and-purchase tax, and this system is used in some countries. That is out of the question here because it is contrary to our Constitution.

**Mr. Hanlon:** There is nothing to stop the Commonwealth Government from passing the revenue from that tax over to the local authorities.

**Mr. RICHTER:** They are passing it on to the States now, and the States pass it on to the local authorities, to a certain extent. It is all a matter of the degree of assistance that the local authority may get from the Commonwealth Government or the State Government.

**Mr. Walsh:** Whichever way you look at it, Queensland does not get much from the Commonwealth Government.

**Mr. RICHTER:** Queensland needs more from the Commonwealth Government. The local authority needs more from the State. It is just a matter of degree. I do not think we can get away from the principle of taxing land as we are doing now by rates.

**Mr. Hanlon:** Don't you think it is radically wrong that a man should pay £7 or £8 in income tax, but in the other sphere of local government he is asked to pay £30 or £40 in local authority tax for rates? How do you reconcile that?

**Mr. RICHTER:** That is not a fair comparison. It depends entirely on what he is getting for the rates. If he is getting water, sewerage and all sorts of services he is paying for service.

**Mr. Hanlon:** For his £7 income tax he is getting child endowment, an army, navy, air force and all the other Commonwealth benefits.

**Mr. RICHTER:** It cannot be looked at in that way. Rates include anything at all.

**Mr. Hanlon:** We are complaining that with rates there is no regard for capacity to pay. That is where the injustice is.

**Mr. RICHTER:** Let me finish to show the instance of rating in some local authorities. I received these figures the other day from the Nanango Shire Council, which is in my electorate. The total receipts from all sources per budget were £174,291, made up as follows—

|                                         | £      | Per Cent. |
|-----------------------------------------|--------|-----------|
| From General Rates ..                   | 38,307 | 21.6      |
| „ Water Supply and<br>Cleansing Charges | 15,603 | 8.95      |

**Mr. Houston:** They are a fixed charge.

**Mr. RICHTER:** It all depends. Different local authorities do it in a different way.

**Mr. Houston:** Everyone, irrespective of income, pays a fixed cleansing charge and fixed water charge, as long as he does not use excess water.

**Mr. RICHTER:** They may not do it that way. Some local authorities do it on a rating system.

I shall continue with the figures of receipts for the Nanango Shire Council—

|                                        | £      | Per Cent. |
|----------------------------------------|--------|-----------|
| From Loans/Subsidies ..                | 36,409 | 20.95     |
| „ Commonwealth Aid                     |        |           |
| „ Roads ..                             | 9,386  | 5.38      |
| „ Contribution to<br>Maintenance Tax   | 1,150  | .65       |
| „ Main Roads ..                        | 10,059 | 5.82      |
| „ Plant Hire ..                        | 22,018 | 12.63     |
| „ Stores ..                            | 11,067 | 6.45      |
| „ Recoverable Works<br>and Services .. | 6,543  | 3.75      |
| „ Other Sources ..                     | 23,749 | 13.82     |

The point I want to make is that out of a total budget of £174,291 the receipts from general rates are £38,307. That applies to a country shire.

**Mr. Hilton:** A lot of that amount is repayable.

**Mr. RICHTER:** Yes. Anyhow, that would have to be dissected.

For the Cairns City Council the total receipts from all sources as per budget are £1,157,258 made up as follows:—

|                                     | £       | Per Cent. |
|-------------------------------------|---------|-----------|
| From General Rates ..               | 204,927 | 17.71     |
| From Water and Sewerage Charges ..  | 121,241 | 10.47     |
| From Loans and Subsidies ..         | 569,251 | 49.19     |
| Commonwealth Aid ..                 | 10,690  | .92       |
| Contributions to Maintenance Tax .. | 4,975   | .43       |
| Main Roads ..                       | 21,316  | 1.84      |
| Plant Hire ..                       | 36,420  | 3.15      |
| Stores ..                           | 51,911  | 4.49      |
| Recoverable Works and Services ..   | 42,328  | 3.66      |
| Other Sources ..                    | 94,199  | 8.14      |

So, hon. members will see that in a total budget of £1,157,258 receipts for general rates were £204,927. I did not select this case to give favourable figures. It was just a city that I picked and I should say that something similar would apply in most other cities.

**Mr. Houston:** When people buy land from subdivision, particularly in Brisbane, the price they pay includes the cost of channelling, water supply, bitumen roads and now, sewerage. They are paying for the amenities they will get but then they will be valued on that added cost.

**Mr. RICHTER:** A decision will have to be made as to whether that becomes an added value.

**Mr. Houston:** They have already paid for it and then they will be taxed on it through their valuation.

**Mr. RICHTER:** I should say that the valuation would not be so much higher and, provided that applies to everybody, it will not matter at all. It will even itself out overall.

Progress reported.

The House adjourned at 9.44 p.m.