

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 25 OCTOBER 1984

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Mr SPEAKER (Hon. J. H. Warner, Toowoomba South) read prayers and took the chair at 11 a.m.

PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the table, and ordered to be printed—

Reports—

Queensland Science and Technology Council for the year ended 30 June 1984

Department of Employment and Industrial Affairs for the year ended 30 June 1984

Workers Compensation Board of Queensland for the year ended 30 June 1984

Statement of Accounts of the Workers Compensation Board of Queensland for the year ended 30 June 1984.

The following papers were laid on the table—

Regulations under—

Weights and Measures Act 1951-1983

Consumer Affairs Act 1970-1983

Rules under the Factories and Shops Act 1960-1983.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Delegation of Authority; Premier and Treasurer

Hon. R. J. HINZE (South Coast—Minister for Local Government, Main Roads and Racing) (11.2 a.m.), by leave: I desire to inform the House that his Excellency the Governor has, by virtue of the provisions of the Officials in Parliament Act 1896-1982, authorised and empowered the Honourable William Angus Manson Gunn, MLA, Deputy Premier and Minister Assisting the Treasurer, to perform and exercise all or any of the duties, powers and authorities imposed or conferred upon the Premier and Treasurer by any Act, rule, practice or ordinance on and from 25 October 1984 and until the return to Queensland of the Honourable Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen, KCMG, MLA.

I lay upon the table of the House a copy of the Queensland Government Gazette of 24 October 1984 notifying this arrangement.

Whereupon the honourable gentleman laid the Queensland Government Gazette on the table.

Incorrect Information in Answer to Question; Complaints Received by Industrial Inspectorate

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Peak Downs—Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs) (11.3 a.m.), by leave: I refer to the answer which I gave to the Parliament yesterday in response to a question from the honourable member for Bulimba. In the answer I stated that detailed figures of complaints received regarding moneys owing to employees were not available prior to 1983-84. The date quoted should have been 1982-83, and the relevant figure for that financial year was 3 882 complaints.

I trust that this additional information will more adequately answer the honourable member's question and be of assistance to him and to the Parliament.

Urban Fire Services

Hon. M. J. TENNI (Barron River—Minister for Environment, Valuation and Administrative Services) (11.4 a.m.), by leave: It is a sad comment on the priorities of some union leaders that they should choose Fire Prevention Week to launch a campaign for conditions which can only push the cost of urban fire services beyond the reach of the average home-owner. Both the United Firefighters Union and the Metropolitan Fire Brigade Officers Association are asking Brisbane people to support a petition calling for an end to the Government's policy of rationalising the manpower and equipment resources of all urban brigades.

This appeal for public support is nothing more than a giant confidence trick by the secretary of the UFU, Mr Arthur Rogers, and the Metropolitan Fire Brigade Officers Association president, Mr Gary Hammond. It was only a few months ago that both men were saying that Queensland's high fire safety standards were in jeopardy because of the State Government's long established and successful policy of making full use of auxiliary firemen as a back-up, where operationally appropriate, to full-time fire-fighters. Had Messrs Rogers and Hammond and their misguided ALP supporters had their way on this issue, Queenslanders would be digging deep into their pockets to pay for the cost of maintaining an excessive number of full-time fire-fighters. Instead of pouring scorn on auxiliaries they should go to Gordonvale this week-end. It would be an education for both union leaders and the Opposition to be at Gordonvale in north Queensland this week-end, where these very dedicated and capable auxiliaries will be competing in State-wide auxiliary championships.

Undeterred by their defeat on the auxiliary issue, the UFU and the Metropolitan Fire Brigade Officers Association are telling Queenslanders that the Government is being irresponsible by transferring from overmanned to undermanned brigades positions that are declared vacant. This gradual shift in manpower levels is occurring only after a very detailed and thorough State-wide survey which took into account such factors as population, tourist growth, fire risks, commercial and industrial development, geographical conditions and back-up support from neighbouring brigades. Earlier this month, in a lengthy meeting with both unions, I gave a written assurance to Mr Rogers that the Government was prepared to look at any evidence that could be substantiated that could affect the manpower requirements of brigades. It is very clear that I was wasting my time trying to reach a sensible understanding with both unions.

The policy of rationalising manpower levels and appointing additional staff, where there are identifiable needs, is the best way to ensure that all property-owners receive a uniformly high level of fire protection at a price that they can afford. So far this financial year, 20 positions from overmanned brigades, with declared vacancies, have been allocated to undermanned brigades. They are in addition to 25 new full-time positions approved in the 1984-85 Budget.

The 45 positions have been allocated as follows: 25 to the South Coast—a brigade which has been seriously undermanned—four each to Caboolture, Cairns, Ipswich and Noosa, and two each to Caloundra and Pine Rivers. The strengths of all major brigades will again be reviewed this December. In the case of Brisbane—a brigade which has the highest ratio of fire-fighters to population of any mainland capital—the Government has officially advised the Metropolitan Fire Brigade that five positions, which have been declared vacant, will be transferred to undermanned brigades. I have been assured by the board that it will rearrange its manpower to the required level without any loss of fire protection.

Both unions are talking a load of rubbish when they claim that fire-fighting equipment in Brisbane cannot be used because of a so-called manpower shortage. The fact is that any brigade the size of the Brisbane brigade always has some back-up fire-fighting equipment or standby that can be manned immediately in an emergency, by transferring men from one station to the next, or from a nearby station to the fire scene. At a time when urban fire services are already costing property-owners \$64m, Messrs Rogers and Hammond have their greedy hands out for more of the tax-payers' money.

What both men fear most is not a so-called reduction in fire safety standards but the fact that the days of over-generous award conditions and limitless overtime have come to an end. I remind honourable members that both men were very keen supporters of a situation which allowed the overtime bill for the Metropolitan Fire Brigade to reach \$544,413 in 1981-82, when the Government put the brakes on this rort. I am sure that the majority of responsible fire officers and firemen in this State do not share the views of Mr Rogers and Mr Hammond, who are hell bent on slugging property-owners with higher fire levy charges, regardless of actual manpower and equipment needs in this State.

Australian Bill of Rights

Hon. N. J. HARPER (Auburn—Minister for Justice and Attorney-General) (11.10 a.m.), by leave: I invite the attention of the House to this morning's edition of "The Australian Financial Review", from which I will quote in regard to the Federal Government's proposed Australian Bill of Rights—

"From what Sir Johannes Bjelke-Petersen has revealed in his own special manner, there is very good reason to distrust the draft of the Bill of Rights and the Federal Attorney-General's motives.

Selective exposure of the draft to academics and civil liberties groups is not anything like enough. Most of the people associated with such interests can no longer be trusted to have any genuine commitment to freedom—

Senator Evans, still refuses to release the bill.

But a copy obtained by the *Review* reveals the details that have caused concern in the Federal Opposition, State Governments, and among some Federal ministers."

Mr Davis: You passed it on to them.

Mr HARPER: The honourable member for Brisbane Central would know who passed it on.

The article continues—

"It is somewhat ironic that a proposed bill specifying the right of every citizen to freedoms such as freedom of speech is still to be kept secret.

The Federal Government's secret draft Australian Bill of Rights explicitly gives the proposed legislation the power to override any Federal or State common law rule deemed to be inconsistent with it."

While the Premier was making his statement in this House, a member of this Parliament's press gallery claimed that he had a copy of the draft Australian Bill of Rights. Obviously he did have a copy and, without doubt, the circulation of the draft Bill has been much more extensive than Senator Evans has been prepared to admit.

Mr Burns: I think you protest too much.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! If the member for Lytton persists, I will have to warn him under Standing Order No. 123A.

Mr HARPER: The honourable members opposite will not have read this in the press. At the end of August, Senator Evans told me that there was no question of making the Bill generally available, that it had simply been made available to those organisations in the community that had a direct and immediate professional or other major interest in it.

Mr Fouras: You will never be trusted again.

Mr HARPER: This is all recorded.

Mr Fouras: He won't cop this.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for South Brisbane.

Mr HARPER: Following questions by me at that time, Senator Evans indicated also that the Commonwealth would not be bound by its provisions. Honourable members should take heed of that. If the honourable members of the Opposition are not worried about it, they should try to understand what I am saying. When I questioned Senator Evans at the end of August, he indicated that the Commonwealth would not be bound by the provisions of the Bill of Rights and that it would be possible for subsequent Commonwealth legislation to contain an explicit clause purporting to exempt it from the operation of the Bill. So the Commonwealth Government intends to exempt itself, but not the States, from the Bill's provisions.

As in so many other areas, why will not the Hawke Labor Government tell the people of Australia what it is thinking and what it has in store for Australia if it is returned to office? The answer is really quite simple: the Prime Minister and those of his comrades such as Senator Evans are so intent on achieving their ambition for totalitarian rule in Australia that they dare not expose their thinking to the people of Australia while there is still opportunity for Australians to maintain democratic Government through the sovereign States which constitute the Commonwealth of Australia.

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following petitions—

Prohibition of Artificial Fertilisation and Embryo Transfers

From Mr Harper (101 signatories) praying that the Parliament of Queensland will legislate to prohibit artificial fertilisation and embryo transfers pending a thorough study.

Pedestrian Crossings, Upper Ross River Road and Thuringowa Drive

From Mr McElligott (652 signatories) praying that the Parliament of Queensland will take action to provide safe pedestrian crossings on the main thoroughfare of the Upper Ross River Road and Thuringowa Drive.

Petitions received.

QUESTIONS UPON NOTICE

Questions submitted on notice were answered as follows—

1. Underage Drinking

Mr BURNS asked the Minister for Lands, Forestry and Police—

With reference to the announcement in "The Sunday Mail" of 13 November that the State Government had ordered an all-out blitz on underage drinking—

(1) What are the numbers of (a) boys and (b) girls convicted of underage drinking on (i) the Gold Coast, (ii) the Sunshine Coast, (iii) Brisbane metropolitan area, (iv) provincial cities and (v) country areas in the six months prior to this blitz and in the six months since that date?

(2) How many people under legal drinking age were found to be under the influence of liquor in charge of motor vehicles during these two periods?

(3) What were the names of the hotels in which the offences occurred with the numbers for each hotel?

Answer—

(1 to 3) Police records are not categorised for me to be able to readily supply the information required. To extract the information requested would involve lengthy and excessive State-wide research, and it is not proposed to direct Police Department employees, who are already fully committed, to researching records to extract the data sought.

2. Walsh Trial; Police Evidence of LSD at Hotel

Mr BURNS asked the Minister for Lands, Forestry and Police—

With reference to evidence given by Detective Maynard, in what is now known as the Walsh case, to the effect that there was no LSD in the area at that time—

(1) Was he later recalled as a witness and did he give evidence that the Drug Squad had, in fact, carried out an operation as a result of which a person was arrested in or near the hotel in question at about the time of the Walsh incident and that the person was dealing in LSD?

(2) Will he provide this Parliament with the name of the defendant, details of the minute of conviction including date, court and penalty, and any other general information as to the circumstances surrounding this matter?

Answer—

(1) I understand that Detective Maynard was recalled as a witness. I am unable to comment further, as my department does not have a copy of the transcript of the evidence.

(2) No. It is not the policy of the Police Department to provide information about the activities of police regarding drug investigations.

3. Escape from Numinbah State Farm

Mr McELLIGOTT asked the Minister for Welfare Services, Youth and Ethnic Affairs—

With reference to the escape from Numinbah State Farm on 26 September of a prisoner Robert Black—

- (1) When was Black imprisoned and for what offence?
- (2) Does his history reveal any connections with terrorism or the Irish Republican Army?
- (3) On what grounds was he transferred to the minimum security prison farm?
- (4) Was there any warning given by a prison officer that Black would attempt an escape?
- (5) If so, was the warning, issued by a member of the Prisons Emergency Squad on 9 July and sent to the chief superintendent, Brisbane gaol, that an escape was planned, acted on?
- (6) If not, what is the reason?
- (7) With reference to his statements to Parliament on 10 October that an informant's information could not be acted on as that prisoner himself escaped later from Numinbah, what special measures have been taken to give protection to this alleged informant he so clearly identified to all Queensland's gaol inmates?

Answer—

- (1) Black was convicted of murder on 10 June 1975 in the circuit court at Maryborough.
- (2) That has been rumoured, but no evidence has been found by the prison authorities to substantiate it.

(3 to 6) The honourable member should be aware that transfer to a prison farm, which is a minimum security institution, is a progressive step in the preparation of a convicted person for release. Such transfers are only made with the utmost regard for the safety of the general public whilst at the same time bearing in mind the rehabilitative benefits for the prisoner. Obviously not all convicted persons who are transferred to a prison farm respect the confidence that is placed in them. Every precaution, however, is taken to ensure that only prisoners who are considered to be of little, if any, security risk are transferred to minimum security institutions.

In relation to the prisoner Black—from all information available to the prison authorities he was a suitable person to be trusted with minimum security placement at Numinbah. He had progressed from maximum security inside Woodford prison to working outside the confines of the prison in the administration block. He is a noted artist, and has exhibited paintings and attended exhibitions outside the prison. His conduct during that period could not be regarded as anything but satisfactory. I am advised that a report was made by a prison officer that information had come to his notice indicating that prisoner Black might attempt to escape. For reasons which the honourable member has outlined in (7), the information was regarded with some suspicion.

(7) Every protection is afforded to that prisoner while he is in custody.

4.

Omar International Pty Ltd

Mr McELLIGOTT asked the Minister for Lands, Forestry and Police—

(1) Is he aware of an application to the Land Administration Commission by Omar International Pty Ltd for the construction of an international tourist resort and marina at Nelly Bay, Magnetic Island?

(2) Is Omar International Pty Ltd a registered company and, if so, where is it registered and who are its directors and share-holders?

(3) If Omar International Pty Ltd is not a registered company, who is the actual proponent, who is financing the initial feasibility studies and why was an unregistered business name used in the application?

Answer—

(1) Yes. An application by Omar International Pty Ltd to establish an international tourist resort and marina at Nelly Bay, Magnetic Island, is presently being investigated by the Land Administration Commission. When investigations are complete, the matter will be submitted to Cabinet for consideration for the granting of an interim lease to enable feasibility studies to be carried out.

(2) At the time the application was made to the Land Administration Commission, the commission was advised that the company was registered in the name of Barge-in River Restaurant Pty Ltd and that it was intended to register in Queensland a change of name of that company to Omar International Pty Ltd. Particulars relating to registration of the company would be a prerequisite to granting any lease through the Land Administration Commission.

The commission was advised that the directors of the company are Geoffrey Eric Orpin of 114 Sooning Street, Nelly Bay, and Mr Sidney Spencer Ward of Arthur Bay, Magnetic Island, and that shares in the company are held by G. E. Orpin, 50 per cent, the balance of 50 per cent being held in trust for G. E. Orpin by Mr. G. Downing, chartered accountant, Currie Street, Nambour.

(3) An interim lease to undertake feasibility studies is being considered by the Land Administration Commission. In the application signed by Geoff Orpin, the commission was advised that Omar International Pty Ltd was then registered as Barge-in River Restaurant Pty Ltd and that the name was being changed to Omar International.

5.

Moggill State School

Mr LICKISS asked the Minister for Works and Housing—

(1) When will the class-room block, which was destroyed by fire at the Moggill State School, be rebuilt?

(2) What is the proposed commencing date and what is the anticipated completion date of the project?

(3) Is he aware that the children formerly occupying the destroyed building are now being accommodated under very adverse and difficult conditions in the old schoolhouse at Moggill?

Answer—

(1) Planning is well in hand for a reconstruction proposal and it is expected to be completed shortly.

(2) Every endeavour will be made to commence the work as soon as planning has been completed and to have the construction finished as early as possible in the new year.

(3) Two classes of Year 7 pupils are temporarily housed in the former school residence. To improve working conditions, the installation of five oscillating fans has recently been approved.

6.

Loss of Employment under Wages Accord

Mr LITTLEPROUD asked the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs—

(1) Is it now being proved that the wages accord is resulting in job losses throughout Australia?

(2) Is there any evidence to support this claim?

Answer—

(1 & 2) The much-vaunted accord has to be kept in the perspective of what it actually is, that is, a statement agreed upon by the Australian Council of Trade Unions and a political party when that party was in Opposition. There was no involvement of the business community or the public generally, so it does not in any way reflect their views.

The ACTU has continued to make demands on the basis of the accord, and the Federal Government has set out to meet them regardless of the ability of the country to pay.

The spiralling increases in labour costs brought on in the last 12 months by the Hawke Government's bowing to the pressures of the trade unions in the name of the accord have cost many thousands of jobs in this country. Many more jobs would be created if employers were not continually called upon to meet new redundancy, superannuation and full indexation payments. There has been some improvement in the labour market since March 1983, but that has been bought about by substantial injections of funds from both the State and Federal Governments.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**Care of the Aged**

Mr KRUGER: In directing a question to the Minister for Health, I refer to the failure of the Queensland Government to take up Federal funds for the aged under the States Grants (Paramedical Services) Act. I ask: As the Act has been in force since 1969 and provides paramedical services such as chiropody, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and speech therapy for the aged in their homes, can the Minister explain why the

Queensland Government has refused millions of dollars for the care of the aged in their homes? Has the Queensland Government not taken up these funds because of the requirement that it has to match the grant on a dollar-for-dollar basis?

Mr AUSTIN: For some time, I have been expecting a question of this nature from the Opposition. The asking of the question gives me the opportunity to expose the sham of the Federal Government's health policy.

Every member in this Chamber would know that State Governments have limited resources for raising funds within the financial structure of their States. However, by way of the Federal taxation that is levied on every person in Australia, the Federal Government basically has unlimited resources for raising funds. I would have expected that the moneys raised by way of Federal taxation would be part of the moneys due and owing and to be repaid to the tax-payers in each State under whatever policy the Federal Government seeks to introduce.

As regards welfare payments, particularly for the community health program—it is true that existing legislation provides for 50:50 cost-sharing in general terms. The Federal Government can demand other terms. In the instance to which the honourable member refers—and it applies also in the Blue Nursing sphere—it is true that the Federal Government has offered more funds to this State than the Queensland Government can match on a dollar-for-dollar basis. If the Federal Government has appropriated that money in its Budget, which it has, and if the Queensland Government cannot match it—and Queensland is not the only State in Australia that cannot match it—why does not the Federal Government simply amend the Act to make the grants directly available to the institutions?

In the past, the Federal Government has amended pieces of legislation whenever it liked. In this instance, when it knows that the States cannot match the allocation, it is reluctant to amend the legislation because it acts as a block on the Government spending money. I would be delighted if the Commonwealth Minister for Health or the Minister for Social Security amended the legislation so that, if the States cannot match the moneys available, those moneys can be paid directly to the associations. I know that the Government is legally bound by the legislation.

Under the Medicare agreement, the Government amended the legislation so that money could be paid directly to private hospitals. Why cannot a similar thing be done under the social security legislation? It is very simple. The moneys that the Commonwealth and State Governments spend are tax-payers' moneys; they are not Government moneys. If the Federal Government has a surplus of funds that have been appropriated for community projects, it should amend the legislation and distribute the funds accordingly.

Sterilisation of Food with Radioactive Gamma Rays

Mr NEWTON: In directing a question to the Minister for Primary Industries, I refer to an article in the "Daily Sun" yesterday that alluded to the sterilisation of food with radioactive gamma rays as an alternative to ethylene-dibromide fumigation. I ask: Is it an accurate report? If not, will he set the record straight in order to satisfy consumer interests?

Mr TURNER: On 23 October I issued a press release about this type of technology. In that release I pointed out that the technology was available and was being used in other parts of the world. I described the benefits and the assistance that its application could give to Australian industry.

I make the point that the introduction of the technology into Australia is dependent on its acceptance by the National Health and Medical Research Council, which is a Federal body. The Health Department in Queensland would also need to accept it before it could be introduced into Queensland.

The article contained a number of irregularities about statements in my press release. In particular, I refer to the comment that an American company was seeking permission

to set up a radiation plant in Queensland. That is incorrect, because approval would need to be given by the Federal and State bodies before that could be done. The article also claimed that I said that the new technology would be a cheap, alternative method, but nowhere in my press release did I indicate that. The article also reported that the Queensland Government is desperate for a sterilisation process, but nothing appeared in my press release that indicated any desperation on the part of the Department of Primary Industries or the Queensland Government. There were a number of discrepancies in the article.

I thank the honourable member for his question because it has given me the opportunity of outlining the true position.

Coorparoo Drivers' Licence Issuing Centre

Mrs HARVEY: I have a question for the Minister for Transport. Because he accompanied me on a visit to the Coorparoo drivers' licence issuing centre to inspect the new ramp that was built for use by quadriplegics, the elderly and invalids, he has demonstrated his awareness of the need for such facilities. I ask: Can he advise whether further necessary alterations will be made for ramp-users at the centre? I refer in particular to the lowering of a section of the counter and other furniture changes.

Mr LANE: I appreciated the invitation from the honourable member to inspect the drivers' licence issuing centre at Coorparoo. I noted in particular the attention that she gave to the facilities at the centre for handicapped people. The ramp has been installed to help handicapped people, and the chief testing officer at the centre informed us that the ramp is very much appreciated by the group in the community who need that sort of facility.

Because the honourable member drew my attention to the need for other facilities, including the lowering of the counter, I have had discussions with the Commissioner for Transport, who will take the matter up with the Works Department with a view to further increasing the access for handicapped people to the drivers' licence issuing centre at Coorparoo. That will ensure that, in accordance with the Government's policies, those people are properly served at the centre.

Assets Test

Mrs HARVEY: I ask the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General: Is it true that the Federal Government assets test makes no provision for the confidentiality of information collected by its social security officers?

Mr HARPER: The Federal Government is saying to elderly people that if they want to receive a pension, they will have to make available to its officers all their private information and records, without any warrant of entry being given to the officers.

A great many pensioners and elderly people are very concerned at the attitude of the Federal Government in imposing the test. I understand that instructions have been given that the distribution of the forms is to be delayed until after the holding of the Federal election. The Federal Government does not want the Australian people to know what it is doing.

Pensioners are being blackmailed. The Federal Government is saying to them, "Unless you allow our inspectors to come into your house to value your assets and to get details from you, you will not get a pension." It is as simple as that. Unless pensioners comply with what the Federal Government dictates, they will not be entitled to receive a pension.

Financial Assistance to Sugar Industry

Mr VEIVERS: I ask the Minister for Primary Industries: How can the State Government justify its financial assistance to the ailing sugar industry—Queensland's largest primary industry—in the form of loans, while at the same time, under sections

120 and 180 of the Racing and Betting Act, it makes to the racing industry loans amounting to millions of dollars that may be converted to gifts, forgiven and made retrospective?

Mr TURNER: It is difficult to understand what the honourable member is trying to get at. It seems that he is being sent in to bat when the bowler is on a hat trick.

I suggest that the portion of the question relating to the racing industry be redirected to the Minister for Local Government, Main Roads and Racing.

As the honourable member has asked a question concerning assistance to the sugar industry, I will answer it. The Queensland Government has an enviable record in relation to the assistance that it has given in recent years to the sugar industry. That assistance has been to the tune of \$30m. Over that same period, the Federal Government allocated \$15m. Mr Kerin was in Brisbane yesterday and he and I had discussions. I am pleased to say that the Federal Government did come to the party and matched the State Government's recent \$5m allocation to the sugar industry by granting \$5.1m under Part A of the Rural Assistance Scheme. That will be of some benefit to the industry.

A Government Member: Will we get it?

Mr TURNER: I am sure we will get it; the Federal Government made a commitment.

I consider that the application of that money is a direct result of the approaches that have been made by the State Government and the industry to get the Federal Government to honour its commitments. Honourable members may recall that, over a period of months, the Government has been working at getting the Federal Government to honour its commitments. I have had direct communication with the Federal Minister for Primary Industry—similar to a Premier to Prime Minister approach—in order to get that assistance for the industry.

The response given by Mr Hawke to the Premier was that the Queensland Government could use the \$4m allocated under the Rural Assistance Scheme to all other primary industries. That was his answer. Mr Kerin's answer to me was that no assistance for the sugar industry would be forthcoming until completion of the internal review, which could take anything up to two to three years.

I think that I have answered the honourable member's question adequately by pointing out what assistance—

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr TURNER: I suggest that the Opposition should ask the Federal Government whether the \$15 m that it allocated to the industry over that period was in the form of a grant. Opposition members will find that it was a loan to the industry, not a grant.

It is unfortunate that many sectors of the community are unaware that most of the so-called assistance that is given to primary industries is provided in the form of a repayable loan, as is the case with virtually all of the assistance that the Queensland Government has given to the industry. That assistance is of benefit to the industry at the time.

I suggest that the honourable member direct the other part of his question to the Minister for Local Government, Main Roads and Racing.

Mr F. P. Luton

Mr MACKENROTH: In directing a question to the Minister for Water Resources—

Government Members interjected.

Mr MACKENROTH: He might begin to tell us the truth.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will ask his question.

Mr MACKENROTH: I refer to the ministerial statement made by the Minister for Water Resources and Maritime Services on 9 October 1984, wherein the Minister stated that Mr Francis Patrick Luton met with two police officers when he delivered information to the Minister's office. Could the Minister for Water Resources and Maritime Services inform the House whether he was present at that meeting and on how many occasions the police visited his office?

Mr GOLEBY: I refer the honourable member to the ministerial statement in which I made it very clear what took place at that meeting. I have nothing further to add to that statement.

As to the second part of the honourable member's question—that was the only occasion on which any police officer visited my office.

Fraud Squad Investigation into Bargara Land Sales

Mr MACKENROTH: In directing a question to the Minister for Lands, Forestry and Police, I refer to his answer to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition on 24 October 1984, in which he stated that any further information released in relation to the Bargara land fraud investigation may prejudice any proposed action.

As the provision of information as to the date or dates on which Assistant Commissioner Dwyer visited Mr Goleby's office could in no way prejudice that investigation, I ask: Will he now provide the information as to those dates?

Mr GLASSON: Reply as to the date now?

Mr Mackenroth: Yes, or you can give it to me later.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr GLASSON: If the member is sincere about the question, I ask him to put it on notice. Surely nobody could be expected to answer such a question off the cuff.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Does the Minister wish to have it put on notice?

Mr MACKENROTH: I place it on notice, Mr Speaker. The Minister could have said "Yes" to your question.

Preferred Option in State Schools; Queensland Teachers Union Attack

Mr CAHILL: Has the attention of the Minister for Education been drawn to a recent attack on him and the Department of Education by the Queensland Teachers Union? Can the Minister put to rest the lies that are being told by the Queensland Teachers Union about the preferred option?

Mr POWELL: I thank the honourable member for Aspley for the question. A complete answer would probably take up the rest of the sitting day. Although some people at the executive level in the Queensland Teachers Union are working very closely and carefully to ensure that education in Queensland remains the best in Australia, as it is at the moment, others within that union do not share these aspirations.

The preferred option is one of many that can be implemented for curriculum development. The curriculum preference being examined is commonly referred to as the preferred option.

Mr Smith: Preferred by the department.

Mr POWELL: In answer to the interjection from the fool from Townsville West, the preferred option—

Mr SMITH: I rise to a point of order. I find the Minister's comment objectionable. I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Townsville West objects to the term "fool" being applied to him. I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr POWELL: I apologise for that slip of the tongue.

Some people are foolish enough to believe that the preferred option that has been thoroughly examined by senior officers of the Department of Education and academics at CAEs and universities is not serious. The preferred option is based on the psychological development of the child. It is as simple as that.

People who are comfortably cocooned do not like it. I can understand why people who have reached a degree of administrative inefficiency would not be happy to again examine their work-place and actions relative to teaching children in Queensland schools. The preferred option is based on a child-centred education. Nobody could logically argue against that.

The final report of the task force is expected to be presented to me in January 1985. When it is received, discussions will take place with members of the Queensland Teachers Union, other employee groups, employer groups and parents and citizens associations. I assure honourable members that no change will be made to the curriculum taught in Queensland schools until discussions have taken place.

The curriculum for development of children from pre-school age to the age of 10 years—the P-10 curriculum—is already in operation. The program is supported by all who demonstrate a modicum of progression in the education system in Queensland.

The Queensland Teachers Union will not be permitted, through its rantings and ravings, to be regarded as the alternative Education Department. The employer of teachers in State schools is the Department of Education, acting on behalf of the Government. That is the way democracy works, and that is the way it will continue to work.

The preferred option is based on sound psychological data and reasoning. Queensland intends that its schools remain child-centred. The curriculum options under discussion are a flow-through to stop the compartmentalisation in education and to provide an easy flow for children in an effort to stop the major hiccups that occur between Years 7 and 8 and the following compulsory education.

The member for Aspley and other members with whom I have discussed this issue understand it fully. Those teachers who have the interests of children at heart embrace the work that is being done at the moment on the preferred option and are looking forward to further reports on the issue.

Year of the Family

Mr BAILEY: In asking a question of the Minister for Welfare Services, Youth and Ethnic Affairs, I refer to yesterday's savage attack by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition on the Year of the Family, which gained wide press coverage. Could the Minister inform the House what level of support, if any, members of the Opposition have given to this concept, which is designed to highlight and strengthen family stability?

Mr MUNTZ: I can only say that to knock the concept of the family is typical ALP policy. Both the State and Federal policies of the ALP are to knock the family unit and to encourage alternative, deviant life-styles, or whatever else they can be called. The promotion of homosexual life-styles and pornography comes through in every Labor Party document.

The community support that the Government has received for this concept is beyond my department's wildest dreams. The concept has received support from young people right through to senior citizens, local authorities, community organisations and church groups. The results of the Year of the Family will continue into the next decade and it is an ideal lead-in to the International Youth Year. The Year of the Family has given all people in the community an opportunity to stand up and be counted on the values

of family life and what they have done for this community. I can only hope that the ALP will take a more responsible attitude in promoting family values in this State and nation.

Mr McELLIGOTT: I issue an invitation to all honourable members to attend the Labor Party's forum to be held on 10 November, when the real pressures on the family today will be dealt with.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the honourable member for Townsville under Standing Order No. 123A.

Government Purchase of Kangaroo Point Land

Mr FOURAS: I ask the Minister for Lands, Forestry and Police: Is it not a fact that an Order in Council dated 8 March 1983 declaring that consolidation and redevelopment of the Kangaroo Point shipyard area shall be a purpose for which land may be taken under the Acquisition of Land Act was declared by the Solicitor-General to be invalid and inoperative? As four properties were acquired as a result of that invalid Order in Council at prices substantially lower than those that would have had to have been paid by any private developer obtaining these properties on the open market, will he give an undertaking to compensate those four property-owners whom he has robbed?

Mr GLASSON: The legal opinion offered by the Solicitor-General's Office on the Executive Council minute in relation to the resumption of the land was based on an opinion by the late Sir Arnold Bennett that the Act covering the use of that land was not specific enough. The Executive Council minute that was approved by the Governor in Council was hoped to add the necessary power. The Crown Law opinion was that it was challengeable in the courts. Therefore, the Crown Law recommendation was that there should be a separate Act.

The second part of the honourable member's question related to land that was taken forcibly. That is quite incorrect. Agreements of sale have been signed by four people. The fifth piece of land was acquired through an open contract of sale.

Mr Fouras interjected.

Mr GLASSON: The honourable member asked the question; he should let me answer it. He has done enough damage in running round the city falsely saying that certain things would happen in relation to the land at Kangaroo Point. If it will satisfy the honourable member, I will table a document showing the details of the contracts signed by the people from whom the properties were acquired by mutual agreement. That acquisition was carried out under the terms of the Land Act.

The honourable member then said that the prices paid were considerably lower than those paid for land across the street. In fact, the prices paid for those properties were considerably higher than those paid for corresponding land across the street.

The honourable member then asked whether compensation would be paid. Because the honourable member's question was asked on a false premise, the answer is, "No." Each of the four people from whom the land was acquired has signed a document saying that he or she does not wish to buy back the land.

Yesterday, in the Matters of Public Interest debate, the honourable member accused the Government of acquiring the land by resumption. There was no resumption, and I made that clear in an interjection during the honourable member's speech yesterday. His accusations were false. He is making too many false statements in relation to the Kangaroo Point shipyard.

Government Purchase of Kangaroo Point Land

Mr FOURAS: I ask a supplementary question of the Minister for Lands, Forestry and Police: Is it not a fact that the owners of the four properties in question were told by officers of the Land Administration Commission that the houses would be knocked

over by Christmas? In fact, were they not told that the properties would be resumed? Was the situation not such that the property-owners were told that if they did not come to the party, the properties would be resumed, that the houses would all be knocked over by Christmas, and that, "You can't beat the Government, anyway."? The Minister said in his previous answer that the property-owners did not wish to buy them back. Is it not a fact that most of the property-owners are very old—one lady is 76, and another person has had a stroke—and that the houses have been removed from the properties so that all that is left is a little bit of dirt?

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will ask his question.

Mr FOURAS: Yes, I am putting my question. Is it not a fact that the land area is so small that the owners could not now legally build a house on it, anyway?

Mr GLASSON: The honourable member's question is a repetition of what he said yesterday in the debate on matters of public interest.

As to the first part of the honourable member's question, about what was said by my officers—the two officers who made the approaches to those people are very honourable officers, and I am assured by them that proper approaches were made. As I said, they are both highly regarded. The same two officers were present recently when the property-owners signed the necessary documents. I will take their word as being correct. I understand that I will shortly receive a letter, written by one of the people concerned, to the effect that he was not pressured, that the negotiations were honourable and that the entire transaction was beyond reproach.

Mr Fouras interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the honourable member for South Brisbane under Standing Order No. 123A.

Administrative and Clerical Officers Association Ban on Information Requests from Members of Parliament

Mr STONEMAN: I ask the Minister for Employment and Industrial Affairs: Is he aware that members of the Administrative and Clerical Officers Association working in the Department of Social Security have imposed bans on, among other things, all requests for assistance or information emanating from the offices of members of Parliament? The Minister can imagine the suffering that that will cause to senior citizens or people with communication difficulties, such as those from a non-English speaking background, through not having their problems, which usually are channelled through the local member's office, dealt with by the Department of Social Security.

Mr LESTER: It is a very sad day when members of unions and associations place a ban upon certain people who are trying to help other people with difficulties. It is a terrible slur on this State. Generally speaking, I have found the groups to whom the honourable member referred to be reasonable. In the public interest and in the interest of the officers concerned, I am making every effort to try to resolve the matter. This afternoon, I will have further meetings with my departmental officers. I hope to be able to talk to the officers concerned with a view to resolving the matter for the benefit of all Queenslanders.

At 12 noon,

In accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 307, the House went into Committee of Supply.

SUPPLY**Resumption of Committee—Estimates—Fifth and Sixth Allotted Days****Estimates-in-Chief, 1984-85****Primary Industries****Department of Primary Industries**

Hon. N. J. TURNER (Warrego—Minister for Primary Industries) (12.1 p.m.): I move—

“That \$100,158,250 be granted for ‘Department of Primary Industries’.”

The improvement in the performance of the Australian economy during the last year was very much a result of the improvement in the fortunes of the rural sector following the breaking of the drought. This single fact highlighted the very real importance of the rural sector to the national prosperity. That fact is often conveniently ignored.

In Queensland, that fact is not ignored. In 1983-84, the gross value of rural production rose by 31 per cent on the drought affected level of the previous year to a record \$3,099m. This performance, in the light of a host of difficulties, demonstrates that the prosperity of Queensland continues to depend, to a very significant extent, on the prosperity of primary industries. However, because of the diversity of the State’s primary industries, prosperity never seems to visit all industries at the one time.

Although the grain and cotton industries have had a good year, the sugar industry has had to face one of the greatest challenges in its history. The livestock industries are only holding their own and the dairying and horticultural industries have had a difficult time.

During 1983-84, my department continued to provide a range of traditional services and introduced a number of new initiatives to assist in improving the performance of the State’s primary industries. Individual activities and programs are constantly reviewed to allow for reallocation of scarce resources of staff and money to meet the changing requirements of the rural sector.

The worth of the Queensland Wheat Research Institute continues to be recognised by grain-growers who planted three quarters of the last wheat crop with varieties released by the institute. Ten years ago, the figure was 10 per cent.

A similar story applies to a departmentally released barley variety, grimmett, which accounted for almost two thirds of plantings last year. In conjunction with the CSIRO, my department has released two new annual pasture legumes which are suitable to heavy rainfall areas and will tolerate heavy grazing.

Wheat plantings in early March are now widely adopted in the Central Highlands and the Dawson/Callide area to produce more reliable yields and to provide adequate levels of crop stubbles for soil protection during the early summer storm period and subsequent mid-summer and late-summer “wet”. This practice is also being evaluated in the western Darling Downs and Maranoa areas.

The cotton industry has consolidated previous gains and produced a record crop. Departmental agronomists have made significant contributions, particularly in the areas of crop establishment, crop nutrition, irrigation management and pest control. Yields exceeded five bales per hectare in 1983-84.

The department’s pasture seed production research programs have led, for example, to the establishment of a \$500,000 industry producing Callide and Samford Rhodes grass mainly in the coastal areas south of Bundaberg. These seed production programs have given the department an international reputation in pasture and fodder seed production.

As new cultivars of pasture grasses and legumes appear out of programs of plant breeding and selection, the need for seed certification has increased. There was a sixfold increase in the tonnage of seed certified by my department over the past five years. This has come from increased production and new cultivars—Callide and Samford Rhodes grass, Fitzroy stylo, Cunningham leucaena and hatch creeping bluegrass—all of which are playing increasingly important roles in raising the levels of animal and milk production throughout the State.

Community concern has run high for many years over the dangers to plant, animal and human health arising from indiscriminate use of farm chemicals, such as herbicides, particularly when applied from the air. The department received 71 notifications of complaints regarding spray drift throughout the State in 1983-84. New provisions of the Agricultural Chemicals Distribution Control Act relating to aerial spraying were introduced, and it is expected that they will alleviate some of the dangers of spray drift. An increase in the level of surveillance over aerial and commercial ground operation will be implemented with a view to further reducing the incidence of damage.

Queensland is now the top State in vegetable production and is far ahead in tomato, mandarin, strawberry and pineapple production. Each winter, Queensland vegetables dominate in all east coast markets, and increasing volumes of fruit and vegetables are being exported. The department has contributed to this success by developing and promoting efficient production and handling techniques that have been adopted by the industry. Because of efficient production techniques and its good packing, handling and refrigeration techniques, Queensland now has a strong competitive advantage. They ensure that fruit and vegetables are placed on distant markets with minimum loss of quality.

The importance of the department's research and extension work is endorsed by Queensland's fruit and vegetable industries and they provide financial support for several research and extension projects.

Queensland has become the leading State in Australia in the use of refrigeration to improve the post-harvest handling of fruit and vegetables. That has come about through work by my department to establish the most effective refrigeration techniques and to encourage their adoption by growers, transport operators and market agents.

The Queensland tomato industry now leads Australia in production efficiency, using techniques adapted for Queensland conditions and promoted by my officers. These techniques include the use of trickle irrigation, trickle fertilisation, plastic mulch, container-grown seedlings, trickle ethylene colouring and better packing and cooling techniques. The Queensland tomato industry now dominates Australian markets and sets the standard that others follow.

The vegetable-processing industry, particularly, has benefited from the variety introduction program. The pea industry in Queensland is now expanding in production at the expense of other States, and the carrot, green bean and sweet corn industries are also making satisfactory progress.

The citrus industry, with the aid of systems developed by my department, has been able to increase productivity and improve export marketing. Those systems include leaf analysis to determine fertiliser needs, sprays to extend harvest-time and shelf life, sprays to thin the crop, better packaging and cooling, and integrated pest-management techniques.

Vegetable-growers in the Lockyer Valley have been helped to overcome their salinity problems by a program of advice on water analyses, gypsum use, farm dam installation, trickle irrigation and the use of salt-tolerant crops.

In the sensitive area of the Torres Strait and Cape York, my department has conducted surveys of insect and fauna to provide baseline data in evaluating the potential risk of entry of exotic pest species.

Work is under way on pest problems associated with the ornamental plants and flower industry in south-east Queensland. Close liaison is maintained with local nurserymen

to ensure attention to their problems, many of which, by the nature of the industry, have no parallel with any other field of agricultural production.

In the course of studies to investigate natural food sources available to fruit-flies, entomologists discovered that adult fruit-flies feed on specific bacteria that occur on leaf and fruit surfaces. Field studies indicated that the bacteria proliferate with the onset of summer rain and lead to a major increase in fruit-fly activity in the summer months. The discovery represents a break-through in our understanding of fruit-fly ecology and should lead to better control.

The department has published a series of handbooks on various aspects of plant protection. They include books on plant diseases, insect pests, weeds and pesticide application technology, and are in great demand by industry.

In February this year, my department also released the first volume of the three-volume "Flora of South-eastern Queensland". This work, which is the first written in Queensland since the turn of the century, will describe 3 500 native and naturalised plants. It has already proved very popular with both professionals and amateurs interested in the rich and varied flora of this State. The second volume has been written and it is planned to release it during 1985.

Effective control of weeds is important in maximising crop and animal production. It requires correct identification of the troublesome species so that appropriate action can be taken. Two departmental publications "Weeds of Queensland" and "Suburban Weeds" have greatly assisted primary producers and urban gardeners in developing weed control strategies.

The native flora of Queensland has made significant contributions to horticultural and pharmaceutical industries, yet our knowledge of native flora is still far from complete. Last year, botanists in my department discovered more than 40 species new to science, some only 100 km from Brisbane.

As I indicated during the debate on the Meat Industry Act Amendment Bill two weeks ago, the Government has agreed to proceed with meat inspection rationalisation arrangements with the Commonwealth. When that rationalisation is effected, any question of duplication of meat inspection will be removed, as the Commonwealth will service all establishments licensed for export and the State will service the remainder. Further, there will be no dual fee. Export establishments will pay a fee to the Commonwealth only. Non-export establishments will pay a fee only to the State.

Arrangements will ensure that all present State functions in the areas to be vacated by it will be maintained. The State will establish a small observance unit to ensure continuing satisfactory performance of functions that it delegates to the Commonwealth.

Modern tick fever vaccines were developed in 1964 as a result of departmental research. Development and refinement of the vaccines have proceeded to the present day. During 20 years, 17 million doses of vaccine have been distributed. Left unvaccinated, approximately 850 000 cattle would have been affected by tick fever, many dying. A benefit/cost ratio of over 40:1 for this service has been calculated. For many years tick fever vaccine was sold cheaply, much of it below cost. This year the price was increased to about two-thirds of cost.

Progress in the eradication of bovine brucellosis in Queensland had been good, allowing the State to be declared provisionally free on 30 June 1984. Since the inception of the program in 1970, more than 4 900 of the State's 33 000 cattle herds have been cleared of infection and there are now only 101 infected herds remaining. Total eradication of brucellosis from Queensland should be achieved well before 1992, the national target date.

In regard to tuberculosis—there are still 169 infected properties of which 164 are located in remote areas. Although eradication of tuberculosis in the more intensive areas of Queensland has been successful and good progress has been made in the extensive

channel country herds, there are still problems with eradication in the extensive areas in the Gulf and Peninsula regions. The main problem is the ability to implement the extra management practices necessary for eradicating the disease in those areas while maintaining producer viability. Measures introduced this year to assist producers in this situation included the funding of movement testing, a substantial increase in compensation rates, the payment of a freight rebate for cattle used for restocking, and the introduction of low interest loans for capital improvement and carry-on finance.

I have just completed a visit to north Queensland with my Pastoral Advisory Committee to meet affected producers and see the problems first-hand. I am now considering other appropriate means of assistance to help the industry achieve the target date of 1992.

A joint project between the department and the Australian Brahman Breeders Association on Pompe's disease, is being developed to reduce the incidence of this lethal genetic condition in stud Brahman herds throughout Queensland. The influence of the Brahman breed has been widespread and is the base for many other breeds. It is important that lethal genetic material is not bred into stud stock.

Queensland must combat any exotic disease incursion should one occur. This responsibility rests with my department. Plans co-ordinating the activities of the various Government departments likely to be involved in an outbreak have been developed and published. State plans have been dovetailed into the State Counter-Disaster Organisation. Officers have been sent overseas to gain first-hand experience in disease outbreaks.

A computerised system for recording brands and earmarks is being developed and should be completed early in 1985. It will provide an up-to-date inventory of all cattle, sheep, horse and pig brands available to producers throughout the State.

For the first time, sales of semen by the Wacol Artificial Insemination Centre exceeded \$1m in 1983-84. That provides an indication of the importance placed on this centre and the work being undertaken there, not only by Queensland but also by overseas buyers. Four of the top bulls in Australia are now housed at Wacol.

Despite a disastrous fire at the Otto Madsen Dairy Research Laboratory, the facility was soon functional again thanks to commendable assistance from officers of the Department of Works. This laboratory has a very good international reputation and it makes a valuable research contribution to the whole dairying industry. The work of the laboratory has been expanded to encompass post-slaughter meat research, and research into the post-harvest handling of fish.

As a further initiative following the establishment of the Queensland Fish Management Authority, the department has now established a Fisheries Management Branch to assist in the improved management of the State's valuable fisheries. With the growing interest in the potential of aquaculture in this State, the department's two main fisheries laboratories at Cairns and Deception Bay are increasing their capacity to carry out work in the experimental breeding and rearing of fish and shellfish of commercial importance.

I recognise the very real threat that soil erosion poses to the future of Australian and Queensland primary production. As evidence of this, I have agreed to be chairman of the Soil Conservation Advisory Committee in an endeavour to maximise the impact of soil conservation measures within a climate of minimal financial support from Canberra.

This year, the Queensland Government will contribute the sum of \$6.33m to soil erosion control. This compares with a rather paltry contribution of \$610,500 from the Commonwealth Government. Last year, a total of 64 000 ha of cropping land was treated with soil conservation measures, despite the aftermath of the drought and the subsequent wet weather and spring. However, land is still being opened up for cultivation, especially for grain production, and most of this newly developed country will require protection against soil erosion.

In addition to the work undertaken by soil conservation officers, an overall departmental extension program has achieved widespread adoption by farmers of crop and fallow management practices which conserve soil and reduce erosion, particularly in grain-growing districts. Zero tillage, herbicide substitution for tillage and stubble-mulching are being practised on an increasing number of grain farms. In addition, improved crop sequences and rotations and improved crop nutrition have also been promoted to conserve soils and increase the reliability of grain-cropping in our environment.

The only part of Queensland currently drought declared is the eastern portion of the Bowen shire. Adverse seasonal conditions over the last three years have fluctuated widely. The peak of the severe and widespread drought was reached at the end of the 1982-83 summer when over 70 per cent of Queensland was drought declared.

The effective handling and marketing of primary production constitutes a major challenge in Australia, as it does throughout the rest of the world. In the Queensland grain industry, the establishment of the Queensland Grain Handling Authority, Bulk Grains Queensland, was a significant milestone in rationalising the storage and handling of the State's grain crops. The authority has replaced the State Wheat Board as the central grain and oil-seed handling and storage body in southern and central Queensland. The State Wheat Board, of course, continues as the Queensland wheat marketing authority.

I am happy to report that the disruption in the Australian egg industry seems to have settled down, at least for the time being, following the serious and much-publicised problems experienced in the New South Wales industry. My department has been in close consultation with the Queensland egg industry and I am confident that policies being implemented by the Queensland egg-marketing organisations will continue to protect the proper interests of Queensland egg-producers.

It is pleasing to note that the Commonwealth Government has finally seen fit to intervene in the market milk dispute between Victoria and the rest of Australia, especially New South Wales. It is unfortunate that some interests will adopt predatory marketing policies to achieve a nebulous short-term gain to the long-term disadvantage of producers generally.

My officers also have undertaken detailed economic analyses of the bread, egg, tobacco, grain-handling, dairy and broiler industries throughout the past year, in many instances in close association with industry representatives. A study is presently under way, in collaboration with the Committee of Direction of Fruit Marketing, to identify any areas of structural disadvantage being experienced by the State's horticultural producers. Although Queensland has emerged as the premier horticultural production State, high costs and uncertain market prices for some commodities have made it a comparatively high-risk industry. My department, in conjunction with the industry, will therefore endeavour to identify these factors.

Following the much-publicised financial difficulties experienced by one or two marketing agencies last year, my department, in conjunction with the Treasury, has developed guide-lines to be adopted by marketing boards in the areas of future trading, foreign currency hedging, crop finance borrowing and forward sales. These guide-lines cover internal control and reporting requirements, and limit the extent of risk exposure based on physical crop expectations. By applying such guide-lines, the potential for financial loss by primary producers will be minimised.

My department has collaborated with the Queensland Water Resources Commission to examine the benefits and costs associated with water resource development projects on the Maranoa, Mackenzie, Flinders and Proserpine Rivers and on Lockyer and Quartpot Creeks. The department has particular skills and expertise in this area and is well placed to continue to provide similar services.

In recognition of the importance of the economics of farming, my department, in association with the Commonwealth Development Bank and the Royal National

Association, has established an annual farm management award, which will provide a form of visual recognition to a person who achieves excellence in this important area.

The marketing of pasture seeds took a major step forward in north Queensland following the opening of the department's seed-testing laboratory in Mareeba during 1983-84. The department took the action following sustained demand from northern seed-producers.

International recognition of Queensland expertise in the testing of tropical pasture seed is continually in evidence. Two departmental officers concerned with seed-testing and research have been invited to assist in the organisation of an international seed-testing workshop to be held at the headquarters of the Centre for International Tropical Agriculture in Latin America, at Cali, Colombia, in late 1984. This visit has been funded by the International Seed Testing Association.

Internationally, the role of Governments in primary products export marketing has now reached major proportions. Realising the special needs of Queensland primary producers who produce, to a large extent, tropical and subtropical products, my department has taken positive steps in export market development. In association with industry, my officers have maintained a close watch on the progress of the Closer Economic Relation arrangements with New Zealand and have been able to iron out some problems.

The department's trade promotions activities were evident at the Queensland display at the Ag Asia Trade Fair in Kuala Lumpur in August this year. Additionally, a trade liaison officer has been appointed to the Agent-General's office in London to assist in the promotion of Queensland's rural and fishing products. These initiatives recognise the importance of the export trade to Queensland's rural and fishing industries and the need to ensure that worthwhile market opportunities are identified and fully developed.

Because of Queensland's location, my department has developed expertise in tropical and subtropical agriculture that is unexcelled in the world. The high standing of the department is well known in the less developed countries and has led to many requests being received for technical assistance and expertise. In response to these requests, the department has established an Overseas Development Section, which has responsibility for co-ordinating the activities of the department in the areas of overseas consultancies, training courses, both within Australia and overseas, and collaborative research programs conducted by Queensland scientists, both overseas and in Australia. Excellent results have been achieved in each of these areas. This has enhanced the department's reputation in the Third World, and has provided substantial spin-off benefits to Queensland in improved international relations and trade opportunities.

The "Queensland Agricultural Journal" and the "Queensland Journal of Agriculture and Animal Sciences" continue as the major regular departmental publications. In addition, a wide range of farm notes, information and news releases are made with the intention of passing on important, up-to-date information to the State's primary producers. The department also continues to enjoy a close association with the media in the dissemination of items of interest to the rural community.

As honourable members are aware, my department continues to administer an extensive body of legislation. With the support of both sides of the Assembly, the Wheat Marketing Act and the Meat Industry Act were amended to provide for improved marketing and inspection provisions in the respective industries. There is also before the Assembly legislation to improve the hen quota scheme so that it reflects more closely current market conditions, as well as very important legislation relating to the proper management of the Torres Strait fisheries. A Bill to provide for the proper control of deer-farming in Queensland also has been introduced.

Before the end of this year, I expect to introduce a new Wheat Marketing Bill that will provide the necessary complementary Commonwealth/State powers to accommodate the next period of wheat industry stabilisation. This will include the provisions of the

Wheat Marketing Act Amendment Bill recently approved by the Assembly as an interim measure.

Legislation is also being prepared dealing with soil conservation measures and canned fruit marketing.

Following extensive representations from industry, I expect shortly to be introducing legislation to amend the Bread Industry Committee Act to provide the Bread Industry Committee with a more appropriate mechanism to regulate the marketing of this important basic food item.

I have also asked my department to review the provisions of the Primary Producers' Co-operative Associations Act, which has been in operation since 1923 with only occasional amendment. This is a significant piece of legislation that has served primary producers well over the years. However, now that it has passed its diamond jubilee, it is appropriate that it be reviewed in the light of current practice.

My department has adopted this policy in its review of the Primary Producers' Organisation and Marketing Act. This legislation was also first enacted in the 1920s and has proved to be a model throughout the world in the field of agricultural marketing. During the last two years, in close association with Queensland primary producer statutory marketing and representative organisations, the entire framework of the marketing Act has been put under the microscope. What is emerging is a concept that is not greatly different from the one that has been in place for the last 60 years but up-dated to recognise and take advantage of contemporary marketing and business practices. I will say more on that when I am in a position to introduce the Bill into the Assembly. However, at this stage I commend all the State's primary producer statutory organisations who are members of the Council of Agriculture for the constructive manner in which they worked with my officers in this major review.

What of the prospects for the balance of 1984-85? My department considers, on the basis of a very early forecast, that the gross value of Queensland's rural production for 1984-85 will be about the same level as for last year—a figure of about \$3,100m, in 1984 values. In real terms that means that the value of rural production will fall behind by about the level of inflation over the year.

Although that is most unsatisfactory, it is substantially better than the forecast announced by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics last week for Australia as a whole. There is no simple solution to this problem, but I have asked my department to continue to maximise its efforts in areas that will minimise costs and maximise producers' returns through the entire spectrum of production, handling and marketing.

I see the integration of efficiency measures through the entire production and marketing chain as the only sensible initiative open to primary producers, and I see the Department of Primary Industries as being in a unique position to facilitate that integration.

As I have demonstrated, the activities of my department encompass the entire spectrum of primary production. The amount that I have moved be granted for the service of the year 1984-85 from consolidated revenue is the absolute minimum necessary to meet the needs of the Department of Primary Industries.

I therefore recommend to the Committee the allocation of \$100,158,250 for Primary Industries in 1984-85.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I desire to inform honourable members that, on the Vote proposed, I will allow a full discussion on all the Minister's departmental Estimates (Consolidated Revenue, Trust and Special Funds, and Loan Fund Account).

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

Mr KRUGER (Murrumba) (12.28 p.m.): Generally, I have been very pleased with the co-operation of officers of the Department of Primary Industries, particularly in the lead-up to debates in this Chamber, when they have given me and members of my committee information of a non-political nature about impending legislation. I hope that our good relationship with those officers will continue.

One of the best publications of its type in Australia for the man on the land is the "Queensland Agricultural Journal". It is unusual not to find at least one or two interesting items in each issue. It is a good way of getting the message across to the man on the land about what is happening in agriculture.

I mentioned in the debate on the Financial Statement—and it is worth mentioning again—that I was a little worried about the proportion of Federal funding towards the overall Estimates of the Department of Primary Industries. The Federal Government contribution of \$15.5m for natural disaster relief and \$15.29m for bovine tuberculosis and brucellosis eradication forms a significant part of the total Budget allocation of \$100m.

In a recent press release relative to the eradication of tuberculosis and brucellosis, the Minister for Primary Industries (Mr Turner) said—

"This financial year, \$21.6 million has been allocated from the Budget for the campaign in this State..."

That statement is correct in a sense, but there is no mention of the amount that has been provided by the Commonwealth Government—

Mr Turner: Don't you think the Federal Government gets money from us by way of taxation?

Mr KRUGER: I appreciate that fact, but that is not very clearly spelt out, and for obvious reasons.

Another item that concerns me appears on page 62 of the Estimates. This year an amount of \$7,499,500 is required for travelling expenses, etc. That is an increase of about \$1.2m over the expenditure last year. In view of some of the trips made during the last year, I wish to know the extent of the travelling under that item. Shortly, I shall refer to a question that the member for Lytton (Mr Burns) asked about overseas trips. A lot of travelling seems to take place. I suppose that good information is obtained from some trips but not from every trip.

Mr Turner: How did your trip go?

Mr KRUGER: My trip was slightly different from the trips to which I am referring. The expenses for it did not come directly out of Queensland Government funds.

On page 119 of the Estimates an amount of \$2,865,000 is shown under an item dealing with general travelling and other matters. The expenditure last year was \$1,797,660. The reasons for the travelling are not spelt out. Travelling is evident in every section of the Estimates for the Department of Primary Industries. The officers of the department have to travel, and there is no way to prevent that. But I am concerned about the amount of information that is obtained. Certain trips may be thought to be partial junkets.

I refer to the question asked by the member for Lytton in this Chamber on 19 September 1984 and to the answer that was given. The answer to the first part of the question was—

"The honourable member for Lytton should be aware that, following an examination of the operations of statutory primary producer organisations, legislation was passed by Parliament amending the Primary Producers' Organisation and Marketing Act to provide for more specific accounting and reporting standards."

That is good. But in reply to the fourth part of the question, the Minister said—

“The overseas travel involved commercial negotiations. As such, the details are confidential to the authorities involved and myself. Their public disclosure could seriously prejudice the interests of Queensland primary producers.”

The details are reported to the Minister. He is the only one who knows anything about those matters. That is not much good to the rest of us. In future, when information is sought about the extent of travel by officers of the department, it should be provided.

One of my colleagues wishes to speak about soil erosion problems because he has many of them in his electorate. However, as the Opposition spokesman on Primary Industries, it would be wrong of me not to refer to the matter. Apparently the Director General of the department (Dr Alexander) is well aware of the problem, because in his opening remarks in the department's annual report for 1983-84 he refers to the heavy rain on denuded soil causing erosion in the Darling Downs, Maranoa, Burnett and Central Highlands agricultural areas. I am pleased that he is aware of the problems caused by soil erosion. On page 6 of the report he points out that the involvement of the Commonwealth Government in the land-management area is welcome.

The National Party at the Federal level does not seem to want the Federal Government to become involved in soil erosion problems. However, in this Chamber we are continually aware of buckets being tipped over the Federal Government because it does not give enough money for soil conservation. That simply does not add up.

Soil erosion is a major problem, and I am pleased to note that the Minister is well aware of it. It does not matter whether the money comes from the Federal Government or the State Government. It is the provision of money for this purpose that is extremely important.

Mr Vaughan: Everybody is aware of it but nobody seems to be doing anything about it.

Mr KRUGER: That is right. The Minister has boasted that the State Government is doing something about soil erosion. I hope that it does a lot more.

An article in “The Queensland Graingrower” of 12 September 1984 reads—

“The additional positions for Moura and Clermont have been provided through the Federal Government's National Soil Conservation Program.”

It is admitted that some benefit will flow from that program. However, I am amazed that at the convention of the Cattlemen's Union held in Rockhampton, the Premier said that the Federal Government allocated only \$1m for soil erosion in this year's Budget.

Mr Turner: I think he meant last year.

Mr KRUGER: That is not what he said. He should have said that \$1m was provided last year. This year, \$4m was provided. In the previous year no money was provided for soil conservation. In 1980-81, the Queensland Government underspent the Grants Commission's allocation for soil conservation by about 41c per capita, or almost \$1m. That goes to show that the money that is available has not been spent.

Contrary to what people are led to believe, leaders in the beef industry are reasonably happy because that industry is in pretty good shape and will be for the next four to six years. That has been brought about because of the fewer herd numbers and because the seasons in recent times have been better. As the Minister for Primary Industries is well aware, the beef industry must be watched closely. Problems always occur with overseas markets and if those markets were to tighten up, the beef industry in Queensland could be in trouble.

I was surprised to read, in the “National Farmer”, statements by Dick Austen, the chairman of the Australian Meat and Livestock Corporation, about the quality of Australia's beef and lamb.

Recently I attended a conference in Sydney about the future of the trans-Tasman sheep meat trade. One hears from time to time screams from lamb-producers about the possible importation of New Zealand lamb to Australia. They do not want the importation of New Zealand lamb. However, when Sir William Gunn stated that it was high time that Australia accepted New Zealand lamb, everybody at the conference clapped and agreed that it was a good idea. That just goes to show how easy it is to promote an idea by swinging support behind an industry.

I am sure that all honourable members are aware of the problems confronting some primary industries. The egg industry is one that is in danger. I know that the Minister will be introducing legislation, but I do not know that it will overcome all of the problems in the egg industry. I have been told by egg-producers that there are handling problems in the New South Wales industry that could pose a threat to the Queensland market. Under section 92 of the Constitution, the egg-producers in New South Wales can claim that they have the right to do what they are doing, and, although I do not want to criticise, I must say that I hope that any amendments to legislation in Queensland will be for the betterment of Queensland egg-producers. It is not a large industry and it has tried to ensure that demand is met by an over-supply of eggs of a reasonable quality.

From a reading of the annual report, I found that butter production increased by 60 per cent in 1983-84. That represents an enormous increase considering that there is an over-production of most dairy products. One would think that, over the years, dairy-farmers would have learnt how to make production satisfy demand instead of over-producing, which is one of the problems faced by the dairy industry at the moment.

Although the Minister did not refer directly to the encroachment into New South Wales of milk produced in Victoria, he is aware that it will be a problem for Queensland if that encroachment extends into northern New South Wales. I know that the Queensland dairy industry is aware of this possibility, and I hope that the Government will give the dairy-farmers as much assistance as it can to overcome any problems that may occur. The Victorian farmers are looking for short-term gain. Many primary producers like there to be controls over their industry when it suits them, but when it does not, they want an open go. That does not make it easy to maintain any control.

It is interesting to note that, in the section of the annual report entitled "Dairy industry highlights", milk production increased by 13.2 per cent in 1983-84. That was despite a drop from 2 712 to 2 655 in the number of registered dairy farms. The decrease in the number of producers and the increase in milk production demonstrate that dairy-farmers are learning how to produce more efficiently. However, had there not been a change from Jersey cows, which produce less milk of higher quality, to Friesian cows, which produce more milk of slightly poorer quality, the problems associated with over-production may not have occurred. I know that that may seem to be a silly statement to make.

A good deal of work has been done to improve dairy herds. Of course, the bulls are playing their part in producing heifers that, in turn, produce large quantities of milk. Unfortunately, milk is a commodity that is not sought after by the consumers to the same extent that it used to be. I guess that is because society is ageing and fewer babies are brought into the world. The young people, of course, are the ones who drink large quantities of milk. Perhaps somebody could take up the challenge and make more babies so that the problems confronting the dairy industry can be overcome!

The dairy industry also suffers from a price war. In addition, soy milk is being brought onto the market. Steps have been taken to improve the method of its production. However, it is obvious from the high price of soy milk, which seems to be in short supply on supermarket shelves, that somebody is getting a rake-off. If a larger quantity is marketed, that will certainly bring down the cost and could easily be to the detriment of the dairy industry.

I am very interested in a booklet "Government in Focus", which is published by the Commonwealth Government. In a recent issue of that booklet, Mr Kerin was reported

as expressing concern for the milk industry. He has asked that certain things be done to enable the industry to overcome its problems. However, the industry was unable to agree on the steps that should be taken, so nothing came of the attempts that were made. I refer to an article in the "National Farmer", which appeared on the page titled "Around the Waterbag" Under the heading "Socialist Twist", this appears—

"The National Party still seems to have its knickers in a knot about what's socialist and what ain't, Waterbag reckons.

At the recent General Council meeting in Canberra one delegate got very steamed up about the crossborder milk trade moves, describing them as 'nationalisation' of the dairy industry—blithely ignoring the fact that the Australian Constitution regards them as 'free trade between States'.

The delegate also tended to overlook the fact that State milk marketing schemes are, of course, socialisation of the industry's income.

It appeared to Waterbag from the above that certain Nationals are convinced anything that happens under an ALP government is socialism, (even if it is free trade) and conversely anything implemented by the coalition is free trade (even if it's socialism).

No wonder the voters can't tell the difference."

That accurately describes the situation.

I turn now to another troubled industry, the peanut industry. I am surprised at the attitude of the Premier and Treasurer to that industry, because a very large part of it is in his electorate. I am also surprised at the Minister's attitude.

I refer to "The Queensland Graingrower" of 22 August 1984, in which this appears—

"State Primary Industries Minister Neil Turner is confident the peanut industry can resolve its problems 'without the heavy hand of government'.

The Minister made this comment in his address to the recent meeting of the Queensland Council of Agriculture, of which he is president.

Mr Turner said peanut growers themselves had to make the hard decisions on their industry's future.

He was concerned at the conflict in the industry and the publicity it had received in recent months."

That statement implies that it is simple for the industry to solve its own problems, yet cry after cry has been heard, over the last few weeks in particular, that the Federal Government should be contributing more to the sugar industry to help it solve its problems.

Industries should not be singled out. Everyone will be pleased to hear the announcement that the Australian Government has decided to come forward with an additional \$5.5m by way of short-term assistance to the sugar industry. It will not provide the whole solution to the problem. Everybody realises that something else has to be done. That assistance is only a stopgap measure. I hope that in the near future the industry will return to normal, but everybody knows that that will not happen quickly.

I mention also the \$28 a tonne increases in the price of sugar. That was of some help, but, unfortunately, at the time of a downturn in the markets, such help does not have results quickly. When markets are good, such assistance looks good. It is the high interest that the farmers have to pay on their huge debts that is causing the problem. If the industry could start afresh, in a couple of years' time it would look good. However, we will just have to wait and see what the review of the industry comes up with in the way of cheaper production and returning viability to the industry.

The fishing industry is experiencing some problems. A great deal of work has been done. The Queensland Fish Management Authority took 12 months or more to get under way. A great deal of progress has been made by it. The fishing industry generally

is beginning to improve. I have had discussions with members of that authority about the problems in the industry. There is an overlapping of responsibilities of inspectors, Fishing and Boating Patrol officers and other persons who must deal with the problems in the industry. A person who has been charged has little chance of convincing a court that some mistake may have been made by the person who laid the charge.

The tribunal that has been established should provide a solution to those problems. Persons who have been charged with breaches of the Act have not been given any relief. The matter should be examined carefully in the future. I hope that the matter will settle down and that hearings that are more honest are held when such charges are laid.

When I was a small crops farmer, I spent a great deal of time studying the benefits to be gained by the use of trace elements to produce better and healthier crops, to overcome some of the spraying costs and to grow crops that will have a much longer life. The borax deficiency in cauliflowers created great problems. Without borax, cauliflower stems rot. A spray was available to combat that problem. Many people who have had a great deal to offer have been snubbed by the department. The department should accept any sound advice that a person may have to offer.

Twenty years ago the Department of Primary Industries was heavily involved in the use of trace elements as a fertiliser supplement. Nowadays, there does not seem to be any follow-up on those matters. Experiments should be carried out so that production costs can be reduced. It has been possible to improve production techniques. Most people would agree that the present marketing system is not satisfactory. There is a great difference between what the farmer receives for his produce and the amount paid for it by the consumer. The combines and the shop-droppers have often been blamed for taking more than their share. If production increases, the man on the land should receive reasonable remuneration for his efforts. At the same time, the consumer should receive produce of the best quality at the lowest possible price. I trust that the department will keep a watchful eye on that problem. I am sure that the Minister will take note of it and take action to ensure that nothing is left undone.

Mr BOOTH (Warwick) (12.49 p.m.): At the outset, I point out that the Minister has not had a particularly easy time since he was appointed Minister for Primary Industries. Morale in primary industries has not been very high. I congratulate the Minister on condensing his opening remarks so that members have ample opportunity to debate his Estimates.

The Opposition spokesman on primary industries made a very good contribution to the debate. He referred to primary industries. He did not display the bitterness that is sometimes displayed. I commend him for his remarks.

Earlier, I said that morale is not very high in primary industries. Morale is not high in the sugar industry. It is fair to say that morale in the dairying industry is not high. It would be fair to say that most sections of the grain-growing industry are beset by such rapid increases in costs that severe problems will be encountered in that industry.

The Minister, in his presentation of the Estimates, referred to board marketing. I wish to refer to the responsibility of board members. In the past few years, board members have forgotten their responsibilities or lacked the ability to take responsible action consistent with their policy-making role. Whenever the Minister talks to people involved in Queensland marketing boards, he should encourage them to accept that they have responsibilities for part of the policy-making role, otherwise the orderly marketing system will be beset with problems. I have always supported the orderly marketing system, and I am not being critical of it. However, it will work only if board members adopt the correct approach to their role.

Board members should not attend meetings merely to rubber-stamp all management decisions. They should preferably formulate policy. If they fail to carry out their role properly, the orderly marketing system in this State will be sabotaged. They ought not to be involved in the day-to-day running of a board.

The orderly marketing system in Queensland is one of the great success stories. I do not claim that the Government devised orderly marketing, but it has done nothing to sabotage it. The Government has continued to consult the people involved, and has furthered the traditions of orderly marketing.

I will not back away from anything that I have said. I will not rehash the problems of the Peanut Marketing Board or those of various other boards. I simply say that board members ought to accept their responsibilities.

I was very pleased to hear the Minister's statement about foreign currency hedging, crop finance borrowing and forward sales. It is dangerous to engage in futures trading, foreign currency hedging and even forward sales. As the Minister pointed out in his opening remarks, it is less dangerous if such transactions are restricted to a minimal proportion of all contracts entered into. It is always dangerous to determine the quantity of crop to be forward sold. If a forward sale involves a quantity greater than the crop that is produced, problems arise if the price escalates. I need refer only to the history of sorghum dealings to illustrate that point. I am pleased that a policy will be devised to provide some restraint. However, irrespective of the policy, dangers are inherent in futures market transactions because, unfortunately, to about the same extent, there are winners and losers.

Currency hedging is also a dangerous practice. It should not be considered. The Queensland Graingrowers Association is not a statutory body—and I do not intend to make an issue of it—but what happened to that organisation in currency hedging could happen to any organisation. I am loath to say that the Queensland Graingrowers Association will not rise again, but a completely new organisation will have to be founded. What happened in the grain industry cannot be forgotten.

I urge the Minister to undertake an increasing role in the maintenance of security in operations that involve futures trading, foreign currency hedging, crop finance borrowing and forward sales. It is all very well for a board dealing in, say, sorghum to hedge in the American corn futures market, but Chicago is a long way away. Many errors have occurred, and could occur again. I am not blaming past board members, but the lessons of history cannot be ignored—even if they are not always infallible. The history of the Queensland Graingrowers Association is a tragedy. I am particularly pleased that, in his speech, the Minister recognised the problem and has instructed his staff to try to devise a suitable policy.

I am also pleased that improvements have been made in the meat inspection system. I have never believed that the duplication of meat inspection was of any great advantage. I am prepared to admit that the new system took some time to devise and that it might contain a few bugs. However, the problem has been faced and the dual inspection system has been done away with. At the same time the State has given nothing away.

I do not want to use all of my allotted 20 minutes without saying something about my own electorate.

Mr Davis: I was wondering when you were going to get to the Leslie Dam.

Mr BOOTH: That battle has been won, so I do not have to deal with it.

This is not the first occasion on which I have referred to the development of a dryland pasture for the Darling Downs and some of the inland regions. I know the difficulty involved in trying to find a dryland pasture that will survive in those areas, but if one could be found it would be a magnificent break-through. I know that the Hermitage Research Station has been doing something in regard to legumes, clovers and medics. I am not trying to knock what has happened with medics, on which experimentation has been proceeding for some time, but I would rather see the research switched to try to find a dryland pasture that will survive in inland areas. Its achievement will be expensive and I am sure that there will be many negative results before then. If a dryland pasture that did really well on the Darling Downs and in the inland regions

could be found, it would be of immense benefit to Queensland and be one of the great achievements in agriculture.

Areas that have suffered some damage from soil erosion sometimes cannot be worked for agriculture and have to be used as permanent pasture. Because there has been no break-through on permanent pastures for areas such as my electorate, property-owners cannot confidently establish a permanent pasture in the areas that need it.

I urge the Minister to consider the problem and institute an experimentation program for dryland pastures. I do not care whether or not it is done at Hermitage, as long as it is done in an inland region and as long as the results are beneficial. Some time ago when the late Dr Griffiths-Davies was at the CSIRO, he brought vast numbers of seeds into this country to try to find a dryland pasture, but he was hampered by a lack of finance. Surely it is possible to send someone overseas to collect seeds in an endeavour to discover a suitable dryland pasture. I am not opposed to overseas visits but, as the honourable member for Murrumba said, I do not want money to be wasted.

Mr Yewdale: Not many of your colleagues are opposed to them, either.

Mr BOOTH: If benefits will accrue, they are OK. I have never heard the honourable member for Rockhampton North say that he would be opposed to an overseas visit if it was beneficial.

Mr Yewdale: I can't get one.

Mr BOOTH: I have not had many, either.

Sitting suspended from 1 to 2.15 p.m.

Mr BOOTH: Spray drift was mentioned by the Minister in his opening remarks, and it is also mentioned in the department's annual report. Spray drift occurs in both aerial and ground spraying but, as a member, I find that most complaints follow aerial spraying. I have spoken to the pilots, who seem to be reasonable people doing the best that they can to mitigate the drift problem but, nevertheless, complaints continue to be made. I do not think that farmers are being unreasonable, nor are the spray operators, but the problem remains.

A suggestion was made recently that, before spraying, the operators could use smoke to detect wind direction and so minimise drift, but I do not know whether that is a practicable solution. If it is, it certainly should be widely used. It takes very little spray to damage certain crops. Members who know anything about trees will know that, for instance, pepperina trees are very susceptible to chemicals and that even with very little drift a tree 150 yards away from the line of spray can be damaged. Because weeds can cause the loss of a large proportion of a crop, it is obvious that the farmers will want to spray them. I know that the easy solution is to say that nothing can be done about the drift problem, but that is not the way to handle it.

The Minister mentioned farm chemicals and herbicides. Some people are inclined to be overly worried about the effect of herbicides, but something has to be done to control their misuse.

Although the lamb and mutton industries are not the major industries in my electorate, they are of considerable economic benefit to it. Recently I have had it drawn to my attention that a large amount of mutton is being imported into Australia. I thought lamb was being imported as well but, earlier this week, I asked the Minister for Primary Industries a question on that subject and he informed me that no lamb has been imported. Nevertheless, I think that some of the imported sheep meat might be hoggett, and that might be interfering with the local lamb market. For that reason, the Government will have to be on the look-out for any dumping by New Zealand. It is all right for the New Zealanders to say, "Well, we have to get rid of it somewhere", but Queensland producers have to make a living.

Early this spring I saw the best lamb ever produced in Queensland, I suppose mainly because of the good season but also because of the expertise of the producers and the amount of time and trouble they have taken. However, I was very disheartened to learn that their return was so poor that it will be very difficult for them to continue to make a living out of lamb production. It is a pity that that is happening, even though producers are turning out the type of lamb that people want to eat. In the Parliament House dining-room members are served some excellent quality lamb. A good deal is said about the promotion of tourism, but excellent food is one of the best forms of promotion. If New Zealand mutton is allowed to be dumped in Australia, the Queensland industry will suffer. I am not holding the Minister responsible for the problem but, in his reply to my question, he did say that he had taken certain initiatives to try to get the Federal Government to accept responsibility——

Mr Yewdale: He has to accept some responsibility.

Mr BOOTH: That is right, and he has. The Federal Government has placed a moratorium on the import of New Zealand mutton for a short time, so both sides have accepted some responsibility. I was pleased about that. I should say to the honourable member that I was not trying to be political. I am sure that the Minister will do his best, as he has done so far. It is an increasing worry and, unless something is done about it, it will take its toll of the industry in my area. Unless something is done, damage will occur to an industry that has been of great benefit to this country.

I wish to raise a couple of other matters. The first is zero tillage. I am on record as saying that I did not think that zero tillage would ever work. I am starting to have second thoughts about it. Zero tillage might work. I do not know that we have all the answers. More research has to be done before we can say to people that they should start to handle a farm on a zero tillage basis; and more research is really what has to be done.

People cannot have one type of equipment to till the farm and another type to operate the farm on a zero tillage basis. They have to be able to operate the complete farm, and that is always difficult. Somewhere along the line more research has to be done. Unless it is done, we will find ourselves in the invidious position of telling people that zero tillage is a goer when in fact we do not know. In my opinion, zero tillage might be a goer. We will have to practise zero tillage for about 10 years before we know whether the chemicals are having any far-reaching effects on the soil or on any other aspect of agriculture. I urge the Minister to set aside a greater amount of funds for zero tillage rather than to go ahead and tell people at this early stage that it is a goer.

Mr Simpson: It could upset your rotation.

Mr BOOTH: It could upset many things. I do not think that we know enough about zero tillage, and I urge the Minister to try to find out more about it.

In recent years the Rural Reconstruction Board has had a difficult task to perform. I said earlier that morale in farming circles was very low. Many farmers have struck trouble and the Rural Reconstruction Board has had to try to spread its funds as far as possible. The problems in the sugar industry were not foreseen. I appreciate that the people on the board are trying to help the sugar industry, but they must remember that other people in the State want help and support, too.

Not very long ago I was told that the majority of the farms in my area were home-sites. It is all very well to say, "You have to be big or get out." It is not easy for many small farmers to sell. Before it is claimed that the small farms in my area are not viable, let me point out that, on one occasion when I was young, I was told by an experienced farmer, "There is nothing wrong with being a small farmer, laddie, as long as you know you are small, buy equipment to suit your situation and set your programs and priorities likewise." For that reason I say that small farmers should not be wiped off before some thought is given to their situation.

I thank the Minister sincerely for the way in which people are able to approach him. I also thank his officers for answering queries. On occasions, it is very helpful to have queries answered.

Mr De LACY (Cairns) (2.24 p.m.): During this debate on the Primary Industries Estimates, I wish to address in particular the topic of soil conservation and this Government's commitment to preserving our most valuable and most finite agricultural resource. The more I look into the subject, I find, as I have come to expect, a yawning gap between the rhetoric and the performance. I have come to expect that this Government spends less on those types of people's issues that affect the great mass of the people, such as education, health and welfare.

It comes as a surprise, certainly to me and I think to most people, to find that there is no commitment by the Government to solving the soil erosion problems. Surely that is a subject that is dear to the hearts and souls of the members of the farming community in Queensland, certainly those who are members of the National Party.

Nothing in this year's Budget, and certainly nothing in what the Minister said today, will do anything to rectify the deficiency in spending and in commitment to solve the very huge problems of soil erosion and land degradation. The Minister for Primary Industries said that the Government will spend \$6.3m on soil conservation this financial year. By my reckoning, that is an increase in absolute terms of 2.5 per cent, which, in real terms, is a decrease in expenditure. But today I do not want to score points.

I will speak seriously about soil erosion because it has been acknowledged that soil erosion and general land degradation are the greatest environmental problems faced by the nation, and that includes the State of Queensland. I agree with that. There is much evidence to support that conclusion.

I refer firstly to the Eather report, which is the report of the Queensland planning committee on soil erosion. The first paragraph of that report states—

“Soil erosion in Queensland has reached very serious proportions. Irreversible damage has occurred and continues to take place over much of the agricultural areas of the State.”

An article that appeared in the “National Farmer” of 7 April 1983 was headed “How Australian Farms Are Blowing Into Oblivion”. Another article headed “Going, Going, Gone!”, which appeared in “Queensland Country Life” of 16 June 1983, stated—

“Loss of soil in central Queensland is staggering. Soil erosion on central Queensland's brigalow country cultivation is stripping just 6 mm of top soil annually.

Unfortunately, it does not stop there. It is an unrenewable resource—in 10 years we will have lost 6 cm and, in less than 50 years, we will have exposed basalt and nil productivity.”

I have selected these articles at random from rural publications. An article entitled “Erosion nearing disaster status” that appeared in “The Queensland Graingrower” reads—

“Of the 2.8 million hectares, presently cultivated in Queensland, 2.3 million hectares are prone to soil erosion.

This area is growing at over 70,000 hectares a year as new areas in the central and south-west grain growing regions are opened up for production.

Damage from soil erosion is irreversible. The soil cannot be put back and its formation from parent material is very slow indeed. Loss of topsoil causes loss of production because it reduces the amount of soil available to hold water, removes the available nutrients and lowers the ability of the soil to absorb water.

In addition, it causes cultivation problems. In some places, damage has been so great that land is no longer viable for crop production.

Many thousands of hectares of land have already been abandoned and large areas have such shallow soils that their viability beyond 30 years is questionable unless they receive protection."

Mr Vaughan: What a shocking indictment of the Government!

Mr De LACY: That is right.

An issue of the "Australian Canegrower" reports the comments of Dr Brian Roberts, who is dean of the School of Applied Science at the Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education. That gentleman points out that land degradation, erosion and instability are problems in all but three of the four mill areas. He claims that, in extreme cases, farmers have been living on borrowed time by farming unusually steep land by adopting inappropriate practices.

I could go on for ever citing evidence of the magnitude of the problems that the nation is facing in terms of the fragile nature of its soil resources.

The loss of valuable agricultural land for a variety of reasons is one of the biggest problems that Australians must come to grips with. A number of reasons can be found why soil erosion is a bigger problem in Australia than it is in probably any other country in the world. I will list those reasons.

Firstly, agriculture has always been of major importance to Australia. Since Australia was first settled, it has relied on agricultural industries. Much of Australia's development has depended on the expansion of the nation's agricultural resources. The old saying that Australia rides on the sheep's back may not be as true today as it used to be but, even though the mineral and industrial base has broadened, agriculture is still the largest export-earner for the Australian economy. The contribution of agriculture to the Australian economy depends upon the maintenance of land and soil resources.

Secondly, although Australia has a relatively large land mass, it does not have an abundance of high-quality agricultural land. Only 4 per cent, or a mere 20 million hectares of Australia's land mass can be considered prime agricultural land. Australian soils are much shallower and older than those of other continents, particularly those of Europe and North America. Because of the need to develop new land, because of urban encroachment, and because of the relatively modern trend towards what are often referred to as hobby farms or rural retreats and other kinds of rural residential development, pressure on valuable agricultural land is increasing. In many areas, development has been forced to move into marginal land, thereby creating problems of soil degradation and soil erosion. Because Australia does not have a great deal of good soil, it is imperative that we address ourselves to the problem and preserve what soil we have left.

I am saddened at times that soil conservation authorities speak about the concept of an acceptable level of loss tolerance. I have heard mention of a figure. However, if a level of annual soil loss greater than the capacity of the soil to renew itself is accepted, this country will be on a collision course with disaster.

The third reason why Australia has problems is that it has a unique climate, with extreme seasonal and climatic variations. That predisposes the soil to degradation from water and soil erosion, from salination and from the depletion of chemical and physical fertility.

The main reason why Australia has such an abysmal record in conserving its soil resources is attitudes. The people of Australia have been custodians of this land for a mere 200 years; yet in many areas the productive capacity of the soil has been lost. Australia's record is bad compared with that of overseas countries. The Chinese, for example, have been farming the same land for thousands of years, with considerably more land pressures than are experienced in Australia, and that land still has the same productive capacity as it did 2 000 years ago.

As I said, the problem is the attitude of Australians to soil. Soil is seen simply as another means of production, another resource. Society's economic attitude is a short-term one. People are not really cultivating the land; they are mining the land. The modern-day economic mentality of "fly now, pay later" means that our children and their descendants will be paying the price of our folly.

I will quote from the words used by the New South Wales Minister for Agriculture, Mr Jack Hallam. My research reveals that he has adopted a realistic attitude and that he is one Primary Industry Minister in Australia who really addresses himself to the problem. He said—

"It is a tragic fact that good soil, which has evolved over millions of years and is carefully nurtured, may, through neglect, erosion, unintentional although bad management, salinity, urban encroachment, lose its productive capacity permanently.

As transient custodians we have a moral responsibility to future generations to conserve our natural resources wherever possible."

I quote again from the words of Dr Brian Roberts, the dean of the School of Applied Science at the Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education. In referring to farmers in general, he said—

"They must avoid setting short term production goals at the expense of their soil 'capital' and accept the mantle of conservator and protector of this precious non-renewable resource.

The days of the arrogant frontier mentality towards land are over. There is a growing awareness that use of the land is the right of future generations as well as ourselves. Even with freehold title, our occupation of the land is but a fleeting moment in the productive life of the land."

Australians seem unable to learn from the lessons of the past. In certain circles, people are beginning to realise that problems are being experienced with soil conservation. There are still many pressures in this State that show that we have not learnt from history. As the member for Warwick said earlier, the lessons of history are not infallible, but one should always learn from them.

Yesterday I spoke to the Federal Minister for Primary Industry. He said—

"It is a constant source of frustration to me that while this country is facing a massive land degradation problem, I am constantly receiving requests from people—this includes politicians—who are seeking funds to either prop up inappropriate systems of land use or develop more of the same. Despite the obvious lessons of the past, I can assure you that political pressure to flood the inland—"

the Minister for Northern Development and Aboriginal and Island Affairs tramps round the country promoting the Bradfield Scheme, which has as much currency these days as the flat earth theory—

"to irrigate saline soils, to drain swamps—"

the member for Mulgrave is not in the Chamber, but he was responsible for promoting that ludicrous project to drain the Eubenangee Swamp near Babinda to increase the sugar peak at the Babinda sugar-mill—

"and to release marginal land for cropping."

Mr Kerin said that those pressures are as strong as ever.

If that is the problem, what is the answer? It is not just a problem to the landholder. The costs of soil erosion affect everybody. They are borne by everybody in the community in a multiplicity of ways, including higher prices for farm products and crops and a loss of export income. Soil erosion causes damage to different types of infrastructural development such as roads, bridges, railway lines, water storage facilities, water courses and harbours. Off-site pollution is a cost that the whole community must

bear. Recently, I was told that it would cost the rate-payers in Brisbane about three-quarters of a million dollars a year to cleanse the Darling Downs topsoil from their domestic drinking supply.

Mr FitzGerald: It doesn't come from the Darling Downs. How could the Darling Downs water come down to Brisbane?

Mr De LACY: If the whole community bears the cost, the whole community has a responsibility to tackle the problem.

Mr FitzGerald: You wouldn't know where the Downs water goes to.

Mr De LACY: I will take the honourable member's interjection. It is probably the topsoil from the Lockyer Valley that must be cleansed from Brisbane's domestic water supply.

Although the whole community must bear some of the responsibility, the State Government should give the lead. Former Federal Ministers for Primary Industry often stated that the Federal Government has no constitutional power or constitutional role in soil conservation. The Minister for Primary Industries, when presenting his Estimates a short time ago, said that he was disappointed with the Federal Government's attitude and with the amount of money that it made available for soil conservation in Queensland. He conveniently forgot to refer to the attitude of the former Federal Minister for Primary Industry.

It is up to the Queensland Government to give the lead. However, the record of the Queensland Government in relation to soil conservation is a disgrace. Compared with New South Wales, Queensland's soil conservation record is a national disgrace. The total land area of Queensland is approximately twice that of New South Wales. The total area of land that is dedicated to some form of agricultural activity is also twice as much in Queensland as it is in New South Wales. The Australian Agricultural Year Book states that Queensland has 1 571 000 sq. km of land under some form of agricultural activity compared with 651 000 sq. km in New South Wales.

Mr Simpson: So that's less on a percentage basis?

Mr De LACY: No, it is not. It is bigger in terms of percentage, and it is twice as big in absolute terms.

The figures that I am quoting were supplied by the State departments to the Standing Committee on Soil Conservation. Those statistics will be published shortly in the Australian Agricultural Year Book.

In 1983-84, New South Wales spent \$39,141,000 on soil conservation whereas Queensland spent \$6,253,000. Queensland spent less than one-sixth of the amount spent by New South Wales to protect an agricultural area twice the size of that in New South Wales. For the financial year 1983-84, New South Wales employed 1 024 permanent and temporary staff on soil conservation; Queensland employed 192.

Another study reveals that New South Wales spent two-thirds of the total funds spent on soil conservation in Australia in 1980-81. Of all funds expended in Australia on grants to land-holders for soil conservation purposes, New South Wales spent 84 per cent.

The Queensland Government appears to be vaguely aware of the problems of soil erosion. In 1981, an eight-member committee was established under the chairmanship of Mr Don Eather. The committee inquired into soil conservation and made recommendations. The report was published in 1983. Prior to the last election, the National Party made a campaign pledge to implement the recommendations of the Eather report fully. However, the report did not receive a mention in the Minister's speech today. In the recently published annual report of the Department of Primary Industries, it is admitted that the Government has reduced the program of soil conservation

works. The National Party Government has not implemented its campaign pledge. Because the problem is too hard to tackle, it has simply put it on the back-burner.

The insufficiency of resources and commitment to soil conservation manifests itself in a number of ways, one of which is manpower. The Government is making no impact on the soil conservation problem. In fact, it is slipping further behind. Research into development of techniques is lagging. Education to change community soil conservation values is not being implemented to the same extent as it is in other States. No planning has been undertaken. I could continue on that theme, but my time is running out.

Even the legislation is inadequate. The Government could declare erosion hazard areas, but the carrot used to entice people to carry out structural works—the \$1,500 grant—is insufficient. The legislative stick that the Government uses is not big enough. It is merely a paper tiger. As far as I know, no-one has ever been prosecuted under the legislation.

I turn to the action taken by the Commonwealth Government. In the 1970s, the Fraser Government commissioned an inquiry into soil conservation. The report, which was published in 1978, recommended a national soil conservation policy. Initially the Fraser Government intended to proceed with the scheme, but it was axed in May 1981 by the razor gang. All overtures since then have fallen on deaf ears.

The present Federal Government is reinstituting the national soil conservation program, and \$1m was allocated in the first year and \$4m has been allocated this year. The Federal Government has promised to increase it to \$20m by 1987. However, the Federal Government has stressed that such allocations are not intended to replace contributions made by States or land-holders. The funds are intended to be a catalyst to boost community awareness.

In conclusion, I say that soil conservation should not be used as a political football. It is the responsibility of all people to address themselves to the problem.

Time expired.

Mr FITZGERALD (Lockyer) (2.44 p.m.): I have pleasure in joining in the debate on the Estimates of the Department of Primary Industries. I thank the Minister for the way in which he administers his portfolio. At times, he encounters many difficult problems. I thank also the officers of the department who have fully co-operated with me for the way in which they perform their administrative tasks.

I pay a tribute to the DPI officers in my electorate with whom I am in contact regularly. As honourable members know, I have a farming background. Over the years, I have learned to respect the knowledge and ability of the local DPI officers. They are very dedicated men. The officers in the Gatton area are very conscientious, hard-working and dedicated.

As some honourable members have already mentioned, the Minister has to look after a number of rural industries that are suffering problems, not the least of which are the dairying and sugar industries, as well as the growing of vegetable crops such as potatoes. I know that nobody is sheeting home the blame to the Minister or his department. Farmers who are having a particularly difficult time making a living while losing the substantial assets that they have built up over the years are facing great problems. One crop that has suffered a noticeable downturn in prices is potatoes. Not very many people in this Assembly and in Queensland generally realise the current serious plight of potato-growers. That they are receiving prices far, far below the cost of production is not new.

I should outline to the Committee the importance not only of the crop to Queensland and Australia but also of the Lockyer Valley in the supply of potatoes to Australian housewives. The Gatton and Laidley shires, which are the centre of the potato industry in Queensland, have approximately 3 000 ha under crop, with an average production of approximately 57 000 to 60 000 tonnes per year. That is approximately 50 per cent of

the Queensland production. In fact, the Moreton region, which also takes in the potato-growing regions of Fassifern, Esk and Redlands, produces about 70 per cent of Queensland's potatoes.

Although Queensland produces approximately 17 to 20 per cent of Australia's potatoes, the bulk of the crop is produced between May and October when no fresh, new potatoes are dug in any of the southern States. I realise that southern States have supplies of potatoes at that time of the year, but their crops have been left in the ground during the winter months—where they store fairly well in the cooler climates—and are then dug. They certainly are not of the quality of Queensland's freshly dug, new potatoes, which have a slightly soft skin and which, with a dob of butter, are a real pleasure and delight to the real connoisseurs of potatoes.

The potato industry is vital to Queensland and is the major industry in the Lockyer Valley. I use the example that I have just stated as a warning to intending potato-growers in other areas of the State. The cost of growing potatoes is very high. Besides having suitable soil and growing conditions—that is water and climate—and a knowledge of how to grow the crop, it is also necessary to have a viable operation. All the things I have mentioned do not necessarily mean that a grower will have a viable crop. He also has to take his cost of production into consideration.

Because I know that the cane-growers in the sugar industry are suffering from a series of low prices and, naturally enough, are looking for an alternative crop, I warn them to consider the problems associated with growing potatoes seriously before they embark on potato production. I realise that many cane-growers have suitable soils and irrigation, are hard-working people and think that the production of large tonnages of potatoes will be a way out of their problems.

Attempts to grow a crop for such an extremely volatile market-price could mean financial disaster for most growers. Over the years the potato price fluctuations almost ensure that low prices will keep recurring. Unless a grower is equipped to cover those low-price periods, he will suffer financial disaster and possibly bankruptcy. I know of some good farmers in the Lockyer Valley who have put substantial amounts of money into their farms, grown three excellent crops of potatoes and marketed them, yet have had to walk off their properties virtually bankrupt.

Cane-growers should be wary of that. They need to find a much more stable crop to grow. The vegetable industry is labour-intensive, technically very demanding and suffers from price fluctuations. As well, it is susceptible to varying weather conditions. Therefore, cane-growers should be very wary of growing potatoes and other vegetable crops.

Current prices should be a deterrent to intending growers. At present in the Gatton area excellent quality potatoes can be purchased at roadside stalls for about \$4 for a 65-kg bag. In some paddocks along the Warrego Highway the crop is being ploughed under because it was not worth harvesting. Over the past couple of weeks sebago potatoes have been selling for about \$80 a tonne and sequoia potatoes for about \$60 a tonne. For some time the Pontiac variety—the pink-skinned variety—was selling for about \$200 a tonne, but the demand has fallen and the price is now just about in line with that paid for sebago potatoes.

An intending grower needs to take into account the cost of producing potatoes. The cost of harvesting is only part of the total cost. Seed has to be purchased and planted, fertiliser purchased, the crop has to be irrigated and it has to be harvested and sold. Those are the direct costs, and on top of them are the overheads.

This year certified seed potatoes from Victoria are costing between \$400 and \$500 a tonne. They have to be cut into pieces with at least one eye per set. Growers now use about two tonnes of seed a hectare so even though a seed potato is cut into pieces it costs about \$800 to plant a hectare of potatoes. Fertiliser costs about \$250 a hectare.

The bag in which the potatoes are marketed costs between 76c and 80c. It costs between \$1 and \$1.50 a bag for hand-picking. The workers who sew the bags also have to be paid. On top of that there is the cost of cartage, washing if that is necessary, and palletising. The total direct cost of growing potatoes is estimated at about \$1,600 a hectare, and that does not take into account the cost of overheads, management fees, repayments, bank interest or any of the myriad costs members know are associated with the growing of any crop. If a farmer is harvesting about 20 tonnes to the hectare and receives about \$60 to \$80 a tonne, he is not even getting his harvesting costs. Those who do cover their harvesting costs still receive nothing to cover any of their other costs.

The problem of price is not a new one. There has been an excellent season throughout Australia and crop yields have been good in all districts, and there has not been a disaster in any other growing area. That combination has meant that this year there is an over-supply of potatoes throughout Australia. Conditions can change fairly quickly. For example, if one crop fails and another succeeds, prices can change from month to month. A recent example of that was what happened in the tomato industry. It suffered disastrous prices for a number of months and then, within a couple of months, prices became very lucrative.

I have been told that the solution to the problem is to set up a board to control the marketing of potatoes, but I would not for one moment wish to inflict a potato marketing board on the Minister. Potatoes are a perishable crop that can be grown all over Australia, and I do not believe that there is any need for a marketing board to control a perishable crop whose yield potential suffers greatly from climatic conditions.

It is not an industry that can be controlled, so I take this opportunity to warn people in other industries, particularly the cane-growing industry, to be very wary before embarking on the growing of large crops of potatoes.

There is no doubt that they could grow large quantities of potatoes, but I am sure they would find that the growing of potatoes is a recipe for economic disaster. They should grow a much more stable crop. If they grow potatoes they will force extra product onto the market and they will not be in a position to cope with any downturn in the potato industry.

The money that is spent on promoting the potato industry should be spent more wisely. With the over-supply of potatoes at present, I doubt the effectiveness of the promotional schemes that are being undertaken. Potatoes are one of the healthiest foods on the market.

Mr Comben: They are full of starch.

Mr FITZGERALD: Potatoes do contain a fair amount of starch. However, I have been advised that a fresh potato contains the same quantity of fats as an equivalent-sized apple. Most people, including the member for Windsor, are under the false impression that potatoes are fattening. The potato itself is not fattening; it is the oil in which it is cooked that is fattening. I prefer a boiled potato or one that has been mashed. A boiled potato, fresh salad and a small amount of meat or cheese is a good diet.

Mr Littleproud: Are you supporting the potato industry because you grow potatoes or because of your origins?

Mr FITZGERALD: I have always supported the potato industry. At present, I am not growing potatoes. The potato industry is one of the most important industries in the Lockyer Valley.

In the short time at my disposal today, I wish to point out how concerned I am about the cut-backs in the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, particularly in those areas concerned with primary industries. I shall quote from a

document titled "Extracts from article on cutbacks in all CSIRO divisions, ex October edition of 'Co Research', the CSIRO monthly magazine". It states—

"A Co Research survey of Chiefs has shown staff positions, staff morale, research support and travel to be the main victims of the recent budget cut backs. The survey showed there will be very little recruitment of staff this financial year, and most Divisions will have to cut back research, be it high priority and/or industry supported or not. Many Chiefs said industry and university collaboration would suffer, as would efficiency, new initiatives and morale. Two-thirds of staff at Plant Industry have volunteered to take several days leave without pay to save four positions of the 19 due to become vacant this year. 'The response has been really wonderful and reminds me that C.S.I.R.O.'s greatest resource is its staff, their dedication and loyalty', Chief of the Division, Dr Jim Peacock said. Staff at the Centre for Irrigation Research are considering a similar strategy or the possibility of working nine-day fortnights following cuts which will affect research on: irrigation techniques to help overcome salinity problems; high crop yields combined with economic water use; methods of avoiding water pollution; and safe ways of re-using precious water resources.

The Division of Forest Research has also had to cut its bushfire suppression research, Project Aquarius. Research relevant to the Daintree rainforest cannot be expanded to meet the need, dieback research will cease and there will be less money for *Pinus radiata* research.

Environmental research will also suffer at Groundwater Research in Perth, where research on environmental effects of mining will cease."

I note that Opposition members are very quiet now. It continues—

"Both rural and high technology industries will suffer from cuts at Atmospheric Research: a severe cut of drought research will destroy the momentum of research built up over a period of years.

The Chief of the Division of Animal Health, Dr Alan Donald, said reductions would be extended to some industry supported project because it was proving impossible to maintain the appropriation funded side of the projects. Some of the areas being curtailed include vaccines against important animal diseases and efforts to find methods of preventing poisoning of grazing animals by plant and fungal toxins, both of which cause ill health and suffering in farm animals, as well as reducing their productivity. They have been forced to reduce research on the resistance of animal parasites to antiparasite drugs and studies aimed at selection of animals for resistance of parasites and diseases. 'Inevitably, the Division's contribution to alleviating animal disease in Australia is being weakened', Dr Donald said."

Mr Comben: All the money that should have gone there went into the sugar industry, which you asked for.

Mr FITZGERALD: The honourable member must be referring to the \$5.1m that has been put into the sugar industry. I will not waste any more of my time in answering interjections. I am amazed that the honourable member said that.

Today's "Queensland Country Life", in an article headed "Funding cuts will hobble CSIRO research efforts", reports—

"Cutbacks in research funding, totalling more than \$600,000, will cause a major strain on rural research projects.

The acting chief of the CSIRO division of tropical crops and pastures, Dr Ray Jones, said last week a decline in staff numbers caused by a reduced operating budget would inevitably lead to a scale-down in rural-oriented research."

Dr Jones made these comments when he was visiting Townsville.

The article goes on to say—

“This was because the reduction would mostly affect operating funds from which wages and salaries were drawn.

As a result all term appointments would be concluded in the first move to reduce expenditure.

And as other research positions became vacant, many would not be refilled.”

I know that the Lawes laboratory of the CSIRO, which is in my electorate, will be affected by the cuts. Although the staff will not be put off, staff that leave will not be replaced. It seems that the Lawes laboratory is being wound down. I know that senior staff have been moved to Brisbane, or are in the process of being moved to Brisbane.

The attitude of the Federal Government is shocking. It is supposed to be a Government that is interested in technology and the future of Australia.

Mr Davis: I have one question.

Mr FITZGERALD: Put the question; I will take it if I wish.

It is ridiculous that the Government should ignore research into primary and secondary industries that is so important for the future of Australia. I will read from an address given by the chairman of the CSIRO (Dr Paul Wild) to the Australian Manufacturing Council on Wednesday, 12 September 1984. He said—

“For me, last month's Budget was the last straw. In real terms CSIRO lost about \$9 million, or 3 per cent, in (operating) funds for continuing research.

No fatal slashes, but a succession of cuts which, if allowed to continue, will bleed us to death. And ultimately, it is the nation which suffers.”

I agree with what he said about those cuts.

Mr Comben: What has this to do with the Estimates?

Mr FITZGERALD: I am speaking about the Estimates.

Mr Comben: CSIRO has nothing to do with this place. It is controlled by a different Government.

Mr FITZGERALD: I am speaking about the interwoven responsibilities of Federal and State Governments with regard to primary industry expenditure. The Queensland Government is caught by having to pick up the tab for the Federal Government. My speech is in the hands of the Chair. Because the Federal Government has cut back its funds, the Queensland Minister for Primary Industries is faced with other problems.

I will read now from a media release issued by the CSIRO Centre for Irrigation Research. It says—

“Irrigation agriculture uses about 73% of all the water used in Australia and contributes to changes in water quality that have the potential to affect all Australians. This industry needs the research information to help solve pollution problems and to use water efficiently.”

That release is dated 12 September 1984.

The Minister for Primary Industries has done an excellent job. I know that his responsibilities are growing daily, particularly because the Federal Government has reneged on so many of its promises for the sugar industry. Admittedly, it has come forward now and fulfilled part of those promises. However, unless something is done, the nation will face the future without adequate research.

Mr CAMPBELL (Bundaberg) (3.5 p.m.): The honourable member for Lockyer mentioned two aspects on which I will comment. Firstly, it should be brought to the attention of honourable members that it is still the National Party's policy to support an Ord River sugar scheme. It is ridiculous that, when every dollar is needed for

Queensland's growers, the National Party supports nationally a scheme that will provide more sugar for the domestic market. The situation should be put into perspective. The market cannot tolerate any more Australian-produced sugar other than that which is produced in Queensland. It is very important to let the people of Queensland know what is happening.

The second aspect is research. It is important that research be conducted and continued for the benefit of all farmers.

There is one area in which it is acknowledged that research has been lacking. I refer to the facilities of the Department of Primary Industries in the Bundaberg region. The facilities are almost totally lacking. It was recognised by the Minister, when he visited Bundaberg with the Minister for Education (Mr Powell) and the Minister for Works and Housing (Mr Wharton), that those facilities are not satisfactory. It should be made known that the farmers in that region are innovative. They have been able to establish new industries, yet the department has not kept pace with those industries.

At present, nearly \$40m worth of horticultural crops are grown in the Bundaberg region, yet only two extension officers and two research officers are based there. What is worse, those inadequate facilities are provided for very dedicated people who deserve better.

It worries me that usually the decisions are made in Brisbane. The officers and resources should be located out in the work-place, where they can do the job for the farmers, instead of down in the south-east corner—the little golden triangle. That is being perpetuated by the centralist attitude of the present National Party.

Policies must be implemented that will put people back into the country. Research and better facilities will allow farmers to develop their land, remain profitable and create strong communities.

Bundaberg farmers are horticultural farmers, and they are leading the way in Australia in the adoption of new technology in farming methods. Basically, that is being done by the farmers and a few dedicated workers, with the help of agri-business. No facilities are provided. It is time that a reorganisation of the horticultural section of the Primary Industries Department was considered, not only in the Bundaberg region but also in south-east Queensland.

Research can be carried out better in Bundaberg than in Redlands, for two reasons: (1) because of the urban sprawl, the Redlands area is turning away from horticulture; and (2) Bundaberg provides a better environment, in which experiments and trials can be conducted over a longer period of the year. Those are two good reasons why there should be decentralisation of research into areas in which farming methods are being developed. For example, the regional leader of the horticultural section is at Maryborough, yet the majority of the crops are grown at Gayndah, in the Burnett, or at Bundaberg. Why keep the leader in Maryborough?

Departments should be dynamic and meet changing markets and development. I am sorry to say that that has not happened. The farmers are not being provided with reasonable facilities and services. Immediate action should be taken to improve, firstly, office facilities and, secondly, research facilities for the Bundaberg district.

The report of the Department of Primary Industries refers to fisheries highlights as follows—

“A study on the impact of estuarine beam trawling, upon both otter-trawl and recreational fisheries in the area adjacent to the Burnett River, was completed. It was shown that the capture of estuarine-distributed prawns resulted in a gross loss in dollar terms to the whole fishery. The beam-trawl fishery, by capturing juvenile fish, particularly bream and flathead, was shown to have the potential to affect recreational fisheries. Consequently, a recommendation was made that beam trawlers reduce their fishing effort.”

Research has been undertaken and a recommendation has been made to reduce the fishing effort of beam trawlers in the Burnett River. What policy decisions will be made to put that recommendation into effect? Now that the Government has that information, it should say what it will do with that recommendation. It is up to the Minister and his department to show the initiative and to take some action to ensure that proper policies are implemented. That would enable the recommendation to be carried out.

I turn now to the sugar industry. In the past few months I have tried to highlight the manipulation of Government funds through the Rural Reconstruction Board. Those funds have been manipulated to the detriment of all farmers, not only cane-farmers. The Minister for Primary Industries (Mr Turner) and the Deputy Premier and Minister Assisting the Treasurer (Mr Gunn) contradicted themselves when speaking about the loan of \$10m that was provided to the co-operative sugar-mills. The Minister for Primary Industries had to tell the truth. He said that the money was provided from the Rural Reconstruction Board. The Deputy Premier tried to deny that. It is important to know that that is where the money came from.

The Government tried to have two bites of the cherry. Firstly, it tried to say that it gave \$10m to the co-operative sugar-mills and that in the same year it gave another \$10m as extra funds for cane-growers. The Government did not say that it took \$10m out of Rural Reconstruction Board funds in 1982-83 to give \$10m to the cane-farmers. That was very manipulative accounting. It is a fraud. It does not do anything for the credibility of the Government when it says that it is helping the farmers of this State.

It is interesting to examine what happened in 1983-84. Appropriations of \$7.3m under the heading "Advances to Borrowers—Other" and \$20m for "Carry-on finance—sugar", making a total of \$27.3m, were made in 1983-84. Of that \$27.3m, only \$4.1m was provided for rural adjustment (non-sugar) and \$14.7m for carry-on finance to the sugar industry. Why was it that the total amount appropriated could not be lent? A total of \$27m was appropriated but only \$19m was provided.

Is insufficient staff employed by the Rural Reconstruction Board? If that is so, additional staff should be appointed immediately to ensure that the cane-farmers and other farmers who need that money are given that money. Or was it another manipulation of funds? Is it a fact that the Government said that it would spend the money but, instead, put it away in short-term deposits to receive interest and supposedly balance the Budget? To balance the Budget, the Government has been manipulating the funds that are supposed to be available to farmers.

There has been a worse manipulation of funds in the Rural Reconstruction Board. According to the 1982-83 report, for the first time in the history of the Rural Reconstruction Board money was taken out and credited to consolidated revenue. That was done in 1983 so that money could be taken from the farmers and given to the co-operative sugar-millers. That practice has continued. In 1983-84, \$3.2m was taken out of the Rural Adjustment Fund.

An amount additional to the normal repayments made to the State and Commonwealth has been taken out. Since 1982-83, it has appeared as a special, new expenditure classification in the Rural Adjustments Fund and the Rural Reconstruction Fund—"credited to Consolidated Revenue Fund". The money is supposed to be for farmers and cane-growers, yet, since 1982-83, this Government has taken out of the Rural Reconstruction Board amounts additional to repayments normally made to the State and Commonwealth Governments.

How honest is the Government when it says to the Commonwealth, "We need extra money. We will make special allowances and provide special funds to the cane-farmers."? Last year, the Government stated that it would provide another \$5m. Why did this Government say that it would make another \$5m available out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund when it subsequently returned \$3.2m to that fund? That is a fallacy, and the Government should face up to that fact.

Although \$5m was contributed—and was the subject of an announcement about how much the Government is doing for cane-farmers—subsequently \$3.2m was taken out of the same fund. The Government is not doing the right thing by the cane-farmers or other farmers.

Money has been taken from the farmers by the Government, only to be given back to them, so that the Government can show how good it is. It then sits back and lauds its own efforts. The Government should stop saying how good it is and talk about what can be done for the sugar industry. What has the Government done for the sugar industry? Between October 1982 and May 1984—nothing!

The Government cannot say what it has done to assist the committee of inquiry. There is utter silence from the Government. Nothing was done. If hard decisions had been made two years ago, cane-farmers and members of the Sugar Wives Action Group in Bundaberg would not be in the situation they are in today. The Government cannot simply say, "We are doing this and we are doing that."

The manipulation of funds provided by the Rural Reconstruction Board is basically fraud. The Government gives the cane-growers \$5m as additional funds and then takes an amount back.

For payments above the normal repayments to the State and Commonwealth Governments, \$8.3m has been taken out of the Rural Reconstruction Fund. What is wrong with the Rural Reconstruction Board? Money is needed for farmers, yet it cannot be provided. As at 1 July 1983, the relevant balances pertaining to the Rural Reconstruction Board were: Rural Adjustment Fund, \$7m, and Rural Reconstruction Fund, \$8.4m. A year later, when so much money was needed by farmers, the balances were: Rural Adjustment Fund, \$16.9m, and Rural Reconstruction Fund, \$13.2m.

The Government should be fair dinkum. If the growers and the farmers require money, why was it not made available as loans? Why is it that a tight grasp has to be kept on the funds? Why was it necessary to increase the balances from \$15m to over \$30m? The balances doubled in one year when money ought to have been made available to farmers. It should be pointed out that the manipulation of funds has not been to the benefit of growers. The fund is being used as a political football.

Mr Randell: That is not right.

Mr CAMPBELL: The member for Mirani says that is not right. He is so knowledgeable about the sugar industry that he uses statistics that are two years out of date. Last week in the Parliament he said there were 7 000 cane-growers in Queensland. I inform him that the number has decreased to 6 077. That is the official figure from the Queensland Cane Growers Council. The honourable member uses figures that are two years old, so what does he hope to do for the sugar industry?

Mr Randell: You know that I said "approximately"

Mr CAMPBELL: Approximately! The honourable member is only 1 000 out in 7 000.

If this Assembly wants to help the sugar industry, it should do it properly. I do not wish to make great noises about the political aspects of what should or should not be done for the sugar industry, but it is about time some decisions were made.

Mr Davis: They have played politics with it.

Mr CAMPBELL: I know that. The trouble is that the Government is upsetting not only the cane-farmers but all the other farmers of Queensland because it is not doing anything for them.

The basic problems of restructuring have to be faced. The Government came up with the idea of having an underwriting scheme. Although it has \$30m in the Rural

Reconstruction Fund, it says that it does not have the money and that it wants the Federal Government to give assistance. The Government has said that, as it wants to help the small cane-growers, an underwriting scheme should be established. I will tell honourable members opposite that an underwriting scheme would not help. Any underwriting scheme designed to help the No. 1 pool price would give more money to the Bundaberg Sugar Co Ltd than to the 250 smallest cane-farmers in the Bundaberg area. If the Government really wants to help cane-farmers, it should not pick schemes out of the air, but come up with good policies that will help the people that it claims it wants to help.

Mr Randell: What about the long-term, low-interest loans?

Mr CAMPBELL: That additional money is being provided. I agree with the provision of long-term, low-interest loans.

Mr Randell: If all the money was given to cane-growers, there would be none left for other rural industries such as dairying and cattle.

Mr CAMPBELL: The member for Mirani says that all the money cannot be given to cane-growers, that other primary producers might also need some. If that is so, why did not the Government leave in the Rural Adjustment Fund the \$3.2m that it credited to the Consolidated Revenue Fund? If primary producers other than cane-growers needed money, why, out of the \$7.3m that was appropriated for last financial year, was only \$4.1m allocated? Although the money was appropriated, it was not spent. Why is it that, if that money was required by farmers, the Government has allowed the balance in the Rural Reconstruction Fund to double from \$15m to \$30m in one year? I say that the money that is in the fund should be used instead of the Government blaming other Governments and everybody else for what is not being done.

Mr Randell: The Government has the runs on the board. It has already put money into the sugar industry.

Mr CAMPBELL: The only runs that members of the Government have on the board are that they sat back in this Assembly and allowed the money of cane-growers to be illegally taken from them and then tried to validate that action. That happened in 1982, and the member for Mulgrave said that it was illegal and that the money had been taken out of cane-growers' pockets.

I wish to recap on three things. Firstly, the facilities for the staff of the Department of Primary Industries in Bundaberg are shocking and should be replaced at the earliest opportunity. There is an urgent need to provide the dedicated staff of that department with adequate facilities so they can do their jobs properly. Secondly, I hope that the recommendations of the Burnett River beam-trawling report are carried out. Thirdly, the Government should be honest about the funds of the Rural Reconstruction Board. They should be released to cane-farmers and all other farmers in Queensland.

Mr SIMPSON (Cooroora) (3.25 p.m.): I support the Minister in the presentation of his Estimates and congratulate him and his department on the work they are doing. It is to be regretted that the department responsible for this State's most important industries has had to adopt a policy of zero staff growth this year. Primary industries are vitally important to the starving peoples of the world.

Unfortunately, some nations have adopted a food-marketing policy that does nothing to help the stability of food distribution throughout the world. I instance the intervention in the marketing of sugar, dairy products and other products practised by the European Economic Community, and the effect that that has had on the stability of efficient industries in other parts of the world. The community dumps its surpluses in such a way as to destabilise the efficient long-term production of food in many parts of the world.

Although this nation is fortunate in having a number of areas that receive high rainfall, it faces the problem that some areas have extremely fertile soil while others have virtually no fertile soil. That means that in a number of instances farmers are unable to diversify, and thus their returns are affected.

If the starving people of the world are to be fed, not only an efficient system of production but also an efficient system of distribution is needed. A number of Commonwealth marketing programs have been in existence for some time. Although they are not supported by everyone in the community, they ensure stability of supply and play a very important role in making food available at the lowest possible price.

A lot has already been said in this and other debates about soil conservation. Opposition members have said that the department's performance in relation to soil conservation is shocking. They virtually blame this Government for soil erosion in this State.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr SIMPSON: They are still saying the same thing.

Erosion is caused by the exposure of soil to wind and weather. Farmers are greatly concerned about erosion. Departmental extension officers have been available to assist, and to bring to the attention of farmers, and even to members of the Opposition, the problem of soil erosion.

Mr Comben: Why isn't the Eather report being implemented?

Mr SIMPSON: It is.

Mr Comben: Where?

Mr SIMPSON: Its implementation is limited by the Government's financial capacity. This Government has a different philosophy from that espoused by other State Governments and members opposite——

Mr Vaughan: We saw that yesterday.

Mr SIMPSON: That is right. The Opposition would introduce draconian laws to nationalise Queensland farms——

Mr Davis interjected.

Mr SIMPSON: Opposition members cannot run away from that. They have said already that they would acquire farms and lay down what would be produced, how much would be produced and where it would be produced. Labor is locked into that philosophy, but we on this side of the Committee believe in private enterprise. I realise that a few members opposite are urban cowboys who believe they know something about agriculture, but they know very little indeed. We on this side believe in a philosophy of encouraging the primary producer to plan and design the use of his resources to ensure that there is minimum soil erosion on his property.

A comparison has been made of the amount of money that the Queensland and New South Wales Governments spend on combating soil erosion problems. The New South Wales Government picks out a few isolated properties and spends millions of dollars on them. In Queensland, the primary producers use their own resources to combat soil erosion problems. To get a true figure of the amount of money spent on combating soil erosion problems in Queensland, I multiply the figure that has been mentioned by a factor of 10. That would probably give a conservative estimate of the amount of money spent on combating soil erosion problems in Queensland. Under our incentive system, primary producers use their own resources to combat soil erosion problems.

Reference was made to the Eather report. If Opposition members had bothered to read the report——

Mr Comben: You had better be careful. I have read it.

Mr SIMPSON: That is an improvement. The honourable member says that he has read the report. He should know then that the difficulty in implementing that self-help scheme in Queensland arose because of drought and the liquidity problems facing primary producers, and he would agree that primary producers in this State are doing an excellent job in utilising their own resources to combat soil erosion problems.

The Government, not the Opposition, has highlighted those problems and is doing something to overcome them. At present, primary producers have limited resources, so, understandably, they are seeking assistance.

We have heard nothing but attacks on primary producers and their liquidity problems. Because of the taxation system, their incentive to produce has been reduced. Attacks have also been made on the efficiency and philosophy of primary producers. The liquidity problems of primary producers have reduced their capacity to overcome soil erosion problems.

The figures from the Bureau of Statistics indicate that average returns to primary producers are falling while wages are being artificially propped up. The nation does not have the ability to maintain the present level of wages.

I know that primary producers have said that soil erosion is a national problem. The previous Opposition speaker and the one before him referred to that. The Federal Government is making a contribution to combat soil erosion problems and primary producers are thankful for that. It has increased its allocation to \$6m, and I commend it for that. That will help primary producers as long as the money is not spent on employing more staff in the departments. In time, we will see how much of that money gets through to primary producers. Assistance has to be provided to primary producers to help them overcome their liquidity problems.

Mr Comben: Your mates want another hand-out.

Mr SIMPSON: No. The Opposition wants to reduce the home consumption price of products to the point where primary producers receive almost nothing for their products. If primary producers were to receive twice as much for their products, they would be able to deal with soil conservation problems. They know the problems more than any Opposition member.

Because of topography, high rainfall and, to a lesser extent, wind erosion, Queensland will always face great soil erosion problems. Australians are learning more and more from other countries about dust bowl effects, the use of different tillage implements and greater trash utilisation. The member for Warwick spoke about chemical cultivation and zero tillage and those methods are being used by primary producers today.

Queensland is doing a good job in soil conservation and utilises its resources far better than any other State. Some Opposition members who have read the annual report will agree with me. Other Opposition members just go on rhetoric.

A need exists for research into practical solutions to stem the loss of productivity in the beef industry because of ticks. This scourge, which was introduced into Australia years ago, has only been offset in part by exotic breeds. I live in the hope that a way will be found to overcome the problem.

A relatively new industry in Queensland is deer-farming. Rusa deer are quite resistant to ticks. I hope that more of these deer can be taken from Prince of Wales Island and farmed. I know that the Minister is considering research into the industry so that the chances of its becoming a viable industry will be increased.

People tend to think that goats will survive in bad country. However, a farmer must feed the goats properly or he will not get productivity in wool, meat or milk. That applies even more so to deer-farming. Because the cost of fencing is great, high economic return can only be achieved by placing deer on good grazing land.

Horticulture is carried on in my electorate. The region is often considered to be the salad bowl of the State. A good example is the Sunshine Plantation, which is often referred to as The Big Pineapple. It carries out an excellent PR exercise. City-dwellers learn a lot from that establishment. Most people in Australia are city-dwellers but, fortunately, that is not the case in Queensland.

Mr Davis interjected.

Mr SIMPSON: It is Lanray Industries.

Mr Comben: Is that one of your companies?

Mr SIMPSON: No, I have no interest in it directly, although I was instrumental in the original design and concept of the venture.

Mr Comben: That is why it is so foolish.

Mr SIMPSON: I do not mind the honourable member's comment. The Taylor family have conducted the venture very well.

I am pleased that that kind of agricultural promotion also results in a greater understanding. I do not think that this nation can continue to be great unless it understands fully the worth and importance of primary production. Other countries support their primary industries because they understand them.

Mr Comben: Are you saying that this Government doesn't support primary industry? That is what you have said.

Mr SIMPSON: I am talking about the Federal Government's import tariffs. Is the honourable member listening?

Mr Comben: Yes.

Mr SIMPSON: I am saying that the Federal Government's import tariffs are making it very difficult for primary producers to compete.

Primary producers have large capital investments and, of course, the Labor Party has a capital gains tax that it is just waiting to bring out of the top drawer. I have never heard such utter garbage as the comments by Labor Party members that a capital gains tax has never been considered but that if one is imposed it will not apply to the homes of Australians.

A Government Member interjected.

Mr SIMPSON: That is right. The Federal Government knows that if the people of Australia were to be so foolish as to return it to power on 1 December—

Mr Comben: They will.

Mr SIMPSON: They will not. The people to whom I talk certainly will not vote for Hawke.

The Maroochy Horticultural Research Station at Nambour, which is in my electorate, is a wonderful example of the good work that can be achieved in horticulture. Diversity into new crops is ongoing, and the research has hardly scratched the surface in terms of what can be achieved.

One of my regrets is that I cannot be both in Parliament and at the same time outside following my interest in horticulture. New technology is being introduced into tissue culture and other areas, and that technology should be pursued.

My area experiences some problems in the spraying of groundsel with 2,4-D. A number of horticultural crops are susceptible to 2,4-D and experiments are being conducted into the use of larger droplets. I believe that is the way to go. Some people, however, are still using other methods to control groundsel, such as insects. As I say, research is continuing.

I am concerned at the importation of citrus products from Mexico and Brazil. Queensland has the capacity to increase its citrus production, and we should try to cut down on the number of imports of citrus and other agricultural products.

Whilst I am on the subject of fruit, I suggest that the Parliamentary Refreshment Rooms should be used as a means of promoting to people in Queensland and Australia, and also to overseas visitors, the vast range of crustaceans, fish, fruit and vegetables that are available. Of course, they should be prepared and presented so that they are shown off to best advantage.

I turn now to the Nile perch project. Honourable members are aware of my interest in the project and the need to complete it as soon as possible. I urge the Minister to ensure that the project is delayed no longer. I hope that no frosts occur at Walkamin and that the project goes ahead, as I am sure it will, to the benefit of this State. It could also become a tourist attraction.

It is apparent that in the past aquaculture has not proved to be a sound economic proposition. Perhaps it will prove to be so in the future, particularly if it is used to produce fish of a smaller size than is provided for by the regulations. I hope that special limits can be set for fish bred in captivity. Perhaps suitable species of fish could be introduced from Western Australia and bred here.

Finally, I am pleased to support the Minister in the presentation of his Estimates. I am also pleased to support his endeavours in primary industries, which are of paramount importance to Australia. I regret that the ALP does not support our primary industries. That is a shame because in the Federal sphere, until 1 December, the ALP controls this nation's coffers. Of course, the Queensland Government totally supports agriculture.

Hon. N. E. LEE (Yeronga) (3.46 p.m.): I congratulate the Honourable Neil Turner on the way in which he has handled a most difficult portfolio. It is not possible to satisfy everybody in such a diversified portfolio. I thank the officers of the Department of Primary Industries for the excellent job that they have done. Whenever I have made inquiries, they have been of great assistance to me.

Mr Comben interjected.

Mr LEE: I have more interest in primary industries than the honourable member would realise. I would send more cattle to the abattoirs each week than any other member in this Parliament. The honourable member should keep quiet and listen for a while; he might learn something. Because I am a member of the Liberal Party does not mean that I should not diversify my interests into country areas.

Mr Comben: I thought that you represented Yeronga.

Mr LEE: I do. I represent Yeronga very well. For 20-odd years the people in my electorate have condemned the ALP Opposition. They will do that for another 20 years. The people who live in the electorate of Yeronga are sensible people. They will vote for the antisocialists for evermore.

I do not intend to answer any more interjections, because I do not have a great deal of time. However, I would be remiss if I did not place on record the DPI's assistance in obtaining a futures delivery centre in Queensland. That system arrived a little late for me personally. Although I had a number of futures contracts on hand, I could not make delivery. Nevertheless, had it not been for the officers of the Department of Primary Industries and the Minister, that futures delivery centre may never have come to Queensland. I assure honourable members that it should have arrived many months

before it did. A lot of unnecessary wrangling and arguing took place with the Sydney Futures Exchange because it did not want to put the centre in an area that was not tick-free.

I suggested, many other members suggested and the DPI suggested that it should go to Dalby. Because it was regarded as a tick area on the "K" line, the Sydney Futures Exchange would not entertain the suggestion that the futures delivery centre should go to Dalby. After many months of wrangling, it went to Miles. It was accepted there. It suited me, my son and my family properties. Miles is a far better location than Dalby. Nevertheless, the argument put forward by the Sydney Futures Exchange was that Dalby was not in a tick-free area. I am at a total loss to understand why, over the last few months, the centre has been shifted from Miles to Brisbane where there are millions of ticks. I cannot understand the reasoning of the Sydney Futures Exchange. For many months it argued that the centre could not be located in an area that was not tick-free. However, it is now located in Brisbane.

Toowoomba would have been a far better location if the centre had to be located in a tick-free area. Toowoomba is more central to lot-feeders and the producers of cattle in the west. The argument is that because the present cattle prices are so good, not many deliveries were made. The stage will be reached at which the delivery centres will be used again. It will take only a small drought for that to happen.

I am pleased that the former Minister for Primary Industries (Mike Ahern) has entered the Chamber. He had a great deal to do with the establishment of futures centres in Queensland. I thank him personally for the great assistance that he provided in the battle to get a centre established in Queensland.

During the drought, many people were forced to feed grain to cattle. The result was that the purple brand was being abused. Certainly, the cattle had had the allotted time on grain—90 or 70 days—but they did not have the required quantity. Instead, cattle were being fed a drought ration of approximately 1 kg a day. When the drought broke and those cattle were brought down for slaughtering, demands were made for the meat to be branded with the purple mark. Of course, the quality was not as good as it would have been had the cattle been totally grain fed.

The Australian Lot Feeders Association had to act. The aim of the association is to maintain top quality beef, with no variation. The association changed the rules to stipulate that lot-fed cattle had to have 7 mm of fat at the sacral crest. For the information of the honourable member for Brisbane Central—I know he does not understand that—the sacral crest is on the rump of the beast. The subject is above his head. I knew he did not understand it. He thought that, when I used the term "sacral", I was referring to something religious.

It became almost impossible to meet the criterion of 7 mm of fat on yearling beasts—or, for that matter, beasts which have milk teeth.

Mr De Lacy interjected.

Mr LEE: The member for Cairns had better not say too much. He ought to stick to what he knows. He is way out.

Mr Burns: How much did you lose on this deal?

Mr LEE: I lost enough.

Mr Burns: You have to be careful here. It is a matter of pecuniary interests.

Mr LEE: No. If an arrangement suits me, the arrangement will suit everybody in Queensland. I never make special representations for myself.

It is my duty to place on record the good work that has been done by officers of the Department of Primary Industries.

Mr Burns interjected.

Mr LEE: The honourable member would like me to name a figure. My losses would not be as much as he loses every week at the races. Book-makers have told me about the large amount that he bets every week. I certainly would not have lost as much as that.

The 7 mm of fat required by the rule is almost impossible to achieve. Previously, 15 per cent of cattle, particularly yearling cattle or cattle with milk teeth, could not meet the criterion. However, the meat was satisfactory for the local trade. Butchers and tradespeople wanted it.

The standard of 7 mm of rump fat has prevented most cattle from passing the test. On many occasions when beasts are being skinned at the abattoirs—and I do not blame the people who undertake that task—the hide of the beast may be pulled too hard, with the result that a couple of millimetres of fat is pulled off. The measurement has to be taken at a specific point. With the loss of the 2 mm, the cattle do not pass the test.

Mr Davis: Are any of your cattle lot fed?

Mr LEE: The honourable member for Brisbane Central has to be joking. Of course they are!

It would be remiss of me not to congratulate members of the Livestock & Meat Authority of Queensland, the Australian Lot Feeders Association and officers of the Department of Primary Industries. I particularly thank Bill Meynink, Bunny Burrows and the secretary, Blair Given. In my opinion, those gentlemen have done a marvellous job.

When this matter was brought to their notice, within a matter of weeks, with the assistance of officers of the DPI and the Australian Lot Feeders Association, the rule was changed. They could see the folly of that unfair, unjust rule, so at the very first meeting after this was brought to their attention by officers of the DPI, my son Trevor and me, the rule was changed.

People are very ready to condemn departmental officers for not moving quickly. They are also quite happy to condemn the Livestock & Meat Authority of Queensland. I point out that the people concerned, who are spread throughout Queensland, quickly got together and took appropriate action.

I said that I would not speak at length, although I could say much more. I congratulate the new owners on reopening the Roma abattoir. I am sure that the member for Roma (Russell Cooper) will have something to say about that. It is not for me to wander into his territory, which he looks after very well.

Mr EATON (Mourilyan) (3.57 p.m.): In my opinion, Primary Industries is the most important portfolio in the Government. Because of the wide field that the Department of Primary Industries covers, I have thought for many years that the ministry requires an assistant, junior Minister.

I agree wholeheartedly with most of the sentiments expressed by Government members and endorse most of the proposals they have put forward in the debate. Perhaps politics should be kept out of this debate and honourable members should try to make a contribution for the benefit of those involved in primary industries, that is, the producers, who usually are the last to receive any benefit. Any benefit that is gained by a primary industry comes only after many years of toil and hard work, and sometimes only after years and years of submissions or requests. Honourable members should take that into consideration and ensure that any criticism they offer is constructive and that any resultant benefits go to the man on the land.

As I said, with only one exception I agree wholeheartedly with the contributions of Government members. As a Labor Party Opposition, members on this side of the

Chamber are accused of not being interested in the man on the land. History shows that the State and the nation were developed by primary industries. In fact, there was the old saying, "Australia rides on the sheep's back." Only since the advent of major industrialisation and million-dollar coal projects has that saying ceased to hold true. Developers went overboard and spent large amounts of money on big industrial developments, and now the State is suffering economic problems through neglect of its primary industries.

I see that the Minister has returned to the Chamber. When I said that the Ministry should have an assistant, junior Minister, I was not implying any incompetence on the part of the Minister or the department. The Department of Primary Industries has to administer only slightly fewer sections than the Justice Department, and honourable members know what a wide field that department administers. The appointment of an assistant, junior Minister would give the Minister more time to get out and about the State. I know that the Minister would like to do that, but he is tied up in Brisbane and has to make a great number of hurried decisions. On many occasions, the Minister does not wish to make hurried decisions. He prefers to make correct decisions slowly. That is one of the reasons why I have always believed that the portfolios of Justice and Primary Industries should have an assistant, junior Minister who could take certain responsibilities. The Minister for Primary Industries would then have more time to travel the State and become more involved in policy-making decisions that have an overall effect on the major primary industries.

The State is about to pay the penalty for giving more attention to the industrial revolution of the past few years than to primary industries. Not only is it facing problems in the market-place for primary industries; it is facing even bigger economic problems in the market-place of the big, industrialised industries such as coal and other minerals.

Australia will have to revert to the old-fashioned way of developing the nation, with the family unit on the land growing a variety of products. That would also create employment. It is industrialisation that has caused unemployment, and that has had a back-lash effect on the community. After all, when a farmer makes money he spends it in his local community, from big business right down to the corner store. A great many businesses have prospered with the success of primary industries.

The promotion of research into primary industries is a pet subject of mine. I have always been a great believer in research. It should be remembered that many early inventions such as the combine harvester, which was invented in New South Wales, are still in use today. But, because of Government apathy and lack of interest, private enterprise has been starved of funds for research to the extent that Australians are now paying royalties on their own inventions, which are now being imported. That is why I am a great believer in research not only into new machinery but into all aspects of primary production.

The department has done a very good job in establishing research stations throughout the State. Page 45 of the department's annual report contains a map showing the location of each research station. In north Queensland every primary producer, from the cane-farmer to the beef-producer, is dependent on advice from research officers. A great many farmers even ask research officers to go to their properties to deal with problems, and that must add to departmental costs. More money should be provided for research purposes. I am disappointed that the Federal Government cut research funds in its latest Budget. For years I have been keenly promoting research not only in primary industries but also in every other industry in which I have been involved. There is always room for more research, and in years to come I hope that this Government sees its way clear to provide more funds for research.

Primary industry research covers a wide field, but I will have time to cover only part of it. I will deal first with the fishing industry in north Queensland. I know that the Minister is keenly interested in the introduction of Nile perch. Like the majority of

people in north Queensland, I am in favour of it, but a few people have expressed concern that because it is carnivorous——

Mr Turner: It will be fully evaluated before it is released.

Mr EATON: I believe so. I hope that more information will be made available to those people who have expressed concern. The people to whom I have spoken in the DPI and others involved in the fishing industry seem to favour its importation.

Private enterprise research is also being undertaken in north Queensland, and perhaps there could be an exchange of views between departmental officers and the private enterprise people. Most of them seem to be on pretty good speaking terms and the department and private industry could perhaps work together. I know that in certain cases departmental officers would not be allowed to discuss secret early research for fear of early results being proved wrong. There is a great opportunity for the department to become more closely involved in the experiments being conducted into the breeding of barramundi and their release into streams. I have already mentioned that establishments in north Queensland are conducting research into fresh-water prawns, and that other establishments are conducting research into oyster leases.

It is vital that industries be attracted to north Queensland, but there is no market like a local market, and the best way to improve the local market is to bring more people to Queensland.

A lot of research is being carried out in the tobacco industry. Smoking is a contentious issue. Both Federal and State Governments are receiving quite a bit of flak from the people conducting the anti-smoking campaign. However, tobacco is with us and we, as members of Parliament, have to ensure that the best interests of that industry are served. I believe that smoking in moderation will not harm anybody, and we cannot be responsible for people who abuse smoking. If we are guilty of that, we have to pay the penalty.

Whilst I am on research, I wish to refer to the research being carried out in the banana industry. In north Queensland there is a lot of concern about Black Sigatoga, a disease found in the Torres Strait. Banana-growers are worried that the disease will move down the coast. I am a little disappointed that the State Government has not been able to do a little more research into this problem. I have already raised the matter with the Federal Government to see whether it can do something. I agree that it would be a very costly exercise. At present, nobody is sure how long the disease will remain in the ground. More money should be made available for research into the disease. Because of the time factor, it is difficult to expedite research.

The banana industry in my electorate and in adjacent electorates in north Queensland is worth millions of dollars. Tully, Innisfail, Mission Beach, Bingil Bay and other towns in north Queensland have small communities, but they are surviving because of the success of the banana industry.

Banana-growers are also concerned about the fact that, because of a reasonably quick return, other people who have vacant land may swing over to the growing of bananas. With good land and good management, people can expect a return within 12 months of their initial capital outlay. People moving into a new industry have to consider how long it will take to get a return after outlaying their capital expenditure. As I say, with good management, people can get a return from bananas within 12 months. From about 18 months onwards, they can expect almost full cropping.

Banana-growers are concerned that, because of the economic situation, cane-farmers and others are looking at growing bananas. That could create problems in addition to the problems created by the introduction of Black Sigatoga. Once that disease gets established in an area, there is no way in which it will be eradicated. The land in my area is so densely cultivated for bananas that if the disease got into one property there is no way in which it could be prevented from getting into other properties. That is causing a lot of worry to the people in the north.

In previous debates I have referred to the sugar industry. Recently, we were pleased to learn that the Federal Minister for Primary Industry will provide some money to the industry. He has stated specifically that he wants to introduce a stabilisation scheme in the industry. That matter will be the subject of argument for a long time.

Unless the sugar industry in another country experiences hardship, not a great deal can be done to help our sugar industry. However, we do not want to see the downfall of the sugar industry in one country to help the industry in another country. I hope that common sense will prevail and that a solution will be found to the problems facing the sugar industry.

When Mr Neville Wran first came to power in New South Wales, people in the dairy industry in that State were concerned about what would happen. They started to march through the streets of Sydney. There were problems with quotas and other matters. I have forgotten the name of the new Minister responsible for the dairy industry, but he was sent into the dairy areas to speak to the farmers to try to stop them from attacking the Government. A solution was found to the problems with quotas and entitlements.

Unless something is done shortly, a similar situation could develop in Queensland. I know that the legislation has been put through the Federal Parliament and it needs only to be proclaimed by the Minister for Primary Industry. He has threatened to proclaim it, should the occasion arise in which it provides the only solution. It is an Australia-wide problem.

The Queensland Government has imposed restrictions and closed the industry. However, under certain circumstances, it can grant a licence to produce milk in a particular area. That provision is not intended to be used for expansion. It can only be imposed when the Minister sees fit, and he has the prerogative to grant a milk licence. I foresee problems in the dairy industry that will be of as much concern as the present plight of the sugar industry.

The Agricultural Bank should be expanded. It was set up many years ago to help the man on the land and has been handicapped by Government policy in recent years and by the coercion on the Government by the private commercial banks. Those banks have taken over a number of the responsibilities of the Agricultural Bank. They wanted to fund projects, and one that comes to mind that involved a large amount of money was the brigalow scheme, which was costly to develop.

The commercial banks were aware that if the Government expanded the Agricultural Bank, it would become bigger and stronger. As a result, they did a deal with the Government to develop those schemes under the old system of opening up land for development if the Government made the money available for those blocks. I am going back to the days of the pound. The Government surveyors would work out that, if a dairy farm was to be developed, £3,000 would be needed to fully establish it, and if a corn farm was to be developed, £2,000 would be needed. That money was made available before the block was balloted for. The person who won the block of land could move in and start work straight away.

The commercial banks sought to downgrade the Agricultural Bank so that it could not rise in competition against them. The Agricultural Bank has served a great purpose over the years and many successful primary producers today, whether they be graziers or dairy-farmers, got their start through the Agricultural Bank. Although times have changed, the principles and fundamentals of the Agricultural Bank and the purposes for which it was instituted are valid today. It has put many people where they are today. Many successful businessmen, who may have moved on to other fields, started in primary industry and have launched themselves into bigger projects.

On occasions, the Government has had to borrow money from other sources for projects financed through the Agricultural Bank. The Government borrowed money at

an interest rate that was 1 per cent or 2 per cent higher than the fixed rate at which the Agricultural Bank would lend. The Government therefore made a loss.

If the Minister for Primary Industries or his officers have the chance, they should go to Western Australia and look at the operations of the Rural Industries Bank. Its function is similar to that of the Agricultural Bank in Queensland. However, industries other than primary industries can use the bank for development in rural communities. It does not lend necessarily for a rural industry. I think that, in Queensland, primary industries and other industries could be tied together in a similar way. I am in favour of a State bank and I think that this would be a good stepping-stone.

I turn my attention now to deer-farming. The Minister has said that it is a growth industry. I agree with him and I think that it will be good for Queensland. I have spoken about this with officers from the National Parks and Wildlife Service when it controlled this industry. I have received many inquiries from people interested in deer-farming. In one case, the people were ready for over 12 months to start a deer farm and they received many excuses from the relevant department, which was then the National Parks and Wildlife Service. That function has now been transferred to the Primary Industries portfolio.

Mr Turner: It has not been handed over yet.

Mr EATON: I sincerely hope that it will be handed over in the near future. Certain national parks officers expressed the fear that deer would escape and become a nuisance. I have explained to those officers that at present it is illegal to shoot deer. Every now and again someone is apprehended for shooting a deer. People who wish to start deer-farming have the money and they are prepared to spend it.

There is a market for deer. Most industries face marketing problems. However, I cannot imagine that the deer-farming industry will experience problems. A market has been established for deer, and I cannot see that the market will be flooded.

The speaker who will follow me, the honourable member for Gympie, is well versed in this matter. I have had contact with certain people in his area who have reported that they went to him for help. I believe that, through the Deer Association, he helped a constituent of mine who wishes to start a deer farm. The expenditure of money on a new industry helps that industry to become viable and ensures that people engaged in the industry will not be thrown onto the dole. People who are engaged in deer-farming will be assured not only of a monetary return but also of pleasure from their venture.

Mr STEPHAN (Gympie) (4.16 p.m.): I have pleasure in supporting the Minister in the presentation of his Estimates. He has a very large and important portfolio. I suppose that I should not compare it with other portfolios, but these days a great deal is made of the value of mining and mineral production to the State. I do not argue to the contrary, but I do not believe that mineral production has reached the heights of primary production.

Last year, for example, the total value of mineral production in Queensland was \$2,300m. The value of rural production during the same period reached \$3,100m. In other words, the value of rural production was 31 per cent higher than that of mineral production. However, we should not get carried away with those figures, because in some industries the results were not as good. Three of those industries happen to be sugar, dairying and horticulture. Last year, the value of sugar production represented 15 per cent of the total value of all primary production in Queensland. Previously, it represented 20 per cent of the value of total primary production. The value of horticulture dropped from 11 per cent of the total value to 10 per cent, and the value of dairying decreased from 5 per cent of the total value to 4.8 per cent. Those three industries give cause for concern. It must be remembered that they are carried on over a very wide area of the coastal belt of Queensland, which means that many people are adversely affected by those reductions in value.

On the other hand, the value of livestock slaughterings has increased from 1982-83 to 1983-84 by 32 per cent to \$1,032m and the value of cattle and calf slaughterings increased by 39 per cent. However, it must be remembered that, previously, both of those industries were at a very low ebb and could go only one way—up.

In all industries, the increase in the cost of production is far higher than the increase in the return to the primary producer. Therein lies a problem.

Mr Davis: Can I give you a bit of advice?

Mr STEPHAN: I do not think the honourable member would be able to give worthwhile advice, but I am happy to listen to any comment that he makes.

Mr Davis: You do better speaking about your local area than this tripe from the Minister.

Mr STEPHAN: I do not have any tripe from any Minister. Unlike members of the Opposition, who are given briefs from Trades Hall, Government members are not handed briefs. I do not think that the member for Brisbane Central has yet received his brief from Trades Hall. I feel sorry for him having to operate under such circumstances. He can rest assured that Government members know their responsibilities on primary industry matters.

The declining ability of Australian industry to compete on the world market is of tremendous concern, particularly the loss of national income of \$900m last year. High interest rates and increased costs have resulted in lower returns. That has resulted in less capital being attracted to Australia from overseas, which in turn has forced up the exchange rate.

Australia does not lack the ability to produce agricultural products efficiently. Australia must compete in the market-place. If its commitments are to be met, there must be a return on the capital that is invested in this country.

Assistance is given to industries in many ways. An insufficient number of extension officers are employed. An increase in the number of new farmers and hobby farmers has placed additional demands on the services provided by extension officers. The advice provided by those officers is most useful. The number of hours at the disposal of the extension officers is limited. There are insufficient extension officers to meet the demand. Not only producers but also hobby farmers are affected.

Land use should be consistent with the maintenance and improvement of productivity in the long term. Rural industry needs to be made aware of the extent of the subdivision of farming areas into residential and hobby farms. Land is being taken from productive agricultural areas. I firmly believe that fertile land cannot continue to be lost and split up into small hobby farms and residential areas. If it is, the production from the horticultural and agricultural areas will be lost.

There is a great deal of fertile land in the Bowen and Burdekin areas. Queensland cannot afford to lose its established producers. That is a matter of great concern to everyone.

Research funding is also a matter of great concern. The member for Mourilyan referred to reduced Federal subsidies. Previously, the subsidy was provided on a fifty-fifty basis. The reduction in subsidies has meant that industry has not been able to undertake necessary research. The shortfall in funding in many instances has had to be met by industry.

The horticultural industry has been able to meet its increased commitments. That industry has received a kick from the Federal Government. That action should not be encouraged. I urge the Federal Government to reconsider the matter and to meet its commitments, even if it is only on a dollar-for-dollar basis.

The horticultural industry employs a large work-force and requires a high capital outlay—a matter I will deal with in a moment. Often the importance of the horticultural industry to the economy is underestimated. Its contribution to the community is often overlooked, especially when it suffers an economic downturn. Earlier this year the returns for growers in Gympie and the south-east corner generally were extremely low. Production was continued in the hope of increased returns. In no way were the growers showing a profit. If the industry is to succeed, that cannot be countenanced.

Marketing, which is crucial to the success of the horticultural industry, covers grading, handling, transport, distribution and ultimately the sale. The Minister's comment when introducing the Estimates is appreciated. He said—

"Queensland has become the leading State in Australia in the use of refrigeration to improve the post-harvest handling of fruit and vegetables. This has come about through work by my department to establish the most effective refrigeration techniques and to encourage their adoption by growers, transport operators and market agents."

I pay a special tribute to those involved in road and rail transport operations. Refrigerated units have been an important factor in getting a better article onto the shelves and into the housewife's basket. It must be recognised that, if the housewife does not take a quality article home, she will not come back to make a second purchase.

Mr Burns: You stop sending us those shoddy tomatoes.

Mr STEPHAN: Whether it is tomatoes, beans or cucumbers, nobody appreciates a piece of fruit or a vegetable that is old, full of fibre and certainly past its peak.

Fruit and vegetables deteriorate very quickly on open shelves. Refrigeration ought to be used on the shelves as well as in transportation; otherwise justice is done to neither the grower nor the customer.

I turn now to our ability to compete overseas. After a 20-year battle to overcome quarantine barriers, in September 1983 Queensland citrus-growers achieved their first export of fruit to Japan. Many negotiations and experimental trials into fruit-fly control preceded the initial shipment. In June 1984, a shipment of 11 000 cartons followed. We must be able to compete economically and guarantee quality. The insistence is on consistent flavour, colour, grade and size. Unless those requirements are met, we will lose our Japanese market.

Capital has emerged as a factor of increasing importance to the rural industry. All the time capital and interest commitments on loans are growing larger and larger.

Recently the overseas travel of some marketing board representatives has been criticised. I should point out that visits to overseas countries help to widen trade opportunities and help to obtain in-depth knowledge of problems confronting Queensland growers. They certainly are a valuable and necessary element in the operations of many primary industries. Because of events that have taken place in some primary industry boards over the past two years, some people automatically assume that there is something sinister and wasteful in overseas travel.

I point out that one of my constituents, Mr Len Carlson, who is chairman of the Vegetable Seeds Subcommittee of the COD, spent 30 days in the United States of America studying the characteristics of the seeds available in that country. He found some that could be used in Australia, but honourable members must remember that Australia is restricted because it does not contribute to the concept of plant variety rights that has been adopted overseas. He was terribly enthusiastic about the varieties of seeds that are available and regretted that Australia is missing out because it does not have the ability, and in some cases the interest, to acquire seeds that will produce a better article, quite often at a cheaper price.

Although to a limited extent work has been done in developing new varieties and new tissue cultures in Australia, it is certainly a long and arduous task. Honourable

members must admit that true recognition has not been given to the work of people in this field. The State has done some selecting from existing varieties, but that is not sufficient and will not meet future demands.

I would like a little more support to be given to improve biological control of pests. Certainly the urgent need exists in the citrus industry for a biological agent to control white louse scale. History has shown that the successful importation of biological control agents can take time and money. The introduction of prickly pear is a good example of that, as is the unproven work on groundsel control. However, the end result is always very well worth while. I am concerned about the Federal legislation that restricts the importation of predators to combat disease. Because of that legislation, no research can be undertaken into the biological control of some pests.

In summing up, I say that there is a need for adequate tariff protection to assist in the economic well-being of the horticultural industry, its very labour-intensive component and the Australian economic cost structure. The State should further expand the biological control measures to meet Queensland conditions and encourage the introduction of insects from overseas countries.

I seek the recognition by the Taxation Department of the nursery industry as a primary industry. For some reason as yet best known to itself, the Taxation Department has not given that recognition, and that has caused some suffering in the industry. I call for increased recognition of, and funding for, extension officers in the horticultural industry. In conjunction with the States, the Commonwealth Government should make a further examination of the practicability of a national disaster insurance scheme for the horticultural industry.

I compliment the Minister on the recent introduction of a Bill to provide proper control of deer-farming in Queensland. I know that deer-farmers have been looking forward to that legislation for some time. It must be borne in mind that deer-farmers have had problems in developing the industry. It is a fledgling industry, and is developing very slowly.

Deer-farming was first contemplated in Queensland in the late 1970s when increasing numbers of feral deer were proving a nuisance to cattle-producers. Action had to be taken, as the animals were destroying valuable grazing pasture. A few people decided that farming those creatures was preferable to mass slaughter. A great deal of money was required for development, without producers knowing whether they would in fact get a return.

At present there has been a shift in returns. A few years ago velvet was profitable, but it is now venison that is bringing the higher return. Although Australian producers cannot meet the requirement for venison at present—imports are still coming from New Zealand to meet restaurant demand—producers went into the industry with their eyes open, and I commend them for the work they have done.

Deer-farming is a growth industry. There are 54 registered deer-farms farming about 5 000 deer.

Time expired.

Mr BURNS (Lyttton) (4.37 p.m.): In the 1983-84 annual report of the Department of Primary Industries, only three pages out of 48 are devoted to the fishing industry and only three lines are devoted to recreational fishing. The report states—

“Recreational fishing in Queensland is an important component of fishery resource exploitation. A special Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee was established to maintain cooperation and coordination between the sectors of this industry.”

I want to declare my personal interest. I enjoy fishing, and I believe that it is about time that the Government gave due recognition to the amateur fishing industry.

For years, amateur, family or recreational fishermen have claimed that their sport was one of Australia's major industries, creating massive employment, adding greatly to the nation's tourist industry and contributing many millions of dollars to the nation's economy.

Mr Lee: You take them straight off the trawler, they say.

Mr BURNS: I have never had to do that, but one never knows one's luck in a big city. I am prepared to go fishing with the honourable member any time, and we will see how he makes out pound for pound and ounce for ounce.

Members will recall that on many occasions I have spoken in this Chamber on the need for the Government to pay proper regard to the tremendous value to Queensland of amateur, family or recreational fishing. In the past when I have spoken on these matters it has been hard to convince Ministers because of the lack of hard, factual evidence. But thanks to the Federal Hawke Labor Government and a move by Australia's amateur fishing organisations, hard factual information is now available to show the massive contribution made by family and sports fishermen and women to the community and to the economy.

The amateur bodies combined to form the Australian Recreational Fishing Council and the Hawke Labor Government supplied funds to employ P A Management Consultants to undertake a national survey of participation in recreational fishing. The survey was conducted in July 1984, with the surveyed regions representing 85 per cent of the adult population.

According to the survey results, 3 750 000 adults fished in the 12 months prior to the survey. Another 750 000 young people aged between 10 and 17 years fished in that period, making a total of 4.5 million. In anyone's language that is a massive total and indicates the massive amount of money involved. I will deal further with that in a moment.

More importantly, the survey showed Queenslanders to have the highest participation in fishing. Other points confirmed by the survey were that fishing is an activity of all income and occupational groups, and is not just for the rich or the silvertails; that 32 per cent of fishermen fish from rocks or the beach, and Queensland, with its miles of coastline, is ideally placed to take advantage of their desire to fish that way; that another 20 per cent fish from boats in estuaries or bays; that a further 21 per cent fish from jetties or wharves; and that 92 per cent of fishermen fish with bait, 26 per cent spin or fish with lures, and 18 per cent use crab-pots, and so on.

The survey by P A Management Consultants estimates that, to fish, adults in the survey regions travelled nearly 2 500 million kilometres in the 12 months prior to the survey. It showed that 56 per cent of households own some fishing tackle; that households in Queensland have distinctly above-average fishing tackle ownership rates; and that 30 per cent of households own or have access to boats. Thirteen per cent own or have access to caravans, camping equipment, trailers, etc. Twelve per cent own or have four-wheel-drive vehicles, utilities or trucks. Queensland, with Tasmania, has the highest rate of ownership/access to boats.

I would like honourable members to note this point: according to P A Management Consultants, the value of equipment, tackle, special clothing and vehicle and camping units exceeds \$6,500m. That is a lot of dollars. PA estimates that in the 12 months prior to the survey, that is to 7 July this year, fishermen and fisherwomen spent \$170m on tackle and special clothing; \$495m on boats and boat equipment; \$285m on caravan and camping equipment; \$175m on four-wheel-drive vehicles and utilities; \$615m on road vehicle fuel; and \$150m on boat fuel, insurance, licences, bait and ice. PA estimated a total all-Australian expenditure in 1983-84 of \$2,200m by amateur recreational fishermen. That makes amateur fishing a major industry. That does not include expenditure on fishing-trip accommodation and the like; it is just the expenditure on equipment associated with fishing.

I repeat what I have been saying in this place for years: recreational fishing is a most important Australian industry—one that has been sadly neglected by Governments in the past. It is time that recreational fishing was given proper recognition, support and promotion.

When Cabinet supports decisions to destroy habitat areas by dredging and development, it should consider the damage that it is doing to a multimillion dollar or, should I say, billion dollar industry.

Queensland, with its marvellous weather, miles of magic coastline, reefs, rivers and bays is a top holiday destination for families from the southern States and from overseas.

Mr Lee: Do you think that trawlers should be allowed in Moreton Bay?

Mr BURNS: There are closed areas, and I would like to see those closed areas policed. The decent, honest trawlerman does not fish in those areas. The rip-off merchant whips in and goes through the breeding and hatchery areas, and very rarely gets caught. He is destroying the fishing opportunities for all of us.

Mr Lee: He kills thousands of little fish.

Mr BURNS: Trawling is part of the industry. The amateur fishermen and the professional fishermen have to live together. They fish the same resource. Amateur fishermen have to accept that professional fishermen will fish the areas, too. We are not arguing for the exclusion of professional fishermen. However, areas will have to be set aside eventually for professional fishermen and for amateur fishermen. Today I am talking about the promotion of amateur fishermen.

The fishing industry in Queensland is not promoted. The New Zealand authorities have a hunting and fisheries officer. He provides information on where to go, where to stay, and what are the best times for particular fish. He also advises on guides, fishing lodges, boat hire and charter. All that information is at his fingertips. He can supply the lot.

This morning, I telephoned the Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation and asked for information on fishing tours. I was told, "We have one to Fraser Island but we have no information at present. We could get it in. And we have one to Escot Station at Cape York." Escot Station is not at Cape York; it is near Burketown. He also said, "I think we have some information on barramundi fishing there." Finally, he came up with this little pamphlet that I have in my hand. That contains all the information on the fishing industry in Queensland.

I have here pamphlets from two commercial operators in New Zealand, from Fiji and from the Northern Territory. Compare them with the lousy, little, outdated publication from Queensland. Queensland has the most magic fishing waters in the world. The reef is like an unexploded volcano waiting for people to fish it. Queensland provides some of the best fishing opportunities in the world, some of the best boats in the world and some of the best crews to handle the boats. As I say, the reef is like a sleeping volcano. Some of the most challenging and unique fishing can be found there. Queensland promotes fishing with the shoddy little dodger that I have in my hand.

The amateur fishing industry needs to be promoted. The facts show that it is a multimillion dollar industry—in fact, a billion dollar industry. People round the world want to come to Queensland to fish and people here would like to make those contracts.

Many fishing clubs in Japan have thousands of members. One has 50 000 members. Half of them have never caught a fish in their lives. I am sure that a couple of honourable members have never caught a fish in their lives, either. Japanese clubs have written asking whether they can organise trips in Queensland and whether proper fishing facilities can be guaranteed. After not getting the assistance that they wanted, those clubs are going to Lord Howe Island and Norfolk Island to fish. The opportunity has been lost; yet the Government talks about promoting tourism.

Mr Kaus: How would you increase the number of fish in the bay for amateur fishing?

Mr BURNS: People should be told that, in Moreton Bay, they will find game fishing that is as good as that in Cairns. The boats and gear are already in the area. Some of the boats that operate in the bay are used in the Tangalooma Classic each year. They are as good as boats anywhere else in the State.

Moreton Bay is probably the most neglected area in southern Queensland. It is a fishing resource for hundreds of thousands of people. It has winter whiting, sand crabs and mackerel, and tailor can be found on the beaches on Moreton Island. That is a good example of exploitation of a resource. Moreton Bay has much to offer, but the pamphlet that I referred to contains only two or three lines.

Mr Turner: What about marlin?

Mr BURNS: I think that there are big marlin off the bay, and money should be spent on research to find out. Good sail-fish and bill-fish have been caught there. Marvellous fish have been caught in the bay and world records have been set in light angling off Moreton Island and out from Tangalooma and Brisbane.

What should be remembered is that from Cape York right down the coast, Queensland has the gear, the boats and the fishing, and that should be promoted world-wide. In fact, the world can be forgotten. Almost four and a half million people in Australia go fishing each year, but, of course, they are not all coming to fish in Queensland. Many of those people should be told in a better publication about the fishing that can be exploited here.

As a keen amateur fisherman, I would like to think that, in 1988—

Mr Lingard: I have seen you fishing at Tangalooma, and you caught nothing.

Mr BURNS: I do not think that the honourable member has ever seen me fishing at Tangalooma.

Mr Lingard: I have.

Mr BURNS: Perhaps the honourable member was the bloke I saw running round there.

Australia's bicentennial in 1988 would be the time to promote a great national fishing competition. Honourable members may laugh, but from January to April in 1938 the first national game fishing tournament was held to mark Australia's 150th anniversary. If a national game fishing tournament could be held out of Sydney in 1938, I am sure that, with the expertise and knowledge available in Queensland, one of the best fishing tournaments in the world could be organised to celebrate the bicentennial in 1988.

A great white shark hunt could be organised and there are massive sharks on this coast. Prizes could be offered for the largest shark caught. Even the smaller fish could be promoted. The competition could be held over six to eight months, and fishing in Queensland would benefit. Any visitor who caught a large fish of any species could have it weighed in at the local bait shop and the local newspaper in the town could photograph the angler with the fish and its measurements could be recorded.

Promotion could be carried on by everyone connected with the industry, such as the four-wheel-drive clubs, the airline people, the bait people, the tackle people and the boat people. Gold medals could be given to mark the largest fish of a species caught during the bicentennial celebrations. It must be remembered that people will be coming to Expo, and there is no reason why, when the nation's first 200 years is being celebrated, a fishing competition could not be organised. Districts could be pitted against other districts. Competitions could be run in the tailor season. Competitions could be run in the barramundi season.

The idea is not unreasonable, because it was done 50 years ago. It should be done again. Queensland has the facilities and the fishing. The only other State that could provide the same excitement in fishing would be Western Australia, but it has such a scattered population that it does not have the resources and the facilities of Queensland's provincial cities. From one end of the State to the other along Queensland's coast the resources and facilities are available. At that time, special competitions could be conducted.

However, one of the biggest problems concerned with fishing is the great domination of the fishing industry by commercial fishermen. I do not argue against that; they earn their living from fishing. I do not suggest that they should not be given a good deal of influence in the industry. However, amateur fishermen have been neglected for far too long.

I could give the Minister a copy of the PA report, but I know that he can get it himself. Billions of dollars is spent on boats and boating. The report does not even mention the boating people who go to Noosa, the Gold Coast or Bloomfield Lodge to do a bit of fishing.

Speaking of lodges—let anyone try to obtain information from the Tourist and Travel Corporation computer on fishing lodges. A man from Bloomfield Lodge told me that he was told by the corporation, "We'll have to put you under 'outback stations'." And his fishing lodge is on the coast! The potential of the fishing industry should be exploited to the fullest. It offers tremendous potential as a recreational activity. The asset is there for us to exploit it; yet it is being neglected.

Mr COOPER (Roma) (4.51 p.m.): I listened with interest to the honourable member for Lytton, who certainly dwelt on the subject of fishing. I dare say my predecessor in the Roma electorate was just as keen on fishing. He certainly did not mind baiting the occasional hook. The honourable member for Lytton would no doubt agree with that.

I was honoured to take over from Ken Tomkins as the member for Roma. It is a rural electorate centred on the town of Roma and comprising a large portion of the Maranoa in the south and including the shires of Bungil and Bendemere. It also takes in a significant portion of the Central Highlands in the north, including the shires of Bauhinia and Duaringa, centred on Emerald. So it is fitting that I speak to these Estimates.

At this point it is appropriate to say something about the department itself. Later I will specify certain areas of concern. It is also appropriate to give credit to the many departmental officers who work in the offices and in the field. These people play a vital role in what is Queensland's most productive industry—primary industry. The Department of Primary Industries is probably the most diverse and difficult department to administer. Problems relating to natural disasters constantly arise and add to the other difficulties that cannot be easily overcome.

For almost 100 years, the Department of Primary Industries has been serving primary producers. Its overall role is to foster and assist the development of Queensland's rural industry, whilst conserving the State's natural resources for the use of future primary producers. At the same time, it provides a service to the Queensland consumer by ensuring the high quality of rural produce.

The Department of Primary Industries works in the three broad areas of research, extension and regulation. It is involved at all levels of production, in processing and marketing, and in consumer acceptance and protection. The department has 2 800 officers stationed in more than 100 centres from Thursday Island to the southern border and west to the remotest areas. That demonstrates clearly that it is very much a decentralised department. These officers serve more than 43 000 primary producers.

The department's officers are involved in the food production cycle from its very beginning. They are the first stop for primary producers wanting practical advice on crops, pastures, stock, pests, diseases, finance or management. In some instances, that

advice is questioned by producers. Constructive questioning is healthy and should be encouraged, as it serves to enable the officers to adapt their learning to the practical needs of farmers. In other instances, however, the criticism is unfair and unwarranted. That serves no useful purpose. I have said before—and I say it again—that encouragement and assistance to Government officers leads, in the main, to a far more productive and useful organisation, and it has been, and will remain, my practice to support and assist wherever I can.

The Department of Primary Industries helps plan the State's agricultural development to ensure that its valuable rural land is protected and efficiently used. Officers of that department check that the seed, fertilisers, chemicals, stock foods, veterinary medicines and other agricultural requirements sold to primary producers are of a suitable commercial standard. They protect consumers in the fruit and vegetable markets by making quality control inspections, and, at the abattoirs, they inspect meat destined for local consumption.

The Department of Primary Industries continually consults with industry leaders for an overview of their needs and problems, and at a regional level it consults with representatives of local producer organisations to get an understanding of local problems. Primary producers are among the increasing number of people relying on computer technology to store and retrieve information. The convenience of that technology puts an added responsibility on the department to release quickly the results of research. The DPI has an annual research budget of \$40m. It can disseminate its research findings through a variety of publications, all of which are available to advantage primary producers.

While on the subject of rural research, the Division of Animal Industry has wide-ranging research programs investigating many aspects of improving the efficiency and quality of production of animal products and of controlling animal diseases. The major volume of the work involves beef cattle, sheep, pigs, poultry and fibre-producing goats—a number of goat farms are located in my electorate—with limited investigation of the diseases affecting horses and deer. The member for Mourilyan referred to the deer industry. I fully support his remarks. It is a new industry that is growing. It deserves any assistance that can be given to it.

The production programs concentrate on problems of major importance to the industries. They include studies on nutrition, management, breeding, reproduction, physiology, transport and handling, behaviour and product quality. Programs are continuing to improve the tick fever vaccines that are prepared in Australia only by the Queensland DPI. Research is undertaken at research stations in several areas of the State, namely, Rocklea, Wacol, Brigalow, Millaroo, Innisfail, Biloela, Charleville, and Julia Creek. It is also undertaken on the properties of co-operating producers and in the major laboratories at Brisbane, Rockhampton and Townsville.

Development of a research facility for sheep, and ultimately cattle, has commenced at Longreach. It is timely for me to mention the very distinct possibility of a research station being based at Roma. That rapidly expanding district warrants such a facility. I hope that the facility will eventually cover research into livestock, pasture improvement, cropping, land utilisation and soil conservation. The various industries involved in research have an input into the definition of problems requiring research, program priorities and the advisory programs resulting from the research by representation on consultative and advisory committees associated with the research stations. Finance to undertake the research comes mainly from the State's consolidated revenue, but there is competition from other organisations. Significant amounts are granted from rural industry research funds administered by national bodies such as the Australian Meat Research Committee and the Wool Research Trust Fund Committee. Funds administered by those bodies are collected by a levy on cattle slaughtered and bales of wool produced, and through a contribution from the Commonwealth Government. Some limited grants are also received from private organisations.

Agricultural expansion is proceeding in most regions of the State, but the emphasis is really on the south-west of Queensland, the Fitzroy and Mackay regions. Based on environmental conditions, the current and potential areas of crop, sown pastures and native pastures have been mapped. The expansion of agriculture and sown pasture will be at the expense of native pasture, and it is not expected that the potential for crop and sown pasture will be reached in the foreseeable future. Most animals in the State continue to graze native pasture. Sown pasture improves carrying capacity. The effect on livestock numbers of the change from native pastures to sown pastures and crop is difficult to quantify and will vary for different regions. That is all the more reason for continued research and study of those effects. The scope for transition from native pasture to improved pasture is seemingly endless.

While referring to rural research, I wish to refer to the Division of Animal Industry. The division has a total staff of 850 officers. Its technology staff are graduates of numerous disciplines from tertiary and secondary educational institutions. The staff complement includes clerical officers and farm and station hand staff. The division has a responsibility to provide diagnostic research and advisory services to livestock producers and to assist in protecting the health of the community. Its objectives are—

1. To promote efficient commercial production of food and fibres from animals, consistent with the protection of the environment.
2. To provide a service to producers aimed at maintaining healthy herds and flocks.
3. To eradicate or economically control animal diseases.
4. To prevent the entry and exit of animal diseases into or from Queensland.
5. To ensure that animal products used for human consumption are produced from disease-free animals.
6. To ensure meat is supplied to the community in as hygienic a state as possible and to promote improvement in the quality of animal products.
7. To provide animal identification services to the livestock industries.
8. To ensure adequate personal development of staff in order to provide the highest standard of service.

These are commendable objectives. The support of producers is definitely justified.

I express concern and misgivings about aspects of the brucellosis and tuberculosis eradication campaign. Producer organisations and industry leaders have also expressed concern that the campaigns in the north of Queensland and the Northern Territory are proceeding too drastically, in that restocking after destocking will force many producers, for economic reasons, to withdraw.

The difference between compensation paid and the cost of replacement is far too great. Cattle-producers are virtually the only occupants of remote areas. Their withdrawal would cause a vacuum. That is a matter of serious concern. Perhaps the policy could be reviewed to permit producers to "clean status" their properties for a few years, thereby easing the economic and social effect on them and on the State's economy.

I am mindful, however, of the overall importance of eradication of disease. Although only 100 cattle herds out of a total of 33 000 are classified as infected, the effort must not falter. The Government should strive for a totally clean status by 1992. Greater consideration and understanding of the problems of cattle-producers and the consequences which result from their isolation and remoteness are warranted. I speak also for industry leaders, who are mindful of the difficulties caused by the brucellosis and tuberculosis eradication campaign. While destocking in the northern region takes place, care must be taken to ensure that depopulation does not occur as well.

I am pleased to note that the Minister has granted concessions by the formation of district committees comprising local veterinary officers, Department of Primary Industries economists and local pastoral advisory committee members. The committees will consult

owners and managers of various properties to ensure that the eradication program will not render local cattle production uneconomic. I am also pleased to note that the late 1985 and 1992 deadlines for the completion of BTEC stages will be used only as guides, and that target dates will be individually assessed. Formation of the district committees will assist in easing the concern of residents in remote areas.

Another activity of the Department of Primary Industries that is of major importance is the Division of Land Utilisation. Never before has the interest of producers been held so encouragingly high. This has resulted in the Division of Land Utilisation playing an increasingly active role in the formation of a separate soil conservation research branch within the Division of Land Utilisation. The branch has drawn together officers working in land management research from several other parts of the department to ensure better integration and co-ordination of work in this field. Land management research ranges from studying the causes and mechanisms of erosion to the development of structural and management systems which will minimise land degradation.

Tremendous interest has been shown in land degradation. Throughout Queensland, many producers are very conscious of this issue and are prepared to ensure that they play a full part in looking after land and the soil.

Work is being concentrated on control of erosion on cropped land, where the damage per hectare is more severe and where control measures are economically possible. For that reason, considerable emphasis is being placed on the vast areas of more recent development. A great deal of recent development occurred in the Roma electorate. Because of its sloping topography and the incidence of high intensity rainfall, much of it is particularly prone to erosion. The effect of erosion is very noticeable on these soils because they are relatively shallow. The areas can ill-afford any soil loss which will reduce the water-storage capacity.

As a general rule, erosion can be dramatically reduced by a combination of run-off control contour banks with waterways and management techniques designed to maintain surface cover of crop or crop residue over the high-risk rainfall periods. Management techniques are the subject of a considerable research, development and extension program, especially in these developing regions. Much of this work has real relevance for the Roma electorate.

The Soil Conservation Services Branch provides a survey and planning service to land-holders who wish to use structural methods of erosion control. Its officers also have a strong commitment to extension and advisory programs which encourage farmers to implement both structural and management control systems. Management methods of control become part of the farming techniques and, as such, are also promoted by several other branches of the department as a co-ordinated program.

Implementation of run-off control structures often involves the flow of water from one property to another. Not every land-holder is willing to co-operate with his neighbours in this kind of integrated system and much departmental time can be wasted. Nevertheless good progress is being made and it is heartening to see the concept of reduced tillage and careful crop selection being accepted more and more by the farming community. Within the Roma electorate and adjacent areas there has been a sustained interest in soil conservation, and DPI officers have been unable to cope with that interest. In an attempt to meet the demand, an additional soil conservation officer has been appointed to Miles and another will take up duties at Roma as soon as some office accommodation can be sorted out. I now understand that a caravan may be used for that accommodation, which is quite OK. I am merely concerned with getting some action on soil conservation.

The soil conservation effort depends on a knowledge of specific soils, their characteristics and their problems. This is being provided by land resource data, which is slowly being collected for many parts of Queensland. The intensity of data collection depends on the purpose for which it is required, and varies from detailed soil surveys for irrigation schemes to broad-scale reviews of the western arid zone. The important point common to all of these surveys is the capability of soils to sustain production.

Soils used beyond their capability will degrade. The data collected indicates the present potential use, the characteristics which limit that use and suggestions to extend that use. The information has wider purposes, of course, including town-planning and subdivision and potential expansion for industries.

In the Roma electorate, resource information has many of these purposes. Not the least is in the farm-planning for property and crop development. It is important that this development be handled in a way consistent with long-term stability and that a sensible integration of crop and livestock enterprises be maintained. In view of these needs, a land resources officer has recently been appointed to Roma to characterise the major soils and their capabilities.

I am aware that the department constantly receives requests for additional staff to assist land-holders with information and to advise in every area of its endeavour. I know of the limits placed on staff numbers. Although those requests cannot be met immediately, the relocation of officers frequently helps to meet obvious needs. However, those very requests indicate the regard in which the departmental service is held by land-holders in general. The Government is conscious of the needs in the Maranoa area and the Central Highlands and is attempting to improve facilities for the most effective operation of research and extension staff. I intend to continue working in close liaison with departmental officers and producers because I feel that, as member for the region, I can help in some way to co-ordinate something in which the people of the area are very interested.

Whilst I am on the farming scene, I should say that the significance of major changes in the Roma region was recognised by the reallocation of a second extension agronomist to the Roma office in 1983. Extension agronomists are involved in providing to producers an on-demand advisory service on cropping and pasture problems throughout the Maranoa district. The service covers crop inquiries on variety selection, pest, disease and weed management, husbandry matters and harvesting and grain storage. It is also concerned with pastures, and inquiries relate to variety selection, planting methods and techniques, stock management and pasture renovation.

A particularly important advisory service relates to land use selection. Not all country is suited to cropping, and extension agronomists help producers by providing guide-lines and advice on soil types, development methods and farm-planning for the development of country. A video tape is being prepared on land use selection specifically to help producers decide which land to use for cultivation. Because most producers have video cassette recorders in their homes, or have access to them, the video tape should be a very useful development for farmers.

Mr Davis: Do you support selling by video?

Mr COOPER: As a matter of fact, I do. I recently sold some cattle in that way.

Mr Davis: Did you get a good price?

Mr COOPER: I got an equivalent price—comparable to the price in the saleyard. It is a new concept. The various methods of sale will still be used, but sale by video is another adjunct that I think is well worth consideration.

The development and extension work conducted by the two extension agronomists is highly significant to the Roma district. They are undertaking trials and extension work to improve crop yields and reliability in that difficult cropping area.

Time expired.

Mr PALASZCZUK (Archerfield) (5.12 p.m.): It gives me pleasure to be able to speak in the debate on the Estimates for the Department of Primary Industries. It is timely to lay to rest the twaddle that is often spoken about the Australian Labor Party being antirural. No-one has done more for the rural sector in the last 18 months than the present Minister for Primary Industry in the Hawke Labor Government, Mr John

Kerin. Bearing in mind that the Fraser Government was a Government of farmers and graziers, did not Mr Kerin inherit a nice mess? Shades of John Howard at the Treasury, and the deficit!

With the election of a State Labor Government, the rural sector of the community can expect to receive sympathetic and understanding treatment from my colleague Mr Joe Kruger as Minister for Primary Industries. He is a man of the land and understands the problems of the man on the land.

As I am the member for Archerfield, it is not generally realised how involved I am with primary industry. A great many of the jobs in my electorate depend on primary industry. The Rocklea markets and the trucking firms that supply the markets are situated within my electorate of Archerfield.

The Federal redistribution commissioners recognised that by placing Inala in the new Federal electorate of Rankin. It has a great affinity of interest with those great grain-growing areas of Warwick and Allora. I am looking forward to my colleague Mr David Beddall winning the seat of Rankin at the Federal election. He is a man who understands the problems of the rural sector and I am sure that he will be keeping a close watch on the rural areas of Rankin.

Since my speech on Tuesday in the debate on the Health Department Estimates, during which I pointed out that P & O, who has the contract to run the convenience food facility at Wacol, was importing pineapple from the Phillipines, pre-cooked rice from California, mushrooms from Japan and fish from New Zealand, I have been contacted by pineapple-growers from Moggill. I know that it comes as a surprise to National Party members that pineapples are grown just across the Brisbane river at Moggill. Those growers, who can literally see the plant at Wacol from their farms, cannot see why they have not been asked to supply it with pineapples. My response to them has been quite blunt. I told them that the National Party is now a party of land-developers. Their days of looking after the farmer are long gone, unless of course his land can be developed as a coal or sand mine, or is useful for high rise development.

Mr Davis: They even changed the name.

Mr PALASZCZUK: Yes, they did. When it was the Country Party, it looked after the people on the land, but not any more.

At present, the Premier is distancing himself from the Federal Liberals; but the National Party in Queensland cannot escape being a party to the decisions of the Fraser Government, given the influence of the National Party in that Government and the fact that Mr Fraser would have been more at home in the National Party than he was in the Liberal Party. I think that many Liberals wished that he had been in the National Party.

Let us look at the proud record of that Government of farmers and graziers. Wool promotion funds were slashed. The Australian Wool Testing Authority was sold off. The interest rate subsidy for the wheat industry was halved. No attempt was made to restructure the meat and livestock industry. That Government presided over the meat substitution scandal that did so much harm to Australia's reputation as a reliable meat exporter. The sugar industry was not assisted. A couple of reports were called for from the Industries Assistance Commission.

The classic was the Asia Dairy Industries scandal. The former Minister for Primary Industry and National Party member for Gippsland did not come out of that scandal very well. In fact, he was let off very lightly. So much for seven years of rule by the Fraser-Anthony Government of graziers, farmers and Liberal Party Toorak-Darling Point would-be rural experts! Is it any wonder that our great primary industries were in the mess they were when the Hawke Labor Government came to power?

A Government Member: How did he get the drought to break?

Mr PALASZCZUK: That was an act of nature, and Mr Hawke was lucky to be in office at that time. When rain falls in this State after a drought, the Premier claims that it is his doing.

There is no denying that there are major problems in the sugar industry, but many of them, such as low world prices, gluts in the European Economic Community and dumping by that organisation, are outside its control. It is bad enough for the industry to have to put up with those problems without having problems such as those at the Babinda sugar mill thrust upon it.

Although the Babinda mill has suffered from low prices and a basically low c.c.s.—it is part of the superwet belt of Queensland—the Co-operative Sugar Millers Association identified one of the main problems as poor management. The chairman of directors of the Babinda mill from 1974 to 1983 was none other than a National Party ministerial aspirant. It seems that the honourable member emulated the Premier in the use of proxies to keep his position on the board. One of the main problems relates to the payment of taxation some years ago. Heaven help the department that gets that member as a Minister! The Auditor-General will probably have a stroke.

To the credit of the Federal Minister for Primary Industry (Mr Kerin), on taking office he acted promptly to see what he could do for the new board at the Babinda sugar mill. Of course, he was ably assisted by the Federal Labor members for Leichhardt and Herbert. It has been recognised that the problems at the Babinda mill will not be solved by ad hoc financial decisions.

I know that this Government likes to make ad hoc decisions. Then it finds that they do not work, and it either has to rescind the decisions or find a scapegoat. The Kangaroo Point Land Development Bill and the Collins Place resumption spring readily to mind. Collins Place, which is a lovingly restored home in a tranquil setting, is quite visible from Parliament House. I am sure that the Government is about to commission a painter to capture its beauty before the building disappears in the same way as the Bellevue Hotel disappeared. The painting will be hung on the fifth floor of the Parliamentary Annexe beside the one of the Bellevue Hotel as a reminder to honourable members of its former glory.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr Booth): Order! I have been very patient. The honourable member has left the Estimates somewhere along the way.

Mr PALASZCZUK: I apologise, Mr Booth.

The Commonwealth Government will be considering the industry's production, marketing and regulatory practices to see whether it can come up with measures that will be of benefit to the industry.

It is common knowledge in the corridors of Parliament House that the Premier, for all his public denials, is intent on a ministerial reshuffle in the near future. I suggest, in all seriousness, that the Premier should replace the present Minister for Primary Industries (Mr Turner) with the Minister for Local Government, Main Roads and Racing. Mr Hinze would make a good Primary Industries Minister. He has injected millions of dollars into the racing industry in grandstands and other facilities, not to mention Albion Park and Deagon. He has really put racing on its feet. Imagine what he could do if he was let loose in the Primary Industries portfolio. I know that he would enjoy it. If nothing else, it would get Sir Edward Lyons out of his hair.

I turn now to the dairy industry. The National Party professes to champion the interests of the primary producer. That myth is easily exploded. Genuine primary producers, particularly dairy farmers, have been disadvantaged by sweetheart deals between the National Party and huge conglomerates in the Brisbane area.

Prior to the last State election, I campaigned in the Beaudesert and Boonah areas.

Mr FitzGerald: That is why we did so well.

Mr PALASZCZUK: I do not think so. The honourable member will find that Mr Rankin's election will prove him wrong.

Mr FitzGerald interjected.

Mr PALASZCZUK: Mr Beddall will be elected. My wife's relatives have their roots in Boonah. I go to see those people on the land all the time. I speak to them and find out the problems that they are facing in rural areas. They support me.

Mr Davis: And the Labor Party.

Mr PALASZCZUK: And the Labor Party, of course.

When I was in the area, I was told time and time again that milk quotas were being flogged off to the highest bidders. The allegations from the farmers were that the recipients were members of the National Party. Although the farmers of Boonah felt that they were being left out in the cold, the farmers round Beaudesert felt most disadvantaged. The winners were the National Party interests that control the Gold Coast. That accusation was raised so many times that it could not be just a case of sour grapes.

As all honourable members are aware, a milk war is raging in the southern States. South Australian consumers pay 12c a litre less than consumers in Queensland.

Mr Davis: How much do they pay?

Mr PALASZCZUK: South Australians pay 12c per litre less, and that is under a Labor Government.

If there was a rationalisation in the milk quota system in Queensland, the price of milk would drop. I suggest that the Minister should consider that.

The Archerfield area is known as the market garden of south-east Queensland. Richlands supplies the first grapes for the Brisbane market.

Mr Davis: They are good grapes, too.

Mr PALASZCZUK: As the honourable member for Brisbane Central said, they are good grapes.

The best early strawberries come from the Richlands, Inala and Pallara areas, not from Redland Bay, as the Minister for Water Resources and Maritime Services (Mr Goleby) would have us believe. Vegetables are also grown in my electorate.

I do not want the electorate to go the same way with development as Sunnybank. It is a crime that the Sunnybank area, with its rich, red, volcanic soil that was known as the salad bowl of Brisbane, was given over to residential development.

Mr FitzGerald: Now it's for Lockyer, is it?

Mr PALASZCZUK: I have been to the Lockyer Valley, and I will tell the honourable member about that later.

Tancred Brothers meatworks is situated in Blunder Road in my electorate. That company has been the subject of many take-over bids. Developers have wanted that land for sand-mining and for the development of an industrial estate. The developers were not interested in the jobs of the workers in my electorate. However, since Huttons was taken over by Tancred Brothers Pty Ltd, employment has increased and the workers have job security. There are now 593 employees working full time at Tancred Brothers Pty Ltd.

I recognise that farming is a private enterprise, high-risk business. However, under the free enterprise National Party, it is highly regulated. It consists of more boards than one can shake a stick at and they are not very efficient. Many questions remain unanswered in relation to the Peanut Marketing Board, which is located in the Premier's electorate.

Those questions relate to "buried" records and undisclosed expenditure. It is easy to see why the Premier does not want a public accounts committee.

The States have regulatory and legislative powers with respect to farming. Queensland, in conjunction with the Commonwealth, should be spending its money on programs that can be of benefit to the long-term viability of the rural sector.

Mr Lingard interjected.

Mr PALASZCZUK: In answer to that interjection—I now ask the Minister to reconsider the Government's decision and to reinstate Mr Jackson in his former job at the Fish Board. He is out of work and in receipt of unemployment benefits. He deserves a fair go from the Government.

Mr MENZEL (Mulgrave) (5.27 p.m.): I have pleasure in speaking to these Estimates. I realise that the honourable member for Archerfield has been trying particularly hard to follow in the footsteps of his predecessor, but that is very hard to do. However, I thank him for his compliment. He is probably the first person in this Parliament or anywhere else in Queensland who has said that I expect to get into Cabinet. It is good to see that Opposition members recognise a talent that I did not realise I had.

Some of the other comments of the honourable member were a little way out. He made reference to a report that the co-operative millers compiled for the board of directors of the Babinda sugar-mill and in particular to problems that it claimed were the fault of management. Mention was made of the low prices that are paid for commodities, such as sugar. Of course, because of over-production, prices are low. Whoever made the report cannot have it both ways.

The report claims that some of the problems are management-related. However, that is only the opinion of one person, Graham Robinson, who is the general secretary of the co-operative mill. He made many comments in that report. One was that the tram-track is no good. I have correspondence from the authority to which he referred, saying that Babinda mill tram-track is no good. That authority denied having the knowledge or competence to say whether the track is good or bad. However, Bill Oliver, who has been employed by the mill, said, "The tram-track is in good condition. There is nothing wrong with it."

Graham Robinson also said that the mill had bought second-hand machinery. I was chairman of directors for nine or 10 years and, during my time as chairman, no second-hand machinery was purchased. Of course, Bill Oliver said that that part of the report, too, is incorrect.

It is true that the board of directors went to John Kerin, through Mr Gayler, the once-only member for Leichhardt—he will not be there for long—and asked him to ask the Federal Government for help, because Kerin had been kidding the sugar industry that he would give help. Prior to the last Federal election he promised help, but gave none, and when the growers said, "Make good your promises", he said, "We can only give to sections of the industry." Mr Kerin is a shrewd politician in some ways. He listened and said, "I will put up a case to Cabinet." In the history of primary industries, he must be the weakest Minister ever from any side of government, because he never seems to be able to get anything through Cabinet.

Mr FitzGerald: He has been in Cabinet for a long time.

Mr MENZEL: He was a junior member, but he was elevated following a scream of protests from rural industries.

Mr Randell: Would you say he's a public relations man?

Mr MENZEL: I think that he does what the academics and the Bureau of Agricultural Economics in Canberra tell him to do. He is a good PR man; that is about all that he is good at. Having seen the program "Today Tonight" last night, I would advise Bob

Hawke to employ John Kerin as his public relations adviser, because Bob Hawke did not do very well. He became a little angry. I do not think that it did him or the Labor Party much good. He made some very unfortunate comments.

My electorate contains many dairy farms. The dairy industry is being wrecked not by the Liberal Party or the National Party, but by John Kerin and the Federal Labor Party. The Federal Government has allowed goods from other States to be imported into Queensland. It appears that Victoria will be allowed to flood the Queensland market. The dairy-farmers in my electorate are concerned about that.

Last week I attended a meeting with the Federal Shadow Minister for Primary Industries (Mr Tom McVeigh) at which he addressed the dairy-farmers and listened to their points of view. They are very concerned about the attitude adopted by the Federal Labor Government. They know that they will be sold down the drain. There is no doubt that they are being sold down the drain by the Labor Party.

The Labor Party does not receive any votes from the dairying industry; it receives them in the urban areas. It looks only at those areas in which it obtains votes. That is only natural.

The member for Archerfield said that Mr Hinze would make a good Minister for Primary Industries. I do not think that that comment can be taken seriously. I ask: Where are the millions of dollars promised by the Federal Government? Yesterday, a lousy \$5m or \$5.5m was put into rural reconstruction. That followed months and months of the Federal Government trying to make up its mind. The forthcoming Federal election was the only reason it provided that money. Undoubtedly, \$5m is better than nothing, but it is a drop in the bucket. Mr Kerin should have put another "0" onto that figure.

Mr Turner: It was as a result of State Government and industry pressure.

Mr MENZEL: It was as a result of pressure from the Minister, representing the State Government, and the industry. They begged and begged.

There is no doubt that at present things are going badly for John Gayler in Leichhardt.

Mr Randell: Is it true that he is interested in the by-product of sugar?

Mr MENZEL: He is. It is sold in the Great Northern Hotel quite often.

Mr Davis: Does anybody want to back John Gayler?

Mr MENZEL: I will not back John Gayler because I do not back losers.

Mr Comben: Do you want a casket ticket on it?

Mr MENZEL: I will bet more than a casket ticket; I can assure the honourable member of that.

In the 1960s sugar suffered a similar downturn and growers walked off their farms. The Babinda sugar-mill got into financial trouble. It had to obtain two loans from the State Government Insurance Office to survive. At that time a levy was imposed. So far this year, a levy has not been imposed on them. When the price went down, growers experienced hard times. Mills, such as the Babinda sugar-mill, which is in a superwet area, have productivity problems. Loss of productivity through flooding and low prices affect sugar-mills.

At that time, the Federal Liberal-National Party Government provided \$19m over a period of about 10 years at 3 per cent interest. That helped build up the price of No. 1 pool sugar. That is what the present Federal Government should do. It is the only Government that has the resources to do it. Today, the amount should be more like \$100m. The Federal Government has the resources to do that. It should provide that money if it is fair dinkum about helping the sugar industry. The Queensland Government has done a great deal of work.

I was in my office when the member for Cairns (Mr De Lacy) made his speech. Because my television set was turned on, I had the unpleasant experience of listening to him. He made some of his usual odd comments. He is not in the Chamber at present. He is probably on the plane back to Cairns, where he belongs. He nearly lost the safe Labor seat of Cairns in the last State election. He won it by only a couple of hundred votes.

The honourable member for Cairns said that I advocated the draining of Eubenangee Swamp to increase the peak at Babinda sugar-mill. I have never advocated that. I have advocated flood mitigation, as have other members, including the honourable member for Hinchinbrook. Drainage would rid the country of excess water that inundates low-lying cane-growing areas. Inundation by floodwaters stunts cane and reduces productivity. If productivity could be maintained through flood mitigation and drainage at Babinda and in other areas, productivity would be stabilised and the problems caused by falling prices would be eradicated.

Last year, Babinda Mill—in spite of low sugar prices—made a profit. I am not sure of the exact figure, but the profit was approximately \$1m after depreciation, or \$2m before depreciation. That profit was achieved when cane-farmers throughout the State were walking off their farms because of low sugar prices.

Mr Turner: Do you think Mr De Lacy grossly misrepresented the facts?

Mr MENZEL: I doubt that he worked with facts in the first place, but he certainly indulged in misrepresentation in the tripe he dished up. Members of the Opposition are probably the greatest knockers in history.

The member for Cairns referred to the Babinda bypass and claimed that I lost votes in the last State election because of it. I refute that. He should be the last to talk about election results, as he nearly lost the safe Labor seat previously held by Mr Ray Jones. The member for Cairns reduced a majority of 2 000 votes to 200 votes. That indicates what people in Cairns think about him.

I feel compelled to correct his ridiculous statement about draining Eubenangee Swamp. No-one in Babinda has advocated such a move. I was advocating flood mitigation and drainage, and I do not resile from that. Until flood mitigation and drainage are carried out, productivity will be adversely affected, not only in Babinda but also in places such as Ingham, Innisfail and Tully. At Bramston Beach, in my electorate, a small venture into prawn-breeding has been commenced by Mr Peter Martinez and his wife. The venture was initially commenced to breed barramundi and has developed into a successful prawn-breeding business. The shortage of capital has restricted development, but it can be done. I bear witness to that. A similar venture has been established at Flying Fish Point, near Innisfail. Although I have not seen the results there, I am aware of the success of a former venture. The scheme has a future in Queensland. I feel sure that the DPI will contribute the assistance that the ventures deserve.

Such ventures help to create employment. I am informed that when prawns have been bred, they can be sold at a certain size to land-owners. Such diversification could assist cane-farmers. By building ponds on their properties, farmers could breed prawns for eventual sale. Although new industry is not the answer to all problems in primary industry, it could be the answer in a number of instances.

Much has been said about what the Labor Party thinks of primary industries and the National Party. However, what will probably kill primary industries is the imposition of a capital gains tax and death duties. The Labor Party is not prepared to state categorically that it will not introduce a capital gains tax. The Labor Party says that capital gains tax will not be introduced until a complete review of the taxation system has taken place. Of course, Bob Hawke will follow the route of the so-called consensus. He will bring all his stooges to Canberra, talk about it and then decide to impose a capital gains tax.

Mr Davis: This has nothing to do with primary industries.

Mr MENZEL: I am talking about primary industries. I have said that a capital gains tax will ruin primary industries. The land value of my cane farm is probably greater than the sale price of the farm as a going concern. If a capital gains tax were to be introduced and the Valuer-General claimed that my farm had increased in value, I would have to pay the tax.

That is what the Labor Party thinks of primary industries. Its attitude to death and other duties is similar.

Mr DAVIS: I rise to a point of order. I very rarely take points of order, but the fact of life is that this Estimates debate has nothing to do with the imposition of a capital gains tax.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr Booth): Order! There is no point of order.

Mr MENZEL: I realise that this matter is sensitive to members of the Opposition.

Before the last Federal election, on 28 February 1983, in "The Cairns Post" John Kerin said—

"Labor will sympathetically consider any request for a loan and/or underwriting scheme to include the 1982 crop."

Of course, it is now 1984. I think John Kerin's press secretary wrote the speech of the member for Archerfield, because he used similar words, such as, "will sympathetically consider". Primary producers do not want sympathy, they want action. They want to remain viable, which is what the National Party, the Government and the Minister are trying to maintain.

The State Government has provided the sugar industry with more than \$30m by way of loans through the Rural Reconstruction Board. The Commonwealth has contributed only \$15m. The State Government also contributed \$800,000 to increase the delivery price by \$20 per tonne and to pay it in advance of the usual time. That relief was very welcome to the growers.

Mr Turner: And the cost of the internal review.

Mr MENZEL: The State also contributed \$175,000 towards the cost of the internal review.

The cost of fertiliser, harvesting, fuel and wages means that this is a critical time of the year for cane-farmers, so they welcomed that contribution of \$20 per tonne. The relief should have been provided long ago, but it is never too late.

Mr Turner: You were a strong advocate of it because of the need for cash flow at this time of the year.

Mr MENZEL: That is right. If the Minister recalls, with representatives of the sugar industry, a couple of months ago I met the Premier and the Minister in the Executive Building before the delivery price was set.

The price of cane is still too low, but farmers' greatest costs are incurred between July and the end of November. That is when they need the greatest cash flow to prepare the crop for the coming season.

The important thing is that cane-farmers did not get only sympathy from the Minister, they got action. They still need action from the Commonwealth Government, which has a responsibility to the industry.

Mr Turner: It should give what it promised.

Mr MENZEL: That is right. The Labor Government broke its promises.

No doubt during the current election campaign the Labor Party will make more promises, but the people realise it has broken its promises so often that it should not be taken seriously.

It is terrible when a Government, even a Labor Government, is not taken seriously. Kerin is the greatest joke of all time. Members should have heard the statement made by Jack Smith of the Mackay District Cane Growers Executive when the announcement of a \$5m grant was made yesterday by the Commonwealth Government. I would hate to repeat it, because it would embarrass Opposition members.

Kerin would have looked a lot more honest if he had given nothing at all—that was his original intention—because had it not been for the Federal election nothing would have been done. It is the only good thing to come out of the Federal election. If the industry is going to receive \$5m every time there is a Federal election, I hope that there is one every month. We might then get something for the industry.

Mr COMBEN (Windsor) (5.46 p.m.): It gives me pleasure to support the contributions made to this debate by the very capable members of the Opposition who have preceded me.

Earlier today I asked the member for Cairns what credentials the member for Mulgrave had to speak about sugar. The member for Cairns said that, to the best of his knowledge, the member for Mulgrave knew about sugar only in so far as it affected his diabetes. I just pass that on for the elucidation of Government members.

The knowledge and expertise clearly displayed by Opposition members such as Mr Kruger, Mr De Lacy, Mr Campbell and Mr Palaszczuk this afternoon puts to rest for all time claims—

Mr Randell: How many of those members actually have anything to do with farming?

Mr COMBEN: Two of them have degrees as Bachelors of Agriculture, Mr Kruger is the shadow Minister for Primary Industries and has a wide knowledge of every form of primary industry in this State, and Mr Palaszczuk, on his own admission, is an expert on agricultural matters. Their contributions to this debate, unlike the clamourings of Government members—

Mr Davis: What about Mr Simpson? What has he got?

Mr COMBEN: That is quite true. The honourable member for Cooroora has very little going for him. The truest thing said here this afternoon is that Mr Simpson will not get into the ministry but Mr Menzel will become Premier and then we will have real stability in this Government. It will be like a stable, and we all know what is found on a stable floor.

The contributions made by Opposition members put to rest forever the claims of the Government that the Labor Party is concerned only with the large Queensland cities or, put another way, that it is not concerned with rural industries, because Opposition members have shown clearly their knowledge and understanding of them.

Let me look at the historical record. Most of the marketing boards in this State were created by the Labor Party when it was in Government for almost 40 years between 1917 and 1957. Prior to its reorganisation by Premier Ryan, the sugar industry was made up of paupers. The Labor Party put the industry on its feet, but this Government has taken no further initiatives to try to do something for the industry.

Mr Randell interjected.

Mr COMBEN: The Labor Party did. The party that we represent, and will continue to represent, is well aware of the tremendous contributions that rural industry has historically made to Queensland's development and economic well-being.

The total value of crops and pastures alone for the financial year 1981-82 was \$1,460m. The total exports of wool, meat and sugar in the same year were worth \$1,423m. The contribution of rural industry to Queensland's development and well-being is freely acknowledged by this side of the Committee.

Earlier this year, "Queensland Country Life", that august journal of conservatism that one finds everywhere, reported the Minister as saying that this year Queensland's rural production could be worth nearly \$3,000m, and that the record figure was 35 per cent up on last year's \$2,200m and reflected seasonal conditions throughout the State.

A Government Member interjected.

Mr COMBEN: Mr Davis did not write it. I believe that the Minister's press secretary wrote it. That is the only way that the Minister gets a mention in "Queensland Country Life". I will tell members how the Minister gets mentioned in editorials, and he will not like that.

A Government Member: Who is that?

Mr COMBEN: The Minister. Is the honourable member not listening?

The Minister said that preliminary figures on the estimated value of production for all major crops and livestock industries for 1983-84 showed a farm-gate return to producers of \$2,986m. So the rural industries in this State are alive and kicking.

A Government Member: I wonder why.

Mr COMBEN: Because of the assistance provided by the Federal Labor Government in its last Budget, not because of the assistance provided by the State Government in its last Budget.

Mr FitzGerald: "The Courier-Mail" will never print this one.

Mr COMBEN: It never prints anything that I say. I share that honour with the member for Lockyer. Nothing that he says or that I say appears in "The Courier-Mail". The only occasion on which the member for Mount Gravatt (Mr Henderson) is mentioned in "The Courier-Mail" is when he kisses cane toads.

Mr Davis: Or when he buys a classified ad.

Mr COMBEN: The only other way in which the member for Lockyer gets a mention in "The Courier-Mail" is when he buys a little space at the back of the newspaper.

It is quite clear that the Department of Primary Industries is one of the State's largest departments. It can be noted in passing that that confirms what the Opposition has said for many years—that this Government is composed of agrarian socialists. Every device for capitalising profits and socialising losses has been invoked and used by this mercenary Government. When protective legislation is proposed by the Hawke Labor Government in Canberra, there is, according to Government members, a threat to the people's freedom of choice, and that legislation is opposed at every turn. But when the Queensland Government supports the great variety of Queensland marketing boards, with their wide powers of search and detention of both goods and people, that is suddenly acceptable. It is the typical double standard that Opposition members have come to expect from the National Party Government.

No longer is it the Country Party. As my colleague the honourable member for Archerfield (Mr Palaszczuk) said, when the party lost the name "Country", it lost its interest in rural areas.

With such a large and important department, it could be expected that the Minister would be an experienced and long-serving member. However, such is not the case. Personally, I find the Minister to be a genuine gentleman, and I cast no reflections on

his personal integrity. Only recently, he celebrated his first year in the Ministry. As I make no claim to have the detailed knowledge of all the facets of his department—

Mr FitzGerald: You have proved that already.

Mr COMBEN: I have not got into the department yet.

As I do not have the detailed knowledge of the department that other Opposition members have amply demonstrated that they have, I decided to look at the appropriate journals and country newspapers to see what standing the Minister had. What did I find? I went to only one newspaper, "Queensland Country Life", which is the Bible of the National Party in this State. I know that it is, because my father-in-law gets a copy of it every week.

Mr Menzel: Well, he's a Tory, too.

Mr COMBEN: In fact, he is member of the branch to which the member for Pine Rivers (Mrs Chapman) belongs. That is a millstone round my neck. The only good thing that the member for Pine Rivers has going for her is that my father-in-law votes for her.

I refer to the editorial in "Queensland Country Life" of 19 July 1984. Editorials are not written by Ministers' press secretaries, so I would expect this to be a genuine opinion of what the rural industries in this State think of the Minister. I read it with great interest. I again affirm that I have no gripe with the Minister. The editorial states—

"Mr Turner has been Queensland's Primary Industries Minister for nine months and it is timely, perhaps, to review his performance. Frankly, it has been disappointing.

What is required, we believe, is a strong, decisive Minister with the ability to evaluate problems, identify solutions—and then see they are carried out to the benefit of all primary producers.

We need an energetic Minister who not only represents the State Government but also the interests and aspirations of those who make up an industry which earns more revenue than any other for this country.

Most of all we need a Minister who is thoroughly conversant with his portfolio, whose staff understands and appreciates the problems of primary producers, who has the confidence of industry leaders and who is prepared to fight for the things he believes are essential for the better administration of all Queensland primary industry."

Mr Alison: From what are you quoting?

Mr COMBEN: I am quoting from "Queensland Country Life", which is the Bible of the National Party. I see National Party members reading it all the time.

Mr Palaszczuk: It hasn't been changed to the "National Country Life"?

Mr COMBEN: I am waiting for the paper to become the "Queensland National Party Life", but the party has not got round to that yet; it is still catching up. It is still smarting because Galileo was tried for treason.

The editorial continues—

"Most of all we need a Minister who is thoroughly conversant with his portfolio, whose staff understands and appreciates the problems of primary producers, who has the confidence of industry leaders and who is prepared to fight for the things he believes are essential for the better administration of all Queensland primary industry."

Mr Turner probably has these qualities—but he has not displayed them all yet. He is presently unpopular with the sugar industry."

He must be unpopular with the members for Mulgrave and Mirani. Apparently, Mr Menzel is about to go into the Ministry. I do not think that the Premier and Treasurer is all that happy with Mr Menzel at the moment. The editorial continues—

“He has allowed the Premier to make all the government running on the ongoing peanut industry squabble. He has not involved himself in the Metro Meats dispute. He has been non-committal about the beef industry unity question and he does not seem to be able to grasp the real concern felt by the Queensland grain industry over Federal Primary Industry Minister Mr Kerin’s plans to revamp the administration of the industry.

When Mr Turner was appointed to the Primary Industry portfolio last November he admitted with honesty and engaging candour that he was inexperienced and would take time to unravel the mysteries of the Ministry.

All sections of the industry were prepared to give him that time. But nine months have now passed, our patience is wearing thin and it is time, we believe, that he began to solve some of those mysteries.”

I read a similar type of comment about the Minister for Health, and I have a couple more for some of the other Estimates debates. I keep a very close eye on the newspapers and I have all of these articles filed. I am not very good at some other things, but I do keep reports on the Ministers.

I will address now a couple of problems that have been referred to by other capable speakers from this side of the Chamber. I am concerned about on-farm nature conservation. Recently, a working committee of producer organisations published a document called “An Agricultural Policy for Queensland”, which gives the following as one of its recommendations—

“Conservation in rural areas should aim at a balance of achieving a managed ecosystem in which native flora and fauna species are maintaining along with the long-term productivity of the land.”

It is in this context that the value of on-farm nature conservation can be fully realised. While our national parks and other similar reserves set aside examples of the various fauna and flora communities of Queensland, they alone do not achieve a satisfactory level of conservation of native plants and animals. The real value of these reserves is only realised when they function in conjunction with the surrounding landscape with its remnants and corridors of natural vegetation, its partially cleared grazing lands and its greatly modified agricultural lands. The contribution to nature conservation by non-reserved lands is in fact highly significant, and includes their values as habitat for native plants and animals, and as passageways and corridors which allow the dispersal from one area to another of plant and animal populations.

I relate these comments to the Estimates under discussion because the Department of Primary Industries should be doing more for nature conservation through rural industries and primary industries. I realise that, to Government members, it would seem an unusual view to take. All that the Government is interested in is knocking down trees, ploughing everything up and laying concrete. The next thing that I expect to hear from that side of the Chamber is that plastic plants will be grown in the west. They would be easier to manage, and farmers would not have to worry about kangaroos eating them. It is not good enough that areas of monoculture can be found in rural industries.

Sitting suspended from 6 to 7.15 p.m.

Mr COMBEN: These two aspects—the conservation of our heritage of fauna and flora and the maintenance of the long-term productivity of rural lands—are generally compatible and provide good reason for the consideration of nature conservation in property management. That aspect should be considered by the Department of Primary Industries and promoted by it.

I have never been able to understand why the Department of Lands has responsibility for the eradication of vermin and pests across the land. It should be the responsibility of the DPI.

Mr Milliner: At the next election, we will get rid of all that vermin on the other side of the Chamber.

Mr COMBEN: That is quite correct. Certainly, the pests on the other side will be subject to a pest eradication Act and they will be classified as vermin. I understand that they showed a positive reaction in the brucellosis program.

Mr Hamill: I hear that they have some problem with the tuberculosis eradication program.

Mr COMBEN: Yes, they have.

I now turn to soil conservation, a matter that has been eloquently addressed by the honourable member for Cairns. He spoke of the need for comprehensive soil conservation programs and referred to the Eather report. He stated that the recommendations set out in the report are not being implemented by the Government. He referred to the large quantity of soil that is washed down into Brisbane waterways, which meant that water for drinking had to be cleaned.

On 5 June this year, "The Sunday Mail" contained an article headed "Our best soil washed to South Australia". It was claimed that flood rains in early April and May had stripped 36 million tonnes of soil from Queensland grain-growing areas. More than 770 000 ha had been damaged by soil erosion, and the losses averaged 46 tonnes per hectare. It was claimed that the worst affected areas were the rich Central Highlands and the Dawson River basin.

In my early days, I used to do labouring work in the Central Highlands area. I helped clear yellow wood, bauhinia and brigalow scrub off the old black soil.

Mr Davis: They were tough old days.

Mr COMBEN: They were tough days. The old cocky used to stick to his black soil in the wet and the dry, and the black soil used to stick to us in the wet. That is the only way in which the situation can be described.

After the scrub had been cleared, I watched soil swept down to the nearest creek or erosion gully during the next wet. If people had had sufficient wit to leave stands of trees so that they could absorb the force of the water run-off, thereby holding the soil together so that it would not be eroded, that land would be intact today. Those areas are now a sorry sight. The whole landscape has been eroded.

Mr Davis: Not a bird on the property—not one bird.

Mr COMBEN: It is quite true that the birds have gone. In my days, there were bustards all over the place. These days, because of the use of 2,4,5-T in getting rid of grasshoppers, very few old bustards are left.

Mrs Chapman: Very few what?

Mr COMBEN: Bustards—plains turkeys.

The use of poisons and insecticides will destroy Queensland's native wildlife. Opposition members oppose that practice, but this Government allows it to continue. Our native heritage of every sort—our land, our trees and our wildlife—must be conserved.

When I was looking through various newspaper articles for information on soil conservation and what the present thinking was as far as the press was concerned, the only person on the Government side who was prepared to be quoted in the press and say to the Government, "We need more money for soil conservation.", was the member

for Condamine (Mr Littleproud). He at least had the guts to stand and say, "Literally hundreds of thousands of tonnes of valuable topsoil are being washed away in Queensland every year. It won't and can't be replaced." It is pleasing that one member of the Government has the integrity to stand up for some of Queensland's heritage.

Finally, I bring to the Minister's attention the need to rationalise commercial fishing and in some way lower fish prices in this State so that Brisbane's most attractive seafood restaurants in the tourist centres can offer a reasonably priced menu. Places such as Misho's restaurant at Alderley are excellent places at which to eat. The Minister should give consideration to fish cultivation and commercial fishing so that restaurants such as Misho's, with its excellent hosts, can continue to operate profitably.

Time expired.

Mr LITTLEPROUD (Condamine) (7.21 p.m.): In speaking to the Estimates of the Department of Primary Industries, I congratulate the Minister on a comprehensive but precise address on his portfolio. I would be remiss if I did not also pay tribute to the staff of the Department of Primary Industries in Brisbane and in the field. The services provided by the DPI, which could be best described as wide-ranging and of a high standard, are appreciated. The officers play a very important role. They retain the practical approach that is so important when talking to the man on the land. In fact, it would be true to say that, together with the primary producers, the DPI plays a very important role in making Queensland's rural industries efficient users of modern technology.

Many rural industries are in crisis. One of the causes of that crisis must be the policies of the present Federal Government. I shall list some of the industries that are in trouble. The sugar industry is in trouble. Members on both sides of the Chamber have referred to its problems. Concern has been expressed about the dairying industry. The grain-growing industry is going through a period of low viability. I will elaborate on that later. At present, the wool industry is not travelling too badly. A great deal of Australian wool is being purchased on the world market under the floor price scheme.

The beef industry is one of the brightest stars on the horizon. It has been suggested that during the next few years its rate of growth will be above that of inflation.

What is causing the problems? Internally, I could refer to rising fuel costs, which have been brought about by the excise duty on fuel. Concern has been expressed about export inspection charges on beef and produce in general. There is a threat of a capital gains tax hanging over our heads. I will elaborate on that later. A tariff has been imposed on headers; a tax has been imposed on superannuation; an assets test has been introduced.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: That is not only my opinion. "Queensland Country Life" of 18 October, under the heading "Industry News", states—

"A slump of \$1218m—or 29 percent in real terms—in the net value of rural output was forecast this week by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics."

So it is not only my opinion; it is backed by the BAE.

I said that I would refer at length to the assets test. Many people are worried about the assets test. Tonight, I would like to concentrate my remarks on some people in my electorate who are extremely troubled by it. I refer particularly to the family farm. Before honourable members begin worrying about the validity of my figures, I point out that they have been examined by a man of very high standing in the grain industry who is also a member of Queensland Bulk Grains.

Mr Booth: Would you say that this is probably the biggest sleeper in the election, and that probably it will be the issue that will decide it?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I think that it will come through pretty well.

The family farm generally represents two generations. The one most in danger is the family farm where the father is aged, just retired or about to retire and unable to play an active part in the running of the farm. However, he still owns the property and has his son working on it. His son may have very little equity in the land, but he works the farm on a share basis.

It is important to remember that these days the average farm is barely able to provide a living for one family. I give three examples. The first is a 600-acre grain farm on the black-soil plains of the Condamine area. That is the average size of a grain farm. The farm is worth about \$500 an acre, giving a value of \$300,000. As the machinery to work the farm is worth approximately \$200,000, the total assets are about \$500,000. Four hundred acres under winter wheat, yielding three-quarters of a tonne per acre, would produce a gross income of about \$30,000. A summer crop of 200 acres, yielding approximately 1 tonne to the acre, returns \$30,000. The gross return for the year is \$50,000.

Although that may appear to be a great deal of money, the costs are substantial. At \$50 an acre, the 400-acre winter crop costs \$20,000. For 200 acres of summer crop, greater expenses are involved—\$60 an acre. That amount of \$12,000 results in total costs on the property of \$32,000. The costs allow for the purchase of machinery, seed, fertiliser, chemicals, labour and depreciation.

Mr Hartwig: What happens if no rain falls?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: That is the risk element that I have not yet taken into account. The net annual profit from an enterprise with assets of \$500,000 is \$18,000. I point out that that farm is expected to support two generations. At \$18,000 a year, the return on capital is 3.6 per cent.

The second example is a mixed farm of 1 280 acres. Such farms are common in my area. At \$250 an acre, the property is worth \$320,000 bare. The conservative value of 200 head of stock—probably breeding cows—is \$60,000. The machinery to produce grain and fodder is valued at \$70,000, which makes an all-up investment of \$450,000. What is the income from that property? Taking into account that it is not top grain-growing country, 300 acres of grain at \$80 an acre would yield an income of \$24,000. If a property-owner breeding vealers turned off 200 head of stock at a margin of \$100 a head, he would gross \$44,000 for the year. The costs involved in 300 acres of grain at \$50 an acre would amount to \$15,000. Producing fodder for the beef on 400 acres costs \$12,000, making total costs for the year of approximately \$27,000. The property therefore yields a profit of \$17,000 a year, giving a return on capital of 3.8 per cent. Once again, the property supports a father and son.

The third example taken from my electorate of Condamine is a cattle property of 5 000 acres on much less productive country. The land is worth approximately \$60 an acre, giving the property a value of \$300,000. The property probably carries 300 cows at approximately \$400 a head for a cow-and-calf unit, or \$100,000 worth of stock. The machinery is worth, conservatively, \$30,000 so the total investment is \$450,000. From the 300 cows, the property-owner would sell 250 vealers or weaners a year at about \$200 a head, giving him a total income of \$50,000.

The costs of running the property are difficult to estimate, but it must be remembered that timber treatment has to be paid for, fences have to be maintained and water has to be provided. There would be associated with cartage of stock and depreciation on fencing and all the machinery approximate costs of \$30,000. The result is a profit of \$20,000, but that figure can vary depending on how costs are managed. The return on capital is 4.5 per cent.

Mr Davis: He would not be paying much tax.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: The member for Brisbane Central said "he". What he should have said was "they" He should bear in mind that I am referring to a family farm

supporting two generations. Because their profits are low, they cannot be expected to pay much tax. The member for Brisbane Central thinks that tax should be paid on \$50,000 or \$44,000. But that is at the top of the page. The bottom line provides the relevant figure.

The father, who has just retired, is now faced with a pensioner assets test. The property cannot support two people. Because he owns the land he will not be able to get a pension, so the first option is for him to sell the farm and invest the money to support himself. What happens to the son? He loses his livelihood and goes on to the dole. Option No. 2 is that the father accepts the pension under that very generous scheme under which, when he dies, the Federal Government deducts the pension payments from the assets in his estate.

Mrs Chapman: Surely they are not going to do that!

Mr LITTLEPROUD: The Government abolished death duties but this is the Labor Party's underhanded way of reintroducing them.

The third option is for both families to remain on the farm. The aged father is able to retain the house and 2 ha of land. That means that two families will be trying to live on a net income of approximately \$20,000, which puts them below the poverty line.

Those who have just retired or who are about to retire face a terrible crisis. I appeal to members opposite to make representations to their Federal colleagues to make them aware of the crisis they have created for these people. As a result of that crisis, I can predict only one thing: in the rural areas there will be a huge anti-Labor vote at the Federal election.

The "Queensland Graingrower" of 17 October reported Mr Kerin, the man who has the feel of things, as follows—

"Mr Kerin said the Government would build on the support it won in provincial cities last year but conceded Labor had little chance of winning significant sections of the farmer vote."

Mr Hartwig: That is pretty true! It is spot on!

Mr LITTLEPROUD: That is right.

I now wish to address myself to the proposed capital gains tax, which is a major election issue.

Opposition Members interjected.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: From the number of interjections from Labor members, it is easy to see that they are hypersensitive about it.

First of all the Labor attitude was no capital gains tax. The second was well, maybe a capital gains tax. Mr Cotton came out and said that there would probably be a capital gains tax. Mr Hawke said that yes, of course, there would be.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr Randell): Order! I would like the honourable member to touch on the Estimates every now and again.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: Part of my argument is the viability of farms. Mr Randell, I hope you will bear with me.

An article headed "ACTU threat on changes to taxation" contained in today's "Australian" reads—

"The president of the ACTU, Mr Cliff Dolan, yesterday said unions would argue for capital gains and wealth taxes and, possibly, death duties as part of a national taxation review planned by the Federal Government."

That will have a great effect on the nation's primary industries. The article continues—

“He said the ACTU could become 'unco-operative' with a Labor government if its affiliated unions believed they were affected adversely by the results of a tax restructuring.”

My point is that the policies of the Federal Government are endangering the viability of primary industries. That makes it very difficult for the Department of Primary Industries and the Minister to come up with policies that will compensate for the damage done by the Federal Government.

In the same vein, the “Queensland Graingrower” of 17 October reads—

“N.F.F. president Ian McLachlan said capital gains taxes, including death duties, value-added tax, capital gains and wealth tax, would place a heavy burden on the community.

The proposition of such a capital tax is an abomination which would have devastating effects on farm viability.

Contrary to popular belief, the average amount of taxation paid by each farmer has consistently exceeded the average paid by all taxpayers despite farm income being below national income, he said.”

I wish to spend a few moments speaking about the consternation about the new five-year wheat agreement that has been forced onto the grain industry. Not all the blame can be sheeted home to Mr Kerin, because the Queensland Graingrowers Association is dissatisfied with the heirarchy of the Australian Wheat Board.

The agreement will operate from 1 October 1984. I want to discuss some of the points that concern me greatly. First of all, for a number of years—for the sake of democracy, I might say—a subsidy has been paid to Tasmania to reduce wheat and flour costs so that Tasmanians can purchase bread at the same price as most other Australians. Over the years that subsidy has been paid from consolidated revenue, but Mr Kerin has come up with a system under which the subsidy will remain but will be paid by the industry itself. In other words, instead of all Australians helping the Tasmanian people to buy bread at the lower price, the subsidy will now come out of the pockets of the wheat-growers, which is hardly a fair thing. No wonder there is discontent in the QGGA.

The change in the home consumption price has also upset wheat-growers. It was \$219.41, but Mr Kerin has come up with a plan that is supposed to look after the wheat-growers of Australia and, suddenly, the home consumption price has been reduced to \$195.25. Is it any wonder that there is not much support for the ALP in the bush? That move will cost wheat-growers \$30m this year alone.

There are also problems with the blending of wheat to be sold overseas. Under the new system five classifications are allowed for. When wheat is delivered to the dock it will be classified as a certain grade, and growers will be paid at the rate for that classification. I have been told by a reliable source that it is possible to mix various grades of wheat—very often a little top quality wheat is mixed with a large proportion of poorer quality wheat to lift the quality of the mixture—so as to arrange a market overseas at a premium price. Growers are worried that the extra money that accrues to the Australian Wheat Board under this system will not finally make its way through to the growers.

Mr R. J. Gibbs: Is this a pause for effect, or are you having a Wheatie?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: It is just for effect, because I know that the honourable member intends to speak, and I am waiting for that.

I now want to discuss a couple of local issues. Cotton is a growing industry in this State. Unfortunately, this year the price is down. It would be unwise of me, however, not to pay tribute to the initiative of people along the Condamine River who are turning

from winter crops and some summer crops to irrigated cotton, because it offers a better return per acre.

The pig industry is very important to the Queensland economy, and the Condamine electorate has more piggeries than any other part of Queensland. During 1983 the industry suffered a downturn in profitability but prices have recently improved. Unfortunately, the cost of coarse grains is affecting that improvement in price.

Mr Mackenroth: Are you saying there are more pigs in Condamine than anywhere else in Queensland?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I have noticed that there are a few in Chatsworth, too.

Mr R. J. Gibbs: I wondered where you picked up those eating habits of yours.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: The honourable member does no credit to the people of Wolston. I noticed that his electorate office is situated in a gully, which is exactly where he belongs.

In the past two years the grain industry in Condamine, particularly the winter crops, has suffered severely because of excess wet——

An Opposition Member interjected.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: It is not the superwet belt of Babinda. However, those people have not whinged or asked for a lot of money, but I do think that, when they are able to prove to the Minister and the Agricultural Bank that they are short of liquidity, consideration should be given to helping them. They will be making applications through the normal channels. They are concerned because they noticed that Cabinet approved relief money at 7 per cent interest to people on the Atherton Tableland whose crops suffered frost damage. I noticed that any finance presently being given to people in the grain belt is at 13.5 per cent interest, so today I asked the department for some explanation. I was assured that it will be forthcoming.

In conclusion, I congratulate the Minister on his administration of the portfolio, and I hope that there are better times ahead for primary industry.

Mr DAVIS (Brisbane Central) (7.40 p.m.): I did not intend to speak in this debate but, after listening to the moaning, whinging cow-cockies on the Government side, I feel that I have to say a few words.

Members who have been in this Chamber for a few years wait for the newly elected members. We receive little bits of information about them. The member for Condamine succeeded Vic Sullivan who, together with the former member for Roma, left this Parliament under a bit of a cloud. We were told that the newly elected member for Condamine was a good cricketer, a former schoolteacher and a cow-cocky. Most of the speeches that he has made in this Chamber have been from the same mould. He is a moaning, whinging cow-cocky.

Except for a brief recess, I have been a member since 1969 and have listened to the moaning, whinging members on the Government side. Whenever a Federal Labor Government is elected, they blame it for everything.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I rise to a point of order. Is the honourable member talking about the Estimates?

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr Randell): Order!

Mr Goss: They have never once given us credit for breaking the drought.

Mr DAVIS: That is true. The God-fearing Premier is given credit for that.

I have had the moans and whinges up to my neck. If Mr Kerin had given primary producers \$50m or \$100m, it still would not have been enough.

I have travelled overseas with the Minister for Primary Industries. He is not a bad bloke, although he is a bit thick. He is a raw-boned country youth trying to do his job. I want to be fair. The Minister is a grazier. He owns a small property at Morven. I have been on it.

Mr Burns: How many acres?

Mr DAVIS: I think that there are about 6 000 acres, about 100 acres of which he can use. I do not want to be nasty but, when I visited the property, an expert in Herefords was inspecting it. He looked at some of the Minister's cattle and said, "They are the ugliest b..... cattle that I have seen in my life."

How would the Minister be able to talk about sugar? I know more about sugar than he does; I have three teaspoonfuls of sugar in my tea. This is the expert that the Government sends to Geneva to negotiate on a sugar agreement and world sugar prices.

I shall turn now to the department's annual report. I have read it from cover to cover and, if Government members ask me any questions about it, I will give them the answers.

Mr Goss: Is it not true that we have not heard one word from them about the jojoba industry?

Mr DAVIS: That is true. They would not even know what it is.

A Government Member: What is it?

Mr DAVIS: It is a bean.

An interesting comment that appears on page 2 of the annual report shows just how bad the Government is.

Government Members interjected.

Mr DAVIS: Government members should listen.

The report shows just how much this Government props up-----

Mr Stephan: Will you take an interjection?

Mr DAVIS: I will take the honourable member's interjection about five minutes before the end of my speech.

Mr Littleproud interjected.

Mr DAVIS: No, I have plenty that I can refer to in the report.

I ask honourable members to listen to the assistance that the Government gives to the cow-cookies, the wheat-farmers and the scrubbers. Last year the Government contributed \$9,547,000 in rail and road freight rebates.

Mr Littleproud: From this Government.

Mr DAVIS: Yes. But who paid the taxes? That expenditure comes out of the taxes of Queenslanders. Honourable members should remember that.

Fodder subsidy was of the order of a million and a half dollars. The cost of agistment was over \$6m. Scrub-feeding subsidy was over \$1.2m. Drowsing subsidy was \$90,000. On-property slaughter subsidy was \$78,000. Drought relief loans for primary producers totalled more than \$41m. Relief loans for small country business was of the order of \$1,333,000.

Mr Mackenroth: That is why they are glad they haven't got a socialist Government.

Mr DAVIS: That is right.

That is a good example of what the Government has done. The whole report is in a similar vein.

I turn now to how much primary industries cost the State. This involves more than the \$41m that I just mentioned. For payments authorised by special Acts and for the contingencies and salaries of the Department of Primary Industries, \$81m was spent in the 1982-83 financial year and over \$86m was spent in 1983-84.

Mr Campbell: How much do they give the racehorse-owners?

Mr DAVIS: I am talking about primary industries. I am not an expert on everything. That is a good question, but I am purely and simply an expert on primary industries.

Mr Hamill interjected.

Mr DAVIS: That is probably so.

What continually annoys members of the Opposition is the criticism that is levelled against the Labor Party that it is not interested in primary industries. That is utter rubbish.

Mr Turner: You have demonstrated it.

Mr DAVIS: No, I am just giving examples.

Many industries in the metropolitan area are battling because of the charges and stamp duty imposed by the Government. The comparison with people in primary industries is just amazing. They do not pay anywhere near what city people pay.

The member for Condamine told the old story about the old battler—pop and his son—working on his farm. However, the value of his property might be half a million dollars.

Mr R. J. Gibbs: It is certainly not the little house on the prairie.

Mr DAVIS: No, there are no Jed Clampetts there.

Government members give examples of how hard they toil on their properties.

Mr Cooper: You are making an absolute mockery of this.

Mr DAVIS: It is all right for the member for Roma, because he forgets that I was born on the Darling Downs, that I lived on farms and that I know the story. My family comes from the land.

The fact of life is that primary producers want every other section of the community to prop them up, and that is the whole point. The same thing occurs when a Federal Labor Government is in power. All that primary producers want to do is take.

Mr Innes: Is it true that you haven't had one successful application for the young farmer scheme from your electorate?

Mr DAVIS: I am glad that the member for Sherwood mentioned that. He is the Liberal Party expert on primary industries. The Young Farmers Establishment Scheme is a farce. The Minister who introduced the scheme said that hundreds of young farmers, who were mostly young sons of farmers, would be settled on the land. The Government was to buy up properties and the young farmers would be assisted. After about five years, about 11 farms have been bought.

An Honourable Member interjected.

Mr DAVIS: Well, I have not heard the numbers from Government members.

Mr Cooper: 53 have been set up.

Mr DAVIS: That is even worse, considering how long the scheme has been in operation. This scheme was to settle hundreds of young farmers.

Now that I have finished dealing with primary industries and the whingers on the Government side, I turn to another matter under the control of the Minister, namely, the bread industry. Approximately four years ago, the then Minister for Primary Industries, Vic Sullivan, introduced the so-called bread industry scheme. It was supposed to solve all the problems in the industry, but all it did was result in the setting up of the Bread Committee, which is an absolute farce. Next, the Government came along with proposals to introduce another bread industry Bill. All honourable members will recall what happened to that draconian legislation. It lay on the table, and it did not see the light of day. In presenting these Estimates, the Minister said that another bread industry Bill will be brought forward.

As I have said on many occasions, there would not be a greater mob of cutthroat operators than the people who are in charge of the bread industry. They could not even agree on when to push the button to activate the traffic lights at a pedestrian crossing. Time and time again, they sit down and discuss the problems in the industry, but they never reach agreement.

Mr Littleproud: What is the problem with bread? Is it too dear or too cheap?

Mr DAVIS: It should be a lot cheaper. It should be up to 10c a loaf cheaper.

An Opposition Member: Plenty of dough.

Mr DAVIS: I am glad that my colleague raised that point. There is plenty of dough going into the Bjelke-Petersen Foundation.

Under the so-called agreement in the bread industry, returns were set at 10 per cent. When the Bill was under debate, I said that there was no way in the world that the industry would restrict returns to 10 per cent. I am led to believe that the level is as high as 20 or 25 per cent, particularly now that the date of baking is stamped on the wrappers of sliced and packaged bread. Who pays for the returns? Who pays for the bread that is thrown out to the chooks? The housewife! What is more, since the setting up of the Bread Committee, there have been very few retail bread runs in Brisbane. The big manufacturers got together and formed combines.

I conclude by saying that I am fed up with the whining and whinging from members of the Country Party—I should say National Party—who have sold out their own people. Firstly, they sold them out by changing the name of their party from Country Party to National Party. Now they have forgotten all about country people. When they leave this Chamber and return to their electorates, they do not care two hoots about their electors, as long as they can obtain a subsidy for them. No matter what the problems are, National Party members want a subsidy and a profit.

I would like to see the tax returns of the so-called farmers in the country whose properties are worth anything from half a million dollars to a million dollars. I have never seen more generous tax concessions than those allowed to the graziers and the farmers.

Mr Cooper: What do you know about it?

Mr DAVIS: I know a lot about it. The graziers and farmers can average their profits over seven years. I would like to know how many ordinary business people are able to do that. That is what half the primary producers are able to do. Rest assured that when they sell their properties for either \$1m or \$1.2m, they will try to use every tax dodge they can to save paying tax.

We have seen through them and we know what they are all about. In the Parliamentary Library honourable members will find the book "Dad Rudd in Politics" written by Steele Rudd in about 1895. Some of the speeches that have been made by members who

represent country electorates are exactly the same as those in the book. We have heard about farms being taken over by kangaroos. In fact, we have heard the lot. In 1895, the members who represented Condamine, Roma and other electorates in south-west Queensland asked, "When are we going to get the railway line?" When the railway line was constructed they wanted a subsidy to use it, a subsidy to kill kangaroos and a subsidy for clearing. What has changed? Nothing! They are the same whining and whinging crowd that they were in the 1890s.

Mr STONEMAN (Burdekin) (7.56 p.m.): It almost makes me feel humble to follow a member who has made such an unbelievable speech! It reminds me of a rather witty comment. It is a long time since a witty comment has been made by the ALP at the State or Federal level. Mr Fred Daly suggested that the only qualification required of a member of the Liberal Party to be Minister for Primary Industry was that he own a cat, a canary and a garden hose. I was very much reminded of that tonight. It is obvious that a full description of the Opposition is contained in Fred Daley's original comments. The Opposition heaps insults and jokes on the primary producers of this State, particularly those of us who have the honour but the unenviable task of representing the people who, despite the great range of problems confronting them, produce the income for this State. I do not suggest that the people who are not farmers are not productive, but it is necessary to have primary producers so that we can all enjoy our present standard of living.

The honourable member who referred to jojoba beans has left the Chamber. He would be interested to learn that the largest and oldest private enterprise experiment in jojoba beans is at Prairie. The honourable member has probably never heard of the place. A great friend of mine, Mr Doug Brown, has been growing jojoba beans for a number of years, so he knows a great deal about them.

Unlike the members of the cat, the canary and the garden hose brigade, I came to this Chamber with a little experience. However, I do not regard myself as an expert. For many years I was involved in wheat, fat lamb and wool production, then wool alone. Finally, I was involved in the beef industry in western Queensland. I then returned to farming in the Burdekin area, which is one of the greatest farming areas on the east coast of Australia. So I feel that I have some understanding of what primary industries is all about.

I congratulate the Minister on the work that he is doing in concert with his department. The responsibilities of a Minister for Primary Industries in this or any other State are huge. It is necessary for him to understand and to come to grips with many problems. It is disappointing that some primary industries have suggested that the Minister should be everywhere. I noted the comments of a member who has travelled with the Minister. He noted that people suggested that the Minister was not doing the job as well as they thought he should or that he should have been somewhere else the day before. However, when they came face to face with him they soon changed their minds and accepted that he has a very deep understanding of their problems. It is certainly deeper than that of the member for Brisbane Central, who referred to three teaspoonfuls of sugar. The cane-farmers have a growing and deep regard for the Minister for Primary Industries (Neil Turner).

I compliment the Minister with complete sincerity and with the backing of the majority of cane-growers in this State. Similarly, officers of the Department of Primary Industries, under the guidance of Dr Graham Alexander, are to be commended on their work. From time to time, nitpicking is indulged in when minor problems arise. I confess that I take part in that. However, the department must have a larger range of activities than any similar department in the world. Sugar and cattle production alone represent 47½ per cent of the State's primary industry income. In addition, the department's activities cover grain, wool, horticulture, dairying and a multitude of small industries such as fishing and tobacco. The list is endless. As the member for Brisbane Central indicated, the annual report of the department outlines the very wide range of activities

undertaken. The officers of the department are to be commended for the production of a very good report.

Apart from its range of activities, the department has to confront huge variations in climatic conditions over a vast State. Even on the tropical north coast, there are wide variations in climate.

I sympathise with members of the farming community in drier coastal areas such as Bowen. Their plight is similar to that of farmers and other primary producers in the Burdekin district. They may be even worse off, because they do not have the advantage of a large river system. When the Burdekin runs, people in the area are fortunate to be able to draw water off. The catchment area round Bowen is short, which affords very little relief for problems encountered during dry periods.

When the Minister undertook a tour of sugar areas in my electorate, he also visited the Bowen area and talked to vegetable-growers. As a result, he was able to appreciate the problems confronting them. They have massive problems, but they seem to be handling them with almost unbelievable equanimity.

Leaving aside far western areas such as Boulia, Bedourie, Birdsville and Thargomindah, I turn to the subject of soil types—a subject that makes the mind boggle. Honourable members opposite are beginning to stir. The honourable member for Ashgrove is listening intently, but the only soil type he would know about is that found in a cricket pitch or in a lawn.

Advice from the Department of Primary Industries on subjects such as leaching and erosion is of tremendous assistance. However, a great deal of understanding and professional knowledge is required to implement that advice in a worthwhile way.

In my electorate, the range of departmental activities is very wide indeed, and I have some knowledge of the department's operations. The headquarters of the department in the Burdekin area at Ayr has 20 employees, and the employment created is important to the town's economy. Those officers, under the guidance of the present officer-in-charge, Mr James Barnes, have a vast area to service, and their work is held in extremely high esteem. I will deal with that later. Mr Barnes is leaving in January. He has been transferred to the Kingaroy area.

The research station at Millaroo has four or five full-time employees under the supervision of Chesty Ballard. They perform very worthwhile work in the area. For the benefit of those who do not know, I point out that Millaroo is approximately 40 miles up the Burdekin River from the coast and is almost in the centre of the Lower Burdekin area.

To the north-west of Millaroo is the Swan's Lagoon Experimental Station, which employs seven or eight men under the manager (Russ Tyler) and Stewart McClellan, who is in charge of research. They are doing a tremendous amount of work with tropical cattle, pasture and so on.

I wish to reflect on the work of one of the departmental officers in the area, Mr Maurie Finlay, who retired a few weeks ago. I had the honour of speaking at one of the farewell functions held for him. Unless honourable members heard the sincere tributes of those who spoke at that gathering, they would not realise the esteem in which Maurie Finlay is held.

During the 38 years that he was in the DPI, he gained a wealth of knowledge. He spent 23 years in the Burdekin, and he was the extension officer and adviser on virtually all crops that anyone could wish to grow. He was also involved with experimental crops that are not yet in commercial production. I pay tribute to Maurie, his wife and family. One of the wonderful things about that officer of the DPI is that after working in the area for many years, he intends to retire there and, in an ongoing sense, his knowledge will be there for everybody to tap.

Mr R. J. Gibbs: What about Mr Hawke?

Mr STONEMAN: I do not intend to speak about Mr Hawke. He said it all last night on John Barton's television show. The honourable member will not hear me knocking the Opposition.

Mr Kruger: Hawke does it well.

Mr STONEMAN: Yes, he does, but he gets cranky very quickly.

The Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations also comes under the control of the Minister. One of those stations is sited in the Burdekin, at Brandon. Under the guidance of Ian Freshwater, John Pollock, Ash Benson, Gary Ham, Max Braithwaite and a number of other people, a tremendous amount of work is carried out. They have a great rapport with the section of the industry that they serve, that is, the cane-growers of the area.

Recently, Claude Rehbein, who was held in high esteem by the industry, retired. Again, he intends to stay in Brandon. It is wonderful to see an officer of the department have enough confidence in an area and like it enough to happily retire there so that, from time to time in the future, his knowledge can be tapped. I pay tribute to Claude for the work that he did for the cane-farmers. In fact, on numerous occasions I was able to go around with Claude and watch him in action at shed meetings when he spoke about sugar production, harvesting problems, weed control and so on. He had a complete grip of the problems of the industry.

The four areas that supply cane to the Invicta Mill are Giru, Clare, Millaroo and Dalbeg, which contain approximately 750 farmers. The Burdekin area, which has approximately 11.86 per cent of the total assigned cane farm area of Queensland, produces approximately 16.8 per cent of the tonnage of cane.

In 1983, it produced almost 20 per cent of the State's sugar. The area produces 14 tonnes of cane per hectare, against an Australian average of approximately 11 tonnes. It is extremely productive. As well as being a wonderful geographical area, it is supported by the Department of Primary Industries, which assists growers to achieve high production.

Rice is grown in the Burdekin area. In fact, 20 per cent of all Australia's rice is grown in the area and the only rice-mill in Australia is located in Home Hill. The rice-producers organisation in the area, under the chairmanship of Mr Lindsay Hall, is very lucky to have Dr Mike Cox of the department looking into new plant varieties and the problems that the producers have to overcome. In the years to come, rice production will play a very significant part in the development of the Burdekin area.

The Burdekin area also boasts grain-growing, horticulture, and even flower-growing and fishing. The honourable member for Lytton is not present, but he would be interested to know that a range of fishing is available in the Burdekin electorate, including estuary fish, such as the famous barramundi. Mud crabs are harvested commercially, and reef fish are also caught. I am fortunate to have part of the Barrier Reef in my electorate. The only problem is that I can not get out to it often enough. A full range of facilities is available for the local fishing industry. For instance, the Musemeci family has been in the industry for 36 years. Angelo Musemeci and his sons are processing fish locally and presenting it in a fashion that would make anyone proud. They are doing that many miles from where facilities are available.

The beef industry plays a large part in the economy of the area. Fattening is carried on in a large part of the western and northern areas of the electorate round Ravenswood and Mingela and right through to the Gulf of Carpentaria—almost into the area in which producers are having problems with brucellosis and tuberculosis. Again I pay a tribute to the Minister for coming to the area and looking into the problems confronting the industry. One is access to markets, but the industry is supported by the expertise of the staff of the Bohle saleyards under the manager, Russell Osborne, who was for many years a property manager in the area and has a practical understanding of the problems. The abattoir is managed by Peter Dalseno. All of those people come under the umbrella of the department and the Minister.

I recently had dealings with the Minister and the department concerning a problem dealing with the Brands Act. For the benefit of honourable members opposite and some of the cat, canary and garden hose brigade, I point out that the Brands Act plays a very significant part in the lives of primary producers. Their brands and earmarks are precious to them.

Because of a change in the Act some years ago the earmarks that had been used on many thousands of cattle cannot now be used. Recently I had a talk with the Minister and one of his senior officers, and they agreed that that change to the Act has caused anomalies. I want to cite two examples—that of the Hedlef family and that of Mr Bob Reilly, who is one of the founders of the Droughtmaster breed. Mr Reilly found that, when he brought his daughter-in-law into the family company, the company's earmark was no longer valid. The Minister has recognised the anomaly and the department is looking into the problem. Members would realise the problems confronting families who have to change their earmark after having used the same mark for 100 years.

Finally, I want to deal with the lack of communication between the DPI and farmers. I am very proud to be involved in the new Queensland Telecommunications Strategy Planning Committee. One of the areas that the committee will be looking at is the way in which departments such as the Department of Primary Industries might better communicate their knowledge and services to farmers in the remote and semi-remote areas. I will be making representations to help organisations such as the Toorak Research Station to use new technology to communicate the work of the Department of Primary Industries to the farmer. There has to be two-way communication. The new technology available in Queensland, which has been accepted by this Government, will be of great benefit to primary producers throughout the State.

I turn to the Queensland Meat Authority and its reporting service. The chairman of the Queensland Meat Authority, Mr Bill Meynink, is a practicing and practical farmer. I have a tremendous regard for him. With his many years of experience, he is picking up the new technology. He is utilising computer sales and computer-reporting. He is planning data transmissions so that cattle can be sold without actually being mustered, which minimises bruising. The whole thrust of the department is to utilise this new technology.

The experimental work of the department will do much to increase productivity in areas such as the Lower Burdekin, the Gulf, the Peninsula and the Darling Downs.

I commend the Minister and the department for the report and their activities. I am confident that those activities will continue for many years.

Mr R. J. GIBBS (Wolston) (8.17 p.m.): Although my contribution will be brief, I think that it is important. I wish to speak about an increasing problem in the fishing industry. I refer to the thousands of men and women in this State who derive great pleasure from standing on the foreshores and fishing for that great sporting fish, tailor. It is time that the Government gave serious consideration to banning the net fishing of tailor because it is killing off a great sport.

The tailor that can be bought at Woolworths or Coles cannot be compared with fresh tailor. When a tailor is caught on the beach, the neck has to be broken or the gills cut immediately so that it can bleed. If it is not bled, the blood congeals and the flesh has dark stripes through it. That is the type of tailor that is sold at Woolworths or Coles.

Over the years, Fraser Island has become famous for what is known as the tailor run. Moreton Island and other places over the border are also famous for tailor. Tailor start their run there and work their way north. This has been a shocking season for tailor fishermen; so was last year and the year before. The reason for that is that the net fishermen are trawling their nets and catching hundreds of thousands of tonnes of these fish at a time. They are leaving nothing for the part-time sportsman.

Recently, it was reported to me that a couple of weeks ago it appeared that the tailor were arriving at Fraser Island. Out of the sky swooped a helicopter registered in

New South Wales and drove the fish to a spot approximately 500 metres off the shore. Three trawlers came through dragging their nets. They completely destroyed that school of fish. There were about 50 anglers on the beach waiting to catch those tailor.

Mr Stoneman: Probably your mate Mr Wran sent that helicopter up there.

Mr R. J. GIBBS: That is the most imbecilic interjection that I have every heard. I can only refer the honourable member for Burdekin to the comments that I have made about tailor. If the honourable member was bled he might be a better person for it.

It is a crying shame that this great angler's sport is being chopped to pieces by professional net fishermen. Tailor is not a fish that is needed to bolster the industry or to give a reasonable standard of living to professional fishermen. It is a fish that should be caught from the beach.

It is not just the part-time angler who is suffering. The bait and tackle industry is also suffering. When the tailor start to run, companies such as Alvey reels and Mossop's Tackle Shop enjoy quite a boom in business. However, in recent times, many of the bait and tackle businesses, which are small businesses, have witnessed a dramatic downturn because the tailor runs just do not happen as they used to.

I have given the Committee only a small insight into what is a big problem. People from all sides of politics are affected because thousands of people in this State like to get onto the beach and fish. I ask the Minister to seek advice from his officers on whether banning net fishing of tailor in this State is a practical solution.

Mr NEWTON (Caboolture) (8.22 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to speak to these Estimates. I am pleased about the increase of 17.6 per cent in the Budget allocation to the Department of Primary Industries.

A vital service provided by the Department of Primary Industries is the development of overseas trade. The department has taken a number of initiatives and made a major contribution to Asia's first agricultural exhibition in August 1984 at a cost of \$37,000.

The Government has encouraged fresh fruit exports. Markets just do not appear of their own accord. In 1962, for example, Japan was recognised as a potential customer for Australian citrus fruits. The CSIRO was put to work to develop a fumigation/sterilisation process that would satisfy the Japanese that the fruit did not carry fruit-fly or fruit-fly eggs. In 1980, the importation of Australian citrus fruits was considered by the Japanese Government and it lifted its ban on Australian Valencia and Washington oranges in 1983. Almost 16 tonnes of Valencia and Washington oranges from the South Burnett district left Brisbane on 9 September 1984, and that was the first Australian fresh fruit imported into Japan. Through promotion, such as the exhibition in Kuala Lumpur, more markets can be opened up, and that will allow growth within the industry.

The Government, through the officers of the Department of Primary Industries, is researching better methods for the preservation and spraying of fruit. I was astounded to read a report under the headline "Gamma ray food row" in yesterday's "Daily Sun". Such headlines may sell newspapers, but the article did not tell the reader how radiation technology will boost Queensland exports. The technique of radiating food under controlled conditions poses no health hazard to humans. Food eaten by the astronauts in the space shuttle had been sterilised by radiation. Because of the infestation of fruit-fly in Queensland fruit, the countries that import Queensland's fruit and vegetables must be sure that it is not infested.

The advantages to be gained from radiation technology were not reported in that article. However, a recent press release issued by the Minister for Primary Industries did list the following advantages that were to be gained—

"delaying the sprouting of some vegetables—e.g.—the shelf life of potatoes could be extended to nine months;

destroying insect pests such as fruit fly lava and grain weevils;

extending the refrigerated shelf life of fresh chicken and prawns from two days to three weeks; and

eliminating disease-causing agents such as salmonella from foodstuffs."

The Minister has forecast that, when approved for local use, radiation technology will provide financial benefits and new export opportunities for Queensland farmers. I commend the Minister and his officers on their foresight and their initiatives. The increase in the Budget allocation will enable the officers of the Department of Primary Industries to monitor and test the so-called wonder fruits, which are the fruits that suddenly appear on the market and attract interest and high prices.

One such fruit is babaco. Many experts have labelled this fruit the poor man's papaw. I have tasted this fruit. It has a unique flavour that does not please the palate, and, therefore, I do not believe it will attract a large market. Earlier this year some fruit-growers in my electorate were approached to grow this fruit. They were attracted to it by widespread publicity about its high market value, particularly in Japan. Its being a tax-shelter proposition has also made it popular.

Babaco, which originated in Europe, is a natural cross between two papaw strains. It was introduced to New Zealand 10 years ago, and has been in Australia for about two years. Undoubtedly some profit is to be made from babaco fruit, but its growing would probably be limited to a market supplied by perhaps six or even fewer producers. If a large number of growers were to cultivate this fruit and produce a glut on the market, its price would be drastically reduced.

I caution all intending babaco-growers to look very carefully at the prospects, as the market is an untried one. Not very much is known about this fruit.

I thank the officers in the Caboolture office of the Department of Primary Industries who assisted me in my investigations into this fruit earlier this year on behalf of some local growers. The production of other exotic fruits could also prove to be not as financially successful as at first thought. I repeat that all intending growers of this fruit should research its potential market through their local Department of Primary Industries office.

In simple economic terms, fruit-growing relies on the law of supply and demand. Many industries are controlled by tariffs, quotas and controls, but the fruit market works very simply. When production meets only part of the demand, high prices follow. As production increases, sellers are forced to accept lower prices in order to clear their stocks.

The avocado industry provides an example. Over the past two years the production of avocados has trebled. Today, in Queensland, 60 per cent of all the avocado trees are yet to reach bearing age. Over the next five years, that percentage will increase 2.5 times and, no doubt, more trees will be planted. As well as the additional trees, higher yields will be obtained as trees mature. That is not great news for the avocado-producers, but it is a perfect example of the economics of the market-place at work. While the production of avocados was less than market demand, avocados were a very profitable crop. Today it is a different story. From the foregoing, it is clear that growers who intend cultivating babaco should not rush into its cultivation.

In conclusion, I thank the Minister and the extension officers of his Department of Primary Industries for their untiring efforts to help the growers of exotic fruits and tropical fruits.

Mr VAUGHAN (Nudgee) (8.29 p.m.): While everyone in this State is applauding the extent to which Queensland benefits from the exploitation of its natural resources, namely its coal and other mineral resources, it is still a primary industry State.

According to the annual report of the Department of Primary Industries, which I have in front of me, the gross value of rural production was \$3,100m. It is because of the great value of natural resources to this State that I want to direct my attention to a problem that was dealt with by previous speakers, and is also dealt with in the report. I refer to soil erosion.

My attention was drawn to page 2 of the annual report of the Department of Primary Industries. A photograph of soil erosion appears on that page. A close examination of the photograph shows that the land surrounding the soil erosion is barren. A great deal of erosion has occurred. The caption above the photograph states—

“Protracted rains during the 1983 winter caused severe gullying of black-soil waterways and contour bank outlets. Soil degradation from water erosion and salinity is the major constraint on the long-term sustained productivity of Queensland’s agricultural and grazing lands.”

Only one tree appears in the photograph. The problem in Queensland is that for many years land has been completely cleared. Although many members in this Chamber have referred to the problems of soil conservation and soil erosion, no big impact is being made on the problem.

On page 5 of the annual report under the heading “Soil conservation and land management”, the following appears, “Some reduction in soil-erosion control works occurred during 1983-84.” Some reduction! Having been confronted with that problem for a number of years, one would expect that the Government would be able to report more than some reduction in soil erosion control works in this State. However, the annual report refers to some reduction in the particular problem.

It does not stop there. Page 6 of the report reads—

“But the strong interest in soil conservation continued.”

More than “strong” interest in soil conservation is needed; action is needed. The report continues—

“The demand for help with runoff control structures was greater than could be provided . . .”

Why should that be so? Why, in 1983-84, was the demand for help with run-off control structures greater than could be provided? What is wrong with the Queensland Government? The National Party Government of this State supposedly represents the rural people of the State. It is supposed to be concerned with what is happening in western areas. But the annual report of the Department of Primary Industries contains an admission that there was only strong interest in soil conservation, that there was some reduction in soil erosion control works and that the demand for help was greater than could be provided.

The trouble does not stop there. I am shocked by another revelation in the report, which is an indictment on the Minister. The Minister should not be blamed completely for the problems because he has not held his position for very long. On page 32 of the report, under the heading “Erosion incidence”, the following appears—

“The wet winter compounded erosion problems caused by the 1983 drought-breaking rains. Prolonged runoff caused serious gully erosion—”

that must be the serious gully erosion that can be seen on page 2—

“in many previously stable waterways and drainage lines on the Darling Downs, and the South Burnett and Moreton regions.”

Then follows this amazing statement—

“Where trees have been removed from hillsides in the Bremer and Lockyer catchments, many landslips occurred.”

Why were those trees removed? Why has the Government, the Department of Primary Industries and the other Government departments that are responsible for monitoring soil erosion in this State allowed those trees to be removed and thus allowed the problem to be caused?

The member for Lockyer referred to the salinity problem in the Lockyer Valley. In the several years that the honourable member for Lockyer has been a member of this Assembly, I have heard him repeatedly refer to that problem. The annual report of the Department of Primary Industries virtually hits the nail on the head. The department

knows what is causing the problem, but what is it doing about it? The department has a strong interest in the problem, but more than strong interest is needed. The report states at page 32—

“Where trees had been removed from hillsides in the Bremer and Lockyer catchments, many landslips occurred.”

At page 34, a photograph depicts the end result. The caption reads—

“After excessive clearing of uplands, severe water-table salting has occurred in some Lockyer Valley catchments.”

The scene depicted is similar to an area that has been flooded behind a dam. When the roots of trees are covered by water, the trees die. How often does one see large areas of the country in which trees have died—just stark, dead, leafless trees? That is the scene of the Lockyer Valley depicted on page 34.

I point out to the Minister that that is not in a far-flung area of the State. It is just down the track. In fact, it is one of the most fertile areas in Queensland. What has happened in the Lockyer Valley is an indictment of this Government; it is an indictment of the Minister; and it is an indictment of the officers who are responsible for soil erosion management in this State.

Over the past 20 years or so, I have travelled by road throughout the coastal and western areas of this State. I have not flown over the area, but I imagine that from the air an even clearer impression could be gained of the extent to which this land of ours has been cleared of trees. I recall about 10 or 15 years ago travelling to Alpha in central Queensland along the highway from Rockhampton. Land was being cleared. I was struck by the fact that the bulldozers working the land were not leaving one tree standing. Paddock after paddock was being completely cleared. The fences remained, but not one tree was left. I asked myself the question: Why does land have to be cleared to the extent that not one tree is left standing in the paddocks?

Mr Davis: That used to be standard procedure.

Mr VAUGHAN: Apparently, that procedure has not changed.

Although I was born at Richmond, in the west of Queensland, I do not have the knowledge on these matters as honourable members opposite who were born, bred and reared in country areas. Not too many trees are destroyed in the Richmond area, with its rolling plains, because there were few trees to begin with.

When paddocks are being cleared, I ask myself why a stand of trees cannot be retained at the fence line. Why not allow a clump of trees to remain to provide shade for the stock? Why are trees not left somewhere? Why does the whole area have to be cleared?

The practice of total clearance is continuing. Of course, in a good season, the tendency is to overstock. When a bad season follows, erosion begins. The penalty is now being paid. However, the lessons do not seem to be learnt. As the report states, there is only interest in the particular topic. That amazes me.

Today, the Minister spoke about the extent to which the Government is allocating funds to solve soil erosion. The figure mentioned is \$6.3m for the year 1984-85. As the honourable member for Cairns pointed out this afternoon, Queensland, which has under cultivation twice the area that New South Wales has under cultivation, spent \$6,253,000 in 1983-84, compared with \$39m spent in New South Wales.

Mr Turner: New South Wales has imposed petrol and tobacco taxes.

Mr VAUGHAN: The Minister should not talk about taxes in New South Wales. With monotonous regularity, Government members put the blame on somebody else. The Government can be compared to Oliver Twist. It claims that it does not want to

impose taxes, yet the Minister has referred to petrol and tobacco taxes. At least the Government in New South Wales does something constructive with its revenue.

It has often been said, "You cannot have your cake and eat it." The Government should raise money and do something with it for the country, but it does nothing. Instead, it hides behind the Federal Government's skirts. When funds are required, the blame is put upon those terrible people south of the border who hold the purse-strings. It does not matter what political colour the Federal Government is. The State Government has the responsibility of deciding whether it should be fair dinkum about what is going on on Brisbane's doorstep, the Lockyer Valley, and spend money on soil erosion. The Government cannot say, "It is the fault of those Federal people" or, as has also been said, "The responsibility lies with the Government."

Mr Neal: The reduction in Federal funding did not help.

Mr VAUGHAN: Don't talk about a reduction in Federal funding. Government members bleat like sheep. It is not the Federal Government's responsibility.

The members for Lytton and Wolston have already spoken about the fishing industry. It is also dear to my heart. The Government does not face up to the problems facing the fishing industry, and it will soon be facing problems of the same magnitude caused by soil erosion. The problems exist because the Government wants to convince the multitudes that this is a low-tax State, so it does not have any money to spend on needy areas.

Page 8 of the annual report of the Department of Primary Industries reveals that \$475,474 was spent on fisheries research in 1982-83 and that \$362,584 was spent in 1983-84. Why the decrease? If the Government is short of funds, it has to make savings somewhere. To maintain its claim that Queensland is a low-tax State, it is not raising sufficient revenue to provide for the necessities that will keep the State running. The Government cuts corners.

Regardless of whether it is the sand crab, spanner crab, mackerel, tailor or whiting industry, the Government must sustain that industry and not bleed it dry as it is bleeding the country areas dry. On page 37, under the heading "Crab research", the annual report states—

"The sand crab is one of Queensland's most important fisheries products. In southern Queensland, commercial crab-pot fishermen, prawn trawlers and recreational fishermen exploit the sand crab heavily. A 12-month pilot programme on the sand-crab fishery was concluded."

I will be extremely interested to learn of the results of that program. If something is not done shortly about the exploitation of sand crabs, that industry will face grave problems. Sand crabs are considered to be a delicacy on any dinner table. The fact of life is that, although the number of dillies per person is restricted, to what extent is it policed? At the appropriate times of year I occupy as much of my leisure-time as possible sand-crabbing. I have never seen checks made on the number of dillies used in a boat. The maximum is four per person in a boat. The floats on crab dillies in Deception Bay look almost like a mine-field. I am sure that some people use more dillies than they are allowed, and the restriction is not being policed.

A limit should be placed on the number of crabs that can be taken. On a particularly good day some people come home with a boat-load of crabs. Obviously they have to give some away. If people took only what they required for themselves, even for the following couple of days, the exploitation of sand crabs would be restricted. The same applies to spanner crabs. I know of people who come back for a day's crabbing with 120 or 130 spanner crabs. Surely that is more than what one boat-load of people could want. If a limit is not introduced, the crabbing resource will be lost.

The member for Lytton referred to recreational fishing. The department's annual report at page 40 devotes three lines to that subject, in these terms—

"Recreational fishing in Queensland is an important component of fishery resource exploitation. A special Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee was established to maintain cooperation and coordination between the sectors of this industry."

That is very good, but I want to examine what is actually happening in the fishing industry. To some extent the member for Wolston stole my thunder on tailor fishing. I have been fishing for tailor since 1960. I have fished from Black Rock, which is across the border, right up to Fraser Island, and can confirm what he said. When I started tailor fishing I could go to Black Rock, Fingal, and Currumbin Rock or up the coast and catch decent sized tailor. Now, virtually all that I can catch are chopper tailor and I am lucky to catch them. People go to the Gold Coast on holidays armed to the teeth with surf rods, Alvey reels and all the rest of the gear to try to catch a feed of fish. That is one of the attractions of a holiday at the coast.

The honourable member for Lytton mentioned the extent of the investment in this recreational activity. People lay out not millions of dollars, not tens of millions, not hundreds of millions but thousands of millions of dollars on this recreational activity. When they go fishing, they want to catch a feed of fish. Nothing is better than to return home with a feed of fresh fish after a day at Moreton Island or at the coast. As was pointed out, tailor has to be eaten fresh, but with commercial fishing that does not happen and the resource is gradually disappearing. Whiting fishing will be affected in the same way.

The beach front at Bribie Island is a noted whiting fishing area. One bait used to catch whiting is ugari, which is a shell fish. I have seen people raking the beach, loading the ugari into four-gallon drums and carting them away. That can go on for only so long before the natural food supply is so depleted that the whiting will disappear and not come back.

Mr Kruger: It would break the heart of an amateur fisherman like yourself.

Mr VAUGHAN: Yes, it is extremely hard.

When families go to Bribie Island with a rod and reel that is probably worth \$50-odd and buy a packet of half a dozen worms for about \$2, they expect to catch a fish, but they do not. Yet I have never seen anybody on that beach policing what is going on. Every day buckets of ugari are taken from the beach to be stewed. God knows what is done with them, although I understand that people even use them for making soup. No effort is made to ensure that the natural food supply is maintained.

A similar problem occurs in the Bribie passage. In October 1982 when the former member for Caboolture asked a question about the extent of net fishing in the passage, he was told that 17 master fishermen were licensed to net in the passage. The answer also gave the extent of the area in which netting was permitted. Yet I have seen nets at the mouth of the passage stretching hundreds of metres across the sand banks that would catch every fish in the area. I almost ran into one the other day.

Time expired.

Mr RANDELL (Mirani) (8.49 p.m.): It gives me great pleasure to support the Minister in his presentation of the Estimates. I am a little amazed and amused, and more than concerned about some of the speeches made today by members opposite. The honourable member for Nudgee made quite a good speech. He made quite a number of practical suggestions. He was concerned about problems in the fishing industry. He was also concerned about soil erosion, which we know is a serious problem in rural areas. His only solution was to condemn this Government for what it is doing. I admit that, possibly, the Government is not doing enough. I am usually the first to say that,

because I am a great advocate of the land. If the soil is lost, it is gone for-ever. The Queensland Government is doing 1 000 per cent more to control soil conservation than the Federal Government. This year, the Queensland Government has provided \$6m for soil conservation. The Federal Government has provided \$600,000

Mr Kruger interjected.

Mr RANDELL: The member for Murrumba, who is the shadow Minister for Primary Industries, should have more sense than to sit there and criticise the Queensland Government. He condemned the farmers for not doing enough about soil conservation. Of course they are not doing enough. If he goes into the rural areas he will find that most farmers are not earning a decent income. They are unable to put money aside to do anything about soil conservation.

One Opposition member referred to hungry farmers. They are certainly not that. The rural knowledge of three or four Opposition members who have spoken in this debate is confined to the growing of half a dozen lettuce in their back yards.

The member for Windsor was concerned only about the quality of fish served in restaurants in Brisbane. If providing a better standard of fish results in higher income for fishermen, I am all for it. But I think that he was concerned only about going to restaurants and getting a feed of fish. He is not concerned about the risks that fishermen take to get the fish to market or the money that they have invested in their boats.

If every National Party member does not get 1 000 copies of the speech that the member for Brisbane Central made tonight and distribute it throughout his electorate, I will walk to Bourke. He said that the Government has no concern for rural people. After that he said, "Look at the subsidies that you are giving to them.", and he referred to millions and millions of dollars. He contradicted himself virtually in the same breath. If the Government did not provide subsidies to keep people on the land, what price would the honourable member be paying for his food? What would it cost him for a kilogram of beef or a loaf of bread? He should get his head out of the clouds.

The honourable member said that rural people are whinging cow-cookies. He referred to the old, battling cow-cookies and their whinging sons, and to the so-called farmers with their generous taxation incentives. The member for Murrumba, who is the shadow Minister for Primary Industries, has the hide to sit there and laugh. He, too, should get his head out of the clouds. It is a shame that he did not pull the member for Brisbane Central into gear when he was speaking. Opposition members wonder why rural people have no rapport with the ALP. It is because of the speeches similar to those that we have heard from Opposition members tonight. The member for Brisbane Central will remember that speech for many days to come. It will be quoted again and again.

Mr Campbell interjected.

Mr RANDELL: Today, the member for Bundaberg spoke to us the biggest load of garbage that I have ever heard. The only stick of cane that he has seen in his life is the one that he fell over when he went for a walk at night. He is a man of theory. He reads about sugar-cane in books, and he has the hide to come in here and tell us how to grow it. I know what the farmers in Bundaberg are saying about him. In a couple of years' time, he will have plenty of trouble.

I congratulate the Minister on the good job that he is doing in his relatively new job. He has a practical background in rural matters. He has a grasp of the problems facing the man on the land. He has worked on the land. He has erected fences and cut down mulga trees to keep his cattle alive.

A Minister for Primary Industries could have no better background and, as that is the way people make a living on the land, he is able to liaise with them at the grassroots level. A person can only make his dollars on the land by working for himself and he must have experience to back it up. The man on the land is affected by the luck of the

weather and the luck of the prices on the market. If he does not have any luck, he will not survive. Of course, Queensland is lucky to have Neil Turner as Minister for Primary Industries.

Mr Kruger interjected.

Mr RANDELL: I would like to compare the State Minister with the Federal Minister (Mr Kerin), who is in the process of doing much damage to Queensland.

Mr Kruger interjected.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr Booth): Order! I point out to the honourable member for Murrumba that the member for Mirani is not accepting his interjections. I ask him to desist.

Mr RANDELL: The interjections of Opposition members do not concern me. The more they talk, the more they put their big feet in it and the happier the Government is.

Mr Kerin was a member of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics. I do not criticise him for that because everyone has to earn a living. But, whether it rains or shines, his salary is still paid. He is a theory man and is not in the same street as a practical man. The member for Bundaberg should remember that. When a person's judgment is the criterion for success or falling by the wayside, he certainly learns quickly. The Queensland Minister has done that.

Mr Davis: I am a practical person.

Mr RANDELL: The honourable member for Brisbane Central may be a practical person—he claims that he is descended from Steele Rudd—but I did not include even him as one of the members who grow lettuce in their back yards.

The Minister for Primary Industries has risen from humble beginnings to be in charge of the Agricultural Bank, the Rural Reconstruction Board and the Department of Primary Industries. In addition he serves on many boards and committees and administers 56 Acts of Parliament. The total Budget for his department is of the order of \$289m. He was a shearer. Queensland is fortunate to have him as Minister because he understands rural industries and rural people at a grassroots level.

I must say that if it were not so serious it would be amusing to hear the way ALP members talk about assistance for the sugar industry. I have asked them time and time again in this place for their support. I asked them to back the Government in its request, in the interests of the workers of Queensland, for aid from the Federal Government. But all Government members hear from them is political statements to save their political hides and those of their colleagues.

I have asked Opposition members to support the Government in its request for long-term, low-interest loans. I spoke on this matter in the Chamber on Tuesday night, and Opposition members interjected and ridiculed my speech. I suggest that repayments should be deferred for several years to give cane-farmers a chance to get back on their feet.

The underwriting scheme that was promised by the Federal Government has not been established.

All farmers, not just cane-farmers, are entitled to social security benefits under strict guide-lines and certain conditions. Many farmers have no income and, in exceptional circumstances, they should be entitled to benefits in the same way as other Australians are. I have made this point before but, if farmers are forced to leave their land, because they are hard-working people they will go out to look for other jobs. However, they will find it hard to get jobs in north Queensland because of what the Federal ALP Government has done up there.

Members who represent electorates in the far north of the State speak about the shipyards that have closed and the fact that the ANL services have ceased. If farmers cannot get jobs, they will have to go onto social security benefits anyway, so benefits should be given to them so that they can stay on the land to produce something that is creating other jobs in north Queensland.

The member for Bundaberg subjected the Chamber to the greatest load of garbage that I have ever heard. Yesterday the Federal Government gave the sugar industry \$5m.

An Honourable Member: \$5.1m.

Mr RANDELL: I stand corrected. At least the Federal Government has done something, but only because it has been pressured by the Queensland Government for so long.

Mr Comben: Don't you want it?

Mr RANDELL: The sugar industry does want it. It will take everything that it can get. It is entitled to it. The rural sector and the cane-farmers have put a great deal of money into the economy of this State and nation, and they are entitled to some return. That money is their money, and some of it should be coming back to them instead of going to that great golden triangle in the south. The Commonwealth Government is paying very high subsidies in that part of Australia. If it spent just a few million dollars in north Queensland, it could tide the sugar industry over its present difficulties and save thousands of jobs. I know that, and Opposition members know it. They should be supporting me.

Mr Kruger interjected.

Mr RANDELL: Opposition members should be supporting me. The trouble is that they do not listen to the people at grassroots level.

I quote comments by a few people in the north after the Federal Government made its offer of \$5.5m to the sugar industry. A Mackay district sugar industry spokesman described the offer as terrible. The acting chairman of the Mackay district cane-growers executive, Mr J. E. Pedersen, who is a very highly respected man in the north and throughout Queensland, and a member of the Queensland Cane Growers Council, said that the Federal Government did not seem to comprehend the depth of frustration felt by many growers in the industry's depressed circumstances. He said—

“The current bandaid approach will bleed many growers into financial ruin unless the Government realises the error of its ways.

If the Government does not wish to see severe social disruption and more unemployment in the sugar industry, it would have to think again quickly.”

Mr Campbell interjected.

Mr RANDELL: It should be proceeding with the underwriting scheme that it promised. What will it do? Will it wait for the review, which will take two years, and then come to the aid of the sugar industry? Opposition members, who want the cane-farmers to walk off the land, should be ashamed of themselves. Only two Opposition members have been interjecting; the others know what is happening.

A recent press report headed “The sugar wives fret as their world turns sour” says—

“The possible death of a legendary Australian industry has led the farmers wives to consider drastic measures like street demonstrations and even walking away from their husbands and farms in order to qualify for the social security payments currently denied them.

‘The bank said they could not possibly give us any more money; no more loans

because we were at our limit. Besides that, my husband and I had decided we couldn't borrow any more because it wouldn't be possible to pay it back anyway. We weren't making a living off the farm.'"

The article also states that the sugar wives formed an organisation called Sugar Wives Action Group. The honourable member for Bundaberg should know that group.

Mr Campbell: I was the only politician at that public meeting.

Mr RANDELL: The honourable member is not doing much now to help them. We hear him now, but those sugar wives know what he is doing. They can read "Hansard" as well as anyone else.

The article goes on to state—

"As far as the Government is concerned, the wives and the children can starve."

Mr CAMPBELL: I rise to a point of order. I was the only politician at that public meeting.

Mr RANDELL: Instead of saying that, the honourable member should be saying that he supports me. His comments will be reported back to Bundaberg.

The article continues—

"We're reduced to virtually begging for hand-outs to get the children fed.

I went to the social security and they said there was nothing they could do for us about special benefits.

We applied to the Rural Reconstruction Board, but that's another loan. If you become viable you have to pay it back with accruing interest."

Mr Comben: The industry is in decline. Tell us how you will solve the problem.

Mr RANDELL: I told the honourable member, but he has not listened. If I do not run out of time, I will get back to him shortly. He is very easy to deal with.

Mr Comben interjected.

Mr RANDELL: The honourable member is a political lightweight. I will deal with him when I have a couple of minutes to spare.

The article goes on to say—

"While we were waiting for that we were surviving on the family income supplement of \$48 a fortnight (\$12 a week for each of her two children) and the \$55 a month endowment."

Mr Kruger: That's more than you are worth.

Mr RANDELL: I would like the honourable member to repeat that outside.

The article goes on to say—

"So then I went to the Department of Children's Services and they give you a one-off handout of \$37.90 for a couple and \$8.60 per child. But that's it. After that you have to go to places like Lifeline for help."

That article clearly demonstrates what the rural workers and their wives think about the Federal Government.

I have spoken longer than I should have. However, I was carried away with the rubbish that the Government cops from Opposition members.

I repeat that the Opposition spokesman on primary industries should be doing something to bring rural people together. He should liaise with the Australian Labor Party. However, he is widening the gap. He is not even pulling his own members into line and making them say something that will give some support to people in rural areas. Those people make possible the standard of living that the honourable member enjoys in this city. It should not be forgotten that it was once said that if rural industry and the rural people go down, Australia will go down. Where is the honourable member's income coming from? If the rural people go down, there will be nothing left. I have wasted enough time replying to the interjections made by Opposition members.

I thank the Minister and his staff for their courteous and prompt attention to my inquiries. Darryl Avery and Jeffrey Swift are top men. I give them all the support and commendation that I can. They are always willing to help. I commend the departmental staff who have performed their duties well in a very difficult period. Virtually every rural industry in Queensland is in trouble. The fishing industry, the dairying industry and many other industries are in trouble. The only occasion on which I can remember primary industries being in similar trouble was during the years when the Whitlam Government was in office. Judging on what Opposition members have said, when people learn to recognise what is happening, it will be too late.

Mr HARTWIG (Callide) (9.7 p.m.): I followed closely the speech made by the member for Mirani. The plight of the sugar industry is a matter of concern to everyone. Seemingly, at some time all primary industries are in such a plight. Honourable members will recall the great crash in the beef industry in the mid '70s and the problems experienced in the dairying industry prior to that.

I pay a tribute to the Minister for the excellent job that he is doing. I have always had the highest regard for him. Despite the various reports that have appeared in the press from time to time, I believe that he has come to grips with the problems. That is something that he must face. Following World War II, a number of Federal Governments were favourable to the man on the land. I refer particularly to Governments led by Menzies, Holt, Gorton, McMahon, Fraser—

Mr Comben: McEwen?

Mr HARTWIG: McEwen.

During that time, Queensland has been led by Frank Nicklin and, of course, by Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen. For a short time in the '70s, when the Whitlam Government was in power, the rot set in. Apart from that time, sympathetic Governments have been in office. We must look for another cause of the problems.

I have never known the population in rural areas to be so low. At times I wonder why. I believe that it has been caused by a combination of factors, one of the most important being the style of life of people on the land. They are a separate breed. They are magnificent people, because they can smile in the face of adversity. Even in times of drought or when prices are low, one will always be welcomed with a smile and a cup of tea. They receive very little help from the Federal and State Governments.

The member for Mirani said that \$270m is provided in the Budget this year. I could only see where \$100m was allocated. What is a hundred million or two?

Primary industry is the most important industry in this or any other country. The industry produces the spice of life, which is food. The question has been asked many times in this Chamber: Why is there only one Minister for Primary Industries? Fifty years ago, there was one Minister. At that time, only a minute area of the State was under agriculture and only a small number of cattle were grazed. This State now has millions of hectares under agriculture and produces crops of various kinds.

Marketing problems are being experienced in the sugar industry. Sugar-cane is beset with all kinds of diseases. However, cattle numbers are also declining, as are numbers

of sheep and poultry. The quantity of dairy products is declining. The number of dairy-farmers in Queensland 40 years ago was 24 000; today the number is 2 300.

Approximately three or four years ago, I attended a world conference in Africa. I assure honourable members that, unless disease or war intervenes, the population of the world will double by the year 2000.

Mr Milliner: What do you intend to do?

Mr HARTWIG: I will come to that in a moment. Doubling of the population in the world will mean about nine billion people.

The media reports that there is a famine in Ethiopia. The world's population is growing by a million every six days. Food production, instead of increasing, has fallen by 2½ per cent—an immense quantity. Such large numbers of people cannot be accommodated, educated or given essential services—let alone provided with enough food. The result is that people are dying. Approximately 4 million children under the age of five years die in Africa each year.

The shortage of food in other parts of the world contrasts with the glut in the sugar industry. Why has the glut occurred? I assure honourable members that no glut of sugar exists in many other countries of the world. Obviously, something is wrong with the marketing system when such an overproduction of sugar cannot be despatched to world markets.

In 1974, I visited Japan. I said to a shop-keeper, "What products do you sell here that have been imported from Australia?" He replied, "Butter." At that time, Australia was exporting quarter-pound packs to Japan. I do not know how many grams that would be. The shop-keeper said, "Look, give us some more. The housewives are keen on the quarter-pound pack of butter." Upon my return to Australia, the first newspaper report I read related to a glut in dairy products.

The Government should engage a competent, astute business person and abolish the offices of Agents-General. They sit in ivory towers and drink liquor, and that is confirmed by the accounts rendered for alcohol. On a previous world trip that I undertook, the figures I carried with me were more accurate and up to date than the figures kept by our envoys in overseas countries. They are not doing their job. The Government should send a competent officer to various parts of the world to ascertain the demand in world markets. It should then endeavour to supply the markets. That is all the Government has to do—look for markets.

In the 1970s, the meat industry experienced problems similar to those in the sugar industry today. In 1974, on my trip to Japan, I visited a butcher's shop. I said, "How does that steak compare with your own beef? I reckon our lot-fed cattle and crop-fattened cattle would compare favourably." I was told, "Wake up to yourself. It is your meat." The carcasses are flown over there, boned out and sold at a hell of a price. At that time Australian meat-producers were taking \$5 per 100lb. At the time of the beef slump in this State the price did not alter from \$5 or \$6 per 100 lb, yet the beef producers went broke. Everybody had cattle. The beef cattleman is not allowed to grow sugar-cane, but cane-growers had cattle. Dairymen and poultry farmers had a few head of cattle, but today they do not have any, and the beef cattle numbers are down.

If Australia wishes to export beef in the future, it must switch completely to lot-feeding. Once a person buys the lot-fed beef that is now being sold in Brisbane, he goes back for more. It might be a bit dearer, but it is better than trying to chew some of the beef from cattle that have spent their time grazing on grass.

Lot-feeding would give grain-growers an assured market. Many honourable members have said that grain-growers cannot find suitable markets. Lot-feeding would create a market for grain and ensure a continuity of kill at abattoirs. If Australia does not switch

to lot-feeding, it will not have a market. Overseas markets do not want other than lot-fed beef. The Japanese have made it clear to me that they are interested only in lot-fed beef.

Mr D'Arcy: The Japs do not have the only market.

Mr HARTWIG: Big deal! Why do they buy their beef from the United States? Because it is lot-fed! The United States has killed Australia on the Japanese market, and I happen to know why.

I will now deal with markets on the home front. What did the Government do to the small butchers' shops, which in many country areas were the only outlet for beef? Why in this State and the nation has the annual per capita consumption of beef fallen by 19 kg, which is approximately 40 lb? Why is that? Because all the little butchers' shops have been closed! The Government said to local butchers, "You can't chop up on a wooden block; you have to use a synthetic material." The blood gets into every knife cut. Butchers' shops in The Strand in London still have wooden cutting blocks, yet this Government banned them and butchers went to the wall by the hundreds.

A few years ago my electorate had 11 slaughterhouses. Today it has one and the cattlemen are saying, "What is wrong with our beef market?" Because people have no access to butchers' shops, they buy poultry, fish and anything else. A person who lives 100 miles from Rockhampton is not able to order meat in the summer-time. And the Government watched the butcher shops die! The shops at Gogango, Westwood, Yaamba and Wowan died. Some people tried jolly hard to close the one at Thangool. I can assure honourable members that when the Director of the Department of Primary Industries went there I gave him a little bit of a talking to. I said, "You close this butchers' shop and I'll do the rest."

I am very pleased that the Budget contains an allocation for investigations into the establishment of Nile perch in the State's rivers and streams. When I was a kid at school the rivers contained fish by the hundreds. I could catch mullet, jew, perch and many other species of fish. Today those rivers are dead. Perhaps an eel or a turtle can be caught, but there are no fish.

I do not know why this State is not stocking its dams and rivers with fish. When I was in Thailand I saw millions of young fish being put into rivers and dams. Because the Thai people depend on fish for food, that Government is ensuring that the rivers and dams are restocked. The Minister for Works and Housing would know that years ago the Burnett River near Gayndah was teeming with fish. One could catch beautiful mullet. I would bet London to a brick on that today one could not catch a fish in that river. That has happened in my lifetime, and my generation should hang its head in shame, but nothing has been done to restock our rivers and streams.

Mr Wharton: You are wrong. There are many more fish in the Burnett River now than there were years ago.

Mr HARTWIG: Is that so? Our generation owes it to future generations to stock the rivers and streams with edible fish.

The Minister for Primary Industries is now responsible for the fishing industry, which is a pretty big industry. It is the only industry I know of in which people reap but never sow. The fisherman reaps the harvest, but never sows its replacement. I do not know how much longer that can go on.

I see the trawlers come in to within a stone's throw of the beach at Yeppoon. They stir up the mud and pollute the sand on the beach. I believe that they also kill all the small fish. One has only to observe the number of seagulls that follow a trawler to know that they are eating more than just the waste. The beach at Yeppoon is often littered with dead young, edible fish.

More research should be done into restocking the ocean, or ultimately there will be nothing for the trawlers to catch. Trawlers cannot continue to catch tonnes and tonnes of prawns, scallops and reef fish without putting anything back. The fish have no chance of escaping the style of nets being used today. A bit further out to sea at Swain's Reef, the Taiwanese boats are operating. Members should not be mistaken; Australia imports fish from Taiwan, and it is fish that is taken from Australian waters! The Taiwanese boats take fish by the tonne and load it onto mother ships standing offshore.

The work done by DPI officers at the research station at Biloela is much appreciated. The Minister should look at the idea of setting up an agricultural college of some sort to enable young people in the Callide Valley who are interested in going on the land to gain a first-hand knowledge of research and to help them in the administration of their farms.

Mr NEAL (Balonne) (9.24 p.m.): I am pleased to support the Minister in his presentation of the Estimates. People should be reminded that primary production still accounts for in excess of 50 per cent of Australia's export income. In other words, it is from primary production that the bulk of Australia's overseas credits are derived. It is with those overseas credits that Australia is able to pay for its imports.

The Minister indicated the importance of primary production to this State. He said that in 1983-84, the gross value of rural production rose by 31 per cent to \$3,099m. Of course, it must be remembered that the previous year's production was affected by drought.

He also highlighted the fact that the prosperity of this State continues to depend to a significant degree on the prosperity of rural industries, and that is something that should not be forgotten. After listening to the speeches of Opposition members, it is clear to me that they have forgotten that. It is disheartening that the Opposition and the Federal Government are paying scant regard to the contribution that the rural sector makes to the prosperity of this nation. They look on rural industries as a milking cow.

Mr Kerin came to Brisbane yesterday and, rather belatedly, promised \$5m to assist the sugar industry. He has done that because an election is pending. I said that in my speech during the Budget debate, and I was spot on. The Labor Party is frightened of losing some seats in north Queensland.

I shall enlighten the Committee in relation to a few of the things that the Federal Labor Government has done for rural industries. The outlays under the general provisions of the rural adjustment scheme were reduced from almost \$45 last year to just under \$26m this year. I have a list of the cuts that the Federal Government has made, but I do not intend to go through all of them tonight.

Mr Kerin said that Labor would maintain tax averaging. In the mini-Budget in 1983, Mr Keating removed the in-and-out opting provisions in the scheme.

Before the last Federal election, the Labor Party said that it would maintain the income equalisation deposit scheme. It has emasculated that scheme. Tonight, we have heard that farmers are doing nothing to conserve their soil, and that they are money-hungry, whingers and so on. Under the income equalisation deposit scheme, they were able to provide for the peaks and troughs in their industry. They were able to do some of the things that Opposition members say they should be doing.

Mr Kerin said that a Labor Government would maintain existing drought relief arrangements. On 31 June 1983, the 50 per cent fodder subsidy was terminated. On 30 September 1983, the interest rate subsidy was terminated.

Under the disaster relief scheme, the States had to pick up the first \$4.5m and then the Federal Government would provide \$3 for each \$1 contributed by the States. The threshold has been increased to \$9.1m, and after that the Federal Government provides assistance on a dollar-for-dollar basis.

The member for Brisbane Central complained about the whinging farmers who are getting hand-outs. Drought subsidies are provided to allow primary producers to agist their sheep and cattle and to maintain their breeding flocks and herds. If the honourable member does not think that that is worthwhile, it shows just how short-sighted he is. Drought subsidies allow farmers to maintain their production, to continue to employ station hands and shearers, and to help to keep country towns alive. Honourable members should bear in mind some of the things that the Hawke Government has done.

On "Today Tonight" last night, Mr Hawke was asked about a possible capital gains tax. That tax has very serious implications for primary producers. Opposition members do not understand what it is all about. Mr Hawke has not made a commitment. He is leaving his options open, and that is why he blew his cool last night on television.

A report dealing with the National Farmers Federation had this to say about a capital gains tax—

"The Federal Government has before it a proposal to introduce a new form of tax, which could eventually lead to a wealth tax.

The Federal Government has been given a paper proposing the introduction of a tax on property—similar to some States' land tax.

The tax would be levied on the unrealised value of properties at a rate of between 1 per cent and 1.5 per cent."

The tax would be levied regardless of the profitability of the property; it would be levied on the value of the property, not on its earning capacity.

If honourable members opposite think that a capital gains tax is not on, I suggest that they listen to what I am about to say. In July 1982, Mr Hawke said in Parliament that a Labor Government must be committed to a capital gains tax because it is vital to its operations. He said also that it was significant that Australia did not have a capital gains tax, yet every other country in the Western World did. It is pretty obvious that he strongly favours a capital gains tax. Mr Hawke is keeping his options open. He is not prepared to come out and categorically deny that such a tax will not be introduced.

Opposition members do not understand the profitability of farming.

Mr Vaughan interjected.

Mr NEAL: Because I only have a short time in which to speak in this debate, I am not interested. The member for Nudgee made a very good speech on soil conservation, but he should listen to what I have to say.

Opposition members do not seem to understand the viability of farming and the debt structure of the average farm. They do not understand the cost of machinery, its operating cost and the cost of spare parts and fuel. Opposition members do not understand that primary producers receive for their commodities a price that is determined by overseas markets. Primary producers must also survive through droughts and commodity price crashes. These are the hungry, whinging farmers about whom the honourable member for Brisbane Central had so much to say. The expert from Bundaberg knows all about it.

Everyone hears about consensus, accord and wage restraint, and the latest wage rise is fair enough and maintains prices. However, because of the recently introduced wheat price structure, wheat income has, in effect, been cut. I ask Opposition members to tell me which other wage-earners or salary-earners in Australia take wage cuts. That is what primary producers have to put up with. When Mr Kerin negotiated that deal, he said that it would effectively reduce the price of bread by a couple of cents. Who will pay for that? The farmers. The member for Archerfield said that bread prices should be dropped by 10c. He is quite happy to put his hand into the farmers' pocket and take out a bit more.

The honourable member for Nudgee referred to soil conservation. He made some very good points, with which I agree. What must be remembered about soil erosion areas is that they were first opened up as grazing country. Because of the cost/price squeeze, land settlement and subdivision into smaller blocks, the primary producers were forced into trying to maximise their income. They were forced into overstocking. They sold off their sheep and cattle and went into farming in marginal areas. That has been a natural progression over many years.

If the profit margins of primary producers were higher, they would have the funds to be able to carry out soil conservation measures. It should all start back on the farm.

Mr Vaughan: It has been going on for 50 years.

Mr NEAL: With respect, the honourable member does not know what he is talking about. In my area farming has escalated only in the last 10 or 15 years. It was only in the last 10 years that the problems have arisen. The Commonwealth Government has to get behind primary producers. It should certainly offer tax incentives.

An Opposition Member: You do not do that.

Mr NEAL: The Queensland Government cannot give tax incentives. The Federal Government gives them, but then it takes them away.

The Federal Government should assist primary producers. I am not totally happy with the amount of money being offered by the State Government. Much more needs to be done. More extension officers are needed. Many farmers are prepared to carry out soil conservation measures.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr Booth): Order! Unfortunately, the Committee is committed to a deadline.

Mr NEAL: I will conclude my comments in a few moments, Mr Booth.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! It has been intimated that the Minister does not have sufficient time in which to reply to the speeches of honourable members. Therefore, I call the Minister.

Hon. N. J. TURNER (Warrego—Minister for Primary Industries) (9.38 p.m.): I thank all honourable members for their contributions. Their comments covered a wide range of aspects relating to my department's operations, and indeed to rural industries generally. The debate has been an educational and enlightening one. Some of the contributions will make interesting reading in years to come.

I will not be able to cover all the matters raised in the time available, but I will endeavour to deal briefly with most of the main points made by honourable members.

The honourable member for Murrumba raised a number of matters relating to various industries. I will comment briefly on them. He referred to the increase in butter production at a time when the market for dairy products overseas is very depressed. I stress that that is well recognised by my department and the industry. Much of the increase to which he referred was the result of better seasonal conditions. However, the efficiency of the industry is improving and that also is a contributory factor.

No doubt the honourable member is aware of negotiations currently under way for the introduction of a new dairy marketing scheme. Unfortunately, no agreement has yet been reached, and Victoria is still being difficult. He also made reference to the problems recently experienced with New South Wales eggs. Negotiations between the Queensland and New South Wales industries are currently under way, and I am hopeful that the matter will soon be resolved.

With regard to the honourable member's specific question in relation to travelling expenses—I point out that this item relates to "Travelling Expenses, General Operating

Costs, Apparatus, Equipment, Sundries, etc." The increase in the travelling expenses component is only the usual increase in line with inflation. The major increase has been in the area of new and replacement equipment.

The honourable member for Warwick made his usual good contribution. He quite rightly drew attention to the very responsible jobs which marketing board members hold. The great majority of those members fully realise that fact and accept their responsibility.

He also referred to the progress that has been made in the area of meat inspection rationalisation and the elimination of dual inspection fees. I am sure that the grazing industry is very happy with the action taken.

I assure the honourable member that I will continue to monitor closely any developments in Australia and New Zealand trade.

He also referred to the dangers and problems of currency hedging and futures trading. I believe the guide-lines that I and my department are working out with our marketing boards and Treasury officers will help to minimise the risks involved.

The honourable member also referred to the medic work being done at Hermitage Research Station and stressed the need for work on summer dryland pastures in inland areas. The department has active programs centred at Toowoomba and Gayndah directed towards finding legumes suited to these conditions. At present, an officer is in India seeking a wide range of clay soil pasture species that will be brought back and evaluated under Queensland conditions. The question of overseas trips was raised by more than one member. The trip to India is typical in that it is aimed at direct benefit to Queensland agriculture and also, like the majority of these trips, is not funded from consolidated revenue but from an international bureau.

The honourable member for Bundaberg pressed for increased research facilities and increased administration facilities for his area. I do not criticise him for that, but he must realise that there are several competing demands for facilities and the funds to provide them. Having visited that area earlier this year, I am aware of the matter.

The honourable member also confused and contradicted himself in relation to the sugar industry and the assistance that it has received. On the one hand, he quoted figures on assistance to the sugar industry and then said the Government had done nothing.

The facts are that the Government actually paid out \$14.7m on sugar carry-on finance measures to 30 June 1984 and committed a further \$5.3m from that year's allocation to be paid in 1984-85, plus, of course, the \$175,000 or half the cost of the internal review, plus the \$800,000 interest component, to lift the first delivery advance from \$160 to \$180. In addition, the Government has made a further special allocation of \$5m for sugar carry-on finance for 1984-85. That is quite apart from the \$5.5m announced by the Commonwealth on Wednesday.

The honourable member for Lockyer referred to over-supply problems with potatoes. I appreciate his comment that any person contemplating the production of fruit and vegetables should carefully consider likely market returns in the currently depressed marketing situation.

I must agree with the honourable member that the severe Federal Government cuts in the CSIRO budget exhibit a very short-sighted attitude towards Australia's primary industries. That is yet another indication of the Commonwealth's lack of appreciation of the continued importance of agriculture to this country.

The honourable member for Yeronga was generous in his praise of my departmental officers and the Livestock and Meat Authority of Queensland, and I thank him for that and for his contribution. He mentioned the responsiveness of the authority and my officers to beef-marketing problems. Members should be aware that initiatives taken by officers of the Veterinary Public Health Branch and the meat authority are leading the way in meat-marketing reform throughout Australia.

The honourable member for Cooroora referred to a wide range of matters. My department is working closely with the fruit and vegetable industry in the promotion of fruit and vegetables, including the development of improved technology.

Earlier this week I released a statement indicating what my department is doing in examining the use of ionisation in treating products such as fruit and vegetables for pests and disease prior to shipment. Unfortunately, the statement I made was grossly misreported in one section of the press. I make it clear that any moves in this area, or in the area of pesticides, are subject to clearance by the National Health and Medical Research Council as well as the Health Department in this State. I would appreciate it if the more sensational sections of the press would research their material more thoroughly.

The member also referred to biological control of pests and the impact that this is having in the citrus industry. I would like to emphasise that this approach, which will minimise the use of pesticides, is being researched for many crops in Queensland by entomologists in my department.

The honourable member for Cairns mentioned the Eather report. I am afraid that he got his facts wrong, as he did in trying to push water uphill to carry Darling Downs soil over the range to Brisbane. The Queensland Government has accepted in principle the recommendation of the Eather report, and I have now established an advisory committee of the presidents of industry organisations to help me in implementing the recommendations of the Eather committee.

Contrary to the honourable member's comments, these Estimates do provide a real increase in soil conservation funding, and the Queensland Government has in fact provided increased funds in real terms for soil conservation in each of the last three years. In the last year, the soil conservation research effort of my department has been considerably strengthened by the setting up of a new Soil Conservation Research Branch. Increased research was a recommendation of the Eather report.

The comparisons with New South Wales are misleading. For example, the quoted figure for New South Wales includes expenditure of over \$13m, but I emphasise that this does not incorporate receipts from its commercial plant-hire operations. The Queensland input per hectare of cropland is slightly ahead of that in New South Wales. I agree with the honourable member that soil conservation should not be a political football. I wonder why he has made it so.

I thank the honourable member for Mourilyan for his support of our developments in aquaculture. The department is putting significant resources into this in north Queensland, particularly for research into the breeding of barramundi. The honourable member also raised the issue of the interstate problems developing in the dairy industry. I have fully supported the Australian Dairy Industry Conference proposal to rationalise dairying in this country. Unfortunately, the Victorian ALP Government has not agreed to that proposal, although it was accepted by the other States.

The Deer Farming Bill, which is currently before the Parliament, is designed to minimise controls within defined habitat areas. Outside those areas, the Government has a responsibility to regulate the industry, at least to the extent necessary to prevent the establishment of new feral deer populations in this State.

I thank the honourable member for Gympie for his support of sound land use. My department is continuing its program of soil and land-use capability survey for the prime agricultural areas of the State. I support his attitude towards biological control of insect pests and assure him that our efforts to find a control agent for white louse scale will continue. My department has always supported the need for plant variety rights legislation, particularly for the horticultural industries.

The honourable member for Lytton spoke of recreational fisheries. I thank him for his information. We are aware of the vital importance of the Recreational Fisheries Advisory Committee, which provides advice to my department on the matter. With the full support of the Queensland Amateur Fishing Council, we have successfully put

closures in place to protect the bass fishery in the Noosa area. If the honourable member for Lytton had included this morning's paper in his research, he would have noted that a closed season for barramundi was announced from 1 November. This is done to protect the species and to enhance the amateur fishery.

My department is actively involved in the breeding of a number of fresh-water fish. We are releasing into public water impoundments in Queensland approximately 250 000 fingerlings a year. These include sooty grunter, sleepy cod and silver perch and will lead to greatly improved fresh-water fishing in the north of this State. In our northern fishery research centre in Cairns we are spending a great deal of money on research, which is aimed at breeding barramundi artificially. This project, if successful, will pave the way for the release of large numbers of barramundi into Queensland streams. In view of our limited resources in fisheries research, the honourable member will agree that we have to place a high priority on servicing the commercial fishing industry. I am aware of the importance of the recreational fishery and can assure the Committee that the department is looking closely at research work to assist in the rational development of amateur fisheries in Queensland.

The honourable member for Roma revealed a thorough understanding of the complexity of my portfolio and I thank him for his sympathetic support. On the matter of the brucellosis and tuberculosis eradication campaign in the difficult northern areas, I take this opportunity to assure the honourable member and the Committee that I have taken several initiatives to review the department's approach to tuberculosis eradication in the north. I recently visited these areas and met many of the producers involved. I can assure members that my department is sympathetic to their problems and is pursuing ways and means of providing further assistance to affected land-holders whose viability is threatened.

The honourable member for Archerfield demonstrated an abysmal lack of knowledge of primary industries by his contribution to the debate. This, of course, is understandable when one realises that in his sheltered life he has never yet stepped off the end of a concrete footpath. Take the example of the solution he offered to problems in the dairying industry in Queensland—reducing the price of milk by 12c a litre! What a novel idea! That suggestion would not be well received by those involved in the dairying industry—dairy-farmers, processors and vendors.

I shall refer to the contributions of the honourable member for Windsor to the debate, although I am not sure if he was discussing the Estimates or problems he was experiencing with his father-in-law, who obviously has a better grasp of political matters than the honourable member. The honourable member should become a subscriber to "Queensland Country Life" and acquaint himself with all the issues, instead of referring selectively to issues he has chosen to raise. In that way he could obtain a better perspective of the work carried out by my department and of some of the difficulties faced by the Minister for Primary Industries. He might then acknowledge that, in carrying out the responsibilities attaching to this portfolio, I do make difficult decisions.

The lack of knowledge of the member for Windsor about primary industries is perhaps understandable when it is realised that he first ventured off the footpath on his so-called horse ride for democracy some years ago—and got lost on the outskirts of Aspley!

Riding for democracy would be a difficult task for any ALP horseman, because democracy is completely foreign to Labor philosophy. My advice to the honourable member for Windsor is that next time he goes riding he should wear a bell; it will make him easier to find. His contribution demonstrated that he knows nothing about rural industries. He is indeed fortunate that few people read "Hansard" Because of that he will probably not get the reaction and condemnation from primary producers that his contribution deserves.

The honourable member for Brisbane Central commented on the bread industry, but his major contribution was a vague suggestion that bread should be cheaper. Obviously

he does not understand the detailed work of the committee, which ensures a regular supply of bread to consumers at prices lower than those in most other States. The first question asked by the member for Sandgate when he became Leader of the Opposition was about bread. That gave me the opportunity to point out to him that the price of bread in Brisbane was lower than the price in all other capital cities.

The honourable member has about as much knowledge of rural life as he has about Hereford stock. Given his solid rural base in Brisbane Central, that is hard to understand! Unlike the member for Archerfield, he cannot even claim to have a pineapple-farmer in his electorate. Seriously, he should acknowledge the role that primary industries have played in this State for a long time and the fact that, but for the amount of national export income earnings of primary industries, this country would be in great difficulties. The honourable member spoke about the amount of subsidy received by rural industries. Most of that is in repayable loans. If all subsidies, tariffs and protection in this nation were removed from every primary and secondary industry, those in rural industries would laugh all the way to the bank. The next time honourable members opposite use a bus or a train to travel from their suburbs into the city, they should acknowledge that those forms of transport are subsidised with many millions of dollars. Honourable members opposite conveniently forget that.

The honourable member for Wolston made comments similar to those of the honourable member for Lytton. I appreciate his comments on the economic importance of amateur fishing and note the important place that tailor have in that fishery. As the honourable member would appreciate, the course of action he recommended requires full evaluation and must take into account the possible conflicting interests of commercial and amateur fishermen.

The honourable member for Wolston produced some interesting statistics on the quantity of fish caught by professional net fishermen who operate on beaches, targeting mainly on tailor and mullet. In talking about hundreds and thousands of tonnes of fish, he is greatly overestimating the catch off beaches. The honourable member should consider that most of these beach professionals have been traditional operators for many years. The value of the recreational fishery, as pointed out by the member for Lytton, is acknowledged and it is an area of conflict. In recent years, many beaches have been closed to net fishermen, and further areas are under consideration. However, the social and economic problems caused by putting some commercial operators out of business have to be considered.

The honourable member for Caboolture was most supportive of my department's efforts in the development of new fruit species, as well as the continued development of established species. I fully support the honourable member's comments concerning the importance of being fully aware of the economics of production before embarking on a new venture.

I thank the honourable member for Burdekin for his kind words on the retirement of Maurice Finlay. Maurice has been a very valuable officer and I am certain the comments are fully supported by Burdekin producers. Similarly, I endorse the honourable member's comments concerning Claude Rehbein, a Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations extension officer, for his major contribution to the sugar industry. I appreciate the comments of the honourable member for Burdekin concerning the use of improved technology in the area of communication and will continue to foster its development.

I appreciated the comments of the honourable member for Condamine in supporting the concern my Government has with the Federal capital gains tax.

I will be introducing into this Parliament as soon as practicable complementary legislation for the next wheat marketing scheme. The honourable member put his finger on some of the real issues in this new five-year arrangement.

I thank the honourable member for Nudgee for the attention that he has paid to my department's annual report, but he does not seem to have understood it.

Some reduction of soil erosion control works occurred in 1983-84 because seasonal and economic conditions—drought followed by heavy winter rains—made it impossible for many farmers to build contour banks in that season. Much of the Lockyer hill-slope tree-clearing took place between 80 and 100 years ago. I am pleased to record that in that area there is gratifying community support for tree-planting programs promoted by my officers. The mistakes of some of the pioneers cannot be corrected overnight.

I recently opened a land-use seminar in Roma. My officers are providing information on land use suitability, including tree-clearing guide-lines, and land-holders are making use of that information in planning their property development.

Members should not overlook the fact that considerable progress has been made in soil conservation. However, the honourable member should appreciate that the total soil conservation effort is dependent on the financial capacity of the farmer to participate. The Government assists the effort, but the farmer still has to meet most of the cost.

The honourable member for Nudgee spoke at some length about crab research and about recreational fisheries. He paints a gloomy picture for crabs and fish, but his opinions are not supported by the facts. The department has done a lot of research on those species and work is continuing. I invite the honourable member to visit the research centre at Deception Bay and acquaint himself with the work that is going on. I do not deny that some problems exist, but they are not being ignored.

The Fish Management Authority has instituted bag limits for amateur anglers on some species, as that is seen as the fairest way of controlling the excessive pressure that is being put on the resource. There are no biological reasons, however, to put bag limits on some of the more common fish such as whiting and tailor.

The honourable member for Mirani made it clear that the Government totally supports Queensland's rural industries. He also made it clear that a number of rural industries are in trouble. Naturally, he emphasised the plight of the sugar industry, which is very important to his area. However, he pointed out that all industries experience similar problems from time to time and that, when they are in trouble, it is essential that there be a combined approach by the Commonwealth and State Governments to assist them.

The honourable member for Callide stressed the importance of beef quality. I could not agree with him more. The future of the cattle industry depends upon the production of meat for specific markets, and in most cases they are markets that demand quality meat. Queensland beef producers have done a lot to meet the requirements of those markets. In fact, they are the leaders in Australia in that area. The other States are still trying to catch up. Queensland introduced meat quality control and consumer identification of meat, and it is still ahead in those areas. The honourable member for Balonne pointed out that unless Governments assist primary producers in times of drought and other disasters, the people who will really suffer are the consumers. They will not get the food they need, and for what they do get they will pay very much higher prices. That is not something that appears in city newspapers. It is certainly not recognised by most city consumers. It is not their fault; they just do not know the facts. But it is about time that those facts were explained.

I again thank honourable members for their contributions.

At 9.58 p.m.,

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr Booth): Order! Under the provisions of the Sessional Order agreed to by the House on 2 October, I shall now put the questions for the Vote under consideration and the balance remaining unvoted for Primary Industries.

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

Primary Industries

Department of Primary Industries	100,158,250
Balance of Vote, Trust and Special Funds and Loan Fund Account	188,085,240

Progress reported.

PROPERTY LAW ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. N. J. HARPER (Auburn—Minister for Justice and Attorney-General), by leave, without notice: I move—

“That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend the Property Law Act 1974-1982 in certain particulars and for related purposes.”

Motion agreed to.

First Reading

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

Second Reading

Hon. N. J. HARPER (Auburn—Minister for Justice and Attorney-General) (10.1 p.m.): I move—

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

This Bill is designed to overcome problems that have been raised by recent decisions of the Supreme Court and to provide a cost-saving procedure in relation to powers of attorney.

The Bill provides that an instrument of subordinate legislation shall not render void or unenforceable any contract or dealing with property that is entered into, made, or effected contrary to that legislation unless that instrument of subordinate legislation expressly provides that the contract shall be void or unenforceable as the case may be.

The Bill further provides that where the instrument of subordinate legislation requires that a certificate, consent or approval relating to any dealing with property be obtained or tendered before or at the time of the dealing, then, in the absence of any particular time specified in the instrument, that requirement may be complied with by tendering that consent, certificate or approval immediately before or at the time of—

- (a) in the case of a sale, settlement;
- (b) in the case of a lease, the lessee entering into possession;
- (c) in the case of a mortgage, the mortgagor accepting liability; and
- (d) in the case of any other dealing, the finalisation of that dealing.

These provisions are designed to overcome the situation where, for instance, a local government by-law in relation to the sale of a boarding-house or flat requires a certification from a health inspector that the premises are, at the time of sale, in a fit condition to be registered under the local government ordinances. The Supreme Court has held that failure to provide such a certificate before a contract of sale was entered into had the effect of making that contract void or unenforceable.

It is clear that the intent of such a by-law, and other similar instruments of subordinate legislation, is to protect the purchaser by giving him warning that there are existing local authority requisitions, and the intention is not to interfere with normal conveyancing practices which require that such certificates be available prior to or at the time of settlement.

The provisions of this Bill still provide ample protection to purchasers but ensure that subordinate legislation does not interfere with traditional conveyancing practices unless it is clearly intended to do so. This provision further ensures that contracts entered

into freely by parties can proceed and removes any uncertainty as to the validity of the contract.

The Property Law Act currently provides a mortgagor with a right to require the production of a certificate of title by the mortgagee to permit the registration of a second or subsequent mortgage, but does not provide a procedure whereby the mortgagor can enforce that right.

The Supreme Court has found in a recent decision that it did not have power to allow a mortgagor to enforce his right. This Bill rectifies that anomaly by providing a procedure whereby the mortgagor can apply to a judge of the Supreme Court to require the mortgagee to produce the relevant instrument of title so as to enable a second or subsequent mortgage to be registered.

If the mortgagee will not attend before the judge, the judge may issue a warrant to apprehend and arrest that person and to bring him before the judge for examination. The mortgagee may be ordered to deliver up the relevant document of title.

The judge is further empowered to order the Registrar of Titles, the Registrar of Dealings or a mining warden to dispense with the production of the title deed to enable the subsequent instruments to be registered in the appropriate case.

Powers of attorney under the general law are lodged with the Registrar of Titles in duplicate, the copy being retained by the Registrar of Titles and the original being returned to the attorney.

Currently, there is no provision in the Property Law Act for the lodgment in duplicate of powers of attorney created under this Act, and only single documentary form is accepted. This means that the attorney has no proof of his capacity to represent the donor and requires him to apply for and pay a prescribed fee for a certified copy of the power of attorney. This Bill allows powers of attorney to be lodged in duplicate.

The remainder of the provisions in this Bill correct drafting errors.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr R. J. Gibbs, adjourned.

The House adjourned at 10.6 p.m.