

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

FRIDAY, 15 OCTOBER 1948

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SUPPLIES OF BARBED WIRE.

Mr. NICKLIN (Murrumba—Leader of the Opposition) asked the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock—

“In regard to a reported statement by him that, as there was insufficient barbed wire being made in Australia, it would be necessary to import supplies, can he state—

“1. What stocks of imported barbed wire are at present held in Queensland?

“2. What action, if any, is being taken to secure supplies from other countries?”

Hon. H. H. COLLINS (Cook) replied—

“1 and 2. Importers have not disclosed what action they have taken in regard to the importation of barbed wire nor is definite information available as to present stocks in Queensland. All primary producers are unable to get necessary supplies for maintenance. Practically none is available for new development. I have been advised by a merchant that he could place 5,000 tons of barbed wire immediately if it were available.”

OSLO LUNCH.

Mr. NICKLIN (Murrumba—Leader of the Opposition) asked the Secretary for Public Instruction—

“Will he have investigations made and inform the House of the relative nutritive values of (a) an Oslo lunch and (b) meat pie and ice cream?”

Hon. H. A. BRUCE (The Tableland) replied—

“I not only will, but I have made investigations as requested by the hon. gentleman. I am pleased the Leader of the Opposition has asked me this question as it enables me to clear up the confusion existing in his mind on this subject. My investigations disclose that no dietitian or politician has advocated meat pie and ice cream as a staple food for children. Dr. Brisben, the ‘Sunday Mail’ ‘sheet anchor’ on diet, has this to say in the ‘Sunday Mail’ of 10 October—‘A child of 10-12 years needs as much daily protein as a man doing heavy manual work. From the standpoint of body needs, the most valuable proteins are found in milk, meat, cheese, liver, kidneys, eggs, and fish.’ It will be noticed that these provide the requirements for steak and kidney pie, steak and liver pie, liver and kidney pie, and fish pie. An Oslo lunch does not contain meat, liver, kidneys, eggs, or fish. If Dr. Brisben is a competent authority his evidence indicates that the meat pie would have greater nutritive value than an Oslo lunch. If Dr. Brisben is not a competent authority, the matter still remains in abeyance. Should the hon. gentleman wish any further information on this subject, I will provide it to the best of my ability.”

FRIDAY, 15 OCTOBER, 1948.

Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. S. J. Brassington, Fortitude Valley) took the chair at 11 a.m.

QUESTIONS.

DRUNKEN DRIVERS OF MOTOR VEHICLES.

Mr. NICKLIN (Murrumba—Leader of the Opposition) asked the Secretary for Health and Home Affairs—

“With reference to the case of a youth aged 19 years who was this week fined £25 for having been found under the influence of liquor while in charge of a truck and for dangerous driving at nearly 60 miles per hour, resulting in damage to two vehicles to the extent of £300 and injury to a woman—

“1. What action has been taken by the Commissioner of Police in regard to the driver’s certificate of competency?

“2. What steps, if any, are being taken by the police to enforce the provisions of the Liquor Act prohibiting the supply of liquor to minors and forbidding them to be in the bar of an hotel?”

Hon. A. JONES (Charters Towers) replied—

“1. The driver’s certificate of competency has been cancelled by the Commissioner of Police.

“2. Appropriate action has been taken and continues to be taken by the Police to enforce the provisions of the relevant legislation.”

SUPPLIES OF ROOFING IRON.

Mr. CHALK (East Toowoomba) asked the Acting Premier—

“1. In view of certain information which has come into my possession that the Commonwealth Government has had secretly stored at Wallangarra for the past two years a quantity of approximately 750 tons of galvanised and black corrugated iron, will he cause an inquiry to be made as to the correctness or otherwise of such information?”

“2. If this information is correct, will he, in view of the fact that wheat farmers on the Darling Downs have asked the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock to endeavour to obtain approximately 8,000 sheets of galvanised iron, make representations to the Prime Minister of Australia to have the major portion of such iron made available for distribution amongst the wheat farmers of this State immediately?”

Hon. V. C. GAIR (South Brisbane) replied—

- “1. Yes.
- “2. Yes.”

DAMAGE TO ROOFING IRON ON
S.S. “SWAINBY.”

Mr. CHALK (East Toowoomba) asked the Acting Premier—

“1. Is he aware of the disastrous happening which occurred on s.s. ‘Swainby’ now in Brisbane port, whereby allegedly, firstly through ammonia chemicals being loaded in the same hatch as practically the whole of several weeks of Queensland’s quota of galvanised iron; and, secondly, through the hatch not being covered in a storm downpour, such iron has been so considerably damaged that much of it is rendered almost useless, and thereby causing further difficult problems brought about by the already acute shortage of galvanised iron throughout Queensland?”

“2. Is he aware that the ‘Swainby’ is a Commonwealth boat, and hence dispute has arisen between the Shipping Board, the shipping agents, and the insurance companies as to who is responsible for the loss?”

“3. Is he aware that while this dispute is going on unloading of the iron is at a standstill, and any material which may be in good or partly good condition is, therefore, being subjected to the same chemicals, and so also quickly deteriorating?”

“4. Will he have these statements investigated, and if need be endeavour to bring pressure to bear on the parties concerned so that the dispute can be settled forthwith and the boat unloaded?”

Hon. V. C. GAIR (South Brisbane) replied—

“1. I am informed that some damage has been caused to galvanised iron on the ‘Swainby,’ the cause of which is being investigated.

“2. The ‘Swainby’ is under charter to the Australian Shipping Board, and the

matter has been referred to the Board by the Australian United Steamship Navigation Company. No dispute has developed between the parties in the meantime.

“3. No. I am informed that unloading of the vessel has not ceased and it will be completed shortly.

“4. See answer to 3.”

EXPENDITURE FROM POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT TRUST FUND.

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN (Nanango) for **Mr. LOW** (Cooroora), asked the Treasurer—

“In regard to Table D5 relating to the Treasurer’s Financial Statement for 1948-49, showing transactions of the Post-War Reconstruction and Development Fund, what departments are included under the heading of ‘Departments Generally’ with an expenditure of £81,433, and what amount was expended by each department?”

Hon. J. LARCOMBE (Rockhampton) replied—

	£
“Chief Secretary’s Department	208
Department of Health and Home Affairs	28,423
The Treasurer	3,694
Department of Public Lands	9,819
Department of Agriculture and Stock	11,444
Department of Public Instruction	21,534
Department of Mines	6,311
	£81,433”

SUPPLIES OF MEAT.

Mr. SPARKES (Aubigny), without notice, asked the Acting Premier—

“In view of the fact, as reported in the metropolitan Press, employees in the meat industry are being dismissed, would he be prepared to meet representatives of the wholesale butchers in order to discuss the present position in the industry?”

Hon. V. C. GAIR (South Brisbane) replied—

“Yes, as I am always prepared to meet anyone who wants to see me.”

PAPER.

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

Report of the Commissioner of Main Roads for the year 1947-48.

STATE EDUCATION ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION.

Hon. H. A. BRUCE (The Tableland—Secretary for Public Instruction): I move—

“That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirableness of

introducing a Bill to amend the State Education Acts, 1875 to 1940, in certain particulars."

Motion agreed to.

EXTENSION OF HOURS: PRECEDENCE OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS ON THURSDAYS.

Hon. V. C. GAIR (South Brisbane—Acting Premier): I move—

"1. That the House may, on the days allotted for Supply, continue to sit until 10 o'clock p.m. Each of the periods between 11 o'clock a.m. and 4 o'clock p.m. and between 4 o'clock p.m. and 10 o'clock p.m. shall be accounted an allotted day under the provisions of Standing Order No. 307. All provisions of Standing Order No. 307 and of Sessional Order of 18 August last shall, *mutatis mutandis*, continue to apply.

"2. Government business do take precedence on Thursday in each week."

Motion agreed to.

SUPPLY.

COMMITTEE—FINANCIAL STATEMENT—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

(The Chairman of Committees, Mr. Mann, Brisbane, in the chair.)

Debate resumed from 12 October (see page 708) on Mr. Larcombe's motion—

"That there be granted to His Majesty for the service of the year 1948-49, a sum not exceeding £500 to defray the salary of the Aide-de-Camp to His Excellency the Governor."

Mr. RUSSELL (Dalby) (11.13 a.m.): On Tuesday of this week the Committee listened to the hon. member for Gregory castigating the Government on their land policy. It was like a breath of fresh air to me, for although he criticised me and endeavoured to misrepresent statements I had made, it was the first time I had heard a Labour member in this Chamber speak up for the country people, the Western people in his area particularly.

The hon. member told us in no uncertain terms that 95 per cent. of the small holders in the West are financially embarrassed. This surely shows how wrong the Government's land policy has been. The hon. member for Gregory said so, and it is evident that it must be so, because if the people in his electorate are embarrassed now, with present high prices, what will happen when prices fall?

The hon. member said that I had screamed for a reduction in my own rentals. It will be remembered that on a point of order I denied categorically that I had ever asked for anything for myself in this Assembly, although I have on many occasions pleaded with the Government to do something for the small holders in our western areas. It is difficult, apparently, for hon. members on the Government side to understand how any other hon. member can be in this Chamber without asking for something for himself all

the time. It is my purpose here to serve and if I can help the Government in any respect whatsoever I shall be happy to do so.

I wish also to reply to another criticism by the hon. member for Gregory, who said that I was opposed to the construction of the far western railway.

I have said on the several occasions I have spoken on railway development that we should do the practical things first—do the things we can do and do not talk about the things that are impossible. I gave my reasons and they can be found in "Hansard."

The fact that the Department of Public Lands has no defined and coherent policy is causing considerable concern amongst those who are interested in the development of the primary industries in Queensland generally. I have pointed out before how tremendously important it is for the Government to have a progressive land-settlement policy so that industries can be expanded and a better form of settlement undertaken.

Let us examine the so-called policy of the Government and see what progress we have been making over the years. I wish to deal particularly with the western areas of the State, the parts of the State where the rainfall is below 20 inches a year. There is clear evidence of the complete lack of any thought whatever by the Government as to the future of those large areas.

It must have been evident to them 10 years ago that the present state of stagnation and deterioration in this large portion of our grazing land was inevitable unless steps were taken to substitute an up-to-date and progressive policy for one that had outlived its usefulness. No attempt whatever has been made by them to do this. All evidence points to the fact that the Minister is either still fast asleep, that he does not know his job, or that he cannot convince his Government of the right policy.

In this division of the State, I heard the hon. member for Gregory say, there are 10,000,000 acres of land held under occupation licenses waiting to be dealt with, and I understand that there are an additional 20,000,000 acres falling due and will be in the same category within the next three years. The Government are unable to do anything in the matter in a reasonable time because of the shortage of field workers, particularly surveyors.

The Government have a splendid opportunity today to do something really progressive in connection with this huge area of our State. We have roughly one-half of the State settled, but we have to deal with the other half. We have the example of the policy that has been followed in the past, which must be most useful in guiding the department as to how to handle the balance of this country.

In March of this year—and my statements are recorded in "Hansard" at page 2067—I gave instances in which the department had given notice to people who held country under occupation licence to be ready to vacate them within six months. The

lessees, in anticipation, sold their stock. But when the time came for them to go out they found that the department was not ready to take over. This involved the lessees in considerable expense, because they had to keep on staff, and there was loss of profits and interest on any capital that might have been represented in the improvements.

Places I know of where this happened are Oondooroo, Marathon, and Maxwelton, and many others, in the Central Division. This meant not only loss to the lessees concerned but loss to the State at a time when the primary industries should be bringing considerable wealth to the Treasury and the people of Queensland.

To that criticism the Minister offered no satisfactory answer. He talked about the shortage of surveyors and the shortage of field staff generally, but let us see what he is doing with his field staff and surveyors in the Dalby district, for instance, where we have 72 soldiers settled, out of a total number of 2,300 requiring settlement. The surveyors are not being used for the purpose of surveying the land required for this purpose but are being used for jobs that normally should be done by the local land commissioners.

In spite of this the Government have not done very much in soldier settlement and have not done nearly so well as Governments have in other States. New South Wales, for instance, has settled 609 soldier settlers and Victoria, with not nearly as much land available as we have here, has settled 570.

I want to illustrate the complete lack of policy by the department in land matters. Recently I made representations on behalf of a company owning a property on the Barkly Tableland, a property of, roughly, 3,000 square miles. It is significant that in this district, where resumptions have been made from time to time, the selections have reverted to the original holdings, which shows in no uncertain way that this country is not suitable for closer settlement.

The proposal that I put to the department for this company was that in return for a consolidation of its various leases and an overall extension of 25 years the company would spend £25,000 on developmental work. The reply that I received was that the matter was held in abeyance and that we should come back again in a year or two. I would point out also that a similar application was made on behalf of this company eight years ago and to that letter no reply was forthcoming. I leave it to the Committee to judge for itself just what sort of a policy the Department of Public Lands has at the present time.

I want to make certain recommendations to the Government in an endeavour to convince them that their lack of policy in the Department of Public Lands is helping the drift of population from the outlying areas to the towns.

Recently, when the Premier, Mr. Hanlon, visited St. George, he spoke about a "resurge" of people from the cities to the country but

although I travel a good deal throughout the State I can find no evidence whatever of it. It was said purely to mislead the people.

I want to make some suggestions to help the Government because I feel that they are not properly informed on these matters.

I find it very difficult to separate a consideration of railway policy from lands policy, because the two are very closely related. You see, the Railway Department earns for the Department of Public Lands a considerable part of its revenue and railway accounts usually show deficits while the accounts of the Department of Public Lands show considerable profits and that department is probably the most profitable of all Government departments.

It works in this way: as soon as you construct a railway through country that may have been earning the Department of Public Lands one halfpenny an acre in rent, the rental goes up to say 3d. an acre. Consequently the railways should be credited with some of the earnings. But they are not.

The railway policy should be to some extent dictated by the Department of Public Lands, and the Department of Public Lands should be regarded as the instrumentality through which the State can be more fully developed. It is important to have large centres of population spread throughout the area, in spite of what the hon. member for Gregory said. He said that with faster transport it was not necessary—that we could all live more or less in the city and travel out to our various jobs.

Mr. Devries: I did not say that.

Mr. RUSSELL: It would be far more desirable to have the people in the country areas, for many reasons. They create a local market, and they are a reservoir of labour. The hon. member for Gregory objected to our country towns being regarded as reservoirs of labour; but what is wrong with it? These people working in country areas are the potential settlers of the country in that area. That is not the objective of those who live in the city. If they go to live in the country they get out of it as quickly as they can. These things can be done by railway policy. Population can be held in those areas only by local industry and that is where the railways come in.

In the last session of Parliament—and it was mentioned by the hon. member for Gregory the other day—I advocated the encouragement of scours in the western towns.

Mr. Devries: Don't you?

Mr. RUSSELL: I certainly do, wherever practicable, and I gave illustrations and I pleaded with the Minister for Transport so to alter the rail freight on scoured wool as to encourage the establishment of that type of industry in Western towns. My pleadings, however, fell on deaf ears. I was very sorry to see at the time of my last visit to Charleville that the old-established scour of Gibson & Company had moved to Brisbane. When I heard of this I asked Mr. Gibson why he had moved. The reply I got was to the effect

that they could not carry on profitably. The growers didn't want to scour their wool there, because it was cheaper to send it to Brisbane. Further than that, wages were 30s. a week higher in the West, and, further than that, the cost of raw materials was so much higher. Soda ash costs £14 a ton to bring from Brisbane to Charleville, which, incidentally, is the same freight as from England to Brisbane.

Now, could not the railways have given some concession on those raw materials to induce the scour to remain in Charleville? With the removal of the scour from Charleville, 20 families left the town of Charleville. It is not only the loss of those 20 families, but it is the loss of the servicing that goes towards the maintenance and keeping those families going. I appeal again to the Government, before it is too late, so to alter their rail-freight classifications as to encourage industry in these towns of the West before it is too late.

I suggest that the policy of the Department of Public Lands should be the subject of early discussion by the Government with a view to finding a satisfactory solution to the many problems present. These discussions, briefly, could include—

- (1.) The best means of distributing population in those areas and promoting satisfactory settlement;
- (2.) Maintaining continuity of production and progressive development;
- (3.) Safeguarding the productivity of the land itself.

I suggest that a new commission be appointed to inquire into the problems and to advise the Government generally on the policy that should be adopted. It seems the Government appoint such commissions but accept their recommendations only if they are in line with Government policy.

We have seen many commissions bring down sound recommendations. I cite the commissions that reported on the Charleville-Blackall railway line in 1920 and again in 1939, both of which recommended this important link; but the Government have done nothing about it. Such a link would have saved the equal of its cost in this year of drought in the Central Division. We have had reports on land from Mr. Payne, the president of the Land Court, but his recommendations were not adopted.

If the Government feel that they should shift the responsibility that really rests on their shoulders, I feel they should appoint a commission to advise them how far closer settlement by cutting up the larger holdings in the West is desirable and the best methods generally to promote settlement. Obviously it would take considerable time to collect the evidence; and I suggest that in the intervening period the Government should grant leases in respect of those areas whose terms will have expired of not less than three years. An exception might be made of those in the process of selection, those improved

sufficiently so that selection could be proceeded with immediately, and those that are capable of being designed.

Three years are necessary, for the reasons that—

1. The Department of Public Lands is already so far behind with its work that such an interval is necessary to allow it to catch up.
2. The acute shortage of material and labour results in excessive costs of improvements necessary for selection.
3. At the moment the cost of carrying out the necessary improvements is beyond the pockets of new selectors, and also as the price of stock is at present so high there is a great risk of capital loss.

It is astonishing to me that the Department of Public Lands, which is so important to the State, should have no real policy. This is understandable when one realises that very few Government members have had any real experience. When I look across at the members of the Government I can see nobody who has had any real practical experience in those areas; and such practical experience is necessary to acquire the knowledge that is essential.

I am not saying that in any accusing sense, but to impress upon members of the Government the necessity or the desirability of appointing a commission composed of men who have intimate knowledge that is the result of experience of these matters and which the individual members of the Government know nothing about.

I propose to deal with land settlement in the West under various headings. Firstly, I want to ask the Minister whether he will investigate the possibility of designing selections out of the country that is falling due for resumption. Having regard to the shortage of surveyors it is impossible for the Department of Public Lands to do anything in a reasonably short space of time, and I think many of these places are so improved that we could design selections out of them at once.

Let me illustrate: Suppose a living area in the Cunnamulla district is considered to be 20,000 acres. There may be paddocks or groups of paddocks approximating that area. If you could get selections with, we will say, 23,000 acres in one case and another with 18,000 acres you may be able to settle selectors and adjust the differences later on when men and materials become available. I feel that this is a practical possibility although I realise there are very great obstacles, but we must try to do something to continue the settlement of our people.

To further this proposal I suggest that the Government should appoint local committees composed of, say, the local land commissioner as chairman, supported or advised by experienced graziers in the area and members of the local authority.

There are many places in Queensland where this could be done. To mention one or two that occur to my mind I would cite Thurrulgoona in the Cunnamulla district, which has been held under occupation licence for some 8½ years, also Tinnenburra, Noorama, and Bundaleer in the South-West, and in the Central Division there are Ayrshire and Westlands. The question of living area depends on the particular part of the State and type of land.

Not the least of the problems of land settlement in the West is associated with the question of security of tenure. Security of tenure is essential.

Mr. Sparkes: Most essential.

Mr. RUSSELL: It is stupid to suggest otherwise.

Another problem is taxation. No prudent organisation will risk the possibility of capital loss in those areas when taxation is at its present level.

Mr. Jones: Why are there thousands of applicants for every block of land if there is such a risk?

Mr. RUSSELL: We have the hon. member for Gregory saying that 95 per cent. of them are insolvent.

A Government Member: You didn't believe it.

Mr. RUSSELL: The hon. member for Gregory said it, I did not say it.

Mr. DEVRIES: I rise to a point of order. I want the hon. member for Dalby to accept my assurance that I did not make use of that expression, that 95 per cent. were insolvent.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. member for Dalby to accept the assurance of the hon. member for Gregory.

Mr. RUSSELL: I will accept the hon. member's assurance; what he said was that they were not allowed by their financial houses to scour their wool.

Mr. Sparkes: Which means the same thing.

Mr. RUSSELL: Exactly. Under normal conditions it would be reasonable to expect that we should get a reduction of taxation, but any advance in national production seems to be regarded by the Federal Government as another excuse for further increases in governmental expenditure on socialistic experiments or social services, such as free medicine, which obviously prevents any reduction in taxation. Unless we get a reduction in taxation and the Government are prepared to stimulate production generally, there will be no incentive to private industry to produce.

That applies not only to the pastoralists of the western area but to industry generally. Under today's conditions, if men work hard to create independence in old age they are taxed to the limit. They see the wasteful and thriftless receive a life's pension from which the thrifty are debarred. They learn

that this is a loafer's paradise in which industry is penalised and sloth rewarded.

It is said that high taxation is necessary as a brake on inflation, but what is the difference between one spender and another? What is the difference between Mr. Chifley as Treasurer and Mr. Chifley as a private citizen? There is no difference. The money is spent just the same. Where, therefore, is the brake on inflation?

We have seen how the Government introduced a 40-hour week at a time when such a reduction of working hours was not justified. It can be justified only when there is an abundant supply of goods to take care of the surplus money circulating in the community.

The taxation policy of the present Federal Government seems calculated to further Labour's policy of unification. They are withholding money that should normally be handed over to the States. Under Section 94 of the Constitution, the Commonwealth is required to pay to the States any surplus revenue that they have not expended. It would appear that that is the reason for the £55,000,000 of outstanding income tax as at 30 June last, which the Government apparently are making no effort to collect. There is also an estimated additional £30,000,000 of income not assessed.

Section 94 of the Constitution reads—

“After five years from the imposition of uniform duties of customs, the Parliament may provide, on such basis as it deems fair, for the monthly payment to the several States of all surplus revenue of the Commonwealth.”

It may be argued that the Parliament has not passed a specific Act for that purpose and therefore there is no constitutional obligation on the Commonwealth to hand over surplus revenue to the State. However, there are many high constitutional authorities who contend that there is no doubt about the obligation to pay that surplus revenue to the States and that the Financial Agreement entered into between the States and the Commonwealth, and subsequently ratified by Parliament, constitutes the Act contemplated by the framers of the Constitution.

There are many other sections that bear on the matter, some of them being Sections 54, 55, 56, 81, 83, 87, 94, 105 and 105A, and others as well.

The Commonwealth is not like the States, and some authorities submit that it cannot, as the States can, carry forward a surplus; it must make appropriations from its revenue for purposes within its powers and none other annually.

The Federal Treasurer, by not collecting outstanding revenue, defeats the provisions of the Constitution. He never has a surplus, because he either wastes a large proportion of the collected tax on socialistic experiments or, if he cannot spend it fast enough, he simply does not collect it, as is apparent by the fact that £55,000,000 is at present assessed but not collected. That is what the Commonwealth Government do, and I hope

that if the Federal Treasurer ever does show a surplus the States will lay claim to their share of it, for I am advised that they will have a good constitutional claim to it.

If the States got their proper share of Federal revenue, and if wasteful Commonwealth expenditure was reduced, there would be no need for this excessive taxation, which is inflationary because it absorbed profits of industry that would otherwise be used to expand and develop it for greater production. Taxation that is not collected is just as serious in its effect on industry as taxation that is collected, because prudent people have to provide for it in their accounts.

State land tax is another imposition that is unfair in its application. For a tax to be equitable, it must not differentiate in its application between equals. For a tax to be economic, its cost of collection should be low.

Consider the costs of the collection of land tax. Prior to 1942-43 State land tax and income tax were collected by one department and the costs of collection reached a peak in 1939-40 of 6.504d. for every £1 collected. Since 1942-43 costs have risen steadily and in the Estimates it is revealed that to collect an estimated £365,000 in land tax the department's cost will be £41,775. That is for each £1 collected it costs 27.408d., an increase of 5.016d. on last year's costs.

The true cost of collection of the tax is really higher than that figure, because many things have not been taken into account—rental, cleaning, lighting, paper, and various other things.

Land tax has a serious effect on the value of Queensland land and we notice that particularly in the border districts where land in New South Wales—where there is no land tax—is 30s. an acre higher than on this side of the border. Prudent buyers consider it worth 30s. an acre less here because of land tax and the possibility of increased land tax. In the light of this comment I urge the Government to consider the repeal of land tax because we are out of step with the other States.

In the light of the last 30 years' experience in land settlement and in view of the changing spirit of the people and the changing requirements of modern life I feel that the question of living areas in the western parts needs to be revised. We should have possibly a new concept as to what a living area is. Heretofore a living area has been regarded as an area sufficient to maintain a man, his wife and family, but I suggest that the new concept should be an area for a man, his wife, his family, and a group of employees. I suggest that, because of the loneliness of the West, which people today are not prepared to put up with.

Mr. Jones: Do you think, say, 23,000 or 25,000 acres in the Longreach district not enough?

Mr. RUSSELL: The answer to that question is that the holders themselves are in difficulties. We can take only the average price of wool and not the present high price. Our experience shows that they are not satisfactory settlers in the majority of cases. I think that that was borne out by the hon. member for Gregory, when he said that so many of them, even in these times of high prices, are in difficulties.

Mr. Jones interjected.

Mr. RUSSELL: It comes to a question of carrying capacity. It has been found that many of the settlers have not been satisfactory settlers because their properties have been too small. It is possible to lay down a living area for a particular area, but not for the whole of Queensland.

If the group idea was adopted it would alter the situation altogether. You must remember that employees have a right to security as well as the lessees themselves, and in this connection there are four factors that have to be taken into consideration—

- (1.) The welfare of the settler himself.
- (2.) The welfare and security of the employees.
- (3.) The protection of the land from impoverishment.
- (4.) The maintenance and improvement of sheep and cattle standards.

Present-day costs and deterioration in the carrying capacity of the land mean that areas have to be larger than before to enable the selectors to become free and independent citizens.

In the last session of Parliament, again recorded in "Hansard" at page 222, I showed that the opening rentals of new selections were invariably higher than the rentals of the land from which they were resumed. The hon. member for Gregory has said these people are very largely financially embarrassed, and so we see that rentals are an important factor in this problem. The lower we can make the costs of these holders the smaller will be the area necessary to make a living. Whether a rental is 3½d. an acre or some other figure makes no difference. The carrying capacity is the important factor. I know of one property in the Cunnamulla district where the rental works out at 2s. 1d. per sheep area, whereas that of comparable land in New South Wales works out at 4½d.

Seeing that revenue from rents gives a profit to the Department of Public Lands, surely we can, in the interests of settlement generally, offer these people a lower rental.

The policy, I repeat, has been to fix the rentals of new selections higher than the rental for the area from which they were resumed, and then systematically jack up the surrounding rentals to a higher level than they were. That policy should be reversed. I know that the Secretary for Public Lands will say that rentals today are no higher than they were 25 years ago, and that may be so, but it only proves my point, that the carrying capacity of the land is going back and

will continue to go back if the country is over-assessed and over-taxed. The continual over-stocking of this Western country gradually denudes it of much of the trees indigenous to it; and while trees are not only very helpful from a fodder point of view, they are essential for shade, especially in breeding areas. The only practical way to protect our trees is by light stocking, and so we must revise our ideas about carrying capacity.

During the last session of Parliament I appealed to the Government to ask Crown assessing officers to err on the generous side in assessing carrying capacity. Members of the Land Court have frequently commented on this practice of over-estimating carrying capacity on the part of Crown assessing officers. On 8 June last, in delivering a reserved judgment in the Land Court, Mr. J. L. Callaghan, a member of the court, said—

“There appeared to be no generally accepted definition of the interpretation of the term ‘average season.’

“The Crown contended that, to arrive at a meaning, a long-range view must be taken. Some of the selectors desired that the Court restrict itself to the seven-year assessment period.

“In the opinion of the Court what was envisaged in the term was what an experienced grazier, resident sufficiently long in a district to know the occurrences of floods, droughts, dry spells, vagaries of rainfall, both as to quantity and incidence, growth of pastures, including their recovery from drought and dry spells, and the response to varied rainfalls, would regard as a season when all the causes and factors of these phenomena were so balanced that stock, to the numbers that experienced prudence would dictate, would have a sufficiency but not a superfluity of pasture and adequate nutriment, together with adequate but not superfluous water.

“If this interpretation were sound, he was driven to the conclusion that Crown assessors’ estimate of the carrying capacity of the holdings, in the loose and dry ashy downs of the Winton area, would not be possible to sustain in such average seasons.”

I ask the Minister whether he has taken notice of these remarks. They are particularly important when it is realised that many lessees are not competent to present their cases.

The necessity of removing the limitation at present imposed on the areas of grazing selections of 60,000 acres or to £400 rent per annum, whichever comes first, is a matter on which the commission I suggest could advise the Government.

Notwithstanding what I have said about small areas or closer settlement, I contend that in the western areas more permanent settlement can be obtained by allowing areas to remain large. There are certain areas that are, in my opinion, wholly unsuitable for closer settlement. I refer to areas around Boulia, Camooweal, Thargomindah, and so on.

It may be argued that where one company is running a large area at the present time two companies could work it equally as well. I suggest that there is no possible advantage in this, as the people who lived there would still be employees instead of owners whether there were two or more companies.

Long tenures and good living conditions for all the people who live out there will effect more settlement than the present policy has achieved. Small holders in that area have not the economic stability to withstand the long periods of drought common to that country. When they get into difficulties in dry times they find it necessary to dispense with their labour. On the other hand, the large owners employ and settle more people than would be settled on that area if the country was cut up and subdivided. Large owners and companies in those areas have to keep all their employees. They can do so more easily than small selectors, by reason of their greater financial resources. If, instead of cutting those places up and building the improvements that are necessary to run separate units of production such as wool sheds, the material required was put into homes for workers in those areas, the community would be much more faithfully served.

Another reason why it is so essential to retain some of those large stations with long-established flocks and herds out in that part of the State is the need for the maintenance of our sheep standards. Places such as Landsdowne, Evesham, Portland Downs, and Noondoo have maintained and raised sheep standards in this State to a point where they never would have got had those places been cut up. I am doubtful whether the country could carry on without them. These stations in times of drought have spent fabulous sums on the feeding of their sheep, sums that would be financial suicide for the small holder today. As I said before, it is doubtful whether the sheep industry as a whole can carry on without them, because they are the reservoirs from which we draw stock when the droughts eventually break.

I believe that the reason for the inactivity of the Government so far as land policy is concerned is that the right policy would be unpopular amongst Labour supporters who, without knowledge of the western areas, consider that it is suitable for closer settlement.

I know the hon. members for Maranoa, Warrego, Barcoo, and Gregory know different, but they apparently are unable to make their voices heard in this Parliament. I do hope that the Government will take notice of their counsels, because it is tremendously important that something should be done soon to arrest the drift and to re-stimulate the progressive development in this area that is so important.

The Labour Party has the erroneous idea that large holdings put into the hands of companies and individuals too much land and is contrary to Labour policy. I submit without fear of reasoned contradiction that large holdings are the only way satisfactorily to settle and develop the country of which I

speak. I feel that there the Government have an opportunity, with all these leases falling due, to make it a condition of an extended lease that the lessee provide good homes and amenities for his workers in consideration for it.

The fact that many of these areas that have been cut up in the past have reverted to family aggregations, of very much bigger areas in some cases than some of the pastoral leases that are falling due, proves that the country is worked more satisfactorily in that way. The properties I control in the Cunnamulla district are in a similar position. I contend that we could not possibly get the results as individuals that we get running them in partnership, by which we are able to reduce running costs and to save stock in periods of drought by spelling paddocks and doing things that small holders are unable to do.

To sum up, I want to stress again the following points that I have made:—

- (1) Security of tenure is vital to increased production.
- (2) Taxation in the form of income tax, land tax and rentals must be reduced.
- (3) Living areas should be revised and must be on a generous scale for not only a man and his family but also for a group of employees.
- (4) Only suitable land should be cut up for selection in the western area.
- (5) The Department of Public Lands must be used as an instrument to develop the State and not—as it is at present—as an instrument of revenue.
- (6) A commission should be appointed to advise on all these points.
- (7) As a condition of extended leases, workers' dwellings must be provided.
- (8) In the meantime the Government should grant a 3-year extension of all pastoral leases, pending the commission's finding on all the country it cannot settle in that time.
- (9) Large holdings in the western area offer more employment and better living conditions for employees and produce more and better wool and meat than does the land in subdivision.

Mr. O'SHEA (Warrego) (12.5 p.m.): I was pleased to note that provision is made in the Budget for a greater amount of money to be expended on irrigation and water conservation.

But I do not make any assertion that we are in a position to build large reservoirs, because we have no, or a very limited, number of places at which headwaters could be impounded and in conserving water for irrigation it is essential that there shall be headwaters to impound.

I listened to the speech of the hon. member for Dalby and it seems to me he has been reading some of my letters about land settlement. I agree with some of the statement

he makes, in particular that regarding the need for varying areas in different districts. Evidently the hon. member does not know that the Government have recently adopted a very sane policy in connection with new settlement. For instance, a block of 35,900-odd acres, some of the best land in Queensland, was thrown open recently at Claverton. At the same time two blocks of fair land were ballotted for, one 75,000 acres and the other 71,000 acres, under preferential pastoral lease, because at present the Act precludes the doing of anything else.

The hon. member for Dalby made a statement as to the alleged lag of returned-soldier settlement in Queensland. He told the Committee what has taken place in New South Wales and Victoria and in doing so used the word "settle," I agree with him that in most instances in connection with soldier settlement in New South Wales the word "settle" can be properly applied.

Mr. Sparkes: Do not forget what happened here with your last soldier settlement.

Mr. O'SHEA: I know what happened here, and it is not going to happen again. We have the satisfaction of knowing that it will not happen again, but the fact is that the word "settle" applies particularly aptly to soldiers in Victoria and New South Wales. From the melancholy picture painted by the hon. member for Dalby it would appear that the graziers are suffering from a terrible disease and if they recover at all they will have to undergo a painful and lingering convalescence. The whole fault in regard to land settlement cannot be laid at the door of this Government but at the door of the Governments of many years ago, because the policy in Queensland in the days when some worthy predecessor of the hon. member was sitting in this Chamber was possibly one of the most stupid it is possible to conceive.

Mr. Russell: Then why not alter it?

Mr. O'SHEA: The Government the hon. member supported had the opportunity to alter it during the years they occupied the Treasury benches.

Hon. members opposite have spoken of the drift of population from the western country. We realise that the drift is taking place. What are we going to do to arrest it? We are not going to solve the problem by standing up in this Chamber and talking about what might be done. It is my duty as a member of the Government party to urge the Government to take precautions in an effort to arrest this drift, which can only be arrested by providing conditions attractive enough to keep the people in the western areas.

Mr. Russell: That is what I said.

Mr. O'SHEA: The hon. member and others with him have been saying that for ages. The local authorities themselves are to blame for this drift. The Wambo Shire Council, of which the hon. member for Aubigny is chairman, is buying eight new

trucks, thus socialising industry before the time is ripe, and the same applies to many other councils throughout the State. By their actions they are forcing those men who have bought trucks—probably under the hire-purchase system—out of their areas and into the provincial towns or the city of Brisbane.

Mr. Sparkes: I will tell you all about that.

Mr. O'SHEA: The hon. member will tell me nothing.

Mr. Sparkes: You have put your foot right in it now.

Mr. O'SHEA: I know the Wambo Shire Council has on order eight trucks.

Mr. Sparkes: We have got 18.

Mr. O'SHEA: That makes it worse. We also know that the Paroo Shire Council and other councils have embarked upon what I might call the socialisation of industry before we are ready for it. We have the spectacle of these authorities saying there is a terrible drift to the city, that they are losing population from their shires, that they cannot keep the people in their areas because the Government are not making conditions attractive enough. The strange thing is that the local authorities have power to make conditions attractive enough to keep the people out there if they desire to use that power but they have no such desire.

The hon. member for Fassifern tells us that the councils are stone, motherless broke. It appears to me that the only remedy is to bury them before they recover for I should not like to see them buried alive. The fact is that these local authorities have bought machinery costing up to £40,000 or £50,000—in two or three shires—and this machinery is lying idle while the councils are waiting for a new Government loan in order to go on with more work.

Mr. Sparkes: You know that is not true.

Mr. O'SHEA: It is true about the council of which the hon. member has been a member for 30 years. It is true also about the amount of money that was expended in the Dalby district on loan-subsidy work and on main roads.

Mr. Sparkes: There are more main roads in the Wambo shire than in any other shire.

Mr. O'SHEA: I know that, and that council should be ashamed of itself for squeezing other local authorities out. I am not going to say anything about the dirty town of Dalby.

Mr. Russell: You are not game, after the hiding you got last time.

Mr. O'SHEA: I should like to see the hon. member for Dalby give a hiding to that medical man resident in Dalby who has given a description of Dalby. I refer to Dr. Watson.

I will not deal any further with the Wambo shire, but with matters mentioned by the hon. member for Dalby, particularly the Charleville-Blackall line. It is as well for the hon. member to be honest about it, and it is just as well for us to remember that there is no possibility of constructing that line within the next 10 or 15 years.

Mr. Russell: There was when the commission's report came out.

Mr. O'SHEA: There was no possibility when the commission's report came out in 1939, prior to the outbreak of war. It would be no good having a line to the Ward River and letting it stop there. The truth of the matter is that about 50,000 tons of steel would be required for the Blackall-Charleville link. In view of the fact that we have been able to get only 4,000 tons of steel out of an order placed almost five years ago for 7,000 tons—3,000 tons short—the possibility of getting 50,000 tons for the link is remote. It is as well for us to remember that the time for doing these things is when materials are available.

It is no use saying that the link should be constructed to save starving stock. The drought is on in the Central-West and the West, and you will not get an opportunity to save the stock by the building of the line.

It seems to me that you can trace self-interest in almost every argument advanced by the various people who become advocates for this particular line at certain seasons of the year. They suggest that the link should be there if required, to shift starving stock from one area to another. It would be a great idea to have it there when it was required, but there are two things to be considered—the amount of expenditure and the amount likely to be gained by the expenditure. I know it suits the hon. member for Dalby particularly well to advocate the construction of that link. I see a gentleman sitting in the lobby whom it would suit—for the transport of many employees.

Mr. Power: He must have given the hon. member for Dalby the brief.

Mr. O'SHEA: No. This is one he thought out for himself. What you require is an alternate service, and you require it immediately.

Mr. Russell: Will you endorse the Premier's statement that it would be cheaper—

Mr. O'SHEA: I cannot endorse any more of what the Premier said than I can of what the hon. member said, and I cannot endorse anything he said. The hon. member comes from that very wealthy wheat-growing area of Dalby, where he has big interests. I have never heard him suggest that wheat silos should be constructed, nor have I heard him argue in support of the wheat industry, but that is a matter that should receive serious consideration by the Government. The construction of silos in the wheat-growing districts is of paramount importance.

Mr. Russell: What do you know about wheat-growing?

Mr. O'SHEA: I know a little more about it than the hon. member does, because I gained my experience of it not as a theorist but as a practical farmer in a farming area.

I now come to those 20 families who left Charleville because Gibson's wool scour closed down. When were 20 men ever employed at Gibson's wool scour at Charleville?

Mr. Russell: I have it from Mr. Gibson himself.

Mr. O'SHEA: If the hon. member has it from Mr. Gibson, then he is about as careless of the truth as the hon. member is, because there were never any more than nine men employed at Gibson's wool scour over the last five or six years it was operating.

I now come to the suggestion by the hon. member that graziers should be given three years in which to quit their leases, which they have held for a number of years. Already the Government have given consideration to this matter and many extensions of time have been granted. In all cases the Government have given a reasonable time for the lessees to get out and in some instances the time has not yet expired, but I have no doubt that when it does any further applications from them will be considered on their merits.

The only point on which I agree with the hon. member is that of living areas. We know that he has living areas, held by himself or by his company, the Jimbour Pastoral Company, or a company with some such name.

Mr. Russell: Do you not know that a company cannot hold grazing farms?

Mr. O'SHEA: I know that very well but the hon. member would get over anything in the matter of land settlement, even if he had to get a dummy to fix it up.

Mr. RUSSELL: I rise to a point of order. I take exception to the remark of the hon. member for Warrego that I would stoop to an improper practice so far as holding land is concerned. I ask that he withdraw it.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Hilton): If the hon. member for Warrego made the remark that the hon. member for Dalby would make use of an improper practice I suggest that he will have to withdraw it.

Mr. O'SHEA: I did not make that remark, but I will accept his denial.

I now come to his suggestion about making conditions attractive for the employees as well as the employers, the settlers themselves. It is a fact that the hon. member frequently gets into trouble because he does not provide sufficient amenities for his employees. That is a very frequent happening and only recently it occurred to the tune of about £16.

Mr. RUSSELL: I rise to a point of order. I have never been in trouble with any

employees and the conditions that are provided for them in all the places I control are in excess of award conditions.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: I ask the hon. member for Warrego to accept the explanation of the hon. member for Dalby.

Mr. O'SHEA: I accept the assurance of the hon. member, but he has not been in trouble with his employees as much as he has been in trouble with the Australian Workers' Union.

Mr. Russell: That is political.

Mr. O'SHEA: That is political! Strangely enough, the hon. member always knows a way out. He pays up before he is forced into the court. It would not suit him to go to court, because he is a member of this august Chamber. It would do him a lot of damage.

We find a lot of lip-service being given to the principle of providing amenities and making conditions attractive for the employee. We hear it said that the provision of comforts is necessary because it will induce people to stay in the country, but we never see it practised, except in odd cases. There are some stations in the western country that are doing a good job. Some of the larger properties at long last have awakened to the necessity of providing amenities for the people living in those areas. They are providing education also at the expense of the station. I agree that western Queensland is not suitable for closer settlement and I believe the Department of Public Lands realises it. I speak of south-western Queensland not western Queensland proper.

We hear people talking about the bad time the grazier is having. It is very easy for people to talk about the bad times but I wish to prove what I am saying about those areas in the West. I refer particularly to Gilruth Plains, a place of 40,000 acres, which is held under such a tenure that no rental and no rates are paid. It has been proved there that, if the lessees have sufficient areas, the country will rehabilitate itself by the practice of sound and sensible stocking.

We know what has been taking place in western Queensland and we know that large areas have been ruined because of overstocking. I suppose the hon. member would agree with me if I suggested that a very careful examination be made of the land-settlement position and that the Government impose conditions in order to control overstocking. I hear no word from the hon. member, so he must agree.

We know that land that has been abused, virtually destroyed in some cases, will not rehabilitate itself in the next 20 years, even if it is spelled completely. As an example, I refer to the stock route from Charleville to Cunnamulla. It is covered from one end to the other with nothing but galvanised burr. It has not a chance of recovering, unless something is done to ease up the stocking that takes place. We know that the stock routes always get the worst of the deal,

because of the thousands and thousands of sheep and cattle that travel over them. I do not know how that difficulty is to be overcome. We might even have to consider the resumption of certain land for the purpose of making another stock route.

Mr. Sparkes interjected.

Mr. O'SHEA: I said certain lands had been abused and destroyed and that applies particularly to the Nebine country and the small areas along the Nebine, where people were settled on insufficient areas in the early days of settlement.

Mr. Russell: Why do you charge a high rental for a small holding?

Mr. O'SHEA: I am guided by the people who are settled on the various properties out in the West, who say, "Forget about our land rentals; our land rentals are nothing; we have the cheapest land in Australia." But the hon. gentleman suddenly discovers that you have much cheaper land in the western division of New South Wales. Some of it carries rental as low as 3d. to 1d. an acre, and some of it is capable of running 4,000 sheep to 100,000 acres. I speak particularly of Mullaroola. We also have it down towards Bourke and Angledool in the western division of New South Wales, where land values differ as you travel along. We have values there of 3½d. and 3d. an acre.

Mr. Sparkes: Not in the Western Darling.

Mr. O'SHEA: In the western division I am speaking of. It might be agreed that the system of determining carrying capacity in Queensland is a little bit at variance with the system in New South Wales. On the Queensland side 15 acres to a sheep is allowed and on the New South Wales side 25 acres to a sheep. There may be some irregularity as far as the determination of carrying capacity is concerned. If the policy that is becoming popular is carried out there can be no danger of our getting into the same trouble as we have been in in the past.

Mr. Russell: What is the policy?

Mr. O'SHEA: I will tell the hon. member later. If the hon. member recalled the areas adjacent to some of his properties in regard to which ballots have taken place he would know the areas that have been made available for settlement.

We have to consider also the question of providing security for employees out in the western country. Population will be kept in the West only if that security exists, and it can be guaranteed to employees by putting a clause in all land-settlement agreements that a certain proportion of persons shall be employed. That, with a provision for the control of stocking, might make it rather awkward for some people.

I feel I have said enough about the much-discussed Blackall-Charleville railway line. I have no argument. I contend that the link is important but it is not a bit of use saying that it will be built before it is within the realms of practicability to do so.

Mr. Russell: If it was practicable would you say it should be built?

Mr. O'SHEA: If it was practicable, yes.

Mr. Russell: If you had the rails?

Mr. O'SHEA: Yes, and the sleepers. It would cost money as well. The hon. member for Logan is not present.

Mr. Wanstall: We will tell him.

Mr. O'SHEA: The hon. member said that 9,000,000 sheep had been lost—that 9,000,000 sheep were dead. That is not true.

Mr. Russell: Did he say they were dead sheep?

Mr. O'SHEA: Yes.

Mr. Sparkes: He said they were lost to the industry.

Mr. O'SHEA: He said 9,000,000 sheep were dead, and nothing would offset that loss. Later he told me himself personally.

Mr. Sparkes: That is not right.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I would ask hon. members on my left to allow the hon. member to make his speech without interruption and the hon. member to address his remarks to the Chair.

Mr. O'SHEA: Approximately 6,000,000 of those sheep were sent from Queensland to New South Wales. 70,000 sheep left two properties within recent months, of which 38,000 went from Wellshot. These sheep were sent over the border. Thousands of sheep have been going over the border in the last 12 months: ever since the signs of drought showed in the Central-West.

It is wrong to say that these losses have been suffered. These sheep were sold at fairly attractive prices. All this story about their being sold at 2s. or 3s. a head is untrue. Up to the present nothing has been sold for that price. If some are sold later on at that price some blame can be attached to the owners probably for waiting too long to remove the stock from the drought-stricken areas. According to the various stories one hears, one would believe that everything out there was lost, but that is not so. The position is similar to that of the trucking of fat cattle from the North to Cannon Hill and then reconsigning them to the South-West. Hon members opposite know why it is done. Because they could get trucks to convey fat cattle but not for stores and stores were consigned to Cannon Hill as fat cattle but reconsigned to the flush areas in the south-western district.

Mr. Sparkes: How did they get the trucks out there if they were not fat cattle?

Mr. O'SHEA: They got out there, and I leave it to the hon. member to work it out for himself. We hear much about the honesty of these people, about how they would not do anything crooked, but it seems to me that now and again they break their golden rule and do a few things that are a little shady,

although I am not suggesting that any hon. member of this Assembly has been guilty of that practice.

Let us examine the arguments used by those who are clamouring for a reduction of rental and compare the land values in the various districts. There are some areas in which the average production of a reasonably well-ordered property is about 12 lb. of wool to the sheep, while in others the average is about 7½ lb. The people who are producing the 12 lb. wool are screaming about their high rental, but the strange fact is that their rental is not as high as that paid by the people in the areas producing only 7½ lb. wool.

Mr. Sparkes: There is about 5 lb. of dust in that 12 lb. wool.

Mr. O'SHEA: There may be more than 5 lb. of dust, but it is still not as much as the hon. member has on the brain.

One thing that must concern this or any other Government is the fact that our wool production is not as good as it might be. Greater encouragement must be given to the establishment of stud sheep properties in this State. There is no reason why Queensland should be spending thousands of pounds yearly in bringing stud stock here from New South Wales.

Mr. Sparkes: And they have to become acclimatised when they come here.

Mr. O'SHEA: Not only do they cost a considerable amount of money, but they must become acclimatised and a great deal of time is lost before the ram can be used for stud purposes. It is very important, it is urgent that we do everything possible to improve our flocks. Unless we can improve our flocks, we are only going to be able to play second fiddle to the State from which our stud stock comes. I feel sure that the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock is giving this matter very careful consideration.

He is doing a splendid job in regard to the improvement of the flocks of the State. I urge that he will not slacken his efforts but will continue with the good work he has been doing since he has held the portfolio of Secretary for Agriculture and Stock and possibly help us arrive at a more satisfactory position in this State in this matter.

Mr. CHALK (East Toowoomba) (12.45 p.m.): After listening to the somewhat humorous interlude provided by the hon. member for Warrego, I want to endeavour to get this Committee back to the more serious problems confronting the State today. I think it was the Leader of the Opposition who in opening his Budget Speech congratulated the Treasurer on the fact that he had been privileged to deliver three consecutive Budget Speeches to this Committee, a privilege that I am sure every hon. member of this Chamber appreciates, as it does not fall to the lot of many in our community to hold the position of Treasurer for such a long time as the hon. member for Rockhampton. Hence for the moment I desire to leave all party politics aside and congratulate the Treasurer on his achievement.

I think it was one city newspaper that published something about my small-statured figure making quite a lot of noise in this Chamber, but I think I can perhaps pass the halo over to the Treasurer because his small figure has made considerable noise and brought forward considerable argument in this Committee. I must confess that after listening to the Treasurer for a couple of hours presenting his report for the year's activities I concluded that I was back in 1947, not in 1948, because in hardly one instance did the Budget report show any "New look" whatever, and for all general purposes I seemed to think that I had listened to a speech delivered when I first came into this Chamber and not one prepared 14 or 15 months thereafter.

Unfortunately, too many people in Queensland regard the Financial Statement of the Government of the State as something of very little importance. If you go into the Library and look at three city newspapers—in that I do not include the metropolitan Press—you will notice these headings in the issues of 1 October:—

"State Treasurer expects record year."

"State Treasurer forecasts remarkable industrial development."

"Record allocation for expenditure on education."

and so on. I say that they are only catch phrases to lure the public into a false sense of security.

They are far from the truth. Today too many people lose sight of the fact that the State is dependent on the uniform-taxation hand-out of the Federal Government and the fact that on that account the State Government must arrange its expenditure most carefully.

The Budget is something that should not be glossed over in this Chamber, rather should the huge expenditure of £30,000,000 be carefully studied and debated by every hon. member. We, as the custodians of the public purse, should try to spend that money as wisely and as economically as if we were spending our own. We must face up to the situation and not attempt to gloss over the financial position of the State, as is done today. The Treasurer has attempted to lure the public into the sublime. Concluding his Budget Speech, he tells the people of Queensland—

"Our finances are solvent; our State balances substantial; our economic position is sound; our production, exports and national income are increasing rapidly; investors are extending primary and secondary industries as quickly as labour and materials will permit; workers have economic security; we have no unemployment problem, and our standard of living is the best in the Commonwealth."

Those are his actual words and he might as well have led us the full length of the rosary path by adding, "This is Paradise," because he did in effect tell the people so.

Let us see what is going on around us today. It will be seen that it is not all like the Garden of Eden but rather are the conditions such that if we do not watch ourselves we shall be in very difficult circumstances. But year after year the Treasurer uses the same phrases, and the same words, and makes the same attempt to lure the people; and it is time that we opened up a discussion in this Chamber to expose the hollowness of many of his statements, which are nothing more than political propaganda for the Labour Party.

Surely, for instance, the Treasurer is not content with the housing conditions under which many of our people exist today? I knew that that remark would bring the Secretary for Public Works Housing and Local Government into the Chamber. He, like many more, usually is content to stay outside of the Chamber until a remark pertinent to him is made. He now comes in to defend his housing set-up. And surely the Treasurer is not content to ride to glory on the educational facilities provided in this State? But according to his Budget everything is rosy. He says in his Budget Speech, "An economic survey of Queensland reveals gratifying evidence of soundness and progress." Those words perhaps are all very well but it is time that we looked at the position not in a general way but with a sense of responsibility as Parliamentarians.

Let us look at a few facts. The Treasurer boasted with a high degree of satisfaction that 9,243 homes were completed in Queensland during the financial year 1947-48.

Anyone reading those figures quickly would conclude that such conditions were brought about by the Queensland Government and the State Housing Commission. Far from it. Private enterprise, that body of people whom the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock stated in this Assembly had fallen down on their job and whom his latest lieutenant, the hon. member for Nundah, also has seen fit to strongly condemn, has been responsible for the construction of 8,418 of those homes, while this glorified State Housing Commission, which according to the Secretary for Public Works employs 911 employees, built exactly 825 homes in the 12 months. In other words, the State Government and the State Housing Commission were responsible for building only 8 per cent. of the homes built in Queensland over the past financial year.

Mr. Power: What is wrong with that?

Mr. CHALK: I will tell the Minister what is wrong with it if he will listen. But, what is more important—and I hope the Minister will listen for a moment—every taxpayer should know that the office expenses and the administrative salaries of the Housing Commission were approximately £100,000 in the past 12 months. No doubt the Secretary for Public Works, Housing and Local Government, in due time, will have something to say in an attempt to gull the public in regard to this expenditure, but what I have

stated are the clear facts—911 employees on the administrative side, plus a small number of labourers, built 825 homes and the administrative cost to the State was £100,000. Twist those figures exactly how you like. Those are the facts as they are revealed by the Secretary for Public Works and by this Budget.

Mr. Power: You are not telling the truth.

Mr. CHALK: I know the Secretary for Public Works and Housing does not like it, but I am going to state the facts so that the public will realise just what is going on.

Anyone who has ever had much to do with the State Housing Commission will quickly realise that the department today is in a hopeless, helpless muddle and it can be regarded as nothing more than a costly undertaking, being run chiefly for political purposes. That is why hon. members on the Government side are so pleased—because the Housing Commission is being operated chiefly for political purposes in their own interests.

Mr. Power interjected.

Mr. CHALK: I knew the Secretary for Housing would come in. However, read the "Telegraph" of last night and you will see that another 39 homes are to be built in the city of Brisbane. Read last week's "Telegraph" and you will see that 24 homes were to be built in the city of Brisbane. How many homes are being built in the country? Let the Minister answer that question. This Housing Commission is being used in Brisbane, not for decentralisation but for bringing people into the city and for the building up of votes for the Labour Party.

Mr. Mann, as I was saying before lunch there is no doubt that the State Housing Commission at the present time is in a hopeless muddle. When the present Minister took control there was a burst of trumpets announcing that there were to be major clean-ups in staffs, &c., which alone was an admission that chaos existed; but after 12 months we know that that trumpeting was nothing more than eye-wash.

When I spoke on the Address in Reply I outlined to this House how the Housing Commission was used for political purposes within my own area and showed that houses were being erected chiefly in Labour-represented electorates, and how unfortunate people like Mr. and Mrs. Downes of East Toowoomba had been the victims of disgraceful tactics. However, as I understand that these people are issuing a writ against the Government in this matter I do not intend to develop that argument any further now. But I am going to defend another unfortunate person—a returned service man who, because of the Housing Commission's action, is forced to take his wife and his relatives and live in a hut, whereas by now they could have been in a new home in the East Toowoomba electorate enjoying the same comforts and conditions as the Minister himself enjoys. There is an ex-service man named Bunnett who, over 12 months ago, bought an

allotment of ground adjoining the property the Housing Commission bought from Mr. and Mrs. Downes. This ex-service man applied to the Titles Office—

Mr. POWER: I rise to a point of order. I am not going to allow the hon. member to make a statement that is untrue. The Housing Commission did not buy the property referred to by the hon. member.

The CHAIRMAN: I ask the hon. member to accept the explanation of the Minister.

Mr. CHALK: I accept the explanation which the Minister has given. What I said was that a writ was being issued against the Government in the matter and therefore I intended to make no reference to it, but I am pointing out that this ex-service man Bunnett did buy a piece of land adjoining that property that I alleged the Housing Commission purchased. This ex-service man applied to the Titles Office for his deeds, and at the same time he applied to a friendly society to advance him money to build a house on this piece of land and as deposit he lodged his war gratuity. This man then engaged builders and the stumps were put in for this home, and most of the timber has been delivered to the site. When the gratuity office handed over the security to the lodge it added a rider, that was, that the lodge could not advance the full money until this person received a deed.

This ex-service man, Mr. Bunnett, and his solicitors, for 12 months have tried to get this deed. I desire to be perfectly fair by saying that the overburdened Titles Office has played its part in endeavouring to get this deed completed. That office informed Mr. Bunnett that it cannot complete the deed until the preceding plan is lodged with it. That plan covers the area of land over which there is a dispute between the Downes and the Titles Office. The plan has been lying in the Public Curator's Office since 1946—just over two years—and as late as last week, when a further approach was made to the Titles Office, the Public Curator informed that office that nothing could be done to help this poor unfortunate man until the Housing Commission made up its mind whether it had purchased that particular land or not. This man, who fought for his country, is forced to live in a hut on this land and gaze on the timber and stumps as they rot, because of the dictatorial and muddling attitude taken by the Housing Commission.

Although the Treasurer may contend that we are living in a paradise, it will be seen that there is a great need for a general overhaul of many Government departments, and from the facts that I have stated I believe there is no department that requires a greater cleaning up than the Housing Commission. Read an issue of the "Courier-Mail" of this week and you will see there that it is openly admitted that building material to the value of £6,000 was stolen from the Housing Commission.

Mr. Power: That is quite true. We admit that.

Mr. CHALK: Is not that a loss of public money due to lack of supervision? The Housing Minister interjected and admitted the theft; shame on him and his department! Mr. Mann, if I were to tell you some of the stories told me about the lack of supervision on housing jobs, the walls of this Chamber would shake. But let me quote some instances that I saw six weeks ago. On one housing job, men were using a hammer and a stout four-inch nail to start holes in weather-boards. I asked them why they were doing this, and they replied that they had broken the nail bit on the job and had to requisition for one from the Stores. Rather than be loafing on the job they were improvising. Three painters were on another job with three tins of paint but only one paint-brush. That is the system that exists. That department must be cleaned up, because if it is not it is a waste of public money.

Mr. Power interjected.

Mr. CHALK: When the Minister in charge of housing finishes interjecting I will proceed.

Now I have something to say on 32 houses built in the Toowoomba electorate and, Mr. Mann, I would impress on you that it was the Toowoomba and not the East Toowoomba electorate. In this Chamber on 18 August—I refer to "Hansard," page 19, of the first session of the 31st Parliament—the Secretary for Works and Housing said no records were kept of the electorates in which State houses were built or were being built. The hon. member's memory must be very short, because on 31 October, 1947, as recorded on page 1097 of the 191st volume of "Hansard," he answered exactly the same question by informing me that 34 homes were being built in the Toowoomba electorate where the commission owned 28 acres of land.

Not one house was being built in the East Toowoomba electorate where the Commission owned 18 acres of land. Of course, the reason why the Minister did not answer my question is quite plain. Not only are the Government favouring the erection of houses in Labour electorates, but in 1947 the Minister stated publicly in this Chamber that the Housing Commission owned 18 acres of land in East Toowoomba, and included in that 18 acres was the 5 acres which the Minister has stated today the Housing Commission did not buy. He cannot have it both ways. He said in 1947 that the commission owned the 5 acres, but in 1948 he disclaims ownership. He says he cannot tell us how much land he owns in any electorate. I submit that he knows very well and if he is honest he will prove himself guilty in this particular case.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I hope the hon. member is not imputing improper motives to the Minister.

Mr. CHALK: Let me refer to the 32 homes in the East Toowoomba electorate and show how the tenants were humbugged.

These houses were designed for gas stoves but because of piping shortages no gas was connected for several weeks and the occupiers were without any cooking facilities whatsoever, despite the fact that there were 30 wood stoves under one of these homes.

Let me read an extract from the "Toowoomba Chronicle," a journal I am sure the Minister for Transport will agree is perfectly fair in its reports. It says—

"The main cause of annoyance is the fact that more than 30 new wood stoves have been stacked under one house for several weeks but no move has been made to install them nor are householders allowed to put in their own wood stoves. In the meantime families, in many cases with several small children, are shivering at night in houses where the draughts come up through the floorboards and through the glass-louvred windows and they are having to cook their meals on spirit stoves.

"One resident said that her husband had purchased a wood stove but was not allowed to install it in the house. She claimed that much of sickness at present prevalent in the area was due to the cold dwellings. The houses themselves have also been criticised. The exterior paint has worn very badly on some and the sides of the houses are streaked with rust marks from nails. The sap coming from the green timber used was the cause of this."

I submit that is an instance of sheer bungling within 100 miles of the Housing Commission's headquarters in Brisbane. Those homes were completed without stoves and with 30 wood stoves stacked underneath one of them. Is it any wonder that people condemn the Housing Commission?

I come now to the lack of co-ordination between the Department of Public Works and the Department of Public Instruction. There again I know the Secretary for Public Works will go off the deep end as the opportunity presents itself and will deny my allegations. Anyone who has had any experience with the repair and improvement of schools will know that what I say is true.

The Government are talking now about decentralisation. I submit that if they are sincere in this they will set up a special Works Department within the Department of Public Instruction.

I am satisfied that if a school committee states its case clearly to the Department of Public Instruction and puts forward a reasonable claim its request will be approved of, but the getting of the Department of Public Works to carry out the job is entirely another matter. I believe that hon. members on this side of the Committee will be honest and endorse that statement. I can remember the Secretary for Public Works making a statement to the "Courier-Mail" in August last to the effect that many of the complaints that schools were waiting repairs were frivolous. In my electorate, after pressing for the painting of a school for many months and finally getting approval, everyone was happy and thought that the school would be painted shortly. However, the sad but rather comical

ending was that the Department of Public Works went out to paint a school but unfortunately painted the wrong school.

Mr. Luckins: No?

Mr. CHALK: Yes, it painted the wrong school, and when the painting was about three-parts finished one of the school children said to the painter, "This is the so-and-so school," and he said, "Lord, we have painted the wrong place." The happy ending to the whole situation was that two schools are now painted.

I have been trying for 15 to 18 months to get heaters installed in some of the schools in the Toowoomba area and the matter has been the subject of buck-passing between the Departments of Public Instruction and Public Works. Whilst a couple of units have been installed in two schools on the Darling Downs for experimental purposes, the Department of Public Instruction has admitted to me in correspondence that nothing can be done until the Department of Public Works makes up its mind as to what is to be done. I have had a case placed before me this week in which it was stated that the Department of Public Works will not move in the matter until it finds out whether the cold in Mt. Isa is the same as the cold in Toowoomba, as it wants to make it a State-wide affair. Perhaps that is right, but it has taken four years already to get two experimental heaters installed. Does the Department of Public Works have to travel round the country to find out whether the cold in one place is the same as the cold in another?

There was a time when a school in East Toowoomba wanted to put up a memorial library. The cost of the library, which was to be to the memory of students of the school who lost their lives in the last war, was £170. The school committee asked the Department of Public Instruction to approve of a subsidy on a 50-50 basis. The request was turned down. I am not going to say that there was not some standard whereby it was justly turned down, as the maximum allowance for each school is £50. However, the school committee was willing to accept the £50 and the position was that on 1 September of this year a contractor agreed to do the work for £170, material being available, and the Department of Public Instruction was asked on that date to approve so that the work could go ahead. There has not been an answer yet. On inquiry made by me from the department last week I was informed that it approved of the project on 14 September when the matter was referred to the Department of Public Works for final report. A month has passed and nothing has happened. The position is that the contractor is prepared to go ahead with the work but that the Department of Public Works is holding it up. This school is only one mile away from where the Department of Public Works inspector is stationed in Toowoomba and he passes it at least three or four times a week.

I want to deal now with an especially important matter. While it may not have such far-reaching effects as the secret-document question raised by Mr. Fadden in the Federal House of Representatives, it has, I believe, extremely serious circumstances. It reveals just what is being done in our State schools. While good-living, hard-working people send their children to school in the hope that they will be educated to become good Australians, the fact is that their education is being undermined by the communistic element.

Recently I visited some of the schools in my area to learn of some of the things that were happening, to ascertain what amenities could be provided for the children, and generally to see what case I could make to advance their best interests. On one of these visits I discovered something that virtually made me shudder. While I realised that the educational curriculum extended from the A B C standard to the scholarship standard, I discovered also that there was a degrading element in some of the schools in that the children were being trained for the adoption of Socialism and Communism in the future. I hold in my hand a school slate, the property of the Department of Public Instruction. When I have used it I shall lay it on the table of the Chamber so that it may be returned to the department to which it belongs. However, I want to make use of it first, and if the Secretary for Public Instruction likes I will hand it to him, because there is something on it that will give him something more to think about than Barcoo pies. It is my opinion that the spirit of Communism is being instilled into the brains of the children by a very cunning and wily Communist in this department.

This slate is one of a dozen or more that were in the schoolroom and they were seen not only by me but by a dozen other people as well. The first four phrases written on the slate were taken from a history lesson that the children were given to write five times. I am not prepared to say that the next phrase is not contained in some book in the school, but in my opinion it is taken out and used absolutely for the purpose of training these young minds to think in the way of Communism.

Let me read the first four phrases that the children were given to write five times on the slate in school, and they were given them to write five times so as to fix them in their minds. The first phrase says, "Henry II. paid the rent of the Crown to the Pope." That is all right, and I believe it comes from a history lesson. The second phrase that they were asked to write five times was "He favoured foreigners to please his wife." Perhaps that comes from a history lesson, but I could not trace it. The third phrase is "He was expected to pay the upkeep of the royal estate." I traced where that came from. The fourth one is, "The Great Council paid for the wars."

Up to there, I cannot raise any objection because I believe that those words were taken from something prepared by the Department

of Public Instruction. But it is the fifth item on this slate—and it was written by 12 children, five times each—to which I—and I trust every other decent citizen of this State will—object to having instilled into the minds of the young generation. It is, "People in Australia rebel by going on strike." Those are the words that the children had been asked to write. (Laughter.)

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. CHALK: I know that Socialism is so much bound up with Communism that men on the Government side will laugh, but why do we implant that in the brains of our children? It is there written, and written by 12 children, five times each. What good to the education standard of our children is it to instil such things into their minds! I submit those words have been used for a specific purpose. I propose to tender this slate so that it can be handed back to the Department of Public Instruction, to which it belongs, and I hope if any investigations are carried out, instead of any secret police coming to me, as they did to Mr. Fadden, they will go to the Secretary for Public Instruction, who should be able to answer all those questions.

The point is that the Secretary for Public Instruction must see that our children are taught and taught correctly and decently. Therefore, I leave it to members of this Committee to judge whether, instead of talking about Barcoo pies and prickly-pear, the Secretary for Public Instruction might not better occupy his time trying to save our children, not from the ills of a Barcoo lunch, but from the ills of Communism, which is being taught in this way.

I know it might be contended that that is a phrase that is contained in some book of the Department of Public Instruction. If it is in a book, it should not be there and, if it is there, then I say that it should not be impressed into the minds of our children, as the Inquisition was. It is being impressed on their minds that people in Australia rebel by going on strike.

Much has been said during the last few weeks about the shortages of various materials and I want to support those remarks. Private enterprise is doing what it can to help the development of this State. However, there is one thing I want to draw attention to. Not only is there an acute shortage at present of building materials, steel, iron and wire, but there is growing in our midst an acute shortage of cement.

Mr. Jones: And slates.

Mr. CHALK: The Secretary for Health interjects. I know that if he had a slate—well, it might teach him something. The point is that we have to watch other projects being carried out at present, such as the building of several footpaths and various things like that. I believe cement is one of the essentials required for the development of buildings and housing and many other things, but I do object to having very large quantities of cement hoarded and used for the development

of scenic drives along Coronation Drive and other places. I believe that these things should be developed in their time.

Mr. Power interjected.

Mr. CHALK: I knew the Minister would come in, because it is in the Baroona electorate, which he represents. That cement is being used while people on the Darling Downs cannot get sufficient cement to install milking machines and other things that are essential for the development of this State. We can develop our scenic drives in due course, but let us at the present time see that we develop our secondary and primary industries so that we can feed not only the people of Australia but the people of the British Empire.

Getting back to the Budget, I hope the people will not be hoodwinked by the Treasurer's cunning ruse to which I made reference this morning. In 1946-47 he presented a Budget estimating that he would spend £17,000,000, but he spent only £7,000,000; and he misguided the public during the 12 months as to what he was going to do, when all the time he knew very well that he was in a position to spend only £7,000,000 or £8,000,000.

Then in 1947-48, he budgeted for an expenditure of £15,000,000. How much did he spend? Only £8,000,000. Again the public were gulled, when the Budget was brought in, as to the great development this Government proposed to bring about; but a few words were inserted very quietly in the Budget that this would be done only if supplies and materials were available. And, Mr. Devries, the same thing occurs this year. We are told that £15,000,000 is going to be spent. We are told that much money is to be spent on education and main roads. All this is simply put forward to lull the people into a sense of security; but all the time the Treasurer knows very well that £8,000,000 or £9,000,000 is all he will be able to spend this year. This time again he tries to mislead the public—to lead them up the garden path by promising all kinds of things. The programme outlined, he states, will lead this State on to the threshold of great industrial expansion. Heavens above, we heard that seven, eight, nine years ago during the election campaign—that this State had then entered upon the threshold of great industrial development—and the Treasurer dresses it up again for the public in exactly the same way, because he knows it is something which, if not fully explained, will be swallowed by the people.

The hon. gentleman, as stated by the Leader of the Opposition, has been blowing exactly the same bubbles for a long, long time. Let us as Members of Parliament face up to the facts as they are today. Let us consider this Budget in the light of what it is possible to do. We had the Secretary for Public Works, Housing and Local Government making an announcement yesterday in the Press that two more sections of the State building on the corner of Edward and Ann Streets were to be proceeded with at a cost of something like £250,000. How is

it proposed to carry that out? Are the Government going to have a priority over the essential materials required for the building of homes for the people of this State?

We must see to it that all available material is allocated for the erection of homes for the people of Queensland and not for half-a-dozen buildings in the city of Brisbane. Let us face up to the fact: how can these large building programmes that are announced in the Press almost every day proceed when shortages exist, as they do at the moment? We know very well that there is another coal strike in New South Wales and production of steel and iron and other essential material is on the downgrade again. We know the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock made a statement in the Press that we will have to go overseas to get wire, iron, and structural steel and pay three or four times the price for it, simply because this country cannot produce our requirements. Notwithstanding this, we find Government schemes being put forward to the people and these jobs can be done by the Government only at the expense of people who have been waiting for homes and other buildings for a long time. Therefore, as I have stated, we must face up to the facts. I believe the Government will not be able to spend more than approximately £8,000,000 and in doing that they will use probably most of the essential material required by so many people. The public would have much greater respect for the Treasurer and his Budget if the Government came out and stated openly that they cannot spend that money, but they hope to do a few jobs to help along the people and are prepared to help those in the country to develop it as it should be. Today we need production. Production is the only answer to all our problems and if production is hamstrung by the tying-up of essential materials in such governmental projects as have been advanced in this Chamber we must surely fall. The people would have much greater respect for the Government and for Parliament if we stated these things clearly. They would not look on the Government, as they do today, as a Government of empty dreams and broken promises.

Mr. JESSON (Kennedy) (2.53 p.m.): I again congratulate the Treasurer on his very fine Budget and I remind hon. members that despite all the screams of anger and jealousy coming from the Opposition the Press accepted the Budget as a gleam of hope. Press reports have agreed with the Government and congratulated them on their future works policy and the work done in the past. We have just finished listening to a great tirade from the hon. member for East Toowoomba, who worked himself into a frenzy. He almost fell over the reading desk. He thumped it and he flopped all over it. If any reason is required for the removal of the reading desk the hon. member certainly gave it this afternoon.

I rose to make two points and as other members wish to speak this afternoon, I will confine myself to them. They are of very

great importance. The first is that I make representations to the Government, which I know will be backed by a number of people, that they nationalise dredging for tin.

This Government have been blamed from time to time for nationalising failing ventures but here is a show that is earning millions of pounds profit each year. The Government could nationalise it and then the profits, instead of going into the pockets of private enterprise, could be put back into the industry to stop the pollution of the Herbert and other rivers in North Queensland. Only a small amount of the profits would be needed to keep the sludge from going into the Herbert River and to level off the people's land where great heaps of it have piled up. With all the emphasis and all the power I possess I urge the Government to give serious consideration to the suggestion. I intend visiting Canberra and pointing out to the Prime Minister what can be done in this direction.

Mr. Chalk: Are you going over the head of the Minister?

Mr. JESSON: I know the hon. member and his colleagues are annoyed about this because they have an interest in the company.

I noticed in the Press this morning that Mr. O'Mara, chairman of the B.A.T.C. stated that the projected amendment of our racing legislation would increase S.P. and off-the-course betting. I throw that back in his teeth and suggest that it is the conditions at Albion Park that have done more than anything else to encourage S.P. betting. All through the war years they have been making huge profits at that racecourse but have done nothing to make things more comfortable for the people. They are a disgrace to any civilised community. People are indulging in off-the-course betting because conditions at Albion Park are so bad that they will not tolerate them. I suggest that the Government give serious consideration to taking over the Albion Park racecourse and building an Olympic swimming pool, tennis courts, and other sports facilities there. The statement by Mr. O'Mara that the projected legislation will encourage off-the-course betting is very ill-advised when we consider the poor conditions existing for the public at the Albion Park track now.

Mr. H. B. Taylor: Do you recommend that the Government close down Albion Park racecourse?

Mr. JESSON: Yes. And in its place build an Olympic swimming pool, a good cycling track, and other sporting facilities. It might even be possible to resume some of the houses in the front and so provide a river frontage to the sports area.

I feel certain that the Minister will deal very forcibly with the hon. member for East Toowoomba when he obtains the correct figures. The hon. member for East Toowoomba listens to any old tale and makes all sorts of irresponsible statements. Why, only yesterday a statement made by him by way of a question was refuted by the captain of

the ship. In fact, to use a colloquialism, every time the hon. member opens his mouth he puts his foot in it.

Mr. GRAHAM (Mackay) (3 p.m.): I desire to congratulate the Treasurer upon the Financial Statement he has submitted. Contrary to what Opposition members might say, I believe that his report reflects great credit upon himself in particular and the Government generally.

Looking back over the years in which Labour has been in control, we can say that Labour has a great record. The Government have shown successive surpluses and it is regrettable that on this occasion the finances of the Government show a deficit of £94,632, for which unfortunately the railway dispute was responsible. The State's general condition is sound, as the Treasurer has stated, and one can look with optimism to the future. We who believe in Queensland, we who have a Queensland outlook, and we who know the potentialities of the State cannot help feeling that she must eventually realise her destiny in great development. Thirty years under Labour jurisdiction have shown that Labour has done a particularly good job, for it must be remembered that during that time we have faced two world wars and one world-wide depression.

It has been said by many speakers in the political world that war has a very disturbing influence on the progress of any nation. Whilst we in Australia perhaps did not feel the full effects of war and were fortunate in that we were so far from the actual conflict it did in many ways disturb our economy and it will take many years for Queensland in particular, and Australia generally, to get onto a level keel again. I cannot accept the gloomy forebodings of hon. members in Opposition that Queensland is on the downward path, that her production is declining and that if Labour Governments continue in control nothing but the worst can happen.

The hon. member for East Toowoomba said that the Treasurer has repeated the same old story Budget after Budget. The same can be said of the Leader of the Opposition as in his speech on the Budget every year he has made the same statements.

Whilst we have this difference of opinion between political parties, progress is being made in the State in which we are happy to live. It was recently said by that well-known gentleman, Mr. R. G. Casey—commonly known as the Bombay Tiger—that Australia was slowly bleeding to death. If the Opposition had been in control I venture to say that Australia would have bled to death by this time. Perhaps he would like to see the infusion of Queensland People's Party blood into Queensland's bloodstream, but I am sure that if that took place, if by chance the people of Queensland took heed of the Queensland People's Party agitation and returned them to the Government benches, Australia would bleed to death much more quickly.

There is no need for any hon. member of the Government party to blow his own bugle, because the record proves what we have done in Queensland.

There is little or no possibility of this State's becoming anaemic while the people see the wisdom of returning Labour Governments to the Treasury benches, but there is the big chance and the definite possibility that that is what would happen in the event of a change of Government.

The hon. member for East Toowoomba took the Government to task on the subject of housing and it may be interesting to ask why the State Housing Commission was brought into being. Can it be said that it was set up for the sole purpose of trying to defeat the ends of private enterprise or was it with the desirable object of helping to relieve the housing situation that was so acute throughout the State? I mentioned some time ago that but for the existence of the Housing Commission many areas in Queensland would be without homes and I quoted the case of Mackay itself, where it was impossible to induce private contractors to build homes. It was only when the State Housing Commission came forth prepared to build homes that the private contractors swung into line and started home-building themselves—but at their own prices. The cost of building a home today in Mackay, and I presume in other parts of the State, has reached an exorbitant level and the latest quotations from Mackay show that the figure has reached £1,600.

It is time that the Government took a more active interest in the subject of costs and prices in an endeavour to have them restored to their normal level. Only in today's paper the Chairman of the Master Builders' Association in Queensland made a special appeal to builders to keep their prices and profits down because, as he said, if prices continued to rise the time would come when it would be impossible to build homes because they would be too costly and that it would be better to build at a reasonable price than not be able to build at all. I agree with him because I feel that unless there is some reduction in the present cost of home construction eventually the time will come when it will be impossible for the workers to buy their own homes.

Hon. members opposite are very bitter that the Labour Party should be endeavouring to carry out its socialisation policy. No-one was more pleased than I—and I speak for other members of my party, too—when the recent Federal convention of the Australian Labour Party reaffirmed that important plank in its platform of the socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange. That is one of the foremost planks in the platform of the party and I for one hope the day will come when we shall see it implemented to the full. Despite the howls of the Opposition and all that they have said, this plank of the party will never be removed and we hope some day to see it fully implemented.

But although the Labour Party is pledged to that policy it has to be admitted that the party has given help to private enterprise in the establishment of industries in Queensland. One need only refer to the aid given

by the Government to the Mt. Isa company and the recent decision of the Government to guarantee the Darra Cement Company in its establishment of cement works in North Queensland, to show that while we are pledged to the policy of socialisation we are also prepared to help private enterprise establish industries, especially for the development of the northern part of the State.

The period the Government are going through—and not only the Queensland Government, but other Governments throughout Australia—is one in which many difficult problems arise. I should say that it is a time that calls for complete co-operation. We should think much more of Opposition members if they would endeavour to co-operate with the Government in solving their problems and did not maintain the dog-in-the-manger attitude of continual bickering, finding fault, and trying to deflect the Government from the schemes they have in mind. I believe that one should be big enough to rise above party politics on questions of national importance. The time is opportune. Queensland is calling for development. But I believe that this development can be achieved only if we co-operate on a common basis. It is degrading to find the Opposition continually taking the Government to task, trying to pick holes in Government activities, as the hon. member for East Toowoomba has done, and trying to show that the Government are not doing their job in relation to the many problems facing the State today.

Mr. Maher: What is the function of the Opposition if it is not to give the other side of the story?

Mr. GRAHAM: I do not deny the Opposition that right, but at least they can give honest and constructive criticism. All that one hears from the Opposition benches is the continuous cry that the Government are falling down on the job. Those statements are rarely or never proved.

Conditions in Queensland today, I believe, are a monument to Labour's administration. I know that it is unfortunate and that it is a very bitter pill for the Opposition to swallow that after 30 years of agitation in Queensland they find themselves still in Opposition, but the reason is their paltry outlook and their distorted viewpoint on many problems of national importance. But although I am giving hon. members opposite my opinion and trying to put them on the right track, I know they will never get there. While the members of any Opposition retain that outlook they remain in opposition. Governments can hold their places only by showing a progressive outlook and by proving to the people that they are willing to help them and to develop the State. That is why the Queensland Labour Party has been returned to power election after election. It has given to the people a progressive policy that the people have accepted. So it is that Labour is still in office while the Opposition still occupy the Opposition benches.

Mr. H. B. Taylor: Give us some ideas from over there.

Mr GRAHAM: It is not for us to give hon. members opposite ideas. The Opposition are devoid of any progressive outlook, and are now seeking the aid of that worthy gentleman, Mr. R. G. Casey. In fact, it has been rumoured within recent times that he is likely to be the new leader of the Queensland People's Party. Having chased all round the Commonwealth looking for a safe Tory seat, he is now coming to Queensland and, as the Queensland People's Party are badly needing a good leader, they are going to ask Mr. R. G. Casey whether he will come in. Evidently Mr. Chandler was unsatisfactory. Mr. Pie was evidently unsatisfactory, and I understand that the members of the party are a little disappointed with Mr. Hiley, and Mr. Casey is going to be the new leader of the Queensland People's Party. I hope that he may infuse new life into that decadent organisation, but, Mr. Casey or no Mr. Casey, I am afraid that the Opposition will still be in opposition in 1950.

Queensland, I believe, is keeping pace with the other States of the Commonwealth. We have in Queensland, I believe, greater problems than other parts of the Commonwealth because of the size of our territory, our smaller population, and our climatic conditions.

But it can be said that taking all things into consideration we are moving along and that progress is being made. There must be some attractiveness about Queensland in view of the inquiries that are being made by overseas interests about the possibilities of establishing industries in Queensland. It can be said that this Government, realising the need for development and industrial expansion in this State, have given every assistance to those who wish to establish industries here. That has been demonstrated by the help given to the British Electric Supply Company, which is to operate at Blair Athol, and I understand other overseas interests are likely to establish industries in Queensland in the near future.

We have wonderful opportunities in Queensland for development. There are many parts of Queensland that are only partly developed and lend themselves to extensive development. I have spoken previously of the possibilities within my own electorate. I know the hon. member for Mirani will support me in this regard. We have an area in Mackay that is now virtually confined to the growing of sugar. There is a certain amount of grazing in the area but as a whole it offers wonderful scope for further development. Before such development can take place I believe that further railway construction will have to be undertaken.

I believe that the agitation started in Mackay some years ago for the construction of a line to Blair Athol was partly responsible for the British Electric Supply Company's coming into the picture with the object of developing Blair Athol. The people in Mackay and surrounding districts have known for many years of the wonderful opportunities that lie in and around Blair Athol. The people of Mackay would like

to see the opportunity given to Mackay people, Queensland people, or people from some other State in Australia to develop the Mackay area, but, taking things as they are, we have to accept what has been done.

For the sake of the development of this State I should like to see some consideration given to the building of a railway from Mackay west into the Nebo or Blair Athol area. If the intention of the British Electric Supply Company is to be put into operation and the line built is used for coal only it will not help in the development of the area in question. It is a pity to see such a vast area of rich country virtually lying undeveloped. We know that in that area are such assets as coal, timber and minerals, apart from its value for pastoral purposes. I believe that if a railway line is not built from Mackay to Nebo to tap those resources that area will more or less stand still.

Reports show that between Mackay and Blair Athol—and I am not speaking of the Blair Athol coalfield now; I speak of the Nebo-Walker's Creek area—there are unlimited supplies of good coal that could be utilised. It is within 70 miles of the coast. I know the Blair Athol field is one of the greatest if not the greatest field of black coal in the world. But between Blair Athol and Mackay there is a wonderfully rich area that perhaps will never be developed but will lie there, as it has lain for hundreds of years—

Mr. Sparkes: You fellows are not going to be there for all time.

Mr. GRAHAM: We shall be here; don't worry. While hon. members opposite have the outlook they have demonstrated they will remain in Opposition. We are not in the least doubtful about the future of our Government. We are confident that this Government will be returned for the next 30 years, and another 30 years after that.

I am speaking of my own area. Unless a railway line is constructed this area will remain undeveloped, just as Blair Athol will never be developed without a railway line. I am putting this proposal to the Government. I know first things must come first, but in time the Government will see the wisdom of my suggestions. On other occasions they have constructed railway lines for developmental purposes. There are so many things to do first and of course I do not expect a railway line to be built overnight. Even if the Government agreed to this proposal now, it would be probably some years before it could be put into operation. I am endeavouring to show the Government the necessity of building this railway line for the purposes of development, and if by my agitation I can induce them to go on with this work I shall have played some part in the development of that part of Queensland.

North Queensland is an area that calls for strong governmental action. I do not hold with everything the Government have

done in relation to the North. They have been somewhat inactive in doing the things they should have done, but the time is coming when the people of Queensland will demand greater activity because of the need for development in that area. Owing to the climatic conditions, water conservation and irrigation must be undertaken immediately. The Government have taken certain action and are doing certain things in relation to them. In various parts of North Queensland rivers are being weired. The Government have the intention of building the Burdekin River dam, but I should like to see some interest taken in my area and some investigations made there. Owing to the drought conditions in the Mackay district there is a very serious water shortage and this could be overcome for all time if proper investigations were made and suitable facilities provided.

Because of the generous rainfall and the river facilities Mackay lends itself to water conservation; but because of the system of obtaining water for Mackay at present—and I might say I do not agree with it—that of obtaining water from underground supplies, the citizens of that city have been for the past two years virtually facing an acute water shortage. Despite the fact that spears were put down many years ago, with the increase in population of the city and the introduction of a sewerage system the demand is greater than the supply. Consequently restrictions on the use of water have been imposed in Mackay for years and these look like continuing. The water system developed like many other systems in Queensland; it was there and has been gradually built on. But that is entirely wrong. If we are to encourage industry to go to North Queensland we must provide the facilities for the industrial expansion. We must also provide the facilities for the increasing population, and even to meet the needs of the people there at present some consideration must be given to the construction of a dam on the same principle as that on the Stanley River.

Because of the lie of the land the Mackay district lends itself to water conservation. Behind the city are mountainous areas. There is a gradual rise from Mackay to the Eungella Tableland, from which water could be reticulated to Mackay by gravitation.

Mr. Sparkes: Do you not think it is the duty of the Government to do these things?

Mr. GRAHAM: It has never been put before the Government in proper form, but it will be done, because the people of Mackay now realise the need for it. Drought conditions are depleting our herds and causing a serious decline in primary production. The town water supply is unsatisfactory and the time is coming when we shall have to give serious consideration to obtaining a fresh water supply and exploiting the irrigation potentialities of the area. I realise that such a scheme might cost a good deal of money, but £4,000,000 or £5,000,000 is as nothing when compared with the benefit to be obtained

from an efficient town water supply and the irrigation of millions of acres of arable land. As an illustration of how serious the water position is, let me point out that there is every likelihood that the Plane Creek sugar mill will have to close down before the crushing season ends because of lack of water. The alcohol distillery alongside also is likely to be affected for the same reason.

Mr. Maher: Let me say that the Opposition give their blessing to your water supply scheme for Mackay.

Mr. GRAHAM: I am glad to hear that, because we may need the help of the Opposition in obtaining it, but I am confident that when the scheme is put before the Government they will appreciate its value and in due time the project will be embarked upon. One has only to look at the Mackay harbour to realise how the constant dripping of water will eventually wear away a stone. When I was a boy I remember the agitation that took place for the construction of a harbour at Mackay, and eventually we got it from a Labour Government.

Mr. Sparkes: Perhaps if you wait for as long you will get this water-supply scheme.

Mr. GRAHAM: I do not say these things can be done overnight, but I do know that if a scheme has merit it will receive the careful consideration of the Labour Government.

Irrigation must be introduced all over the State. We are suffering a decline in primary production because of drought. The introduction of water conservation and the installation of irrigation plants will mean security to the primary producer and increased primary production.

Mr. Plunkett: Your Government have been in power for a long while and have done nothing about irrigation.

Mr. GRAHAM: There are some areas in which irrigation is not essential. I could not advocate spending millions of pounds on irrigation projects that would not be successful, but in some areas we must have irrigation if we are to develop. The Government have set up a Department of Irrigation and Water Supply under the capable leadership of a man from the southern States. I know that in due course we shall see great schemes of irrigation introduced throughout Queensland.

I do not like to be continually referring to the Opposition, but when one hears condemnation of a Labour Government one is forced because of one's allegiance to the Labour Party to stand up for Labour's policy. I cannot stand by and see the Opposition continually condemning this Government on matters of policy. Much has been said about the introduction of the 40-hour week and the responsibility for every difficulty has been put on to the 40-hour week, as, for example, high taxation; but I have not yet heard hon. members opposite produce facts to show that the introduction of the 40-hour week has had a retarding effect on production or that its introduction has had any ill-effects on the welfare of the State.

Mr. Sparkes: Do you mean to say that a machine that works 40 hours will do as much as one working 44 hours?

Mr. GRAHAM: Of course it will.

Mr. Sparkes: Then you are wasting your time here.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dunstan): Order!

Mr. GRAHAM: The same was said about the 44-hour week and the 48-hour week and even when it came down from 56 to 52. There was the continual catch-cry that we could not reduce hours because we should thereby wreck the economy of the State. Queensland is more prosperous today than ever; Queensland's national wealth is greater.

Mr. Sparkes: Why work at all?

Mr. GRAHAM: Eventually we shall bring work down to a reasonable quantity. There are many men in the State who do not work but live on profits from others whom they exploit for that purpose. We cannot all be exploiters and profiteers; some of us have to be workers. We, occupying the Labour benches of this Committee, come from the working classes. We know the conditions in industry. I felt sorry for the hon. member for Dalby this morning when he tried to plead the cause of the worker. One hon. member said that he was born with a silver spoon in his mouth. He does not know the conditions in industry although, seeing that he was reared in the pastoral industry, he may know a little about that.

Mr. Sparkes: I had an hon. member out with me and he did a little bit.

Mr. GRAHAM: I work hard myself. The hon. member for Dalby said that we knew nothing or little about land conditions because we did not have practical experience but I throw that statement back into his teeth by saying that hon. members opposite know little about the cares of the State because they have never engaged in industry. I repeat that the introduction of the 40-hour week has had no ill-effect on the economy of Queensland.

The cry of high taxation is "all baloney." Those who can afford to pay are paying. Perhaps it is the paying higher than they like that hurts them. The useful people in this Commonwealth are not being impoverished by taxation. I will quote some figures supplied by the Commonwealth Statistician showing what a married man with a wife and two children pays in different countries. They are—

£300 a year—

Australia, Nil.

New Zealand, 22s. 10d.

Great Britain, 12s. 11d.

£400 a year—

Australia, 8s. 11d.

New Zealand, 30s.

Great Britain, 15s. 11d.

I propose to deal with those receiving £1,000 a year and over, and this is where it hurts.

There are men receiving £1,000, £2,000, £3,000 and £4,000 a year, like the hon. member for Aubigny and a few more.

Mr. Aikens: That's only pin money to him.

Mr. GRAHAM: Those who can afford to pay are being asked to pay. Taxation does not concern the useful people of this continent.

Complaints are made about the declining production; but what industries have been affected by the 40-hour week? Some point to the dairying industry, but let me quote from the Mackay "Daily Mercury" to show the activities of the Port Curtis Dairy Association, which controls factories throughout the Central Division of the State. This is what it says:—

"Though there was an increase in the production of butter and cheese by the Port Curtis Dairy Co-operative Association last season over the previous output, effects of drought lasted long enough to partly offset good conditions since.

"The annual report reads: The production of 6,939 tons of butter and 323 tons of cheese records a considerable increase as compared with the previous drought affected year, but reflects the prolonged effects of the drought, for the production was much less than could have been expected with such favourable seasonal conditions as prevailed for most of the year."

There is no reference there to the 40-hour week.

Mr. Sparkes: They do not work a 40-hour week.

Mr. GRAHAM: Yes, they do.

Mr. Sparkes: They work 80 hours.

Mr. GRAHAM: I am speaking about the butter factories. Every factory controlled by the Port Curtis Association, from Biloela to Mackay, shows increased cheese production and—

Mr. Sparkes: What about the effect of the 40-hour week on the production of wire, iron and so forth at Newcastle?

Mr. GRAHAM: I am discussing the Financial Statement of the Queensland Government and the Queensland Government cannot accept responsibility for what happens in any other State. We have done a good job in this State; we have developed it. Quite recently I heard the hon. member for Aubigny say that there had been a serious decline in the sheep and cattle numbers in the State, and the Labour Government were blamed for it. The Government are blamed for everything, and it is suggested that if there was a change of Government things would be different. But would they be any different?

Mr. Maher: My word, they would!

Mr. GRAHAM: Perhaps they would—we should go back to the conditions that obtained prior to the advent of Labour.

The decline in sheep and cattle numbers is not due to any action by the Government, and perhaps is not due to drought, but is the result of a deliberate and cold-blooded attempt by graziers to sabotage the efforts of Labour Governments. The prices for livestock today are exceptionally high. Graziers generally realise this and have determined to reduce their flocks and herds because today there is no need to run the same number as when prices were lower. There are boom prices for wool today, high prices for sheep and cattle, and no-one knows that better than the hon. member for Aubigny. He knows very well that he can get as much for 500 bullocks today as he got for 1,000 bullocks five years ago. They do not want to increase their herds, and they make no serious attempt to do so. They have a reason for that. It gives them an opportunity to build up the carrying capacity of their holdings. It relieves them of taxation and removes the responsibility for the employment of the number of men that would be required to look after bigger herds and flocks.

Mr. Sparkes: Ask the hon. member for Gregory whether that is true.

Mr. GRAHAM: That is my opinion. I am not concerned with the opinion of the hon. member for Gregory or any member of his party. That is my opinion, and I do not think I am wrong.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Dunstan): Order! I must ask hon. members to restrain themselves. If I cannot hear the speaker I shall have to check some member by naming him.

Mr. GRAHAM: I believe that because of the political outlook of such men as the hon. member for Aubigny and his fellow graziers they are prejudiced and that they are politically biased against the Labour Government in respect of anything they do. Even if it should hurt their own pockets, they would do something to try to bring discredit upon this Government. Every fault they can find is thrown onto the Labour Government. They, not only as Queenslanders but as Australians, should realise their responsibility to this State. I believe they have a part to play in its development. They have a responsibility not only to the people of Australia, but to the people of overseas countries also. All the help that can be given to the people of overseas countries should be given, but these people are deliberately retarding their production of sheep and cattle.

Mr. Sparkes: Do you not want us to send our meat over to them?

Mr. GRAHAM: Of course we do, but hon. members opposite will not send it except at their own price. England wants their price. They expect the same price there as in Queensland. The other day one hon. member spoke about incentive. What greater incentive could any Queenslanders want than to do his best for the starving people of Europe?

Mr. Sparkes: You will not let us send it. You do not want them to get it.

Mr. GRAHAM: Hon. members opposite do not want to supply it except at their own price.

I have got off the track a little and I will get back now to the 40-hour week. I repeat that the introduction of the 40-hour week has had little or no effect on production in Queensland. Today we are producing one of the greatest crops of sugar that Queensland has ever produced. It is expected that 850,000 tons of sugar will be produced this year. If my information is correct, we shall harvest the whole of that tonnage despite the introduction of the 40-hour week. No cane is likely to be left in the field. The only danger is that because of shipping difficulties there may be some hold-up in the ports.

Production generally throughout the State has increased. We produced prior to the war 75,000 tons of wool, 250,000 tons of sugar, 40,000 tons of butter and meat valued at £3,500,000. Labour is playing its part in the development of this State. I do not think we have yet reached the millenium in regard to production in Queensland but we have realised our responsibilities to this State. So long as the people realise their responsibilities and return Labour Governments to power, so long shall we see that progress is maintained.

Another matter of great importance to North Queensland—and I know it has been spoken of here recently, but I feel justified in touching on the matter again—is the provision of main roads. At present, main roads are completed as far north as Marlborough, but between Marlborough and Bowen the position is bad. I know that main roads are under construction between those places at present, but I believe the time has come when further development work should take place between those two points. I believe it is of national importance.

Too long has North Queensland been neglected. The population of North Queensland has been isolated more or less because of lack of road communication. During the war had need arisen for large numbers of troops to be taken overland great difficulties would have been experienced. The military authorities built an inland military road from Rockhampton to Charters Towers but the coast road was neglected. From the defence, the tourist and development points of view that road should be pushed through as quickly as possible. In some stretches it is in a deplorable state, and thousands of pounds are being lost because people from the South who would travel by car over that area if the road was in good condition will not do so now. Whilst work has been undertaken here and there we believe a greater concentration of effort by the Main Roads Commission in that area is justified. Down in the South there are bitumen roads to the beaches and the main towns, but we do not see that in the North. I believe that the North is calling for more attention from this Government instrumentality in the development of main roads.

I think I have covered everything I intended to touch upon. I should like once again to refer to the Treasurer's handling of the finances of the State. I believe he has done a particularly good job and I think we can look with optimism to the future development of this State. I believe that whilst things go along as they are we shall see in the near future a great development in Queensland. There are many factors that will have to be considered and there are many problems to be solved. The need for population in the North, for example, is very urgent. Unless we get more population there may be some interference with industries already existing there. It has been reported by some authorities that the demand for man-power has virtually reached saturation point; consequently concomitant with the establishment of industry in the North we shall have to have an increase in population to meet the demand for labour. Although we are bringing many foreigners—Balts and others—into the State and sending them to the North to help in the development of that area there is room for more people there. Greater encouragement will have to be given to the industries already existing in order to further develop them and create new ones to absorb the migrants.

I agree with the Treasurer's remarks that our finances are solvent, the State balances are substantial, our economic position is sound, and production, exports, and national income are increasing rapidly. I believe the Treasurer to be right when he said in his Statement, "We may look to the future in a spirit of confidence based upon sound reasons and reasonable anticipation."

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN (Nanango) (3.49 p.m.): We have before us in the Budget debate a very important aspect of Government administration directly related to the well-being of the people throughout the State because the money collected and spent in this or that direction often means much towards greater or less benefit and development. Therefore the duty and responsibility the Government have in managing the State to the best possible purpose is a heavy one. In many ways this can be likened to the control or management of a large property, in which many aspects will be taken into account in order to obtain the greatest overall benefit.

The hon. member who has just resumed his seat adopted the rather shortsighted outlook that any suggestions coming from members on this side of the Committee were unjust criticism and that the facts were distorted out of all recognition. That is a somewhat shortsighted outlook. There are members on this side of the Committee who have had considerable experience in many directions, whereas Government members have perhaps had little experience in similar matters. The Government administration of the State can be likened to that of a man who spends most of his time and money in or around his home, doing this and that to the less important things and at the same time leaving neglected the things that would be to the overall benefit of the remainder of the property—the land,

from which alone he can look for security. In other words, he spends too much time on what perhaps may be termed the less essential, and fails to realise the real basis of his standard of living.

This much and more can be said of Government administration in relation to the State in general. It is apparent when we consider the amounts expended for this and that and the failure to expend moneys on our great inland areas which would build a prosperous and progressive State. For instance, take the subsidies granted to local authorities in the State. One finds that over half the amount granted has been to areas within or about this city and the remainder is distributed throughout the great State of Queensland. This is a very serious and important aspect of Government administration. Considering the overall dimensions of the inland parts of the State it is obvious that the greater amount should be expended in their development.

Take one item of State development in the Financial Statement under the combined heading of rural development, soldier settlement and irrigation, £491,609. That amount apparently represents the Government's vision and accepted responsibility for the development of these very important projects. That shows the Government have a very limited outlook on the overall development of the State. Apparently they adopt the attitude of the man whom I have already used as an illustration, who spends too much of his time in and about the home. This Government appear to be doing that. They concentrate too much in and about the city, doing many things and neglecting to bring about the development and prosperity that a State such as this should be enjoying.

Apart from that, there is the obvious truth that if we as Queenslanders and Australians wish to retain this country we must demonstrate to the world that we have indicated our right to do so by the development of our resources. This should be a very important aspect of any policy pursued by the Government, because our great assets must be developed and our country populated. This is an important basis of our security.

This consideration should compel the Government to move every possible stone in not only providing greater expenditure but also in seeing to it that this money is utilised as far as possible in providing opportunities for development wherever that is practicable. After all, it is what we can make out of the State that gives us our standard of living.

The construction of roads is one respect in which I think the Government fail to discharge their responsibility to encourage development. The first stage of development of any country has been that of the pioneers who have settled an area and ultimately constructed roads out of rates collected in it. An important point to consider is that these country roads are used by countless numbers of people who never contribute towards their construction and upkeep. We know that

the Government have a policy of gazetting certain parts of these roads as main roads; but having regard to the urgency of the need for development throughout the State, the Government should speed up their main-roads construction programme to at least twice its present dimensions and make it commensurate with the worth of our State.

The Government should also do more to obtain greater allocations of road-making plant for the State.

Mr. Power: It is being done every week.

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: The Government should do much more. Do we ever hear them saying today that main roads were never meant to be more than merely roads for horse-drawn vehicles or that the roads must be capable of serving more than local needs or that modern road transport requires a high-class road? We never hear anything of that kind. As an example, take the black-soil roads in the Dalby electorate. It is incredible that in this year of 1948 there is still only a black-soil road on that very important link between Bowenville and Dalby, but that is typical of conditions obtaining throughout the State.

It is also difficult to understand why the Main Roads Commission is pursuing the policy on that stretch of putting a road away at the back of the properties instead of constructing it where the road has already been surveyed and where it is most convenient for the people concerned.

Mr. Devries: The hon. member for Dalby flies; he does not use the roads a great deal.

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: There are many other people who do use the roads. We never hear the Government stressing that the petrol tax should be used to a greater extent for the construction of main roads. We all know that tax was collected originally for the construction of country roads. Things have reached an almost impossible pass as far as road construction is concerned.

As a councillor I know how hopeless it is to attempt to keep roads in a good state of repair, particularly with the amount of traffic passing over them today, with the shorter working week and the prices of materials. The Government should adopt a more realistic attitude, because comparatively little is being done in regard to main roads when we consider this great State as a whole. It is said that little can be done because of the lack of plant, but if that is so those responsible have fallen down on the job and have shown lack of vision in that plant was not got when it was available, which illustrates the indifference of the Government in the policy they pursued.

Speaking of the shortage of road-making plant and the decentralisation of control of plant, I believe that if local councils were given greater opportunity of using road-making plant and allowed to do smaller jobs on main roads throughout their shires, and given means to provide facilities for overhauling equipment, the overall results would

be better. At present Main Roads Commission road-making equipment is scattered here and there throughout the State, and if a machine breaks down it has to be taken back to the repair shop for overhaul. As I suggested, Main Roads works should be decentralised, with greater advantage to our State. Without going into the matter in great detail, I say it is time the Commissioner of Main Roads was relieved of some of his responsibilities, as my experience is that he has no time to discuss road works, which are of vital concern and interest to country people. As a further reason, I say that very little fresh development is taking place, because people are being handicapped in every way. They are being handicapped in regard to motor transport, as I explained in this House recently. Only last week I had an illustration of how road-transport fees and restriction are hampering us. I was told of a case in which a man sold a mob of vealers. The price was agreed upon; but neither the seller nor the buyer would pay the road-transport fees to move them, with the result that the deal fell through and the vealers remained on the property. The same applies with regard to the control of land sales. Periodically one is forced to realise that farmers are prevented from getting in the season's crop on account of the delay occasioned by revaluations and so on.

The Treasurer, in his Financial Statement, referred to the British Food Corporation and mentioned that £500,000 was to be spent, emphasising that it would be a very interesting illustration of what could be accomplished by big-scale farming. That may be so—its success remains to be proved—but, from the point of many practical Queenslanders, it would be a happier picture if we could see families settled on this area instead of the monopolistic or socialistic venture there at the moment.

Development is taking place in the cities and I believe that the Premier's visit to England will result in much good. Whilst we want to see the cities prosper, the inland portions of the State need development, and this is a matter of concern to hon. members on this side of the Committee. The Government are inclined to carry out development only in the city and believe that because there is a busy atmosphere within these areas something similar is taking place throughout the State, but we who live there and know the true position realise that that is not so. Life there shows very little fresh activity and instead of being an influx to those areas the movement is the other way. Many young people that I grew up with are no longer there.

The hon. member for Mackay referred to the lack of facilities in the North and I believe what he says is quite true. The Secretary for Agriculture and Stock referred to the large areas of fertile lands in the Gulf country. While I was there last year I was asked to take up the matter of road construction in some of the areas; which I did only to be informed by the Government that it was against their policy and that they

were not prepared to spend large sums of money on roads to benefit only a few people. I could see their point. Still, that is not adopting the realistic attitude; because people will not go to these areas, even if they are fertile lands, unless they have means of communication and transport available to them. The Government should regard road construction as a form of investment, just as people invest in a business knowing that thereby some day in the future they will reap a reward. The Government should adopt a similar attitude to the opening up of our country. The hon. member for Logan mentioned how mining had failed because of the lack of road communication and that applies generally to the opening up of land throughout the State.

The Government delayed a long time before deciding to provide electricity in country areas, but after much agitation by Country Party members and faced with the drift to the cities they eventually realised the importance of the matter. I am sure that Mr. Cochran's appointment as chairman of the State Electricity Commission gave satisfaction to all. I cannot imagine that anyone who has had any association with him would say that he is not the right man for the position. Regional electricity development throughout the State is a formidable task at any time; but this development is highly desirable, and under the capable leadership of Mr. Cochran and his managers the extensions will be carried out as quickly as possible. The country people are eager to cooperate. However, we must guard against placing an undue burden on rural consumers because of mounting costs. We know, of course, that the Government give a subsidy in relation to the establishment of main lines; which is a big assistance, for rural consumers are called upon to carry much greater burdens financially than people in the city because of the greater installation costs, and the mounting costs of these projects is going to cause embarrassment unless they can be checked. At the moment rural consumers are called upon to pay £5 to £6 a chain from the main line, 7 to 8 chains away. They are also called upon to give a guarantee of around £20 a year, sometimes for five or six years.

I believe that the time is very near when this State must adopt the State-wide outlook in these matters. This would place all on an even footing and would not penalise anybody. We maintain that country people are paying dearly in many other ways for living in those areas. For instance, take telephone facilities. That is a Federal matter, but still the Federal Government have a policy with which this Government no doubt associates itself. I have been informed in recent weeks that because of the mounting costs of the 40-hour week many country applicants are called upon to pay a considerable sum of money in order to have telephones installed in their homes. Last week I received a letter from a lady living in the country, some seven miles from a telephone exchange. The poles were already erected, but because of the high cost of the shorter

week it would cost £135 to run the two wires to her home. Government policy allows an expenditure of £100 only, so she was called upon to pay the extra £35. That is the policy that is adopted in the installation of telephones.

Mr. Brown: That is the Commonwealth.

Mr. BJELKE-PETERSEN: Yes, but I say this Government are associated very closely with everything the Commonwealth Government do; and, while this money will be refunded after a period of seven years, I say it is placing an undue burden on country people to have to meet such costs.

It took the Government a long time to wake up to the necessity of providing rural electrification, thereby making available such a great convenience as electricity in country areas. From a practical point of view I realise that much benefit will be derived from a constructive or energetic road-construction policy and I hope the Government will soon wake up to this urgent need. It should not be the responsibility of country people to have to construct and maintain roads chiefly from funds derived from rates.

In many other ways country people are called upon to meet burdens that are not met by others. They have to pay heavy transport fees. Every time I go to and from Kingaroy I pay 6s. if I travel by plane and something like 26s. in taxation if I go by service car. Therefore, country people are called upon to pay those amounts as well as a tax, as through the petrol tax, and they have to meet other costs, yet they are obliged to maintain roads from moneys largely obtained from rates. Roads are of national value and I say the Government should contribute largely, mainly from petrol-tax money, in order to obtain the necessary development.

I cannot emphasise too strongly the point that the Government should accept greater responsibility. We know that they at present pay something in the vicinity of 17 per cent. towards the cost of road construction in the country. However, roads are such a public convenience that I say the Government should adopt a policy something along the lines of what they have adopted in relation to the provisions of water and sewerage schemes, paying £1 for £1.

The Government contend that they have done all sorts of things for the people and that we are moving into a new era of prosperity, but the fact is that we have shortages and high prices. Surely the people have realised the emptiness and deceitfulness of the Government promises of a bright future under conditions the Government have been responsible for bringing about?

I say definitely that an improved standard of living cannot be had by the methods adopted by this Government. I have pointed out directions where more understanding administration would tend to bring about a more balanced state of affairs in the country as well as in the town. Many things have

to be taken into account. Prosperity and progress are what we all desire, but progress is difficult because of the heavy taxation. As pointed out by the hon. member for Logan, if only taxation levied in rural areas could be largely spent in rural development, it would be all to the good. For prosperity there must be unity and co-operation between the workers, the producers, and the industrialists. One is dependent upon the other, because until the producer and manufacturer obtain success how can they pass it on to the worker?

The idea that the producer can be dispensed with and that the worker can get his success direct from the Government by taxation is absurd. This sort of policy can only have one result, and that is to develop poverty and unemployment. There is only one way by which the people can be paid and that is by the amount they produce. There is no bottomless purse from which the Government can afford to pay a man for that which he does not earn. Whether under the system of so-called democratic government or under the socialistic system, the people must realise that their standard of living is still determined by what is produced and greater results are always obtained under individual enterprise. It is only by increasing the earning capacity of machinery that the paying capacity and a higher living standard can be achieved.

With these remarks I have sought to draw the Government's attention to the serious responsibility they have towards seeing that our State is developed quickly. We must populate and develop our resources, and under conditions which can be expected in our day, not as in pioneering days—in the light of our insistence that we need and can utilise all this great State and country. And in order to bring about quickly full utilisation and development, it is necessary to press forward with a much greater and more realistic road-construction policy. Roads must be built before settlement takes place. The Government should look upon roads as an investment—as something that will bring dividends in the years to come. I stress that point—that road-making is hopelessly past the stage where roads can be constructed chiefly from rates. They are a public utility, as sewerage and water are, for everyone's use and convenience, and we must not merely expect the landholders to largely pay for this public convenience. I have reminded the Government how long it took to realise the necessity for rural electrification, and I repeat that a great and urgent need exists today for a live and realistic policy of road construction throughout the State, along the lines of decentralising main-roads and council activities and giving a greater amount of responsibility to local authorities, backed up by greater financial support from the Government.

Mr. BURROWS (Port Curtis) (4.19 p.m.): Like previous speakers, I wish to congratulate the Treasurer on the Budget. A cursory glance at it only is necessary to satisfy anyone of the magnitude of the Treasurer's task.

The preparation and presentation of this work in any form is a big task, but to do it with the thoroughness and attention to detail that is exemplified by our worthy Treasurer makes it a masterpiece. The diligence that he applies to his work in all matters must have a great influence on those with whom he is associated and his work will, I am sure, be an example and inspiration to those who follow in his footsteps.

Members of the Opposition, of course, are obsessed with the idea that to voice constructive criticism of any action of the Government is contrary to tradition and the policy of the interests that sponsor him. They present a dismal picture and futilely attempt to refute the irrefutable facts so ably compiled and presented to the Committee by the Treasurer. I could not help noticing the contrast between the cold hard facts presented in a businesslike fashion and without the slightest divergence from the point by the Treasurer and the weak, almost irrelevant and illogical statement made by the Leader of the Opposition in endeavouring to keep within precedent when speaking immediately after the presentation of the Budget. I was reminded of an old saying, "After the Lord Mayor's coach comes the rubbish cart."

The hon. gentleman began by charging the Treasurer with exaggerating facts but he proceeded to quote a jingle popular among third-rate music-hall artists when I was a lad. I do not presume to have any great knowledge of the classics, a fact that I deprecate, but if I had to compose a theme song, after listening to the speech of the Leader of the Opposition in particular I would, like him, quote a jingle entitled, "Is it not grand to be blooming-well dead?" Members of the Opposition appear to be a band of mourning misanthropes who have taken a vow, like a King of England, never to smile again until they can return to the glorious days of 1929-32. I am sure that in their own hearts they revel in the memory of those days and, more than likely, celebrate them secretly, just as various nationalities celebrate such occasions as saints' days or independence days. I should not mind wagering that if they were ever returned to power, one of the first things they would do would be to declare the anniversary of the day of their election in 1929 a public holiday.

Mr. Muller: You do not mean that at all.

Mr. BURROWS: I do.

Mr. Aikens: The first of April, April Fools' Day.

Mr. BURROWS: The hon. member for Mundingburra reminds me that their day is already recognised on 1 April.

Reverting to the Budget, I would suggest to the Treasurer that he amend it by including a small sum for the purpose of purchasing a supply of whingeing powders for use by members of the Opposition. Perhaps more would be required because no doubt it would cost a good deal to keep them supplied, as they are certainly the princes of whingers.

The hon. member for Mackay, upon being prompted by interjection, spoke of the serious effect of taxation, and I wish to refer to a statement made by the Federal Country Party representative for Maranoa, Mr. Adermann. I understand that Mr. Adermann conducted a Sunday-school class over the air, from a wireless station owned by him, and I give him credit for that. I remember telling my children to listen to his preaching, for on hearing him quote such phrases as "Suffer little children to come unto Me" in a manner that led me to believe in his earnestness and piety, I felt that he was deserving of the commendation of any good Christian. Although he elected to join a political party of a different colour from mine, I honestly believed he was sincere. Whether his advent to politics has wrought the change I have noticed I do not know. I sincerely hope that it can be debited to politics and that he has not always been of the present outlook, because after reading his statement in the "Courier-Mail" of 12 June I have come to the conclusion that he has proved himself to me to be one of the most blatant hypocrites it is possible to imagine.

His statement in the "Courier-Mail" reads—

"Letting Stock Die Better than Sale.

"Because of taxation it was sometimes more profitable for farmers to let stock die rather than sell."

That statement comes from a man who preached a good sound Christian doctrine to the children. How in the name of goodness can he reconcile with Christianity a suggestion that it is better to let the stock die than to sell them in order to relieve the poverty and starvation that exist in Europe today.

Mr. Morris: I heard the Premier advocate that recently.

Mr. BURROWS: I am not here to defend the Premier. The hon. member knows that if the Premier were here, the hon. member would be out the back door before he would be game to say such a thing.

Last week-end I again visited the Callide coal-field where a Government boring-plant is being used to test and explore the field. To date enormous reserves of coal have been shown to exist. The bores have not yet reached the edges of the field. The last bore put down was on approximately 50 feet of coal. Altogether 840 acres have been drilled, and members of the drilling party informed me that the average width of the seam was approximately 45 feet and the over-burden would average approximately 64 feet throughout the 840 acres. With a width of 45 feet of coal there would be approximately 50,000,000 tons of coal in that area or possibly more.

I was interested to see a tree on which there was a very old survey mark of a railway line that had been surveyed about 1902 from Gladstone to the field. The original prospector had a franchise to build a railway line, and by reference to old "Hansards" I found that he had lodged a sum as a

deposit with the then Government of the day. On further research I found that by reason of his failure to carry out the work his deposit had been forfeited. That man, who found the field, died around the coal-field broke and forgotten. Approximately 50 miles of line would have to be built, as there are 15 miles of line from Gladstone to Many Peaks. Assuming that by the building of a railway line to the field we should increase the value of coal there by merely 1s. a ton, on 50,000,000 tons there would be £2,500,000 of added value to the coal deposit. I have been over the country and, whilst I am not an engineer, it is obvious to a layman that with high costs today it would not cost £2,500,000 to build that 50 miles of railway line. I submit that we have a sound investment there from a business point of view and there are other angles besides the business angle that would enhance the value of the railway line, one of which would be that it would considerably reduce the shortage of coal supplies. There is no shortage of coal there, that we know.

Mr. Kerr: What approximately would be the freight from there to Gladstone?

Mr. BURROWS: On present costs the freight for approximately twice the distance is 16s. but we should be correct in estimating that the freight would not be more than 10s. It is quite within reason and sound for anybody to say that coal could be put on the jetty at Gladstone for very little if anything at all over £1 a ton.

Mr. Evans: It would be cheaper than Blair Athol.

Mr. BURROWS: I will let hon. members say that. Let us compare this proposal with that of Blair Athol. In the first place the two deposits are considered, by greater authorities than I, to be of approximately equal magnitude.

Secondly, there is the length of the lines to be constructed. The line to Gladstone would be 55 miles long whereas the line from Blair Athol to Mollie Island, so I am informed by an engineer, would be about 300 miles.

There is the third consideration that wherever you went, apart from Gladstone and Bowen, you would have to build an artificial port, whereas a natural port already exists at Gladstone. And apart from building an artificial port you would, unless you went to a township, have to build a township and provide all the usual amenities, such as public utilities of water supply and electricity.

Fourthly, Gladstone is an established shipping centre and in relation to the southern market would on a round trip be two, three and even four days closer sail. In addition, once you go north of Rockhampton you get into the cyclone area, where the waters in the cyclone season are more dangerous than they are south of Rockhampton, especially for the small craft that trade along the coast.

I have discussed the matter not only with one engineer but several of them and I am

informed that the proposal to construct a railway line to Gladstone is infinitely more attractive than the Blair Athol proposal.

There is the other factor too: which scheme would give quicker relief to our economic situation? The building of the railway line for 50 miles would be accomplished in less time than the building of the one for 200 to 300 miles.

Some persons with whom I have discussed the matter have asked, "What is the good of trying to build a railway line when you cannot get the steel rails?" Why can we not get the steel rails? According to the manager of Broken Hill, in the annual report of B.H.P., the primary cause of the lack of production at Broken Hill last year, which incidentally was the lowest for 13 years, was the lack of coal supplies.

Mr. Maher: Who caused the shortage of coal?

Mr. BURROWS: It may seem paradoxical, but if Broken Hill had been allowed to use its own coal it would have had ample for its own requirements, but because Nature has been so niggardly in the distribution of coal deposits in Victoria and South Australia, New South Wales was required to meet the deficiency in coal supplies in those States. The Joint Coal Board required some of the output of the Broken Hill collieries, which would normally be used at the Broken Hill works, to be sent to relieve the position in the other States. I submit that we could relieve the position at Broken Hill and the collieries in New South Wales by allowing the whole of their supplies to be retained there by Broken Hill and its subsidiary concerns, which represent 90 per cent. of our heavy industry. It is obvious that until the demand for increased coal is met we are not going to catch up with the demand for the products of B.H.P., and so the whole thing becomes a vicious circle, depending on and always returning to the need for more coal.

We may have to use more or less primitive methods of transport than a modern railway to get the coal away during the period the new railway would be under construction, but until we make some contribution to the solution of the problem by sending some of our bountiful supply of coal to the southern States I submit we are not entitled to complain because the other States are reluctant to send some of their products which we are badly in need of to this State. Just imagine the reaction or the feelings of people shivering in Melbourne because they cannot get coal when they read about or see pictures of the huge coal deposits in Queensland! Under such circumstances, if I were a Victorian, just as I am a Queenslander, I should hate everybody in Queensland and the more I shivered the more I should hate.

Mr. Maher: Nobody has shivered more than since the Socialists took control. Everybody has been shivering since.

Mr. BURROWS: We have heard a great deal about Socialists from members of the Opposition, but the question I am dealing

with is one that is socialistic in outlook, because it is Christian. I think it is the duty of every member of this Parliament to do his utmost to stabilise our economic system and I can see no better method of achieving it than by producing more coal and making more coal available for industry. I gave an instance yesterday of what private enterprise wanted to do with this field. Then we have the hon. member, who is purely here to push the barrow of private enterprise, irrespective of the consequences to the people or the man on the street.

Mr. Morris: It is a better barrow than Socialism, all the same.

Mr. BURROWS: I deplore the hon. member's ignorance. I am not ashamed of being called a Socialist. As a matter of fact, I am flattered when anyone calls me a Socialist and my memory goes back to the greatest Socialist who ever lived and He was only a humble carpenter, and I commend Him and His teachings to the hon. member opposite.

Mr. Morris: I probably know more about them than you do.

Mr. BURROWS: I understand that the hon. member became a Rechabite and every other bite in order to get into this Assembly.

Mr. Morris: That statement is untrue and you know it. It is a habit of yours to make nasty untrue statements when you have no other answer.

Mr. BURROWS: I submit that on account of the urgent need for coal and the importance and value of the coal trade the Government should take over the Callide coalfield as it stands today and call tenders or invite offers from interested parties—they would require to be of some substance—to transport the coal to the port of Gladstone until a railway line is built. I should also be in favour of giving them a franchise to build the line if they so desired it. That point is immaterial when such an important issue is at stake. The market is assured. The value of the trade is further enhanced by reason of the immense contribution that much more coal will make towards relieving the many shortages from which we are suffering today.

As I said before, the point that exasperates me is our failure to recognise the importance of doing something with this important industry; and I think we as a people suffer badly from an inferiority complex in matters of this kind. If we approached the problem much more courageously and in a common-sense way I am sure we could more than master it. As I see it, it is like a nettle; we are only playing with it and getting stung all the time.

In conclusion, I sincerely hope that the expectations of the Treasurer will be realised; and if they are I shall be only joining with others in saying that virtue is rewarded.

Progress reported.

The House adjourned at 4.50 p.m.