

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Assembly**

**WEDNESDAY, 16 MARCH 1949**

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**WEDNESDAY, 16 MARCH, 1949.**

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

QUESTIONS.

CYCLONE AND FLOOD INSURANCE.

**Mr. KEYATTA** (Townsville) asked the Treasurer—

“Would he give consideration to extending insurance cover to losses of property through cyclone and flood damage?”

**Hon. J. LARCOMBE** (Rockhampton) replied—

“At the present time the State Insurance Office provides insurance against storm and tempest damage. This is associated with fire insurance, and a substantial number of policies exist. However, at a Cabinet meeting held last week Ministers agreed, on my recommendation, to appoint a committee of competent officers to investigate the practicability of a separate comprehensive scheme of insurance against cyclone and flood damage.”

#### HOME SITES, REDBANK.

**Mr. DONALD** (Bremer) asked the Premier—

“Will the Government make land available at Redbank to those people whose homes have been resumed by the Railway Department for railway workshop purposes to enable them to erect or re-erect their homes thereon?”

**Hon. E. M. HANLON** (Ithaca) replied—

“Care will be taken to provide suitable home sites for all Redbank residents who may be displaced when the time arrives for the construction of new railway workshops in that area.”

#### STATE INTERVENTION IN BANKING CASE.

**Mr. HILEY** (Logan) asked the Premier—

“1. When was the decision reached to intervene in the Banking Case?

“2. What body made the decision?

“3. Will the House be afforded an opportunity to discuss the intervention?”

**Hon. E. M. HANLON** (Ithaca) replied—

“1, 2, and 3. The decision of the Queensland Government to seek leave to intervene in the Banking Case appeal before the Privy Council was made on 11 October, 1948. A reference to this decision appeared in the ‘Courier-Mail’ of 15 October, 1948, and specific questions relating to the decision were asked in this House on 19 October, 1948, by the hon. member for Logan himself, and also by the hon. member for Murrumba. In reply, my colleague, the Secretary for Labour and Industry, who at the time was Acting Premier, gave a full and frank statement to this House, setting out the grounds on which the Government was actuated in its decision to seek leave to intervene in this particular case. If the hon. member for Logan, or any other member in this House, had desired to discuss the question further, ample opportunity was provided at the time. The Budget debate and the consideration of the Estimates were still proceeding. It is interesting to note that when the Supply Resolutions were reported in this House on 24 November, 1948, ‘Formal’ was called to the Resolutions relating to the Premier and Chief Secretary’s Department, and the Department of the Treasurer. It is also noteworthy that although the hon. member for Logan spoke on the final

Appropriation Bill on the same day, 24 November, 1948, he made no reference to the Banking Case appeal, although he, or any other member, was quite at liberty to do so if it were felt that the matter was one which should be debated in this House.”

#### HOMES AND HOSPITALS FOR UNMARRIED MOTHERS.

**Mr. LUCKINS** (Maree) asked the Secretary for Health and Home Affairs—

“In view of the statement in ‘Courier-Mail’ of 14th instant that two Salvation Army homes and a hospital for unmarried mothers are always full, often with a long waiting list, will he give consideration to other means of finding adequate accommodation for these unfortunate women, thereby assisting them and their offspring to become useful citizens?”

**Hon. A. JONES** (Charters Towers) replied—

“Besides the two Salvation Army homes there are two other ‘lying-in’ homes for expectant unmarried mothers in Brisbane conducted by Church authorities. These two latter homes have many vacancies for waiting cases and, with these, there is adequate accommodation to meet the demands.”

#### STATE DEPARTMENTS’ LAND VALUATION.

**Mr. KERR** (Oxley) asked the Secretary for Labour and Industry—

“1. Is he aware and is it considered right and proper that different valuations should prevail and be used by the Stamp Commissioner and the Price Commissioner?

“2. As present-day values are used for succession and probate duties, i.e., for revenue purposes, and 1942 values for the same properties when being sold, will he give serious consideration to this injustice with a view to correcting the anomaly?”

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

“1 and 2. I understand valuations accepted by the Commissioner of Prices are also accepted by the Commissioner of Stamp Duties.”

#### GALVANISED IRON, CALLIOPE AND MANY PEAKS.

**Mr. MAHER** (West Moreton) asked the Premier—

“1. Is it a fact that victims of the cyclone from Calliope and Many Peaks who were applicants for galvanised iron sent to Gladstone at the instigation of the State Government were refused on the ground that the iron was earmarked for the City of Gladstone only?

“2. Would he inform the House why the differentiation?”

**Hon. E. M. HANLON** (Ithaca) replied—

“1 and 2. The hon. member for Port Curtis has already represented to the Government the case of victims of the

cyclone in the Calliope and Many Peaks areas, and satisfactory arrangements have been made to meet these cases."

MR. BEATTIE'S REPORT ON CATTLE INDUSTRY.

Mr. MAHER (West Moreton) asked the Secretary for Agriculture and Stock—

"Has Mr. Beattie's report on the cattle industry yet been received? If so, will the Government make the report available to Parliament?"

Hon. H. H. COLLINS (Cook) replied—

"Mr. Beattie is an employee of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research and will presumably submit his report to that organisation. My Department has not yet received a copy of his report."

#### ADDITIONAL AREA FROM LANSDOWNE RESUMPTION.

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

"1. Has a man named Quinlan been given an additional area from Lansdowne Resumption?"

"2. If so, did he override the departmental recommendation that the block should be the subject of a ballot?"

"3. What other country does Quinlan hold?"

"4. Has he received a protest from the local branch of the R.S.S.A.I.L.A. against granting Quinlan this additional area?"

"5. Would Quinlan, in order to fulfil the residence conditions of this block, be allowed to live in Tambo and employ a manager thereon?"

Hon. T. A. FOLEY (Normanby) replied—

"I have no knowledge of a man named Quinlan being granted an additional area from Lansdowne Resumption."

#### LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

##### INITIATION.

Hon. W. POWER (Baroona—Secretary for Public Works, Housing and Local Government): I move—

"That the House will, at its present sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirableness of introducing a Bill to Amend the Local Government Acts, 1936 to 1948, in certain particulars."

Motion agreed to.

#### ROOFING TILES BILL.

##### INITIATION.

Hon. W. POWER (Baroona—Secretary for Public Works, Housing and Local Government): I move—

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

introducing a Bill to provide standardisation in relation to roofing tiles and for that purpose to control and regulate the manufacture, sale, supply and use of roofing tiles, and for other purposes."

Motion agreed to.

#### ABATTOIRS ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

##### INITIATION IN COMMITTEE—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

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

Debate resumed from 10 March (see page 2084) on Mr. Collins's motion—

"That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to amend the Abattoirs Agreement Ratification and Meat Industry Acts, 1930 to 1932, for the purpose of regulating and controlling the slaughtering of stock for human consumption in areas additional to the metropolitan abattoir area, and for other purposes."

Mr. MAHER (West Moreton) (11.12 a.m.): Before addressing myself to the question before the Committee I want to make reference to a statement made by the Minister when he was introducing this Bill. The Minister made use of this phrase—

"I cannot for one moment agree with the Deputy Leader of the Opposition who said that cattle could be slaughtered in Brisbane for 25s. a head, that is, export as well as local supplies, while in Townsville it cost the graziers about £5 3s. a head."

I did not make that statement. I do not know who made it. I did not hear it made. It is certainly attributed to me in the "Hansard" proof.

Mr. Aikens: That statement has been made publicly by Northern graziers.

Mr. MAHER: The point is that it is being attributed to me. At the same time I am not disputing that it may be correct.

In introducing the Bill the Minister gave a great deal of detail. He showed how the Queensland Meat Industry Board had made a complete success of the Brisbane abattoir. The Minister, however, in upholding the principle of the establishment of the Queensland Meat Industry Board, and whilst praising the success of its operations, did not go out of his way to pay any special tribute to the Government who were responsible for the establishment of the abattoir at Cannon Hill. The Moore Government, in the face of very bitter opposition indeed, in 1930 introduced the Bill to acquire Swifts' Meatworks for conversion into an abattoir. The Labour Opposition at the time—there are men sitting on the front bench of the Government who took a prominent part in the discussion—bitterly assailed Mr. Moore and the Government for acquiring those meatworks.

The points made in the Labour attack at the time were: first, that the abattoirs should be built and controlled by the Brisbane City Council; secondly, that the price paid to the Swift company was excessive; and thirdly, that someone was getting a big rake-off for

relieving the Swift company of a "white elephant." Those were the three points made in the attack of the Labour Opposition at the time. I sat here in this Chamber and I heard the bitterness of the opposition of the Labour Party to the Moore Government policy of acquiring the meatworks at Cannon Hill from the Swift company.

It is interesting to recall the words of the then Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Forgan Smith, to be found in "Hansard," 1930, pages 1028 to 1033. Mr. Forgan Smith, then Leader of the Opposition, went into a prophecy in regard to the future of the scheme. Many of the ex-Premier's friends and admirers rank him among the great prophets of past eras, with men like Isaiah, Elijah, Daniel and Jeremiah. After I read this extract from what the then Leader of the Opposition had to say I will ask the Committee whether they think he deserves to be remembered as a great prophet—

"The Bill before the House removes from the ambit of the local authority that power dealing with abattoirs. So far as I am concerned, and so far as the members on this side of the House are concerned, we believe that, if any form of public utility is going to be established in connection with the meat trade of Brisbane, it should definitely be a municipal activity. . . . It means an increase in the price of beef, having regard to the capitalisation and the costs I have shown. . . . This will not employ an additional man in Queensland. It will probably result in the unemployment of men engaged in the domestic trade and private slaughter-yards, and mean the displacement of men from other works. . . . The Government, I repeat, have failed to establish any case for the measure. I am satisfied that they are paying more for the undertaking than it is worth, and that the future will show that they have made a bargain that is not worth while. . . . Time will show that this enterprise is not justified. Time will also show that the expenditure of money by the Government at this juncture to the amount involved in this Bill is not justified from any economic or public-interest point of view; and for the grounds that I have stated I am opposed to the Bill."

For such a foolish prophecy the former Premier should do some penitential suffering before, emulating the prophet Elijah, he takes off for the regions of the blest in a chariot of fire. He may, of course, have some qualification for ranking with the prophet Jeremiah in his lamentations; that is the only point of resemblance I can find between the former Premier and any of the prophets.

An attack was made by the Opposition of those days against the principle involved in this very Bill and members will see the somersault now made by the Government and senior Ministers like the hon. the Premier, the hon. the Treasurer, the hon. the Secretary for Public Instruction, and other senior Ministers who sat behind Mr. Forgan Smith when he delivered that shattering attack on this very principle. Today they are swallowing their principles, as expressed by their leader,

because they themselves supported him at that time and now they support this Bill and stand for the very principle that the former Premier, Mr. Moore, then head of the Government, introduced into the Parliament.

The success of the scheme, of course, has impressed itself on the minds of the Government today. They have lived and learned and where they came to scoff in 1930 today they remain to praise. The Minister is introducing an extension of the very same principle that was so bitterly opposed by the Labour Party in those days. Although that was the nature of the attack made by the Labour Opposition in 1930 when the Swift meatworks were acquired, let me say that the facts of the case today are these: the present Government have not changed the control of the Brisbane abattoir in any way nor has any other abattoir been established under local authority control; the purchase of the Swift meatworks has proved to be a very great bargain in every way from the Queensland point of view; not one shred of evidence has ever been adduced to justify the dirty innuendoes that were circulated at the time the Swift meatworks were acquired by those who wished to bring about the defeat of the Moore Government.

At this juncture I am fairly entitled to acknowledge the debt of gratitude that this Parliament and the people of Queensland owe to the foresight of Mr. Arthur Moore, who was then the Premier and who bore the brunt of the bitter attack launched against him for the acquisition of Swifts' meatworks. Time has proved the quality of his judgment. The profits that have been made and the good services that have been rendered to the people by the Queensland Meat Industry Board over the years should be a vindication of his action in this Parliament, even to those who at that time thought differently and opposed the acquisition of the Swift meatworks and their conversion into a modern abattoir.

We come to the question of the wisdom of an extension of abattoirs to other parts of the State. The Minister, introducing the Bill, foreshadowed that the Government intend when possible to erect modern abattoirs at sites yet to be determined. He also outlined the intention to set up component local governing authorities for some kind of minor abattoir in several important centres. The whole thing resolves itself into the question: is this Bill merely a piece of political propaganda? Is it being introduced in some way or another to mollify advocates of abattoirs in different centres by indicating that the Government are active on the principles of the construction or erection of abattoirs in different centres? What is the real motive for the introduction of the Bill? The Minister knows quite well that in the existing state of affairs in Queensland there is no possible hope of getting labour or material for the erection of modern abattoirs on various sites throughout the State today.

**Mr. Aikens:** Existing meatworks can be acquired.

**Mr. MAHER:** Let us take each hurdle as it comes.

When it comes to the erection of new meatworks, what is the position? In many parts of the State we cannot get labour and material to erect even such absolute necessities as public hospitals.

**Mr. H. B. Taylor:** Nor houses for the people.

**Mr. MAHER:** Nor houses for the people. When it comes to allotting priorities for meatworks and other big public buildings, surely hospitals should rank as No. 1, and I think the Minister will admit freely that we are unable to erect hospitals, but if he is uncertain let him consult his colleague, the Secretary for Health and Home Affairs, who I know has been trying to have a hospital erected in his own electorate at Hughenden for several years past, but finds when tenders are called that nobody answers the advertisement. The position is so difficult with respect to hospitals, how much more difficult would it be with respect to the erection of abattoirs? When the Minister tells us that the object of the Bill is to erect new abattoirs at different points in Queensland, very obviously that is a remote possibility. It might mean the lapse of another 10 years before such a proposal could be considered seriously by the Government.

**Mr. Collins:** Do you not think it should be in the Bill?

**Mr. MAHER:** If the Minister admits by implication that he realises the difficulties there and does not intend to erect new meatworks, what then is the object of the Bill?

**Mr. Collins:** It makes provision in the meantime.

**Mr. MAHER:** Is it not beating the air to introduce a Bill to this Parliament to gull the people into believing that it is the intention of the Government to erect abattoirs when there is no earthly prospect of their being erected within a measurable distance of time or within the reach of this Parliament's powers so to do?

I think there is a nigger in the woodpile; the Minister has other fish to fry and his reference to taking power to erect new meatworks is only a front, a cover for his real motive. Without doubt it would appear to me that the real intention is to acquire or purchase by private treaty existing meatworks. Is there any sanity on the part of the Government in interfering with profitable business undertakings that are discharging a useful service to the community, the privately-owned meatworks, which are also contributing to Caesar those things which are Caesar's? They are paying the taxes that help to make the country go forward. To acquire or purchase those meatworks and vest them in the Queensland Meat Industry Board does not savour of common sense.

**Mr. Collins:** What did you do with Swifts?

**Mr. MAHER:** Swifts were in a different category. Swifts were ready and willing sellers, and that makes a difference. If the Minister holds the offer of any existing meatworks, if the proprietors of such concerns have expressed to him their willingness to

sell their works, that is a horse of a different colour; but if they have not given him any such undertaking, if they wish to carry on their business operations in their own way, why should the Minister interfere with them, why should he step in and acquire their works and put those works under the control of the Queensland Meat Industry Board?

Where is the public demand for such action? Cattle, sheep and pigs are slaughtered at the various meatworks under wholly hygienic conditions. The meat is inspected by the Commonwealth meat inspectors and every facility is given there for the meat to be distributed to the public for both export and local trade up to the standard that would be found in any abattoir operated by the Queensland Meat Industry Board. What sound reason can there be for undertaking the big financial responsibility involved in the acquisition of existing meatworks or, under threat of acquisition, offering a price for the purchase of such meatworks?

I want the Minister to face up to this question, to be frank with us and tell us whether that is his intention. Does this Bill mean anything? If it means anything, what is it aimed at? If it is aimed at the acquisition or purchase of meatworks, let him justify to the Committee the expenditure of public money and putting the Queensland Meat Industry Board into further debt by the acquisition of these meatworks when they could not carry out any more useful duty to the public than is being discharged today by the people who operate those concerns. That is a question I should like to submit to the Minister.

Another factor that must not be overlooked is that the greatest care must be exercised by the Minister in the administration of this Bill when it becomes law, to make sure that in his selection of sites for abattoirs and acquired meatworks there is a sufficient flow of beef, sheep and pigs to maintain an output commensurate with the capital invested. The trend today, because of the shortage of beef, mutton and pig-meat, is to find buyers all over the country offering prices for stock in the paddock in excess of what can be got at Cannon Hill. These stock are moved off across the border into New South Wales, and the Minister is not able to do anything about it; it would be a bad thing if he tried, because the stockowner is entitled to get access to the best markets as well as the best prices possible for his stock.

If this movement extends—and the statistical evidence is that as the population increases in Australia our export surplus of beef in particular will grow less—we shall reach the stage when we shall find that the paddock operator might be able to out-bid the operator who wishes to treat cattle at a specified meatworks.

The Government have done foolish things from time to time, as, for example, the acquisition of the Mt. Hutton cattle station at Roma and properties in the North, where everybody concerned made a profit out of the stations except the Government who owned them. Big profits were made by a host of

people, but not by the Government, who owned the stations; and before the Minister gets out of his depth and comes under conditions he does not understand, let him beware and be guided by men of experience, otherwise he might find himself, having acquired meatworks, not being able to get a flow of cattle to maintain those works. He might reach that condition simply because other buyers have stepped into the paddock and reduced the flow of cattle to the meatworks. That is one phase of the question the Minister might well think over.

Another difficulty I see in the Government's moving out and taking over meatworks and establishing abattoirs is that they are likely to create centralised State monopolies. Under present-day industrial conditions, and we are wholly aware of them with their ill-effect upon the general community, there is great danger in creating State monopolies. If the Government expand the scheme as expressed in the Bill, with the disappearance of many slaughterhouses owned by private companies and individuals goes the only protection that the masses of the people have against those elements in the community that engage in deliberate industrial sabotage.

**Mr. Collins:** Are you referring to the butchers and graziers?

**Mr. MAHER:** I am not referring to them, as they are law-abiding people.

If the Minister thinks that the graziers are withholding the supplies of beef from any part of the State, I think that if he makes a close investigation he will find he is wrong for so believing. The only thing that holds cattle back from sale under the high prices that are at present ruling is the fact that the cattle on the properties, because of drought conditions, are not in a sufficiently fat condition for the owners to market them. After all, the buyer is entitled to obtain fat meat when he pays over his money and the owner is entitled to fatten the beast to get the maximum value for it. The Minister would not send drovers out to bring in cattle that were only partially fat. Without a doubt there are plenty of cattle on the properties, but, because of drought conditions, are they fat enough to market? That is the test.

**Mr. Collins:** Some of them are fat enough to bring £32 a head at the Brisbane saleyards.

**Mr. MAHER:** Who is going to hold cattle back at that price? (Time expired.)

**Mr. SPARKES (Aubigny) (11.36 a.m.):** I think there is no-one on this side of the Committee who will take exception to the creation of abattoirs from the point of view of giving better meat to the people—meat killed under proper conditions. I think we are all agreed on that point. I think, also, with my colleague, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, that this Government, and especially those members who were here in 1930, should admit the mistake they made then and pay tribute to the then Premier of Queensland, Mr. Arthur Moore, for what he did for this State when he bought Swifts'

meatworks. Every opportunity has been taken to damn and condemn anything that was brought into being by the Moore Government during those years, but if there is one thing that stands out as a memorial to him it is the acquisition of those meatworks. Not one Government in power during the depression years escaped defeat, but Mr. Moore, when he acquired those works, did a wonderful job, not only for Brisbane, but for the people of Queensland. Queensland is the big cattle-producing State of the Commonwealth and, you might say, it is the only exporting State. We can thank Mr. Moore that we were able to have chilled beef. Hon. members opposite were against the proposal, but if it had not been for his act in acquiring those meatworks we should not have had chilled beef to export.

Let me quote from "Hansard"—it is an interesting little book and I often wonder why the Labour Government have not brought down a measure to do away with this little book because it brings back to them their sins of the past. On some occasions I have even expected them to do so. Let me quote something from this book that was stated by the Premier, who at that time was then a member of the Opposition. It makes interesting reading. I refer to "Hansard" for 1930, page 1238.

Mr. Hanlon said—

"The abattoirs will not be able to kill enough cattle to bear the burden of the cost of the enterprise."

What a statement for our present Premier, who was then a leading member of the Opposition, to make!

**Mr. Collins:** We have had to double the capacity of the abattoir.

**Mr. SPARKES:** We have had it said that it could not get enough cattle. It could have killed more.

He goes on—and this is interesting:—

"My chief objection is acquiring meatworks."

That is a statement made in 1930 by the Premier of today.

"My chief objection is acquiring meatworks."

Now we find that to be one of the main reasons for this Bill. No wonder that some people doubt what is behind it! I think they are a little modest.

I have no doubt as to what is the main object of the Bill. What do we find when we examine the position? Let me link up the facts. We find a huge corporation in the North starting to grow sorghum, ostensibly to provide food for Britain. That was the reason given—provide food for poor Britain. Hon. members opposite wept tears of blood for Britain, yet they would deny Britain meat from this country.

**Mr. COLLINS:** Mr. Mann, I object to the remark made by the hon. member that this Government would deny Britain food. We have never done that in any shape or form. In fact, we have endeavoured to help Britain's food supply. I wish to correct the hon. member's misstatement.

**Mr. SPARKES:** I accept the Minister's denial but his actions are exactly opposite to his statements. First of all, we see a start made to grow sorghum. Then we find the same people acquiring cattle. In fact, they have already bought a large number of cattle. This Parliament has never been told anything about that. Numbers running into thousands have been bought. Are we going into cattle stations again? Can the hon. gentleman deny that? We find that after cattle have been bought in thousands a proposal being made under this Bill to establish meatworks. Do hon. members follow the sequence of events? You, Mr. Devries, I am sure, follow them very closely. The idea is that when we have the works we shall treat our own cattle and eventually push out private enterprise in an industry that means so much to this State. At what cost to the taxpayers of this State will that be accomplished?

We did not push out Swifts. If Swifts had not been a willing seller of their works their concern would never have been purchased. Let us go back again to the little book which says—

“It will not be long before Swifts will turn round and build a most modern works here to compete with your abattoirs.”

**Mr. Nicklin:** Who said that?

**Mr. SPARKES:** The hon. gentleman who is Premier. Have we found any attempt on the part of Swifts to build new works? Swifts were sellers and we were buyers. We bought at a good price, which even the hon. gentleman has admitted. You can see the whole set-up, Mr. Devries. The whole set-up is for this Government to become a monopoly in the beef business of this great State. What will happen then? You, Mr. Devries, know only too well what happened during those years when the Labour Government acquired State stations. I am not going to go into that business. As the hon. member for Windsor has reminded me, that enterprise cost the taxpayers about £2,000,000.

**Mr. Aikens:** Poddy-dodging by adjoining stations.

**Mr. SPARKES:** The fact remains that the Government of the day embarked on State stations.

Let us look at this trouble at Townsville. The hon. gentleman said graziers held back their cattle from the local butchers and at the same time bullocks were bringing £32 5s. in the Cannon Hill saleyards. I supplied those bullocks and got £32 5s. for them.

**Mr. Collins:** Not the ones I am referring to.

**Mr. SPARKES:** These were sold in open competition, like any of my other cattle. If they brought £32 5s. they must have been worth it.

That is by the way. Let us look at the point of view of the grazier in the Townsville area who is being accused of not sending his cattle in. I know, and other members on the Government side such as the members for Barecoo and Warrego who understand the conditions in those areas know, that after

a drought the cattle are out of condition. A few of the male portion of the herd would probably be what we term station beef. The owners who have experienced the drought and suffered heavy losses with their breeders may have bullocks that weigh 600 lb. and they may be of the opinion from what they hear and what the Government say that the long-range price of beef is all right and they may decide, having had good rain, to put another 200 lb. weight of beef on the cattle and market them at 800 or 900 lb. Are you going to take that beef because it is station beef? Are you going to take these cattle, or are you going to allow the grazier to put on an extra 200 lb. on each beast? Is it fair, after the grazier has just experienced a drought, for you to go and acquire these cattle because you have a clamouring multitude who do not understand the business of grazing but who want meat and who say, “We do not care; we must have the beef”?

I say to the butchers in Townsville that there are no graziers in the Townsville area who have fat cattle and who will not market them, because the incentive to market them is there. Why cannot the Townsville butchers buy cattle elsewhere? They could have bought them here at the abattoir if they wanted them. Why shouldn't they do that? I noticed that one man refused £20 for his bullocks. He might have been able to get another £6 or £8 when he topped them up; and he is entitled to that. If the butchers there wanted the meat they could have acted as those other districts did; they could have obtained cattle from somewhere else.

But this Government do not like the grazier to get a fair and reasonable price for his cattle. They were happy at the grazier's getting 16s. a 100 lb. for his meat. They do not appreciate the difficulties confronting the graziers because of seasonal and other difficulties and the conditions that exist in those areas. We are everlastingly talking of decentralisation and keeping our people on the land. What do we do? The very man you hate and detest is the grazier. Nobody has done more for the development of this State than these self-same people, who live under conditions that are mighty hard and that few members appreciate. If you want your country developed, if you want your country occupied, if you want it populated in those areas, you must not begrudge them at least a reasonable livelihood.

**Mr. Collins:** Who is begrudging them anything?

**Mr. SPARKES:** You are going to begrudge them because you say you will take their cattle.

**A Government Member:** If it is necessary, why not?

**Mr. SPARKES:** They will come in! If one goes on long enough they will come in! I thank the hon. member; I congratulate him on his honesty. It did not matter a damn whether a bullock weighed 500 lb. or 600 lb.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! I would ask the hon. member to be more temperate in the use of his language.



**Mr. SPARKES:** I appreciate that, Mr. Mann. I put it to the hon. member that if a beast was edible, weighed 600 lb., and the butchers of Townsville wanted it you would acquire it. Let the hon. member be honest and say so.

**Mr. Aikens:** Why not?

**Mr. SPARKES:** There is only one hon. member who is honest. He asks, "Why not?" The other hon. members have "got the oil" not to open their mouths; the hon. member for Mundingburra has not been stopped. He has not been gagged, like my friends opposite.

That man has a right, and once you interfere with that right you wipe off the ambition in the individual; consequently you will get fewer fat cattle and with Government intervention you will get fewer still. (Government laughter.) Hon. members opposite may snigger. That may be all right, but what sort of a job did the Government make of it when they had State stations before? Have a yarn with the hon. member for Gregory and he will tell you the job the Government made of it. Some of the men employed did not know a Hereford from a Shorthorn. They knew nothing about the business at all.

In reply to the interjection from the hon. member for Mundingburra, I would point out that the man who has cattle has the right to have them properly fattened. Even in this Chamber it has been said—we have heard the hon. member for Mundingburra say it—the people are forced to eat scrag and all sorts of other things. The hon. member made that statement in this Chamber. A grazier wants to prime up his cattle and put the best bloom on them, but the Government will not let him do that. If he sends them in for slaughtering before that, they are too poor to eat. What in the name of heaven do the Government want? They cannot have it both ways. Hon. members on the Government side of the Chamber have done more to deprive the people of Brisbane of good meat than anything else in Queensland. They continually wail about the price of meat and the fixation of the price, but they allow their brethren in Sydney to feed on the best meat produced in Queensland. I can prove that. I had vealers in Cannon Hill last week, and, although the prices were high, each and every one of them went to Sydney.

**A Government Member:** Who pays for it?

**Mr. SPARKES:** The Sydney people. The Government members are continually singing out about the quality of the meat the people get, but they force their people to eat what is called scraggy meat, and this because of their stupid silly idea of trying to control something they know nothing about.

**Mr. Power:** All you people know about is profits.

**Mr. SPARKES:** I am honest in that respect—I want profits. If the Government take profits from any industry they ruin it.

But I believe in everyone sharing in the profits. That is somewhat different to the belief of hon. members opposite who interject. They can come and talk to any man I employ any time they like. They can go on to any one of my properties and have a yarn with the men there and find out what they think of the members of the Government Party. The hon. member for Maryborough was on one of the properties, and he saw man-sized jobs being done by the men. It was not merely a matter of talking, as it is in this Chamber. The men work. They are men who appreciate the West. They have seen it and worked under its conditions, but the members of the Government know nothing about that; I should say most of the members of the Government know nothing about that because I know there are hon. members on the Government benches who do appreciate it.

I feel that my colleagues on this side take no objection to the system of having abattoirs in big centres where they are wanted for the killing of cattle under better conditions; but that is not the point; we do take exception to interference by the Government in an industry about which they know nothing.

It has been said that without control prices would soar tremendously. Speaking for myself, if I had my way I would remove every control we have. Then we should not have the spectacle of a farmer being unable to get a sheet of iron or a coil of barbed wire.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! The hon. member is getting away from the matter contained in the Bill.

**Mr. SPARKES:** It is all wrapped up with socialisation of industry. The men are prepared to pay for these things to be brought here by road and the Government will not let them. The Government prefer to see the farmers starve. A splendid example of the improvement to be had by removing control of prices is to be found in connection with lambs. Lambs were being sold on the black-market at 1s 6d. a lb. and within two months after the removal of control the price dropped to 10d. For those who do not know what a lamb is, let me say that the same thing applies to second-hand motor-cars. They can be bought by the score today.

If the Government are honest and introduce a Bill with the object of building abattoirs properly controlled for the benefit of this State they need have no fear of any opposition from this side; on the contrary, they will get the support of all hon. members of the Opposition, but do not let them try to cover it up with some idea of taking something from the people by means of acquisition. The one thing we must instil into the minds of our producers is a feeling of security. Once they lose confidence in the Government, once they feel that they are likely to lose their land or their stock, they will cease to do the job we, indeed the whole world, desire them to do—produce urgently-needed food.

**Mr. THEODORE (Herbert) (11.58 a.m.):** After listening to the speeches of the hon. member for West Moreton and the hon.

member for Aubigny, one could only conclude that this Bill is a vile and vicious thing directed against the people of this State. The fact is that it is no such thing. It is brought down with a view to protecting the people and giving the residents of the outback parts of the State a service similar to that enjoyed by the people of Brisbane at the hands of the Queensland Meat Industry Board. Of course, it is only natural that these opponents of such legislation should try to draw a red herring across the trail and delude the people into believing that there is some vicious purpose behind the measure.

**Mr. Maher:** What is the real object?

**Mr. THEODORE:** The real object is to give the people of the outback a privilege similar to that enjoyed by the people of the metropolitan area. The only object is to give those people outback wholesome meat slaughtered under proper supervision and properly inspected.

The hon. member for West Moreton was not concerned about that, as he and others with him are concerned about profits—how much profit they can make and how much freedom and liberty they can have to carry on their businesses in their own nefarious way. This Government must be concerned for the people of the State; they cannot allow the people to be held to ransom, as they were in recent incidents. In making provision to see that such occurrences do not happen again the Government are quite within their rights; they are quite within their rights in seeing that the people are not allowed to suffer because of the whims of those who desire to have the right to do as they like.

The giving of effect to the provisions of the Bill does not mean that anybody will be persecuted. I will not believe that the Government would send out men to take immature cattle when they could get beasts of the right quality from adjacent areas. The Government's intention is to serve the people and to see that they get what they are entitled to get—an adequate supply of good beef. I know hon. members opposite would like to see a similar position occur in Australia as occurred in America when controls were lifted. Meat supplies were held from the people until controls were lifted and steers sold for £1<sup>0</sup> a head. No wonder the consumption of meat by the American people is lower than Australian consumption!

**Mr. Maher:** They do not produce beef in a big way.

**Mr. THEODORE:** Don't they? Beef is produced in America in a big way by small growers. The small-grower production of beef accounts for 65 per cent. of the total beef production. That is the sort of thing that we wish to encourage in this country. I should like to see a large number of small farmers in the rain areas or in the areas suitable for raising cattle being encouraged to produce cattle.

There is no vicious principle in this Bill nor is there any clause in it to persecute the producer; it is simply a Bill for the purpose

of protecting the people who at times are persecuted by the producer or those interests that have control at the present time. The people of Queensland will welcome this Bill. The intentions described by the Opposition will not be put into effect; provisions are there for specific purposes, to be exercised only under extraordinary conditions.

I support the Bill and say that the Opposition are talking with their tongues in their cheeks when they oppose a measure of this kind, particularly when they supported a similar one brought down by the Moore Government. Because the present scheme is operating so successfully no less credit should be given to the present Government than to the Government who brought it into operation, notwithstanding that there might have been opposition at the time. I will not argue on that point, but it is because the scheme is operating so successfully today and is thought so highly of that it is being extended throughout the State.

I think it can be said that at least the present Labour Government are amenable to reason. They see the merits of the scheme and they are prepared to extend it. I believe they will receive the appreciation of the people of this State.

**Mr. AIKENS (Mundingburra)** (12.5 p.m.): It has been said that the occasion will always produce the man and, if we use the plural, I suppose we can enlarge that saying and say that the occasion will always produce the men. In this period of post-war shortages, we have seen quite a lot of types of men produced. We have seen many big Australians produced in all walks of industry and in all strata of society. We have seen this post-war period of shortages throw up certain undesirable types of individuals and, in using the word "undesirable" I want to apply it with particular emphasis to the cattle graziers of this State because their attitude, in this period of post-war shortages, is actuated by nothing more nor less than selfishness and avarice.

There is, as we know, a shortage of meat in Queensland today. The attitude of the graziers is that they want every possible penny they can wring from the people of Queensland and from the people of Great Britain for the small quantity of meat that they produce and, as I have said in this Chamber on previous occasions, many graziers have deliberately depleted their flocks, saying that they can make as much money clear of taxation from a small herd as they originally could, clear of taxation, from a big herd.

Of course, it has been mentioned here by the hon. member for Aubigny and, I think, by the hon. member for West Moreton, that the graziers are sending all or most of the stock they produce on to the New South Wales and Victorian markets where they can get a much higher price for their meat than they can get here in Queensland where the beef is raised. That again exemplifies the selfish and avaricious attitude of the graziers. They want to take full advantage of the low-wage and poor-conditions policy of this

Labour Government in order to produce their meat as cheaply as they possibly can and then, having taken full advantage of the low-wage policy of this Government, they want to shift their low-wage-produced cattle by road or rail into the higher-wage States of New South Wales and Victoria, thus getting the highest possible price for their cattle on those markets. If that does not exemplify their avarice and selfishness then I do not know what does.

**Mr. Maher:** Every grazier in Queensland today is paying above the prescribed award wages.

**Mr. AIKENS:** I sincerely doubt it. There may be an individual grazier, but the cattle stations, as a group, in Queensland today are being run not only with cheap white labour, but the cheapest of black labour. On every big cattle station in the State today you will find the majority of the employees are Queensland aboriginals and most of those unfortunate Queensland aboriginals are receiving as little as possible from the graziers.

Much has been said about the position in Townsville. I am going to acquaint hon. members of the Committee with the position in Townsville today with regard to meat supplies, which, I believe, was one of the things that prompted the introduction of this Bill at the present time. I can give hon. members a first-hand account of what is occurring in Townsville in regard to the meat position because I live in Townsville. I am there all the time when this Parliament is not in session. I live there because I want to suffer with the people of Townsville all the trials and tribulations that they suffer. I live there because I want to face with them the problems that confront them from time to time. Consequently, I do not come into this Chamber and give hon. members of the Committee any second-hand information in regard to the position at Townsville. Anything you get from me is first-hand information that I have gathered at the expense sometimes of my own experience.

As a matter of fact, the other Friday morning in Townsville I was standing in a meat queue in Flinders street waiting to buy my family's meat, because I believe in standing in meat queues with the people of Townsville, the same as I stood with them in the ice queues during the war. The present meat queues in Townsville are reaching the disgraceful proportions of our war-time ice queues. While I was standing in Flinders street the other morning, waiting to buy my family's meat—it eventually took me one hour and 45 minutes before I was served—I was threatened with arrest by an arrogant, bumptious police sergeant, who interfered with the meat queue. He wanted the women and all of us to stand on the edge of the footpath in the rain. I immediately engaged in a verbal altercation with this bumptious, overbearing policeman. I did not engage in this verbal altercation with him in the tones of a whispering baritone. I said, "Why don't you send down to Brisbane and get your mates, Nugget Jesson and George Keyatta,

to come here and stand up with the people in their meat queues and see what the people have to suffer?" I was threatened with arrest because he said I was creating a disturbance. That was because I stood in the meat queues with the people. I would gladly have welcomed arrest as a result of fighting a fight for the people of Townsville, in Townsville, not down here 830 miles away.

**Mr. Plunkett:** You would have got your meat in gaol then and saved all this standing in a queue. (Laughter.)

**Mr. AIKENS:** I know that had I been arrested and sent to prison I should have been fed. I do not know whether the gaol gets any meat or not, but in any event I should have been fed.

The fact is that I was there and was threatened with arrest. Fortunately, in Townsville we have top-ranking police officers who administer the law with a measure of common sense. They cannot be held responsible for the action of this bumptious sergeant. Nevertheless, that is just what is occurring in Townsville today, where meat queues are reaching the disgraceful proportions of the disgraceful war-time ice queues.

We heard the hon. member for Aubigny stand up and say, "Is it right that the poor grazier, who normally supplies meat to the Townsville master butchers, should supply cattle that weigh only 600 lb.? Is it not right that those graziers should wait until the cattle increase in weight, or until they are in full bloom, to 800 or 900 lb.? Then they would be able to sell the best meat to the Townsville butchers." I want to ask him, in fact every member of the Opposition, this question: "Why is it that Townsville is the only city in Queensland today where the master butchers are unable to buy any cattle on the hoof? Why is it that Townsville alone cannot get fat cattle on the hoof? Why is it that Cairns, Mareeba, Innisfail, Tully, Ingham, Ayr, Home Hill, Bowen, Hughenden, Cloncurry, Mt. Isa, and every other town in North Queensland can buy fat cattle on the hoof and sell this good meat to the public, whereas Townsville master butchers are unable to buy fat cattle on the hoof and sell this prime meat to the public?"

**Mr. Smith:** They can buy in Cloncurry? They go out and buy it.

**Mr. AIKENS:** The hon. member does not know what has happened in Townsville. He only pays fleeting visits there, the same as George Keyatta and Nugget Jesson. He is only in and out there like a snowdrifter in the back yard.

**Mr. Smith:** I know where the master butchers can buy bullocks.

**Mr. AIKENS:** Why is it that the master butchers in Townsville cannot buy fat cattle?

**Mr. Smith:** They are only using you to make a political attack on the Labour Government.

**Mr. AIKENS:** Am I making this speech or is it the peripatetic hon. member for Carpentaria?

**Mr. Smith:** I say that you are assisting the master butchers of Townsville in making an attack on this Labour Government.

**Mr. AIKENS:** At any rate, whatever I am doing I am doing it on my own volition; I am doing it with a clear mind and a calm brain in the interests of the working class, the interests the hon. member never had at heart in his own personal or political life.

Quite recently we heard a great deal of strikes and industrial unrest from a number of the Opposition and members of the Labour Party. Quite recently the Trades and Labour Council in Townsville, before the meat shortage developed to its present extent, considered a resolution that they should organise and authorise a strike of Townsville workers on the basis of "No meat, no work." It is well known that Townsville is the most highly industrialised city in Queensland; and that the unions there, particularly the three big unions—waterside workers, the railways and the meat workers—are well organised and well led. When the graziers saw that the big unions were talking about a strike on the basis of "No meat, no work," the graziers deliberately withheld their stock from the master butchers in the hope of provoking industrial trouble so that it might force the Government into granting the master butchers a rise in the price of the meat, which rise would be passed on to the grazier. I am saying what every man, woman and child in Townsville knows—the graziers were withholding stock from the Townsville people in an endeavour to provoke an industrial strike in Townsville in the hope that the Government would be swayed by the strike to grant to the master butchers an increase in the price of meat so that they might pass it on to the graziers.

**Mr. Plunkett:** How do the Townsville butchers give 63s. for meat instead of 56s.?

**Mr. AIKENS:** I do not know anything about that and I am not going to be led astray by the hon. member. The fact remains that the same graziers who refused to supply cattle to the Townsville master butchers are supplying the same cattle to master butchers in other towns in North Queensland; and those master butchers are able to buy from the graziers at a price that will enable them to sell to the people at the retail price fixed by the Commissioner of Prices. Yet the graziers will not supply the Townsville master butchers with stock at a price that will enable them to sell that stock to the people of Townsville at the price fixed by the Commissioner of Prices.

Some years ago, during the war, we had a similar hold-up in regard to the price of mutton, and as deputy-mayor of Townsville I convened a conference at which we had representatives of the master butchers, the A.M.I.E.U., and the Townsville City Council. The sheep graziers were withholding stocks of mutton from the Townsville master butchers, who said they could not kill them and sell

them wholesale at the price fixed. We suggested then in a resolution from the Townsville City Council—and I hope the gravamen of that resolution is embodied in this Bill—which we sent to the Prime Minister who was then in charge of the price-fixing machinery, that he issue an order giving his officers the right to go to any station property and seize sheep or cattle on the hoof for public consumption at the price fixed by the Commissioner of Prices. That was on the grounds of the public good, and that is the thing I am concerned about more than the profits of the grazier, the profits of the master butchers, or the profits of anyone else.

**Mr. Macdonald:** How do you fix the price on the hoof?

**Mr. AIKENS:** That is a very simple matter. Take the cattle into the works and kill them and fix the price then. I was hoping the hon. member for Aubigny might ask me that question, because he is recognised—with very little justification for it—as being an authority in this Chamber on meat.

How do they fix the price of cattle for the local meatworks in Townsville? The graziers are paid by the buyer on the basis of so much per live weight or so much per dead weight at the works. Why can this not be done for the master butchers and the various killing establishments throughout the State? The whole fact of the matter is that the position in Townsville—the meat shortage and the deplorable meat queues—has been deliberately created by the graziers who normally supplied the meat to the Townsville master butchers.

**Mr. Plunkett:** They put you in a queue.

**Mr. AIKENS:** They put me in a queue. I nearly got "pinched" in a queue but that does not matter. If the hon. member uses the limited intelligence God has given him he will realise that there must be something radically wrong when the Townsville master butchers, of all the master butchers in Queensland, are the only ones who are unable to buy fat cattle on the hoof and sell those cattle over the counter at the prices fixed by the Commissioner of Prices. Does it not strike him as something more than a coincidence when Townsville is the only town involved? Does it not strike him as more than a coincidence when Townsville is the most industrialised city in Queensland and the Trades and Labour Council there were contemplating a "no meat, no work" strike? Does not that strike him as being more than a coincidence?

Incidentally, many of the graziers—and I have some in my electorate—are not graziers' bootlaces. I pay tribute to the hon. member for Aubigny and men of his type in the grazing industry, because with all their faults—and their faults are legion—they at least breed cattle of a good type; but we have, in the Lower Burdekin and Haughton areas particularly, men who have not a stud beast on their premises and have not had one for donkey's years. They simply hold their land under grazing-homestead leases. Every member of the family has a separate

grazing-homestead lease that was bought from some poor devil in the days gone by who had gone broke in time of drought. None of these grazing-homestead leases are manned. None of them have even a bull upon them. These alleged graziers wait until times of drought and hardship.

**Mr. Sparkes:** They do go broke sometimes?

**Mr. AIKENS:** The little fellows do; but I am talking about the big fellows who have nearly all the land in the Lower Burdekin tied up. They buy all sorts of stock from the chaps in the West and other places who cannot afford to hold them any longer. They rail them to the Lower Burdekin, place them on their empty properties, fatten them, and sell them in about three or four or six months' time as fats. They are not graziers' bootlaces. They are not to be compared with men like the hon. member for Aubigny; but like him they are actuated by the same basic motive or principle, and that is the accumulation of as much money as possible in as short a time as possible.

**Mr. Sparkes:** Have you any railway line to Townsville?

**Mr. AIKENS:** Yes, but it is under water most of the time.

Let us contrast the attitude of the graziers with that of our other primary producers. In this period—and it is most abnormal, most unusual—the overseas prices for most primary products, if not all, are higher than the Australian prices. For many years—as long as I can remember at any rate—the Australian prices for all primary products, including meat, were much higher than the overseas prices; for the people of Australia willingly and gladly paid the higher Australian prices for meat, butter, cheese and wheat and everything else they consumed, because they believed that in paying the higher prices they were establishing and maintaining those industries on a White Australia basis. Over the years the graziers, together with all the other primary producers, had gladly taken the higher Australian prices to compensate them for the ridiculously low prices they received from the overseas market. Owing to the abnormal and unusual conditions today the position is entirely the reverse. We find that for nearly all primary products, if not all, the overseas prices are higher than the Australian prices. What do we find? We find the primary producers—the butter, cheese, wheat and sugar men, and all the other primary producers—doing the decent thing by the Australian public that has done the decent thing by them for so long. These other primary producers are keeping their promise and pledge to the people of Australia and are keeping the Australian market fully supplied at the Australian price and shipping overseas for the temporary higher overseas price only the surplus.

What would happen today if, for instance, the sugar men adopted the attitude that has been adopted by the meat men? What would happen if the sugar men said, "To hell with the Australian market! Never mind about

the temporary lower Australian price; we are going to ship every ton of sugar we can produce overseas in order that we may get the benefit of the temporary higher overseas price?" There would be a revolution, and the first men to complain would be men like the hon. member for Aubigny, who would complain about paying the overseas price for his sugar, suggesting that he should continue to get it at the fixed Australian price. He would be the first man to squeal if the sugar producers did what he is doing and what he advocates; consequently, whereas the other great primary producers, the sugar men, the butter men, the cheese men and the wheat men are giving the Australian public a decent go and some return for the fair spin the Australian public has given them over the years, the cattle men are saying, "Never mind about the higher Australian price we received over the last 30 or 40 years; never mind about the days when we were glad to get the higher Australian price to compensate for the lower overseas price; we now want to see the Australian public starve for meat unless the Australian public is compelled to pay the temporary ridiculous high overseas price."

**Mr. Sparkes:** You are entirely wrong so far as meat is concerned.

**Mr. AIKENS:** That is the attitude of the graziers and it is an attitude to be condemned and deprecated in the strongest possible terms. If this Bill—and I sincerely hope it does—gives the Government power to go out and seize fat stock on any property at the fixed price and make that fat stock available to the public for consumption, the sooner it is passed and the sooner it is implemented the better it will be for the public.

To rub a little coarse salt into the gaping wound of the hon. member for Aubigny before I conclude, I repeat that in Townsville we have seen these alleged supporters of law and order, the graziers, the men who always want the workers suppressed when they talk strike, the men who want the police to go out and baton down the workers when they go on strike, deliberately try to promote industrial trouble in Townsville in order that the price of beef and cattle might be raised.

**Mr. MULLER (Fassifern) (12.28 p.m.):** We have just listened to perhaps the most unfair attack on any section of the community to which I have ever listened since I have been in this Chamber. I refer to the untruthful and unreliable attack that has been made on a section of the community by the last two speakers. If these men are prepared to come into this Chamber and make the statements they did this morning, all I can say is they know absolutely nothing about the industry.

**Mr. AIKENS:** I rise to a point of order. Some doubt has been cast on my integrity and honesty by the hon. member for Fassifern. Any statement that I have made in this Chamber today about the graziers I am prepared to make off the public platform at any time and to challenge them to take action against me.

**Mr. MULLER:** I am not at all concerned with the hon. member's reply. He knows that if the statements are not untrue they are so highly exaggerated that there is very little difference between the exaggeration and untruth. It is most unfair for anyone to come into this Chamber and endeavour to paint an untrue picture of the situation today.

After all, who are the graziers of today? The big grazier referred to, the old pastoralist and the squatter, are things of the past, because beef today is produced very largely by a section of small graziers or cattle-owners who work very hard and do not have the benefit of the 40-hour week. The only way they are able to produce beef is by working long hours under difficult conditions. And, what is more, they have periods of drought to contend with. I have seen them pump and carry water; I have seen their wives and families working long hours for 12 months without a sixpence return.

It is all very well for the hon. member for Mundingburra to criticise those in the Townsville area for not selling cattle to the butchers. The fact remains that they had not the cattle to sell; you cannot sell a poor beast, because you would lose money if you bought steers at a price and sold them in poor condition, as you would not get as much for them as you paid for them. It cannot be done and I say that such unfair attacks as were made today should not be permitted in this Chamber. I have a small knowledge of this industry but I have sufficient personal experience to know that the statements made this morning are untrue. I run 50 head of dairy cows and I run a small grazing property with 500 good Hereford cattle. Anybody can see my returns and I say that over the past five years my return from the 50 head of dairy cows has been better than that from the 500 beef cattle. The men who work for me work hard and take every care of the cattle under their control.

Hon. members endeavour to convey the impression that those who grow beef cattle are exploiting the community—

**Mr. Aikens:** And so they are.

**Mr. MULLER:** The hon. member said so by innuendo this morning.

**Mr. Aikens:** There was no innuendo about it.

**Mr. MULLER:** And so did the hon. member for Herbert. The Secretary for Public Works, Housing and Local Government barged into this question and used the word "profit." In reply to him I say there are not many graziers in Queensland who could show the same net return as he is getting in his salary as a Minister of the Crown. There are not many who could show a return of £2,250. Some might show a gross return of £5,000, but when costs, land tax, rates and other charges upon the land are taken into consideration there is no big profit to show. Therefore I say it is unfair and wrong that any hon. member should be permitted to use this Chamber as a coward's castle and convey the impression that graziers are exploiting the community.

After all, we are living today under a system of price-fixation. Those charged with the duty of fixing prices investigate costs in every possible direction before determining prices. The difficulty at Townsville, as the hon. member for Mundingburra knows full well, is that the fixed price of beef is less than the price the butcher has to pay for the stock and he cannot go on losing money. A butcher told me only last Friday that with the present high costs it was impossible for him to keep going. You cannot expect a grazier under conditions of drought and so on to sell cattle for nothing.

Reference was made by the hon. member for Mundingburra to post-war shortages but you cannot say that the shortage of cattle is due to war-time conditions—at least not to any great extent. The shortage occurred because, over the last 10 or 15 years, there has been no great profit in the industry and consequently the number of cattle has been reduced. It is true that the price today is better than it has been but nevertheless, when you have regard for all costs, you have to be fair and admit that the men growing cattle today—and most of them are in a small way—are not making tremendous profits. They are living under hard conditions out in the bush and they and their wives and families put up with all kinds of inconveniences; there are no educational facilities for their children, as there are for those living on the coast. You cannot say that their conditions compare favourably with those of hon. members of this Parliament who are prepared to criticise them. I think it is very unfair and most unkind.

When the Minister introduced this Bill on Thursday last, he said, amongst other things, that the abattoirs were established by the acquisition of Swifts' meatworks in November, 1931. I think everyone will agree that at the time the works were acquired the abattoirs were to be established for the purpose of giving service. Service to whom? They were established to give service to the owners of the stock and the consumers of the meat. That has been done and I think everyone will realise that the abattoirs have played a great part in the progress of our State.

However, there are one or two things that were said about the establishment of those abattoirs that still apply today. Establishing works of that kind does enable the controlling board to provide the necessary facilities. The board can reduce the costs of treatment, provide facilities for export, establish an organisation for selling the product, and in other ways improve on the conditions that existed prior to the acquisition of those works.

Personally, I have no objection to extending that principle into some of the towns of the State, but I was very doubtful about a statement the Minister made the other day when he referred to the control of these abattoirs. He mentioned what the aims and objects of an abattoir really were, and amongst other things he said that one of the

functions of the Brisbane abattoir, besides treating the meat, was to purchase by-products.

Let us examine the position and see what has happened in regard to the purchase of those by-products. A moment ago I dealt with the position of the ordinary country butcher and pointed out that he was not selling meat at the profit some people thought he was making. Any country butcher will tell you that prior to the introduction of price-control—and I think the Minister knows this to be a fact—if he broke even on the sale of his meat, obtaining sufficient from sales to pay for the stock, he was able to run his place on the return he received from the by-products, such as hides, tallow, hair, bones and other things. What do we find is the position today? Since the establishment of the abattoir and because of other forms of control, the hides have been taken from those people during the past seven or eight years at a price about one-quarter of their actual value. As a matter of fact, the price of the hides is about 6d. per lb. here, while world parity is 29d. This is the point that we are objecting to: the handing over of this control to the Government is not carrying out—

**Mr. Collins:** What control is being handed over to the Government?

**Mr. MULLER:** I do not know whether the Minister has been following what I have said, or whether he is trying to read the paper and listen to me at the same time, but I will repeat what I have said for the Minister's benefit. During the last seven years hides have been taken from the control of the owners, whether you call "owner" the owner of the stock or the abattoir, at approximately 6d. per lb. and sold for 29d. per lb., and that difference between 6d. and 29d. per lb. is withheld from the growers.

**Mr. Collins:** That has nothing to do with this Bill.

**Mr. MULLER:** My word, it has. I am dealing now with the socialisation of this industry, and that is what it means very largely. The same thing applies to hides.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! This Bill has nothing to do with hides; it deals with the establishment of abattoirs.

**Mr. MULLER:** We are dealing with abattoirs, and abattoirs deal with the sale of stock. You have got to get rid of the by-products as well as the meat.

**Mr. Collins:** The owner of the hide still is the owner after the beast is dead.

**Mr. MULLER:** I do not think the Minister understood me. If he is prepared to examine this matter very closely, he must admit that if the owner of the stock sold to the abattoirs or butchers receives only 6d. a lb. for his hide that fact must be taken into calculation when he sells his beast, just as he takes into calculation the market price of 29d. for hides if he receives it. It is all reflected in the value of the

beast. The moment control is handed over to the Government or a socialised organisation you have to accept the least possible conditions. The growers of stock say: "If you are prepared to give us the real price for our hides we are prepared to sell you our beasts for less money." The hon. member for Mundingburra would find meat in Townsville, if the hide was not stolen from the owner. If the butcher is compelled to sell his by-products at considerably less than their values, he must sell his beast at a correspondingly higher price.

I have not seen the Bill but after listening to the speech of the Minister it appears that country abattoirs will be controlled by boards. He did not say what those boards were, likely to be.

**Mr. Collins:** Yes, he did.

**Mr. MULLER:** I have read the hon. gentleman's speech and I cannot see where he stated it. The hon. member for Aubigny in an interjection asked whether the local authorities would appoint the boards but the Minister did not say they would. I am inclined to think that they will be appointed in the same way as many of the boards created by the Government. I do not think that the primary producers will be allowed to control the ramifications of the board. If they were, one could not object. Even if the board was appointed by the local authority the Minister is not willing to allow it to do business in the ordinary way. If it were allowed to do so, there would be no real opposition to this Bill.

I want to give the hon. member for Herbert credit for being honest enough to tell us what is at the back of this legislation. I repeat that we offer no objection to the principle if meat could be treated at a reasonable cost, if a larger number of stock were submitted and they could be treated at a lesser cost than a lesser number, in addition to providing the necessary facilities for selling, treating and exporting cattle. The hon. member for Herbert said that cattle-growers had endeavoured to hold up the people to ransom.

**Mr. Aikens:** So they are.

**Mr. MULLER:** I ask the hon. member for Herbert and the hon. member for Mundingburra, who is interjecting: who held the people of Queensland up to ransom a few years ago during the 16 weeks meat strike? Not the cattle-growers. The people were denied the right to get decent meat. Thousands of cattle were offering, the railways were prepared to carry them, but the meat workers were on strike and consequently the people were held to ransom. The Minister cannot point to one single occasion on which growers have refused to sell their stock.

What do the Government propose to do with them? Supposing the growers held their cattle over from this year until next year

for the purpose of avoiding taxation, as it is said; they simply have to bring them into their returns next year.

**Mr. Aikens:** They turn them out to die on the billabongs.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order!

**Mr. MULLER:** I interjected last year when the hon. member who has just interjected said that graziers kill their sheep to avoid taxation, that there were plenty of that type of men in Goodna. I am inclined to think that the hon. member for Mundingburra should be in Goodna with them, for making that interjection. These producers are not profiteers. Everyone knows they are decent hard-working people. They are not the people who flock to the city and look to the Government for everything.

**Mr. Collins** interjected.

**Mr. MULLER:** The hon. gentleman might know something about poddy-dodgers but I do not. Where I come from we never worry about poddy-dodgers or clean-skins. We work for an honest living. I am not interested in those people who talk about pinching or branding the other fellow's cattle; I am putting up a case for decent honest hardworking people. It is no use anybody's telling me that people are withholding their stock from sale because they are afraid of taxation.

**Mr. Aikens:** Many graziers are selling meat on the black-market to butchers to escape taxation.

**Mr. MULLER:** I am not going to say that beef is not sold on the black-market. Under existing conditions nearly everything merchantable is sold on the black-market—meat, wire, boots or shoes. As the hon. member for Aubigny said, it would be a good thing if these controls were thrown overboard.

I am prepared to take my stand alongside the hon. member for Aubigny and throw these controls in the ocean tomorrow. There is not the slightest doubt that these stupid controls are largely the cause of our trouble. You have the trouble in connection with meat; not only is there a fixed price over the block but there is a fixed price for the grazier who supplies. When you can get so much more for your meat in places outside Queensland and Australia, can you wonder there is a black-market existing?

The hon. member for Buranda interjected during the time the hon. member for West Moreton was speaking, that you acquired the worker's labour. You do not acquire the worker's labour. If you did, that would be getting back to the slave days. The Industrial Court fixed the price of labour and laid down the conditions; and we have to abide by them. We do not encourage people, as some hon. members opposite do, to strike. The Commissioner of Prices is the tribunal which fixes the price of meat. If an owner elects to hold off until the next year he does not get anything by doing so. I throw those

unfair innuendos and suggestions back in the teeth of the people who make them. I tell you deliberately that they are not true.

I do not want the Minister to think I am opposed to the principle of establishing abattoirs; but let them be abattoirs established on a fair basis both in the interests of the producer and the consumer, and not a regimented organisation telling people they have to do this or that or sell at something less than cost. You know what will happen if you do that. If you lose money who is going to make it up? The taxpayer or the people who are supposed to be getting cheap meat. Anything you undertake has to be economically sound whether it is conducted by the Government, private enterprise or a co-operative concern—sound and run on an economic basis. It is not right to take something from the other fellow because he happens to be in the minority and cannot defend himself. We have a lot of members who come here and say, "I represent the workers." Did you ever hear such claptrap? It does not indicate a statesman-like outlook, and is merely used as an excuse for fleecing the other fellow and hunting him out.

If the cattle-grower or the producer of any commodity is hunted out of business and that makes him drift to the city—good heavens! the hon. members for Mundingburra and Herbert and the Secretary for Public Works will starve. This idea of profits is all rubbish. After all, I ask any hon. member, who is on a wage or a salary of £1,000 a year, whether if he is offered a salary of £1,200 a year he will refuse to take it? We had the Minister backing in his cart to collect the extra £750 a year.

**Mr. Power:** You are only a part-time member.

**Mr. MULLER:** I am only a part-time member? I have only a part-time salary. I am not complaining about it. I took the £250 a year, but I will not say that the cattle-grower is not entitled to a decent living. That is what the hon. gentleman is doing. The Minister took his £2,250 a year without even a bat of the eyelid, but denies some of the cattle graziers who live under much more difficult conditions even half that amount. In the arguments advanced this morning there was an endeavour to convey the impression that the cattle-growers are exploiting the community, but they were merely attacks and untruthful statements.

**Mr. DECKER (Sandgate) (12.52 p.m.):** There is no doubt the abattoir is a great institution in the metropolitan area, and I can understand the intention of the Government to extend such facilities to other areas. The Brisbane abattoir has been a wonderful impetus to the industry, in that it has carried out slaughterings for the export trade in a way which reflects the greatest credit on it and which will be to the everlasting advantage of the industry. In the methods adopted for freezing, cold storage, grading, the general handling of carcasses and that sort of thing it has done a wonderful job. But there are



two aspects of the abattoir in the metropolitan area. It is doing a wonderful service in uplifting the beef industry of the State, but it is of very doubtful advantage to the ordinary householder or beef consumer in the metropolitan area. I say without fear of contradiction that one could not buy a lower quality of meat in any other part of Australia than is dished out to the citizens of Brisbane. The price is high, but unless a person goes in for modern methods of cooking, such as the use of pressure cookers, the beef is almost unpalatable. That aspect of an abattoir must be looked into particularly, in the interests of the people. I feel that a number of people in the State of Queensland will be sorry when abattoir control is extended to additional areas, that is, from the citizens' point of view, but from the industry's point of view I admit it will be a marvellous thing. We must look deeply into the matter to see whether we cannot get to the root of the trouble of the quality of the meats supplied to our people, particularly the poorer classes of our community. We are supposed to consider all the ranks and classes in our community, and is it a fair thing that the housewife in Brisbane must have unloaded on her surplus meat that is scarcely fit for human consumption? I grant that it is killed under Government supervision, that it is expertly and hygienically handled at the abattoir, but the fact remains that in the cutting and grading the useless meat goes out to the consumers of our city and it is scarcely palatable to them. It seems remarkable that the grades for export must be so high in a time of so much shortage of quantity that the residue of meat that is not fit for export should be kept for use by our people. If this residue is good enough for us who live in a land of plenty, surely it could be arranged in some way that this residue or surplus could be sent overseas. If it is not suitable for overseas purposes, it should never be sold to the Brisbane public.

You have only to go out of Brisbane as far as Cleveland, where the butcher slaughters his own meat, to buy a beautiful joint cheaper than in Brisbane, and the quality is superb. You have only to go to Caboolture and you can still buy meat of wonderful quality at a lower price than in Brisbane. Why should we in the city suffer in that way? If the housewives of the city of Brisbane were allowed to express in this Chamber their opinion of the city meat supply—

**Mr. Nicklin:** They would be called to order for their remarks.

**Mr. DECKER:** There is no doubt about that, and I urge the Government to give serious consideration to forcing the Queensland Meat Industry Board to supply better meat to our people. Why should we pay such tremendous prices for such poor beef and mutton?

Progress reported.

The House adjourned at 12.58 p.m.