

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 23 AUGUST 1967

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

QUESTIONS**SEPTIC SYSTEM AND ENROLMENT,
CANNON HILL STATE SCHOOL**

Mr. Houston, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Education,—

(1) When is it proposed to replace the earth closets at the Cannon Hill State School with septic installations?

(2) What is the average attendance at the school?

Answers:—

(1) "It is not practicable to install a septic system at the Cannon Hill State School, as a satisfactory effluent disposal area is not available. However, information received from the Brisbane City Council indicates that a town sewerage scheme is expected to be available in this district in 1969."

(2) "829 pupils."

TOWNSVILLE MEDIUM SECURITY PRISON

Mr. Aikens, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Health,—

When is it anticipated that the medium security section of the Townsville Prison will be ready for occupancy, how many prisoners will be accommodated and how many staff employed?

Answer:—

"The Townsville Medium Security Prison when completed will provide accommodation for 192 prisoners. This accommodation will be in addition to that provided in the Maximum Security Prison for 268 prisoners. The medium security section is being constructed in units, each containing accommodation for 24 prisoners, and will be occupied progressively as each unit is completed. The first unit is now under construction by the Department of Works and it is anticipated that it will be completed by the end of 1967. It is also expected that construction of another unit will commence this financial year. Staff for the medium security section has not been determined. Most of these prisoners will work outside during the day and staff will be included in the general staff on a general roster."

COLLINSVILLE POWER STATION

Mr. Aikens, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Industrial Development,—

(1) Has any estimate of the additional cost of construction of the Collinsville Power Station, due to the present industrial dispute, been determined? If so, what is the amount involved?

(2) Will this additional cost be passed on to North Queensland electricity consumers in the form of increased charges and, if so, to what extent?

(3) What will be the estimated extra charge imposed on the average North Queensland householder as the result of extra costs brought about by the dispute?

Answer:—

(1 to 3) "It will be impracticable to determine with any degree of accuracy the probable additional cost of construction of the Collinsville Power Station due to the present industrial dispute until Stage 1 of the project has been commissioned, but it goes without saying that an escalation of costs must be the consequence of prolonged industrial unrest. However, whatever the increased cost may be, there is only one source from which such increased cost can ultimately be recovered and that is from electricity consumers. Needless to say what these additional charges would be could not be estimated at this stage."

STAMP DUTIES FROM SALES OF MOTOR VEHICLES

Mr. Bromley, pursuant to notice, asked The Treasurer,—

How much money has been received by the Stamp Duties Office since July 1, 1966, to the present date from sales of motor vehicles and what portion of this amount is the result of the amending legislation introduced in the last Session of Parliament relating to sales of such vehicles?

Answer:—

"No statistical record is kept of the total stamp duties which arise directly or indirectly from the sale or transfer of motor vehicles. \$1,203,432 was collected between January 3, 1967, and July 31, 1967, under the special stamp duty imposed by the Amending Act of 1966."

PARTICIPATION OF CROWN EMPLOYEES IN PUBLIC DISCUSSIONS ON DEPARTMENTAL MATTERS

Mr. Bromley, pursuant to notice, asked The Premier,—

(1) With regard to the *Education Office Gazette* No. 7, July, 1967, under the heading, "Public Discussion of Official Duties", wherein it is stated teachers are

advised that Cabinet, by decision of May 2, 1967, decided—"That any Crown employee, invited to take part in any television, radio, or similar public discussion on any matter impinging on his official duties, must secure the approval of his Minister before accepting such invitation," when, if at all, was this decision approved by Executive Council and an Order in Council or Regulation relating to this decision printed?

(2) If no Executive Council approval was given to this Cabinet decision, since when has the Government decided that Cabinet decisions become law and therefore legally binding on members of the community?

(3) Are Cabinet decisions normally released for publication?

(4) What other sections of Crown employees are affected by this decision?

Answer:—

(1 to 4) "The general instruction embodied in the Cabinet decision of May 2, 1967, relating to participation by Crown employees in public discussions is mainly related to the provisions of *"The Public Service Acts, 1922 to 1965,"* and, in particular, Regulation 36 thereunder. These provisions have been re-emphasised from time to time by various Governments and this is all that happened on May 2 last. I must point out to the Honourable Member that the decision was an administrative one coming properly within the executive responsibility of Cabinet and consequently Executive Council approval was neither necessary nor was it sought."

FINANCIAL AID TO DESERTED WIVES

Mr. Ramsden, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Labour and Tourism,—

(1) Has he seen a report from Canberra in *The Courier-Mail* of August 15, 1967, in which it was stated that it is intended that the Commonwealth review the present situation involving deserted wives and families?

(2) Is this proposal in any way connected with the announcement by the Commonwealth Treasurer in presenting the Budget that it was intended to confer with the States to achieve a basis by which the Commonwealth would recoup the States fifty per centum of their expenditure in assisting deserted wives? If so, is this not a change in the Commonwealth's attitude?

Answers:—

(1) "Yes."

(2) "Queensland with other States has been pressing strongly over a long period to abolish the embargo placed by the Commonwealth Social Services Act which

prevents a deserted wife and the wife of a prisoner receiving social service benefits for a period of six months, and it has been stressed that deserted wives in all States, other than Victoria, should be treated in the same manner by the Commonwealth as the Commonwealth Government is treating those who live in Victoria. The Commonwealth up to the present announcement have been unyielding in their attitude towards this problem. I am sure all Honourable Members are pleased to see that the Commonwealth apparently is now prepared to accept at least some of the responsibility to alleviate the distressing circumstances where they occur, in which many of these families are placed when the husband, who is also the father of children in many cases, deserts or goes to prison. The Honourable the Premier has received a letter from the Right Honourable the Prime Minister referring to the proposal announced by the Commonwealth Treasurer, and in which it is suggested a conference at officer level should be held to examine, in detail, the proposal. It is intended that Queensland will be represented at this officers' conference by the Under Secretary of my Department, Mr. Muhl, and the Director of the Department of Children Services, Mr. Clark. No date has yet been fixed for this meeting. The Director-General of the Commonwealth Department of Social Services, in a letter to the Under Secretary dated August 21, 1967, has stated that, and I quote, "In the event of mutually acceptable arrangements being worked out in such discussions, the Commonwealth has offered to meet half the cost of assistance provided by the States in this field."

PROPOSED CLOSURE OF ADAVALE HOSPITAL

Mr. Rae, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Health,—

(1) Has he received a petition from residents of Adavale relating to the proposed closure of the Adavale town hospital?

(2) If this closure is contemplated, and as this service is most valuable to the residents of Adavale, will he stay any further action until such time as a full and complete investigation into all aspects surrounding the intolerable situation, which would be created by such a closure, is made?

Answers:—

(1) "Yes, the petition was presented by the deputation received by me earlier this month."

(2) "I arranged for the matters submitted by the deputation to be referred to the Quilpie Hospitals Board, which administers the Adavale Hospital, for its comments. I will read the reply received

from the Board. 'With reference to your request for the comments of the Quilpie Hospitals Board in the matter of the petition, presented to the Honourable the Minister by a deputation of Adavale and district residents, the following is advised: The Quilpie Hospitals Board considers that the proposed weekly clinic will provide a more efficient medical service to the Adavale residents than the present system of a fortnightly visit. According to the following figures, it is apparent that the demand for treatment has diminished during the last five years, and it is the considered opinion of the Board that the present figures do not warrant the retention of a full-time matron:—

	Outpatients' Visits	Inpatients
1961-62 ..	4·625	·24
1962-63 ..	4·65	·1
1963-64 ..	3·66	·29
1964-65 ..	3·44	·11
1965-66 ..	3·12	·08
1966-67 ..	2·56	·05

It is stated by the petitioners that Adavale is completely isolated during floods and wet weather; however, these conditions occur but rarely in the area where the annual rainfall is less than twelve inches, and during wet weather a patient may be transported by four-wheel drive vehicles to a place where he may be transferred to a fully-equipped ambulance and thence to the Quilpie Hospital. Under normal weather conditions no part of the area is without the service of an ambulance, and in a case of emergency the medical superintendent from Quilpie will travel in the ambulance to render immediate attention. The Board trusts that the foregoing explanations will assist the Department in its deliberations on this matter.' The Honourable Member will, I am sure, realise that the Department must give some weight to the clear and unequivocal views of the local board. The representations made by the deputation members will, nevertheless, be fully considered in conjunction with these recent advices. I feel bound to express surprise, however, that the deputation, immediately upon leaving my office, should have made an ex parte and distorted Press statement. I further regret the fact that the Honourable Member, having accepted my suggestion to raise the matter by way of Question, so that the facts could be available to his constituents, should, before receiving my reply, have seen fit to make it the subject of an ill-informed polemic in this House."

OVERSEAS RECRUITMENT OF TEACHERS

Mr. Hanlon, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Education,—

(1) In view of the exodus of significant numbers of Queensland teachers overseas, has his Department taken any specific steps

to reverse this flow or at least counter it by a recruitment campaign for teachers for this State from overseas?

(2) Has the Director of Secondary Education been given any brief to examine the possibility of such recruitment during his overseas visit and/or did he, himself, do so on his recent visit?

(3) Is such recruitment feasible under present conditions of employment of teachers in this State and, if not, does not this of itself suggest an urgent need for improved conditions here?

Answers:—

(1) "No. In some other States where such steps have been taken the results have not been encouraging."

(2) "No."

(3) "At a time when there is a shortage of teachers in all States and, indeed, in all English speaking countries, overseas recruitment campaigns would need to offer extremely high salary inducements to attract significant numbers of satisfactory overseas applicants. This problem is not peculiar to Queensland. New South Wales and Victoria have also recently lost considerable numbers of teachers to Canada."

POLICE REPORTS ON TEACHERS

Mr. Hanlon, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Education,—

(1) How many, if any, of the teachers in the employ of the Education Department are the subject of reports to him or his Department from the Special Branch of the Police Force?

(2) Has he or his Department sought or received directly or indirectly from Commonwealth Security any reports on teachers in the employ of the Education Department?

(3) In view of apparent concern among teachers, perhaps accentuated by the Cabinet directive on public comment by Crown employees, that teachers active in their Union or vocal on teaching conditions are being "dossiered" by the Special Branch or Security, will he give an unequivocal assurance that such sources are not called upon by him or his Department in relation to such matters?

Answers:—

(1) "In regard to the operation of the Special Branch this Government, since taking office in 1957, has not departed from the practices established by the previous Labour Government during its long period of office."

(2) "No."

(3) "Members of the teaching profession or of any other particular group, are not singled out for special attention as members of such groups."

EXTENSION OF ACTIVITIES OF INDUSTRIAL ENGINEERING LTD. TO QUEENSLAND

Mr. W. D. Hewitt, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Industrial Development,—

Has his attention been drawn to a statement in *The Australian* of August 19 regarding certain expansion plans of Industrial Engineering Ltd. of Melbourne and their stated intention to explore possibilities in Queensland? If so, what steps are being taken to acquaint the company of the undoubted opportunities which exist for capital investment and new industry in this State?

Answer:—

"Negotiations between Industrial Engineering Ltd. and the Department of Industrial Development have been proceeding for some time. The Company has been assured that the Queensland Government would welcome an extension of its activities in this State. Indeed, an area of twenty-five acres of land has been provisionally reserved on one of the Department's Industrial Estates in anticipation of the Company's requirements. I need hardly add the negotiations with the Company to which I have already referred will be actively and energetically pursued."

HEPATITIS AND BIRTHS OF MONGOL CHILDREN

Mr. W. D. Hewitt, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Health,—

(1) Did he see a recent statement by Dr. Alan Stoller, Director of the Victorian Mental Health Institute, suggesting a link between hepatitis and the increase in births of mongol children?

(2) Has there been a proportionate increase in the birth of mongol children in this State which could suggest such a link?

(3) Will this matter be kept under review as further information becomes available?

Answers:—

(1) "The reports of epidemiological surveys done by Dr. Alan Stoller suggesting a link between hepatitis and the births of mongol children have been drawn to my attention."

(2 and 3) "My advices are—(a) Dr. Stoller's studies are concerned with defined sections of the community, and there has been no confirmatory evidence

of this postulated relationship from any other workers. The incidence of mongolism is 1 in 700 births and there is no evidence of increase in this rate. (b) The Department of Health is keeping under review this scientific hypothesis and any valid conclusions will be considered promptly. There is certainly no evidence at present that a pregnant woman who contracts hepatitis is at any increased risk of giving birth to a mongol child."

BOOKLET "KEEPING FIT"

Mr. W. D. Hewitt, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Health,—

Will he arrange for the National Fitness booklet, *Keeping Fit*, to be made available to all Honourable Members?

Answer:—

"The National Fitness booklet, *Keeping Fit*, will be made available to any Honourable Member on application to my office."

INQUIRY INTO EDUCATION SYSTEM

Mr. Donald, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Education,—

Will he favourably consider the public request of Mr. Gavin Semple, President of the Queensland Teachers' Union, to have an open inquiry into the shortcomings of the Queensland education system?

Answer:—

"I do not consider an enquiry into the alleged shortcomings of the Queensland education system is warranted. From my overseas observations and discussions I am convinced that the quality of our teachers and the basic quality of education in Queensland are, on the average, equal to those of any country I visited. As education overseas is generally controlled by local School Boards, there is a greater variety of standards than is the case in Queensland. I am aware that, as in most other countries, additional teachers, ancillary staff, classrooms and equipment will effect further improvement. Every effort has been made and will continue to be made, within the State's capacity, to provide the additional funds required for these purposes."

COST OF REPAIRS TO DIESEL ELECTRIC LOCOMOTIVES

Mr. Donald, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Transport,—

(1) What has been the cost of repairs to diesel locomotives since they commenced operating in the railway service of Queensland until the end of the 1966-67 financial year?

(2) Have any repairs to these locomotives been necessary since then? If so, what has been the cost?

(3) What is the maintenance cost per train mile of (a) the diesel locomotive and (b) the steam locomotive?

Answers:—

(1) "\$16,247,471 since 1953."

(2) "Repairs to Diesel Electric Locomotives have been necessary since the end of the 1966-67 financial year and the cost incurred is being compiled and I will advise the Honourable Member."

(3) "The maintenance cost per train mile is (a) diesel electric locomotives 22.54 cents and (b) steam locomotives 93.09 cents."

GUARANTEED LOANS TO PRIMARY INDUSTRY BOARDS

Mr. Murray, pursuant to notice, asked The Treasurer,—

What is the total amount on loan by the Government or Government instrumentalities and the total amount of loans from any sources guaranteed by the Government to marketing, abattoir or any other board handling or processing the products of primary industry?

Answer:—

"The information is being obtained, and when it is available I will see that it is passed on to the Honourable Member."

EYE CONSULTANT, TOWNSVILLE GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Davies for **Mr. Tucker**, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Health,—

(1) Is the eye consultant to the Townsville General Hospital on or about to proceed on annual leave, and are no further appointments being booked for the period of his absence? If so, why has a relieving consultant not been appointed?

(2) What is the present waiting time before eye patients are able to obtain an appointment with the consultant?

Answers:—

(1) "The Secretary, Townsville Hospitals Board, has advised that the Board has approved the application by the part-time eye consultant for annual recreation leave from November 1 to November 30 next. At the time of granting this application the Board had accepted an application from an eye specialist in Tasmania for appointment to the additional approved part-time position. If this doctor does not take up his appointment before November 1 and a

relieving specialist is not available the Board will follow its usual practice when no such specialist is available, that is, the simple procedures will be performed by the Medical Superintendent and any eye condition of an urgent nature will be referred to either Cairns or Brisbane. Non-urgent cases will be deferred until the eye specialist resumes duty. Ordinary refractions will continue to be carried out by the local optometrical contractor to the Board."

(2) "The Secretary advised that urgent cases are dealt with immediately and non-urgent cases are given an appointment, the present waiting time for which is five months. In order to relieve the position at Townsville the Board was given approval in May 1965 to appoint an additional consultant. Its efforts since that date to make an appointment did not meet with any success until the recent application previously mentioned was received."

SERVICES OF CRAIG MOSTYN & CO. PTY.
LTD. AS AGENT FOR FISH BOARD

Mr. Houghton, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Labour and Tourism,—

(1) Is the firm, Craig Mostyn, acting as agent for the Fish Board in or out of Queensland?

(2) If so, (a) what was the quantity of fish, prawns, etc., handled by this firm for the Fish Board for the three years ended June 30 last and (b) what commission or handling charges were paid by the Board over this period for the rendering of such services?

Answers:—

(1) "No. However Craig Mostyn & Co. Pty. Ltd. buy considerable quantities of sea food from the Fish Board."

(2) "See Answer to (1)."

ADVERTISEMENTS FOR SALE OF LAND ON
SMALL DEPOSITS

Mr. Aikens, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Justice,—

(1) Has his attention been drawn to advertisements currently appearing in *The Townsville Daily Bulletin* wherein certain real estate agents are offering allotments of land for sale and claiming that no money is required other than the payment of a small initial deposit?

(2) If so, is he aware that any person answering such advertisement, after paying the initial deposit to the real estate agent, is then sidetracked to a hire-purchase company which demands substantial collateral and exorbitant interest rates before financing the purchase of the desired allotment?

(3) Is this system lawful? If not, will he stop this practice which, in effect, amounts to collusion between estate agents and hire-purchase companies to ensnare and fleece the people?

Answers:—

(1) "Since notice of this Question was given by the Honourable Member, I have sighted the advertisement to which his Question relates."

(2) "The details of any transactions resulting from this advertisement are unknown to me."

(3) Without having full knowledge of these transactions I am unable to answer the Honourable Member's query. I am having enquiries made and as soon as sufficient details relating to the matter become available to me, the Honourable Member will be informed."

MAIN ROADS EXPENDITURE IN PROSER-
PINE, PIONEER, MIRANI AND SARINA
SHIRES

Mr. Graham, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Mines,—

What was the Main Roads expenditure for the years 1965-66 and 1966-67 in the following shires, (a) Proserpine, (b) Pioneer, (c) Mirani and (d) Sarina?

Answer:—

"The expenditures during 1965-66 and 1966-67 on roads declared under "The Main Roads Acts" in the Local Authority areas listed were:—

	1965-66	1966-67
	\$	\$
Proserpine Shire	332,000	461,719
Pioneer Shire ..	839,990	912,190
Mirani Shire ..	283,738	388,102
Sarina Shire ..	276,709	388,607
Totals ..	\$1,732,437	\$2,150,618"

FISH BOARD WHARF IN PIONEER RIVER,
MACKAY

Mr. Graham, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Mines,—

(1) Has his attention been drawn to a statement in the *Mackay Daily Mercury* of August 18, attributed to Mr. R. Eastment, a member of the Mackay Chamber of Commerce, on the lack of facilities at the fishermen's wharf in the Pioneer River, Mackay, that he had been told that, as Minister for Mines and Main Roads, Mr. Camm had an annual allotment of \$360,000 to be used for facilities for wharves and boats generally?

(2) If so, does he intend to utilise some of this amount to provide the facilities that are required?

(3) If not, will he use his best endeavours to have finance provided from other funds to meet the needs of those engaged in the fishing industry in Mackay?

Answer:—

(1 to 3) "Under section 5 (3) of "The Commonwealth Aid Roads Act of 1964," an amount not exceeding two million dollars may be spent by the States as a whole each year on the construction of works that are not roads but are directly connected with transport by road or water. Each State's share of such expenditure is limited to the proportion that its receipts under the Act during the year bear to the total distribution amongst the States for that year. Queensland's proportion of the total distribution is slightly in excess of 18 per cent., so that its annual expenditure on works connected with transport by road or water, other than roadworks, would at present be limited to a little more than \$360,000 (18 per cent. of \$2 million). The maximum permissible amount under section 5 (3) is paid each year to the credit of the Commonwealth Aid, Marine Works, Fund, which is administered by the Honourable the Treasurer. The projects on which the money is utilised are determined by the Treasurer upon the recommendations of the Harbours and Marine Department. During the ten years from 1947 to 1957, a total amount of \$5,184 was expended from the Commonwealth Aid, Marine Works, Fund in the Mackay-Proserpine area. During the ten years from 1957 to 1967, the expenditure from the Fund in the same area amounted to \$395,174. The latter figure includes an expenditure of \$29,152 on the Fish Board wharf in the Pioneer River at Mackay. As I personally spend a good deal of my time in Mackay receiving deputations, naturally I have become acquainted with the position at the Fish Board wharf, and I have inspected the facility to ascertain the requirements of the fishermen. The boat owners of the Mackay district can be assured that I will, as always, use my best endeavours to have the facility extended. I have already submitted the proposal to the Honourable the Treasurer."

ADDITIONAL BRIDGE OVER PIONEER RIVER, MACKAY

Mr. Graham, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Mines,—

With reference to his Answer to my Question on August 22 on the erection of another bridge across the Pioneer River,—

(1) From whom and when was the approach made?

(2) Does he consider that the need for another bridge is essential within the immediate future?

Answers:—

(1) "As I am vitally interested in the welfare of the Mackay district and future development in that area, I have discussed this matter with the representatives of many organisations in the district, including the Mackay Hospitals Board, the Mackay City Council, the Pioneer Shire Council, the Development Bureau, the Chamber of Commerce, and responsible citizens of North Mackay and representations have been made to me by the Chamber of Commerce, political parties in the area, including the A.L.P. and the Country Party, and the Trades and Labour Council."

(2) "It is not considered that funds can be made available for this work in the immediate future."

ON-THE-SPOT TRAFFIC FINES

Mr. Sherrington, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Education,—

(1) How many motorists have been fined annually for traffic offences under the On-the-Spot system since its inception?

(2) What is the amount of revenue received annually by the Government as a result of the system?

(3) What is the number of road traffic accidents for each of the corresponding years and how many were (a) fatal and (b) non-fatal?

Answers:—

(1) "It is not possible to give the number of motorists who have been issued with traffic offence notices since the inception of the Traffic Offence Notice System on August 16, 1965, for many motorists in this period have been the recipients of more than one such notice. For the period August 16, 1965, to June 30, 1966, a total of 93,890 traffic offence notices were issued in Queensland, and for the period July 1, 1966, to June 30, 1967, a total of 146,911 traffic offence notices were issued in Queensland."

(2) "Traffic offence notices to the value of \$791,626 were paid in Queensland during the period August 16, 1965, to June 30, 1966, and traffic offence notices to the value of \$1,185,808 were paid in Queensland during the period July 1, 1966, to June 30, 1967."

(3) "As the information sought does not come within defined statistical periods, this Answer involves a considerable amount of research. I will provide this information to the Honourable Member as soon as it is available."

FLOODING OF IPSWICH ROAD, OXLEY

Mr. Sherrington, pursuant to notice, asked
The Minister for Mines,—

As it was made manifestly evident during the recent flooding that work carried out in connection with the widening of Ipswich Road, Oxley, between Oxley Creek and the junction of Blunder Road was totally inadequate, what steps have been taken to rectify the position?

Answer:—

“During the recent flooding the section of road between Oxley Creek and Blunder Road intersection with Ipswich Road became flooded. From the Department’s records this would have been about an average of once in 15 years flood, which was the flooding for which the road was designed. Owing to the fact that the road was not quite completed it suffered some flood damage, which was to be expected, but this has now been rectified.”

KANGAROO PRESERVATION RESERVE

Mr. Sherrington, pursuant to notice, asked
The Minister for Lands,—

In connection with his recent Press statement regarding the setting aside of a kangaroo reserve, what steps have been taken for the early proclamation of such an area?

Answer:—

“The preservation of as much as possible of the native fauna and flora of the State is of very great interest to me. To this end an area of about 63,300 acres in Area I of the Land Development (Fitzroy Basin) Scheme will shortly be set aside as a Reserve for Scientific Purposes (Fauna and Flora Conservation) under the control of the Minister for Primary Industries as trustee. This area contains quite a large area of scrub country as well as forest and parts are of scenic value. The setting apart of the area will be of great benefit in the preservation of the native fauna and flora of the State including in the former, the kangaroo population. As mentioned previously, I am greatly interested in a project such as this and it is my intention to have the feasibility of the creation of a further reserve in Area III of the Brigalow Scheme examined before plans for the opening of the new blocks in that area are finalised. I would further mention that with a view to conserving the species, the necessity for continuous and careful assessment of kangaroo populations in the State is recognised by the Government and zoologists of the Department of Primary Industries are engaged on this task.”

SCIENCE EQUIPMENT FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Mr. P. Wood, pursuant to notice, asked
The Minister for Education,—

(1) How many sets of science equipment for primary schools intended for use with the new science syllabus which came into effect at the beginning of this year and for which head teachers were invited to apply by a notice in the *Education Office Gazette* of August, 1966, have been issued?

(2) Is there a delay in issuing this science equipment?

(3) If so, when is it expected that all schools which have applied for the equipment will receive it?

Answers:—

(1) “426.”

(2 and 3) “No. Issues are continuing. It is expected that all schools will receive their sets by September 30, 1967.”

SITE FOR TEACHERS’ COLLEGE,
TOOWOOMBA

Mr. P. Wood, pursuant to notice, asked
The Minister for Education,—

What is the present position concerning a site for a teachers’ college in Toowoomba?

Answer:—

“Portion of the site of the Darling Downs Institute of Technology has been reserved for the purpose of a teachers’ college in Toowoomba.”

COAL PURCHASES BY RAILWAY
DEPARTMENT

Mr. P. Wood, pursuant to notice, asked
The Minister for Transport,—

(1) What tonnages of coal were purchased by the Railway Department in 1965-66 and 1966-67?

(2) What was the price paid for the coal in those years?

Answers:—

(1) “Year	Tonnage
1965-66	.. 245,185
1966-67	.. 162,025”
(2) “Year	Cost
	\$
1965-66	.. 1,570,588
1966-67	.. 865,416”

INCREASED RENTALS, HOUSING COMMISSION PROJECT, MT. GRAVATT EAST

Mr. Newton, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Works,—

As the tenants of Queensland Housing Commission rental homes at the Mt. Gravatt East project have had their rent increased because of an increase in rates, why are there differences in the increases, ranging from 30 cents to 85 cents?

Answer:—

"Rentals in the Mt. Gravatt area bounded by Creek and Cavendish Roads were increased on account of rate increases levied by the Brisbane City Council for 1967-68. The range was from 20 to 25 cents per week for unsewered houses and from 35 to 40 cents per week for sewerer houses. The variations arise from differing land valuations. One sewerer house was increased by an additional 10 cents to adjust a previous short charge. As the Honourable Member is aware sewerage is being progressively connected throughout this area. The increases in rental based on amortisation of such capital costs and the change to rating on a sewerer basis range from 50 to 75 cents per week."

TRAFFIC LIGHTS, OLD CLEVELAND ROAD AND CREEK ROAD INTERSECTION

Mr. Newton, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Mines,—

When is the installation of the traffic lights at the intersection of Old Cleveland Road and Creek Road expected to be completed and what is the date on which they will commence operation?

Answer:—

"Work has been held up awaiting supply of certain technical materials, delivery of which will be completed by August 25. It is anticipated that the remainder of the installation work will take 2½ to 3 weeks. The signals will commence operation immediately on completion of installation."

ANNUAL RENTALS, SAND-MINING LEASES

Mr. Newton, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Mines,—

What is the annual rental per acre received by his Department on the following mineral sand mining leases (a) Consolidated Rutile Company, Stradbroke Island, (b) The Tazi Company, Stradbroke Island, (c) Currumbin Minerals Pty. Ltd., Gold Coast area, (d) Mineral Deposits Pty. Ltd., Gold Coast area and (e) Associated Minerals Pty. Ltd., Gold Coast area?

Answer:—

"No leases are held on Stradbroke Island by Consolidated Rutile Limited, but some are held by Stradbroke Rutile Pty. Ltd., a related company. Rental on mineral leases and dredging leases held by the companies listed is one dollar per acre per annum as prescribed by legislation. However, in the cases of (c), (d) and (e), dredging claims also are held. Rental thereon is 25 cents per acre per annum, also prescribed by legislation. This legislation is available for perusal in the Parliamentary Library."

SEALING, BOONAROO ROAD

Mr. Davies, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Mines,—

When will the road to Boonaroo, Maryborough's nearest seaside resort and fishing centre, be sealed from the Tuan Forestry turn-off to Boonaroo?

Answer:—

"Based on priorities from Burrum Shire Council it is not anticipated that bitumen sealing will be complete before 1970."

ROAD SAFETY COUNCIL FLOAT FOR LABOUR DAY PROCESSIONS, MARYBOROUGH

Mr. Davies, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Transport,—

Why did he refuse permission for the Queensland Road Safety Council to prepare a float for the Maryborough Labour Day Celebration Committee's Procession on May Day, 1966, and on May Day, 1967, in order to further extend their campaign for greater safety on roads?

Answer:—

"The entry of floats by the Queensland Road Safety Council in processions is governed by the availability of funds for the purpose, the limit to the number of functions in which the Council can participate and the availability of its limited trained staff. As a matter of policy floats available are entered in processions of a national celebration or festivals of special significance. Unfortunately it is not possible to accept all the invitations which the Road Safety Council receives."

CONTROL OF PURCHASE OF DANGEROUS DRUGS

Mr. Bromley, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Health,—

With reference to the recent tragedy which happened in Sydney affecting a young Brisbane couple, what precautions are in evidence in Queensland to prevent people from similarly and obviously so

easily obtaining dangerous drugs for the same reason as these were apparently purchased?

Answer:—

"Without entering into a discussion on the speculations of the Honourable Member as far as this tragic affair is concerned, I would draw his attention to recent amendments to legislation concerning control of drugs in this State. In December, 1966, the Health Acts were amended to give to the Police the power to detain any persons found in unauthorised possession of dangerous and declared drugs. By Order in Council, barbiturates as well as amphetamines and hallucinogenic drugs have been brought under this control. In amendments to the Poisons Regulations to be gazetted shortly all persons dealing with drugs must account for the obtaining and disposal of such drugs. These steps will greatly strengthen the control of these drugs in Queensland."

PRODUCTION AND SALE OF TOBACCO LEAF

Mr. Wallis-Smith, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Primary Industries,—

What are the details of the 1966-67 tobacco crop to date in (a) North Queensland and (b) South Queensland, indicating (i) leaf cleared by auction and its average price, (ii) leaf cleared by negotiation and its average price, and (iii) leaf taken into hold and its average assessed price?

Answer:—

"Separate details of quantities and average prices of tobacco leaf in each of the six categories listed in the Question are not officially collated. The overall results of tobacco leaf sales to date during 1967 are as follows:—

	North Queensland	South Queensland
	Short Tons	Short Tons
Quota Leaf Offered ..	5,381.5	1,148.4
Quota Leaf Sold ..	5,283.2	1,147.3
Quota Leaf Arbitrated as "In Quota" but not yet sold ..	98.3	1.1
Average Price per lb. Realised for Quota Leaf Sold ..	112.2 cents	114.0 cents "

HOSTEL FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN, NORMANTON

Mr. Wallis-Smith, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Education,—

(1) Further to his Answer to my Question on September 6, 1966, relative to a hostel for school children at Normanton, when will the hostel be completed?

(2) Will he establish a secondary department at Normanton on the completion of the hostel in order to cope with the increased eighth grade enrolment?

Answers:—

(1) "This is a matter for the Carpentaria Shire Council. The latest information received is that the Treasury has approved the reversion of debenture loan of \$10,000 and subsidy of \$10,000 approved previously in 1966-67. No date can be given for the completion of the project."

(2) "Should, in future years, the number of potential secondary students warrant it, consideration will be given to the establishment of a secondary department, but recent estimates would not indicate that the establishment of such a department could be justified at present."

WATER SUPPLIES FOR ABORIGINES AT KOAH, OAK FOREST, KOWROWA AND MANTAKA

Mr. Wallis-Smith, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Education,—

(1) Has he received any satisfactory proposals to ensure an adequate water supply for Aborigines living at Koah, Oak Forest, Kowrowa and Mantaka? If so, when is it intended that water will be provided for them?

(2) If there have been no proposals to date, will he take urgent measures to ensure that adequate water is available at their homes?

Answers:—

(1) "No."

(2) "The Honourable Member is referred to my reply of September 7, 1966, when I conveyed the information that the persons who would benefit from any proposed water supply are not assisted Aborigines within the meaning of *"The Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders' Affairs Act of 1965"*. The residential areas are leasehold and rateable properties within the Mareeba Shire Council area, and while the Department is interested in encouraging the development of these people, the provision of a water supply is a matter for consideration by the Shire Council. The Honourable Member is advised to pursue his representations to the responsible local authority."

POTATO PRODUCTION, BRISBANE SPECIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Graham for **Mr. Harris**, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Health,—

(1) Were any crops of potatoes grown at the Brisbane Special Hospital during the year 1966-67? If so, what was the production for the period?

(2) In what manner is the production disposed of and who is responsible for its disposal?

(3) In the event of a surplus, what Government or Church institutions are supplied?

Answers:—

(1) "161 tons 13 cwt. 62 lbs. of potatoes were produced at the Brisbane Special Hospital during the financial year 1966-67."

(2) "The Brisbane Special Hospital takes all the potatoes it requires. The administration of the Brisbane Special Hospital is authorised to offer any surplus to the Ipswich and Toowoomba Special Hospitals, 'Eventide', Sandgate, and the Royal Brisbane and Princess Alexandra hospitals, free of charge. In 1966-67, the surplus distributed was as follows:— Ipswich Special Hospital, 3 tons 5 cwt.; Toowoomba Special Hospital, 2 tons 1 cwt. 28 lbs.; 'Eventide', Sandgate, 8 tons 12 cwt. 92 lbs.; Royal Brisbane Hospital, 25 tons 4 cwt. 100 lbs.; Princess Alexandra Hospital, 13 tons 10 cwt. 94 lbs."

(3) See Answer to Question (2)."

ETNA CREEK PRISON FARM

Mr. Davies for **Mr. Thackeray**, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Health,—

(1) How many people will be employed at the Etna Creek prison farm and what will be their classifications?

(2) Will applications for these positions be called for? If so, in what manner and when?

Answers:—

(1) "The first stage of the new prison at Rockhampton, which will contain accommodation for 48 prisoners, is nearing completion and it is anticipated that the first prisoners will be lodged there in January, 1968. It is anticipated that a staff of eight prison officers, one of whom will be a senior officer and another of less senior rank, will be employed. As the prison develops and the population increases so will there be increases both in number and classifications in staff. The ultimate is expected to be a superintendent, deputy superintendent, chief prison officers, senior prison officers, first class officers and ordinary officers, with trade instructors and farm officers. However, this will be a progressive measure in the light of requirements."

(2) "Applications for these positions will be called from within the service, and it is anticipated that applications for ordinary prison officers will be called locally in the Rockhampton district. These officers, if selected, will be required to undergo an 'in-service' training course in the metropolitan area for a short

period, to familiarise them with prison procedure. In fact, a number of persons in the Rockhampton district have already applied for consideration for appointment, and they have been informed that when the prison is ready for occupation they will be further advised and considered."

ADDITIONAL HOSPITAL ACCOMMODATION, BURKETOWN

Mr. Inch, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Health,—

Are plans in hand for the construction of additional hospital accommodation at Burketown? If so, when is it likely that work on the project will commence?

Answer:—

"The Department of Works was requested to plan a new hospital building at Burketown. Before planning could be commenced it was necessary to obtain site information and this has just recently been received by it from its district officer. The sketch plans are now in course of preparation and are expected to be completed within the next few weeks. At this stage it is not possible to state the probable date of the commencement of construction."

INSPECTION OF DERAILED RAILWAY WAGONS AND CARRIAGES

Mr. Davies for **Mr. R. Jones**, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Transport,—

(1) Is every wagon and passenger carriage, following individual or collective derailments, subject to workshop inspection and are wheel-units trammelled?

(2) Were any of the vehicles involved in the recent spate of derailments on the Queensland Railways system previously derailed and not subject to workshop inspection and wheel-unit trammelling?

(3) Are employees other than qualified breakdown gangs engaged to re-rail wagons or cars?

(4) If so, are vehicles re-railed under these circumstances returned to traffic without workshop inspection and wheel trammelling?

(5) If so, when and by whom were these safety procedures suspended?

(6) In view of the growing public concern over the number of recent derailments, will he assure the House that the travelling public and train crews will not become expendable due to any such economy measures being undertaken within the Department?

Answers:—

- (1) "This is the standard procedure."
- (2) "No vehicle involved in a derailment is permitted to continue in service without an inspection and necessary repairs or attention having been given."
- (3) "Derailments do occur which do not require the attendance of the breakdown gang."
- (4) "See Answer to (2)."
- (5) "No safety procedures have been suspended."
- (6) "The Commissioner informs me that there has been and will be no relaxation of safety precautions within the Railway Department."

SMALL-BOAT HARBOUR, CAIRNS

Mr. Davies for Mr. R. Jones, pursuant to notice, asked The Treasurer,—

- (1) How many sites for the establishment of a small-boat harbour at Cairns have been inspected and what are their locations?
- (2) What tests have been carried out?
- (3) Have all reports, including those of local and harbour board authorities and consulting engineers, been received and assessed?
- (4) If so, when is it anticipated that a final decision will be made on the proposal?

Answers:—

- (1) "Three. Yorkey's Knob, Cairns Esplanade and Smith's Creek."
- (2) "Soil, pile penetration and current flow tests were carried out where necessary."
- (3) "Yes."
- (4) "Shortly."

EDGE HILL STATE SCHOOL, CAIRNS

Mr. Davies for Mr. R. Jones, pursuant to notice, asked The Minister for Education,—

- (1) What is the present enrolment at the Edge Hill State School, Cairns?
- (2) How many classrooms and temporary classrooms are contained in the school?
- (3) How many teachers have been appointed to it and what is the number of grades and what are the class sizes?
- (4) Does this compare with the staffing scale and teacher-pupil ratio considered efficient?
- (5) Are extra teacher appointments anticipated in order to alleviate the problem and is remodelling and/or construction of extra classrooms envisaged?

Answers:—

- (1) "531."
- (2) "Thirteen permanent classrooms and one temporary classroom."
- (3) "There are fourteen teachers. In the seven grades there are fourteen classes varying in size from 32 to 46."
- (4) "The school is staffed in accordance with current departmental policy. Staffing arrangements are subject to monthly reviews."
- (5) "Plans are being prepared for the provision of two additional permanent classrooms."

PAPER

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

Report of the Registrar of Co-operative Societies for the year 1966-67.

ST. GEORGE IRRIGATION PROJECT

APPROVAL OF EXTENSION

Hon. H. RICHTER (Somerset—Minister for Local Government and Conservation): I move—

"That the Speaker do now leave the chair and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the following resolution:—

"That the House approves of the extension of St. George Irrigation Undertaking and that Kajarabie Dam on the Balonne River, Moolabah and Buckinbah Weirs on Thuraggi Watercourse, and irrigation, drainage and roadworks to serve the existing and proposed extension area be constructed at an estimated capital cost of \$8,600,000 in accordance with the provisions of the Irrigation Acts, 1922 to 1965, as recommended by the Commissioner of Irrigation and Water Supply and the Director-General, Department of Primary Industries, and as set out on page 5 of their joint report on the Extension of St. George Irrigation Project."

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE

(The Chairman of Committees, Mr. Hooper, Greenslopes, in the chair)

Hon. H. RICHTER (Somerset—Minister for Local Government and Conservation) (11.57 a.m.): I move—

"That the House approves of the extension of St. George Irrigation Undertaking and that Kajarabie Dam on the Balonne River, Moolabah and Buckinbah Weirs on Thuraggi Watercourse, and irrigation, drainage and roadworks to serve the existing and proposed extension area, be constructed at an estimated capital cost of \$8,600,000 in accordance with the

provisions of the Irrigation Acts, 1922 to 1965, as recommended by the Commissioner of Irrigation and Water Supply and the Director-General, Department of Primary Industries, and as set out on page 5 of their joint report on the Extension of St. George Irrigation Project."

The proposal to improve supply to the existing irrigation area at St. George and to expand this area set out in the joint report by the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission and the Department of Primary Industries is one of the key items in the Government's efforts to mitigate drought in Queensland. It will also make an important contribution to decentralisation of population and production, and hence in maintaining population growth in western Queensland.

The extent to which this scheme can provide drought mitigation in the drought-prone Roma and south-west statistical divisions of the State can perhaps best be appreciated by indicating that the total area of at least 24,000 acres which it will be possible to irrigate from the enlarged scheme is almost equal to that presently irrigated in the Lockyer Valley.

The St. George scheme is proposed to be financed from State resources. Further key schemes in the Government's aim to bring irrigation closer in drought areas are the \$26,000,000 Emerald project in Central Queensland, \$56,000,000 for the Kolan and Isis Schemes in the Bundaberg area, and a \$24,000,000 project in the Bowen-Broken River Valley in North Queensland, for which Commonwealth financial assistance has been sought.

Even without this Commonwealth assistance, State schemes in progress and planned, such as Coolmunda Dam near Inglewood, Wuruma Dam near Eidsvold, and Eungella Dam to serve the Collinsville area in North Queensland, will make a substantial contribution to improving our defence against drought.

The St. George project is the eighth water conservation scheme approved by the Government since it took office in 1957. Two further schemes, namely, the Lower Lockyer project to cost \$2,170,000 and a large weir on the Mackenzie River near Blackwater to cost \$1,770,000, have also recently been approved by the Government for commencement in the 1967-68 financial year. However, the St. George scheme is the first project which has required establishment under the Irrigation Acts, and, as such, the first which the present Government has presented to Parliament.

The St. George scheme must be established under the Irrigation Acts because it involves not only the storage of water but also the conveyance of water from storage to an irrigation area in which land presently held is to be resumed for settlement purposes and subdivided into appropriate-sized farms for irrigated production, the apportionment

of water rights to the individual irrigation farms (charges for which must be paid whether water is used or not), and the delivery of water to the farm boundaries so that it can be applied to land by gravity without pumping by the individual landholder.

Provisions for all these procedures are available under the Irrigation Acts but not under the Water Acts.

On the other hand, schemes recently and previously approved by the present Government have all been established under the Water Acts. These other schemes have involved virtually only the construction of a storage on a stream, and use of the water by release downstream from the storage along existing natural stream or flood channels for use by individual landholders, who obtain licences to pump from the streams. Such schemes have not involved resumption of land for settlement purposes and its subdivision into irrigation farms. The taking out of licences is not compulsory but depends entirely on the desires of individual landholders.

The Irrigation Acts provide that when an irrigation scheme is to be established, the proposed scheme must be submitted to the Legislative Assembly for approval by a resolution of the Assembly. It also provides that full details of the proposals shall be provided in the form of a report prepared by the Commissioner of Irrigation which shall contain the required particulars set out in section 7 (3) of the Irrigation Acts.

The required report has been prepared as a joint report by the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission and the Department of Primary Industries, and it was tabled in the House on 9 August. This report contains much more detail than is specifically required by the Act and is in fact a very complete assessment of engineering, agricultural and economic aspects of the scheme.

I draw attention to the very thorough investigation by the two departments concerned on which this report has been based and express my appreciation of the co-operation of my colleague the Minister for Primary Industries and the staff of his department with the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission and myself. I point out that this joint planning by engineers, agriculturalists and economists, on which all our recent irrigation development has been based, is unique in Australia and is an example of inter-departmental co-operation at its best.

The present proposals have two principal objectives—

(1) To increase the volume of water available in dry years and the rate at which water can be supplied to the 20 farms in the existing irrigation area; and

(2) To expand the area irrigated in the St. George district from the present 6,800 acres to 24,000 to 27,000 acres according to the crop by enabling—

(a) Further areas to be irrigated on the farms in the existing area;

(b) Extension of the existing irrigation area by up to 32 new farms, with an irrigable area not less than 450 acres each;

(c) Irrigation by private diversion along the Balonne River up to a further 1,000 acres.

The existing St. George irrigation area obtains water supply from the present weir on the Balonne River at St. George with a capacity of 8,200 acre-feet, from which a normal annual supply of 10,000 acre-feet reducing to 6,400 acre-feet in dry years is available. Water supply is provided to the area by a pumping station with a capacity of 40 cubic feet per second at the weir, delivering into 30 miles of channels supplying water to each of 20 farms with a gross area of some 12,000 acres on which in the 1965-66 year some 6,800 acres were irrigated.

Establishment of the present St. George irrigation undertaking was approved by Parliament in November 1953, and in presenting the proposals to Parliament it was indicated that the scheme was in fact a pilot scheme to illustrate the benefits that irrigation could bring to parts of western Queensland where such schemes are practicable.

This scheme was supported by the Premier (then Leader of the Opposition) who then said—

“As the Minister said, this is indeed a very valuable experiment in the irrigation of farms in western districts and whether it is an economic success or not, the experiment is worth making, because it will demonstrate the economic possibility of irrigating farms in western districts. If it is an economic success it will lead to the establishment of further similar projects in other parts of western Queensland and so the experiment will be well worth the cost from that point of view.”

As indicated in the report, settlers experienced initial disabilities due to inexperience, inadequate information on potential irrigated production in the area, and other factors. It was necessary for the Government to increase the size of farms from 300 to 600 acres, which fortunately was possible because only 50 per cent. of the farms had been opened. This increase in size was necessary not so much because of inadequate land but to ensure that adequate water was available to supply a sufficiently large area of irrigation for an economic return.

However, experience has convinced the present settlers of the value of intensive land use under irrigation and given them confidence in their ability to handle irrigated areas up to 400 acres. It has also indicated

that the original water allocation available to farms, which permitted only 50 per cent. of farm areas to be irrigated, is not an efficient arrangement in terms of farm production and over-all administration and management of the irrigation works. As a result, during the 1965-66 year the total area irrigated was some 6,800 acres, of which approximately 60 per cent. was irrigated fodders, 30 per cent. grain, and 10 per cent. cotton. A trend towards more cotton and grain production, which can provide higher net returns than perennial and annual fodder crops and livestock, has continued.

The necessity to develop more than the original area envisaged on each farm has resulted in water use beyond the normal safe supply available from the weir. The quantity diverted in 1965-66 was some 17,800 acre-feet and in 1966-67 some 16,000 acre-feet, as against the normal safe supply of 10,000 acre-feet available annually from the storage. In addition, expansion of the irrigated area has now resulted in a requirement for peak supply that substantially exceeds the capacity of the existing pumping station and channel works. In 1966-67 this resulted in some reduction in potential yields, particularly of cotton and fodder crops.

Apart from this current hazard of inadequate quantity and rate of water supply, it is now possible to say that the area has satisfactorily illustrated the practicability of production under irrigation of a wide range of crops in the area. In particular, the area has illustrated its suitability for production of drought and supplementary fodder supplies for the extensive adjacent grazing areas, mainly as a sideline to the principal production on the individual farms. The practical advantages of such production in this highly drought-prone area are illustrated by the acquisition of at least six of the existing farms by graziers from the surrounding districts and significant sales of fodder production to other graziers.

Rather than provide additional storage, pumping, and channel capacity to provide adequate supplies to the existing area only, the scheme aims also at expanding the area to be irrigated to take fuller advantage of the water resources available in the Balonne River and at expanding the benefits to be obtained from irrigated production in this area.

However, in view of the urgency of additional supply to the existing area, it is proposed that first priority be given in the development of the scheme to works that can provide some initial improvement to the supply to the existing area. These works will comprise a temporary pumping station on the Balonne River some 5½ miles downstream of the proposed new Kajarabie Dam and a temporary connecting channel to the Thuraggi Lagoon watercourse; permanent works comprising Moolabah and Buckinbah Weirs on Thuraggi Lagoon watercourse; part of the permanent pumping station on

Buckinbah Weir; and the main supply channel from that weir to the northern corner of the existing area shown on Figure 2 in the report. These works are estimated to cost \$1,100,000 of the total \$8,600,000 capital cost of the entire scheme, and it is hoped that they can be completed in the 1968-69 financial year.

Details of the proposed scheme as required under the Irrigation Acts are set out in the summary and conclusions on pages 1 to 5 of the report and in the attached Figures 1 to 8. They are outlined briefly as follows:—

The boundaries and extent of the lands proposed to be comprised in the area:

These are set out in Figure 2 of the report.

Description of works:

These are also indicated in Figure 2 and comprise—

Temporary pumping station with a capacity of 30 cubic feet per second on the Balonne River at 151.5 miles and a channel to convey water to Moolabah and Buckinbah Weirs, pending construction of Kajarabie Dam.

Existing pumping station and main channel works, retained as part of the present scheme, to serve about one-third of the present farms.

Kajarabie Dam on the Balonne River, 13 miles upstream of St. George, with a height of 40 feet from stream bed to full supply level and storage up to 81,600 acre-feet.

Moolabah and Buckinbah Weirs on Thuraggi watercourse, to store 3,200 and 3,900 acre-feet respectively.

Thuraggi diversion channel from Kajarabie Dam to and along the line of the Thuraggi watercourse, to enable water to flow by gravity from the dam to the two weirs.

Channel works to convey water from Buckinbah Weir to serve the remaining two-thirds of the existing farms, plus the proposed extension of the area. Water will normally flow by gravity from Buckinbah Weir into this channel system. However, when the level of water in Kajarabie Dam is drawn down to a capacity of less than 70,000 acre-feet, to minimise evaporation loss, water level in Buckinbah Weir will be drawn down by 6 feet by a pumping station with a capacity of 200 cubic feet per second delivering water from the weir into the channel system, against a maximum head of 5 feet.

Resumption and resubdivision of lands in the extension area into 32 new farms each of not less than 450 acres of irrigable land and for which a normal annual supply of 600 acre-feet would be available.

Necessary surface drainage and road works in the extension area.

Excluding costs of existing works based on costs as at 1 December 1966, the estimated cost is shown in Table 1 of the report and is as follows:—

	\$
Kajarabie Dam (including resumptions and other costs)	5,400,000
Moolabah and Buckinbah Weirs	430,000
Irrigation, drainage, road and other works, temporary pumping station, resumptions, etc.	2,770,000
	<hr/> 8,600,000 <hr/>

Actual capital expenditure on the existing scheme to date has been \$1,960,000.

Annual costs of operation and maintenance will vary with annual water use, and particularly the periods during which it will be necessary to operate the Buckinbah Pumping Station.

Estimated annual costs including operation and maintenance of the existing works are set out in Table XXII of the report, and summarised as follows:—

	\$
Minimum pumping	83,000
Maximum pumping	94,300
Average pumping	89,000

The capital cost would be provided by annual appropriations as determined by Parliament from Loan Funds to the Construction Trust Fund of the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission. Interest and Sinking Fund charges would be met from Consolidated Revenue. The surplus of revenue over operation, maintenance and management costs would be paid to Consolidated Revenue Fund and make a small contribution to these charges.

It is envisaged that the programme of construction would cover a period of five years, but the actual period would depend on funds made available.

Revenue from the scheme will be derived from water and drainage charges and rental of lands within the irrigation area, water used by the Town of St. George and from water diverted by private pumping from the Balonne River between the Kajarabie Dam and the Balonne-Culgoa Junction and from the Kajarabie Reservoir up to 5½ miles upstream of the dam.

Proposed charges are as follows:—

Water diverted for irrigation by private pumping from the Balonne River and Kajarabie Reservoir—\$2 per acre-foot.

Use by the Town of St. George—an annual sum of \$1,080 for an annual assured supply of 800 acre-feet.

Water delivered to existing and new farms in the irrigation area—\$3 per acre-foot for water supplied as water rights and in excess of water rights.

Drainage charges on farms in the irrigation area—70 cents per acre.

Land rentals on farms in the irrigation area—initially 25 cents per acre.

The estimated average annual direct revenue from these charges applied to the existing and proposed scheme when fully developed is \$137,800, or some \$48,800 in excess of the estimated average annual cost of operation and maintenance.

Based on the supply of water available from the existing weir in a dry year, some \$42,200 of this surplus would be attributable to the new scheme.

The quantity of water proposed to be made available for irrigation in normal years within the irrigation area from the combination of the existing weir at St. George, the proposed Kajarabie Dam, and Moolabah and Buckinbah Weirs is 50,000 acre-feet per annum, delivered from the storages. This is sufficient to provide some 35,000 acre-feet per annum at the farms within the irrigation area.

In addition, a quantity of 2,000 acre-feet per annum is proposed to be made available for irrigation by private diversion along the Balonne River from a point $5\frac{1}{2}$ miles above Kajarabie Dam site downstream to the junction of the Balonne and Culgoa Rivers.

Water would be allocated to farms in the irrigation area on the basis of an annual water right of 1 acre-foot per acre of irrigable land, plus supply in excess of water rights equivalent to $33\frac{1}{3}$ per cent. of the water right. On this basis, existing farms would receive a total water allocation of some 800 acre-feet per annum and new farms a total of 600 acre-feet.

Quantities of water allocated as water rights are required to be paid for annually whether used or not, and supply in excess of water rights up to the allowable $33\frac{1}{3}$ per cent. quota would be paid for as and when used.

In the case of supply by private diversion along the Balonne River, water would be allocated by licences issued under the Water Acts, and 75 per cent. of the amount allocated would require to be paid for annually whether used or not, and the balance if and when used.

The supply that would be available has been assessed by determining conditions that would occur had the storages been built and the irrigation area fully developed over the period 1898 to 1965. This study has shown that the annual supply of 50,000 acre-feet to the irrigation area and 2,000 acre-feet along the Balonne River would be available in all except 10 of the 68 years of study.

In eight of these 10 years 73 to 97 per cent. of the normal supply would have been available, and under the worst conditions, which occurred between March 1902 and April 1903, 34 per cent. of normal supply would have been available. It is considered that reduction of supply to this extent in one year in 68 must be accepted, otherwise development would be unnecessarily limited in the other 67 years.

The above quantities of water estimated to be available for irrigation have been determined after allowing for inflows of up to 150 cusecs into Kajarabie Reservoir to be passed downstream to provide water for stock and domestic purposes to lands fronting the Balonne River and its effluent channels through Queensland and New South Wales downstream to the Barwon River. This is to protect riparian rights.

This arrangement will ensure that the rights of landholders whose properties have frontages to any of these streams to water supply for stock and domestic purposes, provided for under the Water Acts when supply is available in these streams, will not be interfered with.

It is emphasised, however, that these supplies will be made available only when there is flow into the reservoir, and stored water will not be released for this purpose when there is no inflow. I think that is quite reasonable.

It is proposed that the Commissioner will exercise control over the Balonne River, Maranoa River and Thuraggi Lagoon watercourse for the purpose of supply to the existing and proposed enlarged irrigation area, and for the use of water for private diversion along the Balonne River.

Implementation of the scheme will enable the area irrigated annually on farms in the enlarged irrigation area and land riparian to the Balonne River to be increased from the present 6,800 acres to some 24,000 to 27,000 acres, according to crops grown. Development of the scheme will involve the resumption of up to 21,000 acres of land in the project area for resubdivision and development as irrigated farms. The details of the tenure of these existing holdings are given in the report.

The area of land that will be inundated by the dam, weirs and diversion channel totals some 10,600 acres. Much of the area is, however, within the stream channels of the Balonne and Maranoa Rivers, and resumption will be necessary only when land is outside these limits.

The soils in the existing area have proved their suitability for irrigated production of cotton, winter and summer grains, lucerne, and perennial and annual pastures for hay or livestock production. There is thus a wide range of potential production and a combination of production that could be engaged in by landholders which would provide profitable enterprise. This is illustrated by a detailed analysis set out in the report of five possible enterprises combining combinations of cotton/grain, grain/lucerne, grain/irrigated pastures, and all grain. That the yields used in these studies are conservative is indicated by actual cotton yields of 2,410 lb. to 2,740 lb. of seed cotton an acre from three farms in the St. George area in 1967, as compared with a yield of 2,250 lb. of seed cotton an acre adopted for the studies, and an actual yield exceeding 80 bushels an acre

of wheat obtained by one landholder in 1966, as compared with 60 bushels an acre used in the study.

The actual farm sizes will vary from farm to farm according to the topography and the availability of soils suitable for irrigation. Indications are that, generally, farms will be somewhat larger than 450 acres of irrigable land, and that gross areas, including areas of land not suitable for irrigation, will be somewhat larger than 450 acres. The actual production to be undertaken on both new and existing farms will be a matter entirely for the individual landholder. Any of the programmes studied offer satisfactory returns both in amount and return on capital investment. Landholders will therefore have a wide selection of production to suit their own desires and also to allow changes in production to suit future market changes both on new and on existing farms.

Although present Australian requirements of raw cotton are likely to be met in the next few years from Australian production, there is still great scope for expansion of local cotton-spinning and manufacture. In any case, production at export parity price appears to offer a profitable enterprise. The studies show that gross incomes from the enterprises studied could vary from \$24,000 to \$49,000, and net incomes from \$8,000 to \$21,000 a year.

Experience with irrigation projects throughout Australia has shown that it is not practicable to obtain direct revenue, principally from water charges, that will meet interest and redemption charges on the capital cost of such schemes. Justification for Government expenditure on a scheme must therefore depend on the benefits which result from increased production created by the scheme, and the increased business activity induced by this production. Unfortunately, the full measure of benefits that are created cannot be evaluated because of the impossibility of tracing throughout the State all of the results of increased primary production.

However, as far as is practicable, the report sets out details of benefits in terms of increased production and other induced activities which are summarised as follows:

As previously indicated, the direct revenue in excess of operation and maintenance costs is estimated at some \$48,800 and would be sufficient to cover debt service charges on \$890,000 of the capital cost of the existing and proposed schemes.

The increased gross annual value of production resulting from development of the scheme would depend on the forms of production adopted by landholders on existing and new farms. For the types of production investigated, the annual increased gross value of production from the existing and new farms is estimated to range from \$1,118,000 for the grain and fat-lamb production to \$2,330,000 for the cotton-grain enterprise.

After allowing for the portion of the capital cost of the scheme which would be serviced by the direct revenue, this increased value of production would be equivalent to 29.8 per cent to 14.2 per cent of the unserviced capital cost of the new scheme respectively. This ratio compares favourably with that for other schemes recently approved or proposed.

It is also estimated that the proposed scheme would provide an increase in the annual value of retail trading in the town of St. George varying from some \$450,000 to \$1,120,000. This would include some \$100,000 for plant replacement or repairs, and \$694,000 for fuel, oils, seeds, fertilisers, sprays, and insecticides.

Increased rail freight into and out of the area is estimated to amount to \$423,000 annually.

The potential cotton production of some 19,000 bales of cotton lint per annum would support a local ginnery with a capacity 50 per cent. greater than that at present established at Cecil Plains. In addition, a volume of 8,000 tons of cotton seed available after ginning would possibly provide for the establishment of a local seed-processing plant. The establishment of a cotton ginnery would of course depend on the successful establishment of an export market for cotton.

Based on the effect of the existing area on the population of the town of St. George, it is estimated that the new scheme would further increase population on farms and in the town of St. George by 600 to 700.

The above benefits alone would justify the establishment of the scheme. However, if all existing and new farms adopted cotton and grain production, wheat output of 18,500 tons and 8,000 tons of cotton seed would be available annually. With little more than normal storage, both the grain and cotton seed by-product could be diverted for stock feed in any drought years which occur on an average of one year in three in this region. This fodder would be sufficient to feed for 200 days 435,000 sheep valued at \$3,480,000, without allowing for loss of subsequent wool production if the sheep died, and pending replacement.

Alternatively, if all farms adopted hay and grain production, annual fodder production would be sufficient to feed for 200 days a total of 700,000 sheep valued at \$5,600,000. The value of the sheep fed would be equivalent to 35 to 53 per cent. of the capital cost of the existing and new schemes, or four times the value of fodder received by farmers in the irrigation area.

The existing pilot irrigation area at St. George has satisfactorily illustrated the advantages of providing irrigation in western Queensland to increase and diversify rural production; provide a source of supplementary and drought fodder to the grazing

industry in the region; and assist decentralisation by increasing and holding population in the rural and urban area of St. George.

The present proposal to safeguard and expand this production on existing farms and extend the area irrigated is therefore considered most desirable and an important step forward in the State's programme of water conservation and irrigation development, as well as a substantial contribution to the mitigation of serious drought losses. If approved by Parliament, it is planned that work on the scheme commence during the current financial year. Already the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission is proceeding with detailed surveys and designs for the works, and work-forces are available for transfer from Coolmunda Dam, which is approaching completion, to work in the St. George area.

I am therefore pleased to move the motion.

Mr. NEWTON (Belmont) (12.33 p.m.): The Opposition supports the proposed extension of the St. George irrigation project and the construction of the dam and weirs mentioned in the motion, and takes this opportunity to deal with various matters concerning this work and the benefits to be obtained by farmers and the Government.

As was the case when this scheme was before Parliament in 1953, a report has been presented and tabled as a joint venture by the Minister for Local Government and Conservation and the Minister for Primary Industries. It contains much detailed information that it is quite impossible to deal with in the time available, and sets out clearly in eight parts the extensions proposed and where the work is to be carried out. In introducing the motion this morning, the Minister went further in an endeavour to detail the various aspects of the scheme. He showed how the Government would benefit and mentioned the benefits that would flow to farmers in the area.

One of the main things about which members of Parliament should be concerned is that there should not be any compulsion on farmers in the area to take part in the scheme. However, it is well known that most farmers will take every advantage of a scheme of this nature, which has already been in operation in the St. George area for 15 years.

The Minister gave the Committee figures showing the charges that will have to be met by farmers in the area and by the township of St. George. It is to be hoped that the Government has made sure that no unreasonable charges will be imposed upon the farmers, but the charges mentioned by the Minister, and which also are set out in the report, will provide at least some return on the large sum of money that is to be outlaid to provide the scheme.

Mr. Richter: The charges are very reasonable.

Mr. NEWTON: I said that. However, we must ensure that a stage is not reached at which the charges met by the farmers concerned and the township of St. George provide the Government with an undue return from the scheme. The return should be based on what farms can produce and on the increased business that will flow to communities in the area.

As I read the report, it occurred to me that some faults in the original scheme may have needed attention over the years and that similar adjustments might have to be made when the scheme is extended. If adjustments have to be made, the position will not be any different from that arising in any other project of this type. Reports are based on information available at the time they are made, and further research, surveys and other work associated with a scheme may show that adjustments are needed. The first irrigation scheme in the St. George area was investigated about 73 years ago. A proposal to extend that scheme was brought before hon. members in this Chamber about 14 years ago, and in those 14 years further information has been collected relative to irrigation schemes of this type in western areas.

It is, of course, much more difficult and a much more complicated task to provide irrigation schemes inland than it is in coastal areas. Rainfall plays a very important part in such schemes. It would probably be possible to build huge dam and weir schemes in coastal areas, because the annual rainfall would assure the supply of water required for the particular localities in which the dams and weirs were built; in inland areas the problems are quite different. As the Minister said in his introductory speech, one of the Government's main ideas in endeavouring to implement the scheme is to attempt to overcome the difficulties that people on the land experience as a result of drought, and all hon. members know that the average annual rainfall in inland areas is much lower than it is in coastal areas of Queensland.

Whatever faults there may have been in the original scheme, the technical officers of the two departments concerned and the consulting engineers should have information available to them today that was not available 14 years ago when the scheme was implemented. The more of these schemes that are implemented in particular areas, the more it will enhance the knowledge of those in the department, and the information available now should be much better than that available years ago.

When this measure was before Parliament on the previous occasion, various stages of the scheme were discussed and it was clearly indicated by the then Minister in charge of irrigation and water supply that if what the Government then intended was successful further stages would be considered either by that Government or by future Governments in this State. It is quite evident that the scheme has been a success in this area.

It is true that in certain parts of the speech he made on that occasion, the Leader of the Opposition—the present Premier—gave the scheme his blessing. At the same time, he rightly took the opportunity to raise certain points, particularly those relating to the number of farms that would be supplied, as to whether the officers and engineers in the various departments really felt that the scheme could supply sufficient water for the number of farms mentioned, and also the question of cost.

On that occasion the present Premier said that this was starting something in western areas entirely different from anything that had been done in any other part of the State, and if it was a success it would be of great advantage to the rest of the State because other schemes would certainly be implemented in other areas, particularly in central and north-western areas, which are in a somewhat similar position to this area.

As the Minister has indicated this morning on behalf of the Government, it is the intention to go ahead with quite a number of projects of this nature in the future. Of course, this is supported by the report of a conference of the Council of Agriculture at which the Minister for Education stood in for the Premier and clearly indicated that over the next 10 years, the Government intends to spend \$50,000,000 on water conservation. The report reads—

“A tentative programme of State works has been approved involving expenditure of \$50 million over the next ten years.

This includes seven additional projects:—

- The Logan River;
- Pike Creek, on the southern border;
- Upper Brisbane River;
- Pioneer River (in the Eton area);
- Barambah Creek;
- The Albert River; and
- The second stage of the Leslie Dam.

Simultaneously over this period the Government is seeking Commonwealth financial assistance to enable the development of the Emerald irrigation project, based on the Nogoia River dam, the Kolan, the Bowen-Broken Rivers and the Burnett-Isis schemes. Total cost of these four projects alone would be in the vicinity of \$104 million.”

So there is no doubt that the Government has indicated clearly to the people concerned just what its intentions are in this regard.

The Nogoia scheme, which will be the largest storage so far constructed in the State, will provide for the irrigation of more than 58,000 acres in an area that has been severely hit by drought. The arid years of 1964 and 1965 have awakened the primary producers generally to the urgency of water conservation.

After 100 years of surveys, study and research into these problems, irrespective of the party in office at the time it is hoped that new ideas will have been brought forth to overcome the weaknesses in any scheme put into operation. When this project was before

Parliament on the previous occasion the then Leader of the Opposition went into the economics of it and the development that would be derived from such a scheme. The same points have been gone into again by the Minister this morning and are dealt with in the report of the Commissioner of Irrigation and Water Supply.

During the earlier debate concern was expressed about the quantity of water that would be lost as it flowed along the channels to the farms. From the record of that earlier debate I understand that what is known as the flooded scheme was to be used, which means that the water is pumped into channels in the hope that it will be forced through them to the farms that are to be irrigated. A distance of five or six miles was mentioned on that occasion. That is an exceptional length of channel for water to be force-flooded to the farms. Under the old system the water flowed along open earth drains where there could be a considerable loss of water. I understand that in a number of irrigation projects in other States the water is flooded into channels, the bottoms of which have been concreted. This helps to move the water along more quickly, and at the same time it avoids loss from seepage through the open earth on the bottom of the drain.

Today many new methods are used. I have been impressed by what is being done by a number of farmers. They bring in people with heavy equipment to sink dams on their property. If because of the nature of the subsoil the loss of water would be great, they use plastic sheeting to line the dam before it is filled. This method seems to overcome the problem. We have been doing this sort of thing in the building industry for some time when we wanted to keep water either in or out.

Not much has been said about this matter on the present occasion, but in the earlier debate there was talk about these channels being plugged with clay. No doubt that would serve a similar purpose, but one would think that with more modern methods there would be something better that would not cost the Government as much as concreting the channels, for concreting is a costly process.

Mr. Lee: Concrete is cheap because it has permanency.

Mr. NEWTON: That is true, but when we are extending the present scheme, providing a new dam and weirs, the cost involved is greater.

On the former occasion the then hon. member for Aubigny raised a very good point when he referred to the crops grown by the primary producers in the area. His main contribution related to the fact that the experts for the A.L.P. Government indicated in their report that a return on 300 acres of irrigated land would be £8,444 a year, which today would be equal to about

\$17,000. The hon. member for Aubigny questioned this at the time. The then Premier made a very good contribution to the debate, as did also the hon. member for Clayfield, and said that when these schemes are available and the farmers take advantage of them, it depends mainly on the farmer as to how he works his farm to get the best results from it.

One of the most important aspects of this scheme—probably this did not apply in 1954, although possibly it did—relates to the flow of the rural population to the city of Brisbane and provincial cities. The Minister indicated that he hopes—as we do—that this scheme will help to curtail this grave and serious trend. This scheme will be worth its weight in gold if it stops the flow of the rural population to the provincial cities and the metropolitan area.

Recently a party from this side of the Chamber visited Central Queensland where we were able to inspect the results of dry farming as well as irrigated farming. I agree with what the hon. member for Gregory said last night about people in the West facing hardships because of the problems confronting them, although I do not agree with the other aspects of his speech which will probably be the topic of another debate. When comparing dry farming and irrigated farming we found that there was no need to eliminate drills or rows—whatever they may be called—for cotton, wheat, sorghum and safflower in irrigated farming, but, with dry farming, certain rows had to be sacrificed. Those who have worked on the Darling Downs know that wheat is planted as close as 4 inches apart, whereas in the inland areas, where farms are not irrigated, the drills are spread out.

Share-farming has been important in the development of the State, and also to the man on the land. Many men who follow this type of occupation started off as farm-hands and married the farmer's daughter and developed an interest in this type of life and made share-farming their career.

Since World War II primary production has declined seriously, and it is to be hoped that schemes of this nature will put the industry back on a sound basis. We saw evidence of this on our recent visit to Central Queensland. There were large irrigated farms with as many as four share-farmers on them. The system has changed since I was on the land. In those days everything was on a 50/50 basis and the share-farmer supplied nothing. But he got his share of the cream cheque and any livestock and crops that were produced. Today the share-farmer receives 75 per cent. of anything produced on the farm, but he is required to supply the various implements necessary for his work.

I raise this point because the same could apply in the St. George area. I know that area quite well as I have been there on several occasions. If a farmer decides to take advantage of the irrigation scheme, he

ploughs his land and sows grain, and he must meet the extra expense of providing stump-jump ploughs and 4 or 5 harrows or a 10- or 20-disc Sundercut. Today the machines are larger.

(Time expired.)

[*Sitting suspended from 12.58 to 2.15 p.m.*]

Mr. BEARDMORE (Balonne) (2.15 p.m.): I rise to support the motion. Although the Minister has explained the very good reasons for submitting this scheme for the consideration and approval of hon. members, there are some features that I should like to emphasise further. As the present undertaking is in my electorate, I have had the opportunity of being closely associated with its progress since its inception in 1953. I am well aware of the early problems met by the farmers who were originally allotted 300-acre blocks in 1956-57.

Inexperience and lack of knowledge in the effective application of irrigation practices in western areas resulted in failure of cotton crops and low production from other activities in the initial years. However, with the assistance of the information and guidance given by the demonstration farm developed by the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission, most of these difficulties have been overcome. Soon claims were made that the blocks were not living areas. It was seen that these claims were justified, and I am happy to say that I took an active part in having additional 300-acre areas allotted to these farmers.

With the increased knowledge gained over the past 5 or 6 years and the use of better techniques, the farms have now been developed to a profitable stage and are undoubtedly a credit, and a valuable asset, to the St. George district, and to them could be attributed the present stabilised population of this inland country town, which is the largest in Queensland situated off a railway.

Having acquired confidence and experience in irrigation techniques, farmers are now intensively farming their lands. Crops in wide variety are grown, including cotton, lucerne and annual fodder crops, perennial and annual pastures, and summer and winter grains. Fat lambs produced in the area are of high quality and have on many occasions topped the market at Cannon Hill. A substantial percentage of the Queensland-bred lambs sold at Cannon Hill yards comes from the St. George irrigation farms. In 1963-64 the number of lambs was approximately 11,000.

Mr. Houston: How many last year?

Mr. BEARDMORE: I am not certain, but I know that in the following year it was round about 9,000.

Cotton crops in the area in 1966-67 not only gave high yields but were of excellent quality. It is important that a large proportion of the crop was of grades that are in the greatest demand on the world market.

The quality of lucerne hay from the area is such that several district graziers have undertaken contracts to purchase it on a long-term, fixed-price basis. It will be stored in anticipation of dry times.

Further development of the area is at present being retarded by lack of sufficient irrigation water storage. When the blocks were first opened the water allocation for each farm was adopted at 185 acre-feet per annum, or sufficient to irrigate about 50 per cent. of each 300-acre block, and provided a gross irrigated area of between 3,300 and 4,600 acres. Farmers are now irrigating an average of 350 acres a farm and are using up to 640 acre-feet a year, the total usage from the existing weir being almost 17,000 acre-feet. This is far in excess of the calculated normal safe yield of the weir of 10,600 acre-feet, which could be reduced in a drought year to 6,400 acre-feet; and believe me, Mr. Hooper, western areas have experienced a succession of droughts in recent years. In 1965 a substantial shortage of water occurred for the existing development. This was caused, of course, by low rainfall in the catchment area.

Furthermore, the existing irrigation works were designed to cope with a peak demand for an irrigated area of some 4,500 acres, but 6,800 acres are being irrigated currently. As a result, the supply was inadequate to meet maximum requirements of cotton and other crops during the latter half of 1966, and this resulted in significant loss of production. There is, therefore, an urgent need to increase the capacity of the main supply works so that the rate of supply is sufficient to meet irrigation requirements in periods of peak demand. I strongly emphasise this requirement, and I urge that early steps be taken to provide facilities that will ensure that adequate water is available as soon as possible for the existing farmers. I am very pleased to see in the report that priority in development of the scheme is to be given to those parts of the works, together with some temporary arrangements, that will provide substantial additional storage and an increase in the rate of supply to the existing area.

St. George is at the heart of an extensive grazing region and in close proximity to the drought-prone area of south-west Queensland, where droughts occur on an average of one year in three. The main sources of fodder during these dry periods are the Darling Downs and the coastal areas. Add to this the fact that Balonne Shire alone carries nearly one-tenth of the sheep depastured in Queensland, and the benefits that could come from this irrigation project will be realised.

It is now well established that a variety of suitable fodders can be grown in the St. George district. With the extension of the area as indicated in the report before the Committee and the construction of a major dam on the Balonne River, with supporting weirs and ancillary works, a ready

and accessible source of fodder supply for these vast grazing areas could be provided in times of need.

Creation of a further 32 farms could increase the irrigated area in the undertaking to between 24,000 and 27,000 acres, compared with 6,800 acres at present. This could be of untold benefit and a considerable saving to the graziers in the adjacent country. The State gains in the long run, if only by encouraging decentralisation; but there is much more than that to be gained, and I hope that hon. members will realise the urgency and importance of implementing the proposed scheme as quickly as possible. Of course, the growing of fodders would be only part of the production of the area, because there is ample evidence that profitable returns would be obtained by the cultivation of a wide range of other crops and by lamb-raising. This flexibility of production is a very attractive aspect of the scheme, because it will allow for changes in output, if required, to meet possible future changes in markets and prices. These cannot be foreseen, but they are certain to occur.

A point about which I had some misgivings was the rights of landholders along the river system downstream of the proposed dam to a supply of water for stock and domestic purposes. I am happy to note from the report and the Minister's remarks that adequate provision apparently is being made to preserve those riparian rights. This will be done by storing only flows that exceed 150 cubic feet a second in the Balonne River and by allowing all flows up to that amount to pass downstream through the low-level outlet in the storage.

I am informed that this flow has been determined on the basis that it is the amount required to provide flow along the Balonne River and all its effluent channels, including the Culgoa, Narran, Bokhara, Birree and others down to their junction with the Barwon River.

Provision has been made for the whole of this system, because investigations by the Border Rivers Commission are now in progress to determine the possibility of more equitably distributing flows among these streams. At present, flows of 20 cubic feet per second at the Balonne-Culgoa junction pass entirely down the Culgoa River, leaving the other effluents without flow.

I am also informed that consideration will be given by the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission to some variation of the procedure to temporarily store flows of less than 100 cusecs in Kajarabie Dam and periodically release the quantities stored at rates in excess of 100 cubic feet per second to give a better "run through". In addition, of course, there will be frequent occasions of flows which will overflow the storage and pass downstream. The method of operation, while not improving the occurrence of flows, will at least ensure that current rights are not reduced.

Another aspect of the scheme which pleases me is that provision for some of the water available from the main Kajarabie Dam is to be made available for irrigation by private pumping from the Balonne River.

In recent years, because of the development of the irrigation area and the limited supply available from the present weir, the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission has been obliged to refuse several applications by landholders fronting the river for licences to pump water for irrigation. This has been a justifiable attitude, since the addition of further areas of irrigation would have aggravated shortages to farms in dry times.

Although only a limited interest in irrigation has been shown up to date by graziers with frontages to the river, with the increasing illustration of the benefits of irrigated fodder production within the irrigation area it can be expected that this will grow significantly in the next few years. It is therefore a wise step on the part of the Minister to ensure that some provision is made for this future development. The allowance of an annual supply of 2,000 acre-feet for this purpose will permit the irrigation of up to 1,000 acres along the river from some five miles upstream of the Kajarabie Dam downstream to the Balonne-Culgoa junction.

The limitation of provision for private diversion to five miles above the dam site is also understandable, since to fully utilise the reservoir in dry times it must be drawn down substantially and landholders who might otherwise be encouraged to install irrigation equipment further upstream than five miles would frequently find themselves without an assured supply of water.

The charge of \$2 per acre-foot for the right to divert an assured supply from the stream is also a reasonable one, since this is indeed a valuable right made possible only by the expenditure of substantial Government funds.

The Minister and his officers are to be commended on the way in which, in a situation of very flat terrain, they have been able to devise this scheme, which can provide storage of considerable size and also supply water substantially by gravity to the area to be irrigated. It is wonderful that this body of water can be gravitated from the main weir without having to be pumped.

It is interesting to find that the proposed storage of 82,000 acre-feet in the Kajarabie Dam, plus a further 7,000 acre-feet in the Moolabah and Buckinbah weirs, a total of almost 90,000 acre-feet, is almost 20 per cent. greater than the storage in Moogerah Dam, which requires a wall 100 feet high. It is also interesting to find that the assured annual supply, and hence the area that can be irrigated from the Kajarabie Dam and associated storages, is more than 40 per cent. of that resulting from construction of the proposed 1,000,000 acre-feet-capacity

Maraboon Dam, the source of supply for the proposed Emerald irrigation project in Central Queensland.

This is of course the result of using to advantage the run-off from the very large catchment of the Balonne River, and engineering skills in devising a structure which can store water to the full height of the stream channel in low flow periods, while at the same time allowing for the lifting of spillway gates enabling large floods to be passed through the structure without affecting flood levels upstream. Similarly, advantageous use of the natural depression along Thuraggi Lagoon watercourse, to provide a means of conveying water from the storage to the irrigation area by gravity, is a commendable use of natural conditions to good advantage. It is worthy of note that the water confined within the banks of the Balonne upstream extends, for a distance of 49 miles, 18 miles to where it will spread onto adjacent low land. In the Maranoa River, a distance of 5 miles of the 11½ miles will be outside the banks. The flooded area outside these beds and banks will be resumed and landholders suitably compensated.

In order to have some quick result and, in fact, short-cut any undue delay, provision has been made for a temporary pumping plant with temporary drains to be installed about 6 miles upstream from St. George for the purpose of pumping into Moolabah and Thuraggi Lagoons during periods when there is sufficient water to spare from the Balonne River, pending, of course, the completion of the main weir.

As hon. members will observe from the report, the watershed serving the run-off commences around Killarney, extending around the perimeter of the Great Dividing Range, taking in Toowoomba, Dalby, Chinchilla, Miles, Roma and Mitchell, and includes the Condamine, Dogwood, Bungil, Maranoa and many other streams, all of which converge on the town of St. George and, of course, the proposed weir site.

The Minister has rightly classified this scheme as a key item in the Government's attack on drought, the hazards of which we in the South-west are so well aware. It is pleasing indeed to see the Government moving in this way to give us the means to more effectively combat this crippling hazard.

The desirability of establishing large water storages to provide areas where specialist growers can produce fodder for sale to graziers for drought and supplementary feeding has already been referred to in the report of the Drought Mitigation Committee in 1966. This committee emphasises the value of fodder reserves as a means of drought mitigation, and the St. George scheme will undoubtedly provide a valuable contribution to such a reserve.

It is important that this scheme will be undertaken on a sound basis of established experience in the existing area. My close association with it has convinced me that the existing farmers have successfully pioneered irrigation in this inland section of Queensland, and proved beyond doubt that intensive farming is possible, provided an adequate and assured supply of water can be maintained. I am also convinced of the benefits that are created by irrigation in increased and stable production, provision of drought fodder in the heart of the large grazing area and, what is perhaps the most important of all, the encouragement of increased business activity, and hence increased population in western Queensland.

As the Minister has said, at the time the original scheme was first inaugurated it was considered a valuable experiment in irrigation in the West. It was possibly also considered a bold decision at the time but, like many bold decisions, it has paid off. I strongly commend the Minister and the Government for the further bold decision to follow this through to secure and expand the irrigated area at St. George, which I regard as an important project in the further development of this State.

I congratulate Mr. Haigh, Commissioner of Irrigation and Water Supply, and his officers, and also the officers of the Department of Primary Industries, for the difficult job they have done in the initial work of investigation, and in the preparation of this very interesting, full and comprehensive report, enabling this scheme to get away to a flying start.

I wholeheartedly support the motion.

Mr. O'DONNELL (Barcoo) (2.35 p.m.): I congratulate the hon. member for Balonne on his speech. However, he seems to think that this project is initially the present Government's attempt at drought mitigation. I point out that this scheme was initiated in this Chamber in 1953, by a Labour Government, and was brought into operation in 1956-57. If credit is due to the present Government, surely a great deal of credit is also due to those who laid the foundations for this scheme.

We on this side gave our full support to this irrigation project. We believe that this type of activity is most important particularly in the light of the experience gained during the recent disastrous drought. It was not the first serious drought experienced in Queensland. Over the years, facts have built up and much thought has been devoted to them not only by people on the land but also by departmental officers, engineers and experts in primary industry, so that very slowly, but surely, plans have come to fruition. There must necessarily be a great deal of experimental trial and error before a solution can be advanced which will achieve good results.

I join with the hon. member for Balonne in congratulating Mr. Haigh. He well deserves to be regarded as one of the "greats" in this State in the field of water supply and irrigation. He is dedicated to his work and I am sure that with his enthusiasm and hard work we will go ahead in the years to come. He has the right approach, but I sincerely hope that he does not overtax his health. He puts a great deal of effort into his work, and I ask him to proceed with caution for our benefit, as well as for the benefit of those on the land.

I also commend Mr. Ladewig, of the Department of Primary Industries, another dedicated public servant who spares neither time nor effort in tackling the problems affecting the man on the land. This type of project is the only way we shall obtain some form of decentralisation in rural areas.

I repeat that I support this scheme, but I also want the Maraboon Dam project—perhaps better known as the Nogoia Gap Dam project—to go ahead. I should also like to see an irrigation scheme established in the Flinders electorate. If we bring such projects as far west as possible, with a degree of safety, we will perform a worthy service for those who raise sheep and cattle in the Outback.

During the recent drought the high cost of fodder to people in the western areas was brought to our notice. In normal times, if a grazier who desires to store fodder buys it from Gatton and takes it to a point in the west of my electorate, it costs him \$18 a ton in transport fees. On a 16-ton load the transport fee is \$288. That is a tremendous charge to impose on a man who is looking to the future of his property. In times of drought the transport fees may be waived, but the price of the fodder rises skyhigh. What he picks up on the swing he loses on the roundabout, and he is still in trouble. That is not fair to the man purchasing the fodder, nor is it fair to the man selling it. In the good season the man growing the fodder makes little or no profit and thus receives little encouragement to proceed with fodder production for the benefit of people in the less favoured areas.

This proposal will result in smaller properties. The Minister mentioned that 450 acres would be about the ideal size. The number of properties in the area will increase from 20 to 52. The results, either the primary results from the actual properties or the secondary results, will have consequential effects in the area and will bring more people there and maybe establish an industry or two.

We all know how closer settlement has benefited in the Central Highlands. When we get the Nogoia Gap Dam and people proceed with establishing 130 farms there, imagine the progress there will be in that district and think of the great advantage it will be in retaining people outside the provincial cities and building up an area

that is in need of population, and in giving opportunities to young people to settle in the area and enjoy good conditions!

I wish to point out an interesting fact relative to the Peak Downs Shire, which is now noted for its cattle and grain-growing industries. The decline of the sheep industry on account of the spear-grass and the dingo menace meant an exodus of employees from that area, so that there are no more people there now than there were 30 to 40 years ago. The sheep industry was a great employer of labour. Closer settlement, to a certain extent, has rectified the position, but not sufficiently to result in a growth of population. Undertakings such as the St. George irrigation project can give a stimulus to the growth of population and to secondary benefits which will help to retain the population in the area.

A comment was passed by the hon. member for Clayfield in his Appropriation Bill speech relative to expensive land settlement schemes. This is a land settlement scheme. If we valued this project only in dollars and cents we would never undertake it. The return will come in two ways: namely, the actual products from the soil and the secondary benefits that will flow. These cannot be assessed tangibly, but the benefits that will flow over a period will show that the cost was warranted.

When the hon. member for Clayfield was referring to expensive land settlement schemes he asked an Opposition member how he would like \$60,000 spent on education in his area. This comes to Commonwealth Government finance, which is evident in this scheme only in the provision of loan money on which this Government will operate. In that statement the hon. member for Clayfield forgot that that land settlement scheme money was not given to us by the Commonwealth; it was only lent and has to be repaid. If we asked the Commonwealth Government to give money for the project he referred to, it would say no, that it was not a good investment, and that the beef-cattle industry is a good investment.

With these land settlement schemes, particularly those associated with irrigation, we will do something of value, and, apart from what is done in the mining industry, unless there are major engineering works and irrigation areas are established at strategic points throughout the State, I cannot see how decentralisation can be achieved. From this, let us grow—from the South, to the Centre, to the North. It is an excellent scheme.

I appreciate the difficulties associated with irrigation projects, but I know that, with experience and planning, we have more chance of success today than we had in the past.

Mr. E. G. W. Wood: Don't you agree that we should establish markets first?

Mr. O'DONNELL: I shall deal with that point in a moment. There may be marketing problems. Hon. members have heard me

speak in this Chamber about primary producers and their production problems. When we were putting forward the Maraboon Dam irrigation project, the Federal Treasurer immediately said, "Cotton is out." Whose prerogative is it to plant cotton? Is it the Federal Treasurer's, the State member's, or the Government's? It is, of course, the farmer's prerogative. He is the one who has charge of his property and it is he who decides what he should plant. All that he wants from the Government and his association is advice to give him some protection against what the future may hold. Looking for markets before even considering production is similar to the old saying about the chicken and the egg. There is always a certain amount of risk involved. I feel that if an industry is controlled with honesty and integrity among the producer, the processor and the consumer, it has a good chance of success.

Let me again refer to cotton, which is held in such disregard by the Federal Treasurer. I suppose it would be possible with irrigation to produce cotton so well that it could even be exported from this country. Phenomenal production can result from irrigation. At Pilot Farm No. 1 in the Maraboon Dam site area the first year's crop was 2,400 lb of cotton an acre. This year production has increased to 3,300 lb an acre. At Pilot Farm No. 2, on, to use the words of Mr. Haigh, not brigalow soils but complex soils, the first crop was 2,500 lb an acre. Safflower under irrigation can produce 2 tons an acre. When managed by a skilled farmer, an irrigated farm can be extremely productive. A crop cannot be wiped out overnight merely by saying that production has caught up with consumption. After all, if Australia is to be thought of as a food bowl for the underprivileged countries of the world, as it could be in years to come, we have to think in terms of cheap production.

I have dealt with the decentralisation aspect and shown the productivity that irrigation can produce. The man on the land today has come a long way. Mention has been made here of a new attitude among school-teachers. When we think of professional men of all types let us not forget the man on the land, who has also progressed considerably. I often think how humble a young teacher going out to a one-teacher school in a rural area now feels when he finds that there are in his district Masters of Agricultural Science, Bachelors of Arts, Bachelors of Veterinary Science, and others far better educated than he is. As a consequence, he has to do a specially good job to live up to what is expected of him by these people. As children grow up on the land today, no longer is the dull boy kept on the property. He would be completely out of his depth. The man on the land today is a man who has had practical experience and who also has the scientific knowledge and qualifications to enable him to make a success of his job. This is a very good thing.

Mr. Aikens: The only thing that has stagnated is the legal profession.

Mr. O'DONNELL: I do not propose to comment on that interjection.

The action now proposed is a step along the road towards overcoming some of Queensland's problems. If things of this sort are not attempted, God help the State in the future.

I know very well what the people in western areas are thinking about fodder. They are thinking, as did some of the people in the South-west who bought farms in the St. George irrigation area, that they will use the products of such properties to supplement feed in the bad seasons that they experience so often. That is the idea of graziers in the Central West. If a grazier cannot buy a property, or does not feel disposed to buy a property, he is working out in dollars how much closer to him the fodder will be and how much the saving in transport will be.

Roads could be a factor in Central Queensland, and I remind hon. members of the difficulty in taking heavy vehicles from the Emerald district to the Blackall-Barcaldine area because of the bad state of the Capricorn Highway. A number of other factors must be taken into consideration, but I do not think any hon. member in this Chamber will criticise destructively any aspect of a project such as this. As I said, it is a step in the right direction.

I appreciate the interest shown in this project by the Minister, his departmental officers and the Minister for Primary Industries. Although the Minister for Conservation has initiated this plan, experts in the Department of Primary Industries will have the heavy responsibility of advising people to enable them to make their future as successful as we all wish it will be.

Mr. SULLIVAN (Condamine) (2.53 p.m.): I am very pleased to associate myself with the motion before the Committee, and it is pleasing that it is being accepted so readily by members of the Opposition. Of course, it was to be expected that all hon. members would be very much in favour of a scheme such as this. It is very easy to understand the pleased look on the face of the hon. member for Balonne, and I compliment him upon the contribution that he made to the debate.

Mr. Aikens: He astonished us by his support of the measure.

Mr. SULLIVAN: I do not think that is a fair interjection, because those of us who have known Mr. Beardmore over the years that he has been a member of this Assembly know that he has been a strong advocate for the people in his electorate, who have to endure greater hardships than do people in more favoured areas. I know that the hon. member has made many recommendations to

the Government along the lines now proposed, and no doubt he will be very grateful to the Government when this development is brought to fruition.

In recent weeks I have had an opportunity of looking at the St. George irrigation area, and I thank the Commissioner of Irrigation and Water Supply, Mr. Fred. Haigh, for the arrangements that he made with his engineer there, Mr. Barlow. I went to St. George with a couple of farmers from my own area, men who have been engaged all their lives, as I have, in dry farming. We went to see what is taking place in the area and what is envisaged with the establishment of the new dam.

There is no doubt that people in the St. George area are very pleased and grateful for what the Government is doing. It has been mentioned by hon. members on both sides of the Chamber, and by the Minister, that this no doubt is a very practical and real way of combating the recurring droughts that haunt this particular area of the State. The hon. member for Balonne, I think, gave us quite a good oration on this subject and it is not necessary for me to repeat what he said. The fact that these people will be able to grow their own fodder in areas that are prone to recurring droughts is a very big factor and, as was mentioned by the hon. member for Barcoo, they will not have to meet the high freight charges that are incurred in taking fodder from areas where it is grown at the present time. No doubt this is what was in the minds of the Government and the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission and its officers when they decided on a policy of developing water storages in the strategic areas enumerated by the Minister in the introduction of this resolution.

As a dry farmer, it was very interesting to me to visit this area and talk to several men who have purchased irrigation farms during the recent years of drought. I refer particularly to Mr. Claude Bowhay, Chairman of the Balonne Shire Council. I had a very interesting discussion with him and, as a very new wheat farmer, he was very proud of his efforts. Last year, under irrigation, he was able to grow 81 bushels of wheat to the acre. This indicates the fertility of the soil and its suitability for this type of production. With an assured artificial rainfall, if one can call it that, no doubt he can grow his crops fairly regularly and his reimbursement will be fairly secure.

Mr. Bowhay is one of the leading Merino stud breeders in this State, and his primary purpose in purchasing this farm was to save his Merino stud ewes and rams for breeding, which no doubt he did.

Other graziers are now interested in purchasing these farms. I believe one grazier has bought one and put a manager on his grazing property. He has taken over the farming himself. That indicates the interest that is being shown in this area.

The hon. member for Balonne mentioned that in the years since the development of the No. 1 irrigation area at St. George fat lambs have been grown very successfully there. I have seen those lambs sold at Cannon Hill and, as he mentioned, on many occasions they have topped the market. That is declining to some extent, but I might mention that recently in the Dalby district I had a look at a farm on which the owner is establishing improved pastures—clovers, para grass and other various grasses—by irrigation, and last year for 12 months this man, Mr. Schurmann, was able to fatten 1,200 lambs off 20 acres of improved irrigated pasture. That is 60 lambs to the acre, so it is possible that this type of thing can be established in the St. George irrigation area.

Mr. Newton: Where was he drawing water from?

Mr. SULLIVAN: Underground water—bores. I mention this simply to indicate to hon. members what can be done if people have water and are prepared to establish irrigated pastures.

A fortnight ago I was in the McAllister area. I had intended to attend a field day there yesterday but my responsibilities here prevented it. The soils in the McAllister area are much better than they are in the St. George area. However, an amazing thing has been achieved in that area by Mr. McKay. Admittedly it has been an abnormal winter, but he has established 900 acres of lucerne as part of his wheat-growing programme. After he has grown wheat for a while he builds up the fertility of the soil. In order to put nitrogen back he grows lucerne under a rotational programme. At the present time, under the management of a farm consultant, he is conducting trials on 100 acres of lucerne. This lucerne is being grown on the dry farming method; there is no irrigation. He put on 100 head of beef Shorthorn cows when they had just calved. He carried them through on 100 acres of lucerne divided into 10 equal paddocks, on the crash-feed method whereby they feed on 10 acres for a few days and are then moved on. By the time they had fed off the 100 acres of lucerne he was able to re-commence feeding off the first paddock. On this method the 100 acres carried the 100 cows and 92 calves until the calves were sold as vealers, and the cows carried on with plenty of feed.

This again is the sort of thing we can look forward to with the development of irrigation—not only in the St. George area but in other areas where irrigation can be provided. This is the sort of thing we have to do. With a growing population there will always be a demand for more land. This is a responsibility we have to measure up to. Projects such as this will make land available to young men and women who want it.

I have had a good look at the development of the cotton-growing industry in the area. I had the opportunity to talk to a couple of

people engaged in cotton growing, one of whom was a Californian. They are very pleased with the results they are able to get from their irrigated cotton. As figures have already been mentioned I will not weary the Committee with a repetition of them. They claim that because of the dry climate their cotton is far superior to that grown on the Darling Downs.

With the development of this second stage of the irrigation project at St. George I foresee tremendous development in cotton-growing. This is development as we like to see it. As hon. members have said, it is a form of decentralisation.

As the hon. member for Balonne said, this is possibly the front entrance to a very dry pastoral area, and this is one of the greatest things we can do to offset losses in future droughts. With the growing of fodder in the area, the graziers will know that it will be available to them in close proximity.

The Condamine River flows right through my electorate, and I look forward to further harnessing of its waters in the years that lie ahead. The soils on both sides of the Condamine River, right through my electorate down into the Balonne electorate, are capable of growing almost anything. All they need is the water.

Mr. Beardmore: The same watershed.

Mr. SULLIVAN: Yes. The waters that originate in the northern part of my electorate on the western slopes of the Bunya Mountains run through there. I therefore believe that we have a responsibility to ensure that we in Queensland have first use of that water, and anything that is left over can flow down to New South Wales and Victoria.

The Darling River Conservation Committee is also active in the scheme that is being investigated, and no doubt we in Queensland have a responsibility to ensure that we have first use of the water.

I commend the Minister, the Commissioner, and the departmental officers for what they are doing. There is no doubt that Queensland is a great State, but we have a responsibility. We know that all parts of the State do not enjoy the same natural rainfall. We therefore have a responsibility to conserve all the water we can. The people of Queensland can look to the future with confidence, knowing that they have a Government that is conscious of this need and knowing also that it will measure up to its responsibilities.

I am indeed pleased to have had an opportunity to support this measure, and it pleases me to see that most hon. members are of the same frame of mind.

Mr. AIKENS (Townsville South) (3.7 p.m.): I am not averse to this proposal, but we have heard from several speakers who were more concerned with giving us a long garrulous dissertation than they were with dealing with the salient facts associated with it. We listened to a speech on behalf of

the Labour Party from "Farmer Fred". I was astonished to know (although I will take his word for it) that he was ever in the country. He may have been a farmer, but it was a long time ago.

Mr. Davies interjected.

Mr. AIKENS: The agrarian expert from Maryborough has now interjected.

If this measure will stop the drift from the country areas to the city, if it will even turn the flood tide back a little, I will be very happy, because that is something I have advocated for many years just as every genuine North Queenslander has. In the long dissertations that we have so far heard on this measure—I do not mind the hon. members for Balonne and Condamine making a speech as it will read very well in the "Dalby Bugle", and that is all part and parcel of the political game—I do not think anyone has told us how many additional people have gone into the Balonne electorate, or the Condamine electorate, as a result of the original scheme approved by this Parliament many years ago. I do not want to hear how many extra fat lambs or how many dillberries per acre they are getting from that land.

Mr. Beardmore: There is an extra 30 per cent. in the population of the town of St. George.

Mr. AIKENS: If that is a fact, the framers of the original proposal might well be proud of it.

We know it is absolutely necessary in the interests of Australia, and the Australian people, to increase the national wealth of this country. National wealth comes from the soil. Wool, wheat, crops, and articles manufactured from the primary products, are the things that are really necessary. I am prepared to accept the assurances of the hon. members for Balonne and Condamine that the national wealth of Australia has been increased as a result of the implementation of the original scheme and may well be further increased as a result of the approval of this proposal. If that is true, it is worth while.

As to the disposal of the crops, I understand that the main crop will be wheat. If wheat is to be grown, the growers may be assured that they will be able to dispose of the crop, because everyone knows of the racket in the wheat industry so far as the Federal Government is concerned. It is an old saying—I have used it previously in this Chamber and shall repeat it—that the party that controls the wheat vote controls the Government, and the people of Australia have been paying for many years a much higher price for wheat than they should have in order to keep the votes of the wheat farmers in all States going to the party in control of the Federal Government.

Today it is much easier to sell wheat. I feel sure the farmers in this area will not grow the good-quality wheat that is sometimes grown around the Pittsworth area on the Darling Downs. Instead around St. George they will grow the old soft wheat and the bencubbin type. It does not matter what wheat they grow today, because under the present set-up all they have to do is get it to the railway siding or the silo and the benevolent Commonwealth Government will buy it from them at the declared price and then give it to the starving Indians to feed to their sacred cows. So there are no worries about getting rid of the wheat that will be grown in this area following the implementation of this scheme.

If cotton is to be grown there it must be grown in competition with the highly mechanised cotton-growing industry just over the New South Wales border.

Mr. Bennett: What about safflower?

Mr. AIKENS: That is a minor crop, if I can term it as such. I am dealing with the major crops. If cotton is to be grown we must keep our eyes and ears open to the threat from cotton development over the New South Wales border.

I can clearly remember—it is in "Hansard" for all to read—the former Treasurer, Sir Thomas Hiley, making some sneering remarks concerning these irrigation schemes in the country area of the State. He spoke very sarcastically of growing water-melons and selling them to the Aborigines and said, "What is the use of spending money on water conservation schemes in country areas if you cannot dispose of the crops produced as a result of them?" If these people grow wheat, the Federal Government will purchase all they can produce—any quantity, any quality—and give them the declared price, and then give it away. I shall deal with that matter on another measure and shall not pursue it further today.

Decentralisation should keep people in the country, and we have the best type of people in the country. In country areas we do not see long-haired louts, female impersonators, those distasteful "pork and beans" or poofsters; we see the best types in the country, and if this measure will keep them there I am in favour of it.

I think the most pertinent comment made so far today is that this scheme is estimated to cost \$8,600,000. We know, of course, what happens to Government estimates. We should consider ourselves lucky if the scheme is completed for \$30,000,000, because the actual cost of Government jobs today runs to nearly four times the estimate by the time the job is completed.

Mr. Bennett: Are you now attacking the public servants who prepared the estimate?

Mr. AIKENS: No. I am attacking the general system which takes no notice of industrial hold-ups, spiralling costs, and other obstacles encountered in the construction of

major jobs. I should appreciate it if the hon. member for South Brisbane would tell me of any major Government job, State or Federal, in the last 20 years that has been constructed within the original estimate. I sometimes wonder what those palatial mansions and palaces the Government is building along George Street will cost. But the measure does not deal with them so I shall not digress.

I want to know from the Minister who is piloting this measure through the Committee, or from the Premier, who has graced the Chamber with his presence, how they will raise the \$8,600,000. Where is the money to come from? Is it to be raised from hire-purchase companies? If so, that pool of finance is unlimited. If we are going to allow the greedy, predatory, hire-purchase companies to dip their sticky, hungry fingers into the pockets of the taxpayers of Queensland to build this dam, why not use the same source of finance for other projects?

We have heard of all the irrigation works that are to be carried out in the southern portion of Queensland. We have heard members of the Government parties and the Labour Party tell us of some of the irrigation work to be done in the Central Queensland area. It appears to me that the Government has become completely myopic towards irrigation works in the North. Not a brass farthing has been spent on irrigation in North Queensland in the ten years that the Government has been in office, and it seems that it has no intention of doing anything in the next ten years. If \$30,000,000 is to be raised through hire-purchase companies to build this dam, why not raise \$230,000,000 to build the Burdekin Dam? It is a much better economic proposition than this or any other proposed dam that I have heard of.

If the Government is going to get itself in the grip of the hire-purchase companies, I can only assume that it is hoping—or plotting, planning or expecting—to be defeated at the next election, because I know of no better way of crippling an incoming Labour Government than to have the finances of the State hopelessly involved with hire-purchase companies. If that is so, by the time the Labour Party takes office in two years' time the State will be completely bankrupt and the incoming Government will be beaten before it starts.

Mr. Lloyd: The Government is bankrupt now.

Mr. AIKENS: Yes, but that is nothing compared with the financial position in which it will be in if it gets tangled up with hire-purchase companies. If the Government rules that local authorities can finance capital works from—

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN (Mr. Hodges): Order!

Mr. AIKENS: Surely I am in order in asking how the money will be raised.

Mr. Richter: I told you, but you didn't listen.

Mr. AIKENS: As a favour to a fine old North Queensland gentleman, tell me again.

Mr. Richter: I told you before—by money from State funds.

Mr. AIKENS: Of course it will be by money from State funds, but where is it to be raised?

Mr. Bennett: From motorists, with traffic tickets. That is where they are getting their money now.

Mr. AIKENS: I am receiving evasive replies to questions asked not only during the course of debate but placed on the Business Paper. One is very lucky to get a concise reply that can be read and understood by the man in the street. It is all very well for the Minister to say that the money will come from State revenue. It is a wonder he did not say, "from Consolidated Revenue." Assuming that it is to come from Consolidated Revenue, I again ask the Minister how it is to get into Consolidated Revenue before it is diverted to this proposal. How is the Government going to get the money to put into Consolidated Revenue before spending it on this dam?

Mr. Richter: Loan funds.

Mr. Lloyd: They can't even build schools.

Mr. AIKENS: Let us not be diverted now; there will be plenty of time to talk about that later.

That is all that I have to say on this proposal. If it does only half the things that the hon. members for Balonne and Condamine say it will, it will be well worthwhile. However, as the representative of the useful people of Queensland—the most useful and certainly the most intelligent, namely, the electors of Townsville South—I have a right to ask if, having started the financial rot by permitting hire-purchase finance for local-government works, the Government is going to continue the rot and use similar finance on these irrigation works. If the Government wants to leave a Labour Government flat broke before it starts, let it get the State and the people tangled up with hire-purchase companies before it goes out of office.

Mr. McKECHNIE (Carnarvon) (3.20 p.m.): Before proceeding to support the motion, I should like to throw some further light on the questions raised by the hon. member for Townsville South. In the report, under the heading "Finance", it is stated quite clearly—

"It is proposed that the capital cost of the project be met by annual appropriation by Parliament as required from Loan Funds to the Construction Trust Fund of the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission. Interest and sinking fund charges on expenditure from this fund are met

from Consolidated Revenue. Surplus of revenue over operation, maintenance and management costs would be paid to Consolidated Revenue and provide a contribution towards these charges."

That answers the hon. member's question about finance.

Mr. Aikens: How is it going to get into those funds in the first place? Tell me that. Loan funds from whom?

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. McKECHNIE: The other matter raised by the hon. member was that the estimated cost of \$8,600,000 would end up as \$30,000,000. I have much more confidence than the hon. member has in the planning department of the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission. I will give an example to make my point. The hon. member implied that the cost of this scheme will be four times as high as the estimate. The Coolmunda Dam was estimated to cost \$5,000,000. Despite rising costs over almost four years and additional work that was carried out, the increase in the cost of that dam was only 20 per cent. That is not bad; it is a long way below the 300 or 400 per cent. implied by the hon. member.

The third point raised by the hon. member for Townsville South I shall answer on behalf of my confrere the hon. member for Balonne, who is very proud of the wheat grown in the Balonne area. It is not low-grade wheat that will be foisted on the public, as was suggested by the hon. member for Townsville South. It is some of the best wheat grown in Queensland and, because of its high protein content, has attracted 6s. to 8s. a bushel above the f.a.q. price.

I support the construction of the Kajarabie Dam as outlined by the Minister and supported by the hon. member for Balonne. The watershed supplying it is immense. It begins at Killarney, swings round behind Toowoomba, goes north of Dalby to Roma and Miles, and also takes in the watershed of the Carnarvon Ranges. This water will come down and be trapped just below the confluence of the Maranoa and Balonne Rivers above St. George, and the dam will collect 89,000 acre-feet. As the Minister said, it will be sufficient to irrigate almost as much land as is now irrigated in the Lockyer Valley, and, in round figures, it will boost the area under irrigation from 7,000 acres to 28,000 acres.

The hon. member for Barcoo said that hon. members on this side of the Chamber should have paid tribute to the previous Government for establishing the pilot scheme. I have not read the speech made by the Leader of the Opposition in 1953—of course, Mr. Nicklin is now Premier—but references from both sides of the Chamber indicate that he very strongly supported the scheme at that time. We acknowledge that the pilot scheme was a good one; but how much better must this one, which is four times as large, be. We

have profited from the pilot scheme, but the Country-Liberal Government is now doing four times as well. That is about the usual relativity between the performance of this Government and that of former Governments. I pay tribute to the former Government for establishing the scheme, but this Government is fortunate in being able to do so much better.

Reference was made to how the implementation of this scheme had increased the population of the area. As the hon. member for Balonne interjected, the population of the town of St. George increased by 30 per cent. after the pilot scheme was established, and it has been calculated by the department that at least 20 per cent. of that 30 per cent. was directly due to the benefits accruing from the St. George weir.

The next point is that these schemes are the best approach we have to two great problems, namely, decentralisation and drought mitigation. The previous smaller scheme increased the population of St. George by 30 per cent., so we can hope that the increase will be much greater under this expanded scheme. At the same time, we are building up drought reserves in this area, which is possibly one of the farthest inland points in South Queensland where we could establish this sort of fodder conservation. It is right in the heart of sheep country that was so badly hit by the recent drought.

Mr. O'Donnell: There is a third aspect, too—increased production.

Mr. McKECHNIE: Yes; I will come to that.

Mr. Aikens: And that 30 per cent. increase in population will be an increase in the best type of population, too.

Mr. McKECHNIE: They are all good people.

There will be this drought mitigation, and, as the hon. member for Barcoo interjected, it will build up production. However, we have to be careful that a balance is kept between drought mitigation and increased production. As most hon. members are aware, if you over-increase production you take away a certain amount of drought mitigation.

Mr. O'Donnell: Don't you think that depends on intelligent farming?

Mr. McKECHNIE: Yes, I do, but the areas have to be large enough so that increased production can result. There must be an opportunity to conserve fodder. There is no real doubt, in my mind anyway, that drought mitigation must be attacked by means of on-farm storage of fodder. Landholders on dry blocks should contract with owners of irrigated blocks to purchase fodder at a fixed price year in and year out—not when drought is on them, but the years preceding drought so as to build up a stock-pile on the property where it will be needed.

One of the main crops in this area will be lucerne, and I hope a system is introduced that is rather new to us, namely, the pelleting of lucerne. The area is big enough. The machines for this type of procedure are very expensive, but I am sure it will attract a contractor into the area who will convert the lucerne into pellets, which is a less expensive method of preserving it as a drought reserve.

Grain and fat lambs have been dealt with. The second stage of the Leslie Dam and the Pike Creek Dam must be undertaken in the foreseeable future. As a matter of fact, there is a meeting of the Border Rivers Commission early next month. Fortunately, the authorities in New South Wales now have a better outlook towards our Border Rivers Scheme. I strongly stress the benefits that result from these dams. The construction of Coolmunda Dam at Inglewood is not yet completed, but it is already apparent that it is boosting the population of Inglewood. Houses are going up and the population will further increase as time goes by. Similarly will this Kajarabie Dam above St. George bring the same benefits to the town of St. George. At the moment, huts from Coolmunda Dam are about to be shifted to the site at St. George, so that we have continuity. When this job is finished I hope we will see other jobs undertaken and these huts coming to Pike Creek so that this is a continuing process and decentralisation and drought mitigation will be a continuing feature of this Government. I strongly support the proposal.

Mr. MULLER (Fassifern) (3.29 p.m.): I also support this proposal. The trouble is that we do not conserve sufficient water or build enough dams of this type. Water conservation is something that is close to my heart. I think hon. members will remember that during the three years that I was Minister in charge of Irrigation we launched three of these schemes. I am not taking credit for that, but it was on my recommendation that the Government launched three of these schemes. We had these other schemes under examination at that time.

Although this is a very important project, it is not the only pebble on the beach. However, I commend the Minister for introducing this proposal today. Without wanting to be parochial, let me say that the big pebble on the beach is the scheme for the Logan and the Albert, which I think is more urgently required. As I do not want to be parochial I support the present proposal because I believe that water conservation is something we cannot neglect. The big difficulty still is that we get so little assistance from the Commonwealth Government to finance these works. It has been asked where we are to get the money from. We get the money from the same source as all other loan money. The difficulty is that loan money is so limited.

I have said this before, but I think it is worth repeating: in the United States of America the Federal Government finds all

the money for irrigation. It advances the money to the States at the rate of 2½ per cent. over a period of 40 years. In practice, that means that it costs the States nothing. They refund the money at the rate of 2½ per cent. over 40 years. In that way they have sufficient capital to do the work they require. A total of \$160,000,000 a year is divided among 16 States. It must be remembered that here the Commonwealth Government has the money bags, and we have to rely on its support or help.

The hon. member for Barcoo said that this scheme was initiated by the Labour Government in its time. That is not quite correct. The Labour Government talked about it. When I followed the Labour Minister of those days I did not even go on with it; we were considering it. However, credit must be given where it is due. It is true that the Labour Government launched the St. George irrigation plan, but it did not make a perfect job of it. I am not being critical, because I realise that water conservation in that territory and on the coast are two different things. The scheme was not a great success at that time, and it was left to us to build it up and put it on a business footing. Like all irrigation schemes, it had its teething problems.

There are four essentials for the success of any water conservation scheme. First of all, you must have good-quality water; secondly, you must have a suitable catchment area; thirdly, you must have practical men who know how to use it; fourthly, you must have a market.

The real trouble at St. George originally—up to a point it still exists, although it is gradually being overcome—was the difficulty of marketing. I went to St. George on one occasion and spoke to a man who had grown 10 acres of beautiful lucerne. Most hon. members would know what it would have cost him to prepare the land, sow the seed, get a good strike and grow that stand of lucerne. He had turned over the 10 acres of lucerne so that the roots were sticking up in the air. I said, "Young fellow, you should be in gaol for doing that."

He said, "That is all very fine. What do I want it for? I have to live. Nobody will buy my lucerne. I can't sell it to the graziers." When I asked him why he could not sell his lucerne to the graziers he said, "They say they don't require it, so I ploughed it up to grow cotton." That is the sort of thing that happens.

We are gradually getting over the problem with cotton-growing. At that time there was a lot of trouble with the boll weevil. I am told that the growers are rapidly getting over that difficulty by a continuous system of spraying. It shows that there is a means of getting over every problem when you have the know-how.

Water conservation in this dry territory is something that we have to think of. I do not want to make a comparison here with

the Logan and the Albert. The difference between this scheme and the Logan and Albert scheme is that in the latter area we have the people who are prepared to use the water. We have 15,000 acres of beautiful land and each of the farmers has irrigation equipment. Their only trouble is that when they want water there is none, and during the wet season the water flows to the sea and is lost. In the area under review the producers have not the equipment, but there is the argument that the need is greater because it is a dry area. On the one hand there is one story, and on the other hand there is another.

While I commend the Minister for introducing this proposal, I hope it will not be long before he sees fit to introduce a similar measure to bring the Logan and Albert scheme to reality. It has additional merit in that it is on the outskirts of the city of Brisbane. I forecast that in a few years' time new industries will not be practicable unless a better water supply can be provided. To illustrate this point I cite what happened in the Moogerah area. Without doubt the Moogerah Dam made the Fassifern district. In addition, the Swanbank Power House provides power for Brisbane, Ipswich, the Downs and elsewhere, but it could not function without the Moogerah Dam. That applies to industries all around Brisbane. Quite a number of heavy industries are contemplated in and around Brisbane, but they cannot be established without an additional water supply. The establishment of an additional water supply is so urgent that we must do something about it.

In this instance it is proposed to spend \$8,600,000. I pay a tribute to the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission on the estimates that have been prepared for schemes that have been mooted and completed. The final costs have been so close to the estimates that they could not possibly be any better.

An Opposition Member: They are pretty good engineers.

Mr. MULLER: Yes, they are. They have done their job particularly well and I feel it is my duty to give them credit for it. For Moogerah the estimate was £1,300,000, and we completed the job for a little less than that. We were extremely fortunate in being able to carry out the work without being beset with rains, floods, and so on. All these things enter into the picture and can affect the ultimate cost.

The estimates for this scheme have been very well prepared. Likewise, the business side of the project has been gone into very carefully in considering the crops that can be grown in the St. George area. We could meet certain problems, but this is in an area away from the coast where feed for the sheep is necessary. The graziers have wakened up to the problem. A moment ago I referred to a man who could not sell his

lucerne, but we now have the case of Mr. Bowhay, who has bought one of the irrigated farms. He is showing what can be done. However, we cannot expect the little fellow with a few hundred acres of irrigated land, with limited capital resources, to build up a fodder supply to meet the convenience of people in the far western areas. The time will come when somebody, somehow, will be expected to share the responsibility for financing the storage of the produce in that area.

Let us look at the economics of this scheme. When it started it was virtually impossible to sell the lucerne in a wet season, and by the time it got to Brisbane it was almost worthless. The farmers tried to grow cotton and they struck a problem with the wog. We then gave them more land to enable them to raise lambs. They were successful with this. However, lambs do not come from hen's eggs; ewes are necessary, and a sufficient area is needed to raise the lambs. The farmers have since got on their feet and have got the scheme going in quite a good way.

Let me tell the Committee of my first visit to Theodore and the Dawson Valley irrigation scheme, which is quite a sound scheme. Hon. members from Central Queensland know what happens. People in that area are 149 miles from Rockhampton. Rockhampton is another 400 miles from Brisbane, and by the time lucerne went from Rockhampton to Brisbane and back it was worthless. That is why we must know, when we provide water, what we will do with the product after we have it. If we do not, the scheme will be economically unsound.

It is a question of whether this scheme should have priority over the Logan and Albert Rivers scheme. As I have said, I will not adopt a parochial view on this proposal. I feel it could be made a success. I inspected the site at the time and felt that we were not justified in going on with it until the scheme was on a sound footing. It is now on a sound footing; we have some land, and I believe that as a result of the experience we have gained the scheme cannot fail.

Until the St. George scheme was put into effect little or no cultivation was done in the district; in fact, little was done for many miles this side of St. George. It would be safe to say that St. George, if not the best, is one of the best sheep districts in Queensland. I felt it was worth mentioning the little knowledge and experience I have had in this matter because there are so many critics who are ready to jump in. If the scheme does not measure up in every detail, somebody points the finger of scorn at it. If we want people to live in these areas, we must do something to help them live there. We complain about the drift from the country to the city. This is one way we can steady it. If these people have to provide fodder for stock in dry periods such as we have gone through, and have to bring it from the coast and pay

exorbitant freight on it, their position becomes economically unsound. But if they can grow the fodder in that area as a result of this scheme, then we are doing Queensland a good turn.

Something must be done to impress on our representatives in the Commonwealth Parliament that we must do something more than give lip service in the way of water conservation. The proposal to grant \$50,000,000 over five years to the six States is just chicken feed. We will not get anywhere with it. We must do something bigger than that. The hon. member for Townsville South asked a moment ago where we would get the money from. When we look around and see what money is found for—I am not critical, because some projects may be necessary—surely money could be found for urgent projects like water conservation because of the climatic conditions in Queensland. This is the driest continent in the world and we are a long time waking up to that fact. Our rainfall is spasmodic. When it does rain the water races away and in six weeks' time we have our tongues hanging out for water. We have many natural advantages; this is a disadvantage. It is the duty of this Parliament, and every member of it, to do all possible to establish more water conservation schemes in Queensland.

Mr. WALLIS-SMITH (Tablelands) (3.45 p.m.): First of all, I should like to support the hon. member for Belmont, who in his first few remarks so ably said that we on this side of the Chamber are very much in favour of this scheme. I say that because it contrasts so strongly with the attitude of the Premier, who was Leader of the Opposition when a similar scheme was introduced on 1 April, 1952. When the Mareeba-Dimbulah irrigation project was before Parliament, the Premier, as Leader of the Opposition, said at page 2086, Vol. 203 of "Hansard"—

"There is no harm, however, in adding this to our programme. If this particular item should actually become a performance by a Labour Government during the lifetime of any member of this House, one will be entitled to believe that the age of miracles is not past. Let the Minister get on with the job."

Mr. Tucker: Who said that?

Mr. WALLIS-SMITH: Mr. Nicklin, in 1952.

I also refer to what was said at that time by the hon. member for Fassifern. Mr. Muller, who has just resumed his seat. He said—

"Let us deal now with the Mareeba-Dimbulah scheme. It is to cost £20,000,000. It must be remembered that it should pay interest and redemption and that in addition we must see some return for the money expended. If we merely

go in for irrigation with our eyes closed, which is the position here, we are only doing a disservice to the cause of irrigation. All we need is a few more wild-cat schemes and the people of Queensland will be fed up with irrigation."

I think it important to know these things, because to be consistent a person cannot have one approach to irrigation and water conservation in 1952 and a completely different approach in 1967. "Hansard" contains pages and pages of what Opposition members, now Government members, then said about that project. There is an example of a scheme to bring people to an area, and it was sneered at by hon. members who are now on the Government side.

I commend those responsible for the preparation of the report on the St. George scheme that was tabled in Parliament. It is an excellent report, in which the objects of the scheme are set out very clearly and concisely. There are, however, parts of it that require a little more investigation in the light of what has happened in other irrigation areas. I shall deal with those points as I proceed.

In the first place, this scheme will extend the supply of water for the 20 farms presently irrigated. That number of farms does not represent a large number of people. Various members have said they are interested in seeing people return to country areas. The scheme is also to provide for 32 new farms. On the figures shown, each of those farms will cost \$260,000, and I wonder, just as some members of the then Opposition wondered when the Mareeba-Dimbulah irrigation project was under consideration, whether that is economically sound.

The farms are to be of approximately 450 acres each. Here I bring to the notice of the Committee something that happened only a week ago in the Mareeba-Dimbulah irrigation area. There was a sale of four blocks of similar size, with the very new and advantageous condition that the buyer of the first block could have an option on any or all of the other blocks at the price he paid for the first one. Is that consistent with a desire to see more people in the area? Of course it is not. The first block was sold for more than double the upset price, and the purchaser exercised his option.

Mr. Richter: No, he didn't.

Mr. WALLIS-SMITH: He exercised his option on one block.

Mr. Richter: Three of the four went to competition.

Mr. WALLIS-SMITH: He exercised an option on one block.

Mr. Richter: Yes.

Mr. WALLIS-SMITH: Right. He got two blocks there, then waited and found that he could get another one much more cheaply;

so he eventually got three blocks. That man was Mr. Rankine, who is very prominent in the Country Party in Queensland.

The blocks to which I am referring were similar in size to those in this scheme, and I do not wish to see anything like that happening at St. George. I am sorry that the hon. member for Balonne is not in the Chamber, but I ask the hon. member for Carnarvon to remember what I have said and make sure that an option clause is not included. I sent a telegram to the Minister asking him to remove the condition of option. His reply was, "This is a Cabinet decision. Regret cannot revoke it".

Mr. Richter: It went very well, didn't it?

Mr. WALLIS-SMITH: For people going into the back country? One man with three blocks! It is to be hoped that things of that sort do not continue to happen.

I am not trying to throw cold water on this scheme—there is probably not enough water there to throw on it, anyway. In North Queensland and in other areas where there are big rivers, the Government would not have any trouble finding plenty of water. My aim is to see that a scheme such as this brings the maximum number of people into the area where it is situated. Decentralisation of population has been mentioned by virtually every hon. member who has taken part in this debate, and population certainly will not be decentralised if things such as those to which I have referred are allowed to happen.

Another question that has not been asked is this: will this scheme provide a permanent return by preventing floods? This can be assessed from experience with other schemes where there is a large catchment area and the dam is of such magnitude that it does control flooding in the wet season. If this scheme is compared with the Tinaroo scheme, it will be found that the Tinaroo scheme gives a return that is not mentioned in the St. George scheme and which I do not think will ever eventuate there. In spite of that, the Government intends to pay this exorbitant price to establish 32 farms in the St. George area. The Tinaroo scheme contains hundreds of farms and, although it should have been completed in January, 1964, it still is not complete.

Let me conclude on this note. When the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission has done its job of conserving water, let it hand the land that will be served by that water to the Department of Primary Industries and the Department of Lands. In many of my representations relating to the allocation of land, I find that I have to go away from those two departments. In my opinion, it is not good that officers of the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission should be responsible for allocating land or dealing with applications lodged by people for land in an

area such as this. Once the water is conserved, the land should be dealt with by the Department of Lands in conjunction with the Department of Primary Industries, which would be responsible for the crops.

As I have mentioned crops, perhaps I should refer to some of the difficulties that arose when the former Labour Government undertook the original water conservation scheme. Here again, the Premier came to the fore and said that the extension of the Dimbulah scheme and of the Burdekin River Authority would not be possible because there was no market for the production of both schemes. If we are to talk about a market to offset a very important conservation scheme, we will be simply running around in circles. Let the Government look to the marketing authorities and establish machinery that makes marketing work, not as it did in the last drought when there was no machinery at all available to handle fodder. It is up to the Government to establish machinery that will handle efficiently all types of fodder in the mitigation of drought.

Mr. MURRAY (Clayfield) (3.57 p.m.): It is interesting that the hon. member for Tablelands should have dragged in "Hansard" and looked back 17 years. This can be very profitable, but at times it can be very unprofitable, too. Let me say to the hon. gentleman that if we used what was written in "Hansard" without also realising what the particular situation was at the time we could get things very much out of context. I doubt very much whether the dam referred to on the Tablelands—I presume the hon. member was referring to the Tinaroo Falls Dam—was constructed with the benefit of the type of cost analyses by agricultural economists that is available to us today. I am quite sure that if we look back to the original Burdekin proposals and find that they had the benefit of sound cost analyses by agricultural economists, I will eat my hat as those who would have grown the produce recommended in the report on the particular farms would certainly have had to eat it themselves.

Of course, if one wants to go back and refer to "Hansard", I am quite sure that the Premier, as Leader of the Opposition in those days, was perfectly justified—as the hon. member for Fassifern no doubt was—in querying the project at that time on the information that was supplied to this Parliament.

Mr. Wallis-Smith: I am not doubting that.

Mr. MURRAY: Fair enough. We should be careful how we use "Hansard" in quoting it as a man's opinion, particularly if we quote his words out of their full context. Of course, it can also be very useful, but it goes deeper than just taking the words of "Hansard".

Mr. Tucker interjected.

Mr. MURRAY: The hon. member for Townsville North knows that very well. Here we have a project to be approved by this Parliament, and this is one of those fascinating situations where we have speakers alternating across the Chamber and, speaker by speaker, agreeing with the proposal put forward by the Minister. Of course, it is being agreed with for many reasons, most of which have been outlined very well and very lucidly from both sides of the Committee today. It is a sort of agreeable situation when everybody supports the measure. At the same time, hon. members have taken the opportunity to make some observations and recommendations for the future and indeed for the working of this particular proposal.

We have had a very excellent report placed before us, and we have been asked to approve of the scheme. I commend the Minister for the report, which fully explains the situation. It does what it sets out to do. However, if such reports are to be put before us—which they should be—if possible, they should come into the hands of hon. members at a longer period before the debate than has been the case on this occasion.

Mr. O'Donnell: It was published in February.

Mr. MURRAY: It may have been. It is sometimes difficult to get these things out. I suggest that, where possible, Ministers should get these reports out early so that hon. members such as the hon. member for Belmont can study them before the relevant debate. I congratulate the hon. member for Belmont on his contribution. He has been referred to as "Farmer Fred". It seems that the hon. member might well have spent some of his early days on a farm and has some memory of sitting under a cow doing what one normally does when one is sitting under a cow.

It has been interesting to hear hon. members opposite dealing very intelligently with this proposal. There have been some very useful contributions from both sides during the debate. We have been asked to approve of a scheme costing \$8,600,000. It is of some interest that we are being asked to approve of it. Apparently that is a provision of the Act. It is a great pity that, on other occasions when vast sums of money are being spent by the Government, Parliament is not required to give its approval. This would be an extremely useful precaution, and Parliament would feel that it was participating in its proper role of approving expenditure by the Government. One could think of other great schemes where this is desirable—building schemes and the like. Currently the Government is spending many millions of dollars on projects which do not come before this Parliament for approval. Despite the cost of those schemes, there is no investigation by a Public Works Committee or a

Public Accounts Committee. The hon. member for Carnarvon mentioned that the Coolmunda Dam cost 20 per cent. more than the estimate. This needs investigation. There might be very good reasons for it, but the reasons should be investigated and known to this Parliament. The reasons for any scheme costing more than the estimate should be thoroughly investigated. It is the cumulative spending in excess of estimates that runs us into all sorts of financial problems. We need to exercise the greatest care and caution. It is the responsibility of this Parliament to make sure that estimates of the cost of schemes are not exceeded—certainly not by 20 per cent. Over the time of construction of this scheme we should be able to project reasonable types of events that are likely to occur, such as wage rises. By foreseeing such things we should always be able to keep very close to the mark.

Mr. McKechnie: There was additional work.

Mr. MURRAY: Did it come before Parliament for approval? That is the type of thing I am raising. I believe it is critically important if there is to be greater expenditure than outlined to us for our approval for these matters to come before Parliament.

Mr. O'Donnell: The Premier and the Treasurer could adopt the same attitude at Loan Council meetings with reference to Federal expenditure, could they not?

Mr. MURRAY: That is true.

I make the suggestion that, in the absence of a Public Works Committee and a Public Accounts Committee, any figure over \$500,000 should come before Parliament for approval rather than the sum involved in the building of a dam such as this, simply because a provision is contained in an Act of Parliament that it must come before Parliament.

Mr. Carey: Would you change your opinion if you happened to become a Cabinet Minister?

Mr. MURRAY: In answer to the hon. member, I would not. It is a fundamental principle that Parliament should be the watchdog over public expenditure. In any case, the hon. member for Albert has raised a very hypothetical question.

Hon. members on both sides of the Chamber have agreed readily to this proposition because it embodies the regulation of rivers and streams—in other words, the regulation of water. We are so far behind the plans of the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission and what Ministers from time to time would like to have seen implemented in this State, simply because of the attitude of this Parliament, and of Parliaments over the years, to water conservation. New South Wales is racing well ahead of us. The Minister can correct me if I am wrong, but I believe that all the water south of Sydney

is now either regulated or in the process of being regulated. I also believe that a number of streams north of Sydney are in the process of being regulated. Perhaps the run-offs are not as great as some of ours, but we must get on with this work for the reasons that have been so thoroughly outlined by hon. members here. These are worth-while projects and this one is particularly worth while. It is obviously a good investment for the State. The Minister for Lands must be almost green with envy when he looks at this report and compares the capital investment here, together with the net income, with that for blocks in the brigalow scheme.

The hon. member for Barcoo dealt with me critically without understanding, I suggest, what my motive was the other day in another debate when I said that the \$60,000 we lent to the individual settlers in the brigalow scheme would be very welcome indeed in the form of assembly halls, libraries, or schools, for our educational system. That sum of \$60,000 would be very welcome, especially when we consider that private capital is available to do the brigalow job.

One cannot argue against this scheme, because it is a true application of the principle of the Government's supplying the facilities. We are providing the proper facilities here, facilities that will then allow private enterprise to get on with the job.

I should like the Minister, if he can, to enlighten me as to how this land is to be supplied. Will it be allocated by ballot through the Department of Lands, or will it be allocated by auction? Can the Minister indicate what is intended? Can he do so now, Mr. Hooper?

Mr. Richter: It will be allocated in exactly the same way as in the irrigation scheme at Tinaroo—mostly by auction.

Mr. MURRAY: Fair enough. I raised that point because I believe the information is vital to this Committee. Those who are successful in obtaining these blocks by auction or ballot will therefore supply their own finance, I presume, to get on with the job. Is that the intention?

Mr. Richter: They get time to pay for it.

Mr. MURRAY: These points are critical to the Committee, because here we supply the facility and make the land available by one system or another, and the successful man gets on with the job. In a report such as this he is given, after thorough investigation by the agricultural economists and officers of the Department of Primary Industries in conjunction with officers of the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission, a series of alternatives. He is told that if he accepts one of these propositions his income will be a certain figure based on known prices today. They are not bound to do this, nor

will they in all cases. But at least they know that if they accept any of these suggestions their net return on capital investment will be a certain amount. And they are indeed extraordinarily high amounts. I hope hon. members opposite are happy with this, because we will have a lot of little capitalists on our hands, successful men on the land, and hon. members opposite often decry anyone making a profit. The alternatives are here. The propositions are set out.

We cannot suggest for one moment that this will be a drought mitigation scheme. The hon. member for Fassifern dealt with this subject. Probably the very year we have a drought they might be growing vegetables on this irrigated country. That might sound facetious. But there will be a crop in that year or decade that will be profitable for them to grow, and it may not be a fodder crop. They might follow an intensive stocking scheme such as outlined by the hon. member for Condamine. They might run a beast to the acre and raise a vealer. They will probably be better on irrigated crops than intense grazing and stocking. There will be no great turn-off of fodder because, if a man determines that he will graze this country to the limit by putting stock on and off it according to production, irrigation, and seasons, the turn-off of fodder for other than what he wants to store may be very little. So do not let us look at it as a drought-relief scheme. If we are to have drought-relief schemes there must be another approach by the Government to give security in time of drought, for instance, wheat reserves or fodder reserves of some sort. The Government must face up to that ultimately. These schemes are not necessarily drought-relief schemes, although they do give great security to those who own the land, because it is irrigated.

The benefits of decentralisation have been mentioned by hon. members on both sides of the Chamber, and they are very real. Here we are encouraging decentralisation of more families onto projects that will succeed; there is no doubt about that, because of the diversity available to those who settle on this land. Pursuits perhaps not yet thought of will be followed by men in the country when they have the necessary facilities made available to them.

The hon. member for Barcoo said that these matters cannot be considered merely in terms of dollars and cents. Of course they cannot. Things must be started on a proper basis; we cannot go into wild-cat schemes. That is why I say that the report that was tabled is an excellent one. There are, however, still some intangibles, and the degree of success and profit to come from the scheme cannot yet be foreseen. Throughout the State, projects of this nature should be undertaken as rapidly as possible. The State

should be able to afford them year by year, as they are schemes that do the maximum amount of good with the greatest amount of security. That is what Queensland needs.

This is a Government undertaking that all of us in the Chamber support to the fullest extent. Give the farmer the facilities and let him get on with the job, and he will do it. Do not interfere with him; get off his back and give him his freedom. He has proved, generation after generation, that if he is given the facilities, and Governments keep off his back, he will do the job and do it thoroughly.

Mr. LICKISS (Mt. Coot-tha) (4.16 p.m.): I support the motion before the Committee, and I extend my congratulations to Dr. Harvey and Mr. Haigh, and to their departments, on the production of such a very comprehensive and excellent report.

Recent droughts have highlighted the need for water conservation, and it is interesting to note that when water conservation is spoken of in this State we immediately relate it to rural production. In Tasmania today the shortage of water is related to a lack of hydro-electricity. Water conservation is therefore not something to be related purely to the rural sector. Indeed, I was somewhat taken to task following my maiden speech in this Chamber because I commented on the Burdekin River scheme. Indeed, the hon. member for Townsville North hopped on the band wagon and said that I had better not go north again. I have since been there several times.

Mr. Tucker: Incognito—you sneaked in and sneaked out.

Mr. LICKISS: I never play that sort of trick. I leave those tactics to the hon. member.

During my maiden speech I mentioned priorities. I think the Burdekin River Dam will ultimately be built and will be required possibly in the first instance by industry at Townsville; secondly, for hydro-electricity generation; and thirdly, for irrigation. That seems to me to be the order of importance.

Mr. Tucker: You didn't say that.

Mr. LICKISS: If the hon. member learns to read and cares to go through "Hansard" for the last six years, he will see in black and white that I have already said that. I still believe that that will possibly be the future of a Burdekin River Dam.

Mr. Tucker: What about all the salt that you said was in the ground?

Mr. LICKISS: It is still there, in some clay-type soils. We are now examining the proposal placed before us today, and we are fortunate in being able to consider it in the light of an excellent report.

Much has already been said in this debate about decentralisation. It is very significant, if I may make the point, that so far during this session of Parliament I have sat in amazement listening to a number of hon. members on both sides of the Chamber hopping onto the band wagon of town and regional planning. It is a case of reluctant realisation of the vital necessity for this concept of planning. People are beginning to recognise the need for town and regional planning. Indeed, the Lord Mayor of Brisbane now finds that regional planning could be advantageous to Queensland. The hon. member for Ipswich East—

Mrs. Jordan: Ipswich West.

Mr. LICKISS: Ipswich West.

The hon. member also supported town and regional planning in a speech that she made in this Chamber.

If it were not for the excellence of the report, in dealing with a matter such as this one might well say, "We are planning in isolation, because we do not know the regional concept of what this plan will do in a given area". It is for this reason that I again strongly advocate the early adoption of town and regional planning in Queensland.

Mrs. Jordan: I will give you some maps that are six years old.

Mr. LICKISS: I will give the hon. member some that are 14 years old.

I believe there are some water problems in Central Queensland at present, although they are connected with electricity, not with rural activities. Questions such as that, when related to town and regional planning, will bring the future planning for the progress of the State into focus. Without planning—without co-ordinated planning—I suggest that we could be "flying blind", to use a phrase used in the Air Force.

I shall very quickly relate the scheme proposed in this motion to the proposed brigalow development scheme. My colleague the hon. member for Clayfield commented on this point. I have pointed out that brigalow development is a high-risk, high-capital venture. I should say that, in contrast, this would be a low-risk, moderate-capital venture. This scheme is set up so that a person will go onto the land completely unencumbered by Government directions. In contrast, under the brigalow scheme it is incumbent on the incoming lessee to do certain things that are mapped out for him.

Mr. O'Donnell: Those strings were attached by the Commonwealth Government.

Mr. LICKISS: They were not. They were laid down in conjunction with the State Government.

Let me say how pleasing it is to see a scheme such as this brought before Parliament. It is one which merits the commendation of hon. members. I agree with the comments made by hon. members who have spoken in support of the motion, and I again make the plea that, in dealing with matters such as this, planning should be dealt with on a regional basis. If that were done, it would ensure that the planning was in accordance with the requirements of the State and in the direction in which we would like to see this State progress.

Hon. H. RICHTER (Somerset—Minister for Local Government and Conservation) (4.24 p.m.), in reply: Very briefly, I thank hon. members for their generous support of the motion. Although a few derogatory comments were made during the debate, there was no real opposition to the scheme. I am very pleased that hon. members on both sides of the Chamber are in full agreement on the acceptance of the proposal. There are one or two points that I wish to clarify. The hon. member for Townsville South questioned the amount of money that has been spent on work done in the North. I have had figures taken out for the 10-year period from 1957 to 1966-67 showing the amount of money spent on irrigation in the southern, central and northern regions. In the southern division the amount is \$29,433,800; in the northern division \$25,793,500; and the central division has suffered with \$12,772,485. The hon. member therefore has nothing to squeal about; he has had a pretty good run in the North.

The hon. member for Tablelands made a simple division of the cost of this scheme by the number of farms, which is quite ridiculous. When he gets to his own area, where there are 500 farms, and divides that into the \$32,000,000 cost of the scheme, how ridiculous can he get? He also spoke of flood mitigation. This is impracticable in the St. George area. If he goes there he will see that for himself. He apparently has not been there.

The hon. member for Clayfield asked how these farms will be opened. I apologise for not mentioning this previously. In the first instance they will be opened by selective ballot, either as agricultural farms or perpetual lease.

I think that is all I have to reply to. There were many side issues, but I do not want to deal with them now as the hour is getting late. I thank hon. members for their support.

Motion (Mr. Richter) agreed to.

Resolution reported, and agreed to.

The House adjourned at 4.30 p.m.