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1901-11-06

House of Representatives

Mr. Speaker took the chair at 2.30 p.m., and read prayers.

PETITIONS

Mr. R. EDWARDS presented two petitions from the Queensland Sugar-growers and Manufacturers Union, representing various sugar-growing districts in Queensland, in protest against the proposed kanaka legislation.

Petitions received.

QUESTIONS

TRANS-CONTINENTAL RAILWAY

Mr POYNTON

- I wish to know from the Prime Minister if his attention has been called to the following resolution, which was passed by the South Australian Parliament last week : -

That, pending the construction of an Interstate railway to Western Australia, it is desirable that the first section of a line of 100 miles from Port Augusta should be constructed as soon as possible, providing the Federal Government agree to adopt the line as the first section of railway from Port Augusta to Western Australia, and approve of the route.

I wish to ask the Prime Minister if the Cabinet have considered this matter? If not, will they do so, and let the House know at an early date their decision in regard to it?

Minister for External Affairs

Mr BARTON

- That resolution has not been brought under the notice of the Commonwealth Government, and has not been considered by the Cabinet.

Mr Poynton

- Was it considered at the Premiers' conference?

Mr BARTON

- No. It was not brought before the conference. I can give the honorable member no further information in regard to the matter at the present time, but if he desires me to look into it more fully I shall esteem myself favored if he will ask a question upon notice.

NORFOLK ISLAND

Mr HUGHES

- I wish to know from the Minister for Trade and Customs if instructions have been given to the officers in charge of Custom-houses in various parts of Australia to regard imports from Norfolk Island as imports from a foreign country? I am informed that Mr. Baxter has replied to certain representations made by importing firms that Norfolk Island is not part of the Commonwealth.

Minister for Trade and Customs

Mr KINGSTON

- No instructions have been given, but, as a matter of fact, Norfolk Island is not part of the Commonwealth, and therefore imports from Norfolk Island must be regarded as imports from a foreign country.

Mr Hughes

- Is not Norfolk Island part of New South Wales ?

Mr KINGSTON

- No.

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Mr Barton

- Lord Howe Island has been made part of New South Wales, but Norfolk Island has not.

ERROR IN DIVISION LIST

Mr SPEAKER

- When recording the division which took place in the House on Friday afternoon last, upon the motion for a special adjournment, the tellers of the ayes inadvertently recorded the name of Mr. G. B. Edwards instead of that of Mr. R. Edwards, and I have therefore directed the Clerk to correct the list.

QUESTIONS

VICTORIAN GOLD JUBILEE EXHIBITION

Sir JOHN QUICK

- Can the Prime Minister see his way to make arrangements which will facilitate the visit of members of the Federal Parliament to Bendigo next Wednesday, upon the occasion of the opening of the Gold Jubilee Exhibition there ? It might be too much to suggest that the House should adjourn for a whole day ; but I have been requested to invite honorable members to visit Bendigo upon the occasion, and perhaps the Prime Minister might arrange for the House meeting on Wednesday at a later hour than usual. A special train will be sent to Bendigo to convey the Governor-General.

Mr Barton

- When could members get back?

Sir JOHN QUICK

- At about seven o'clock. A number of honorable members have expressed their desire to be present, and we hope that the Government may be represented, and I hope that the Prime Minister will endeavour to attend. A few hours I am sure would not be missed, especially upon an occasion of such interest and importance.

Mr BARTON

- We missed a few hours yesterday in consideration of the possibility of not getting a quorum, and I am not prepared to say at this moment that we are prepared to lose any more time, in view of the position in which recent events have placed public business. Time is, I think, of the essence of the contract in regard to this Parliament, but I shall take what the honorable and learned member has advanced into consideration, and let him know my decision later on.

DRILL INSTRUCTORS- NEW SOUTH WALES CAVALRY FORCES

Mr POYNTON

asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice -

Was an examination held in April last for drill instructors to the cavalry forces of New South Wales ?

How many were examined, and how many passed?

Why have not the results of the examination been made known?

Have any appointments as' drill instructors been made since the above examination ?

If so, were the appointees subjected to an examination ; if not, why not, and what are their qualifications ?

Minister for Defence

Sir JOHN FORREST

- The answers to the honorable member's questions are as follow : -

Yes, on 20th April, 1901.

Six were examined; they all failed to pass.

They were all informed that they had not obtained the standard required for instructors.

Yes, one; squadron Sergeant- Major McConnell.

This appointment was direct from the Imperial service, in which he served 22 years in the Royal Horse Artillery. He was discharged as a sergeant, with excellent recommendations.

LAUNCESTON RIFLE RANGE

Sir EDWARD BRADDON

asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice -

Whether he will immediately make provision for the completion and equipment of the Launceston Rifle Range, so that it may be made practicable to hold the rifle meeting arranged to be held there this year ?

Sir JOHN FORREST

- In answer to the right honorable and learned member, Sir Edward Braddon, I would say that the plans and specifications for this work are being prepared, and every endeavour will be made to have the range ready for the rifle meeting in December. The fact that the range has lately been under water has prevented the work being proceeded with as soon as it otherwise would have been.

PROMOTION- DEFENCE FORCES

Mr CROUCH

asked the Minister for Defence, upon notice -

Whether he has decided to adopt the policy of giving preference to men who have served in the ranks of

the defence forces in future appointments to commissions ?

Whether he will cause the regulations of the State Defence Forces to be amended so as to provide for this reform, pending the passing of the Commonwealth Defence Bill ?

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Sir JOHN FORREST

- The following are the answers to the honorable member's questions : -

Preference will be given where other conditions are equal.

The existing regulations admit of this being done.

PACIFIC ISLANDS LABOURERS BILL

Debate resumed (from 5th November, vide page 6838) on motion by Mr. R. Edwards -

That the Bill be referred to a select committee.

Mr R EDWARDS

- I desire to express my thanks to the Prime Minister for having consented last night to allow me to continue my remarks this afternoon. I have already explained to honorable members why I find it necessary to occupy so much time. I am sure that no one can accuse me of having trespassed upon the patience of the House at any great length, and it cannot be said that I have wasted time during the session. Some very long speeches and lengthy quotations were made in the debate on the motion of want of confidence, and I abstained from speaking on that motion, because I knew that I should have to ask the attention of honorable members for a considerable time when this Bill came again before the House. Some honorable gentlemen have objected to my bringing before the House the opinions of outsiders ; but the quotations which I am making contain the views of men who have practical knowledge of the sugar industry and of the kanaka labour question as it affects Queensland. I have, however, gone over the material from which I am addressing the House, and have cut down considerably the quotations which I intended to make, so that, although I may occupy a considerable amount of time this afternoon, I shall not occupy so much as I originally intended to do, and I hope honorable members will bear with me, as the importance of the question is the excuse I offer for my action. Before going further, I should like to read some telegrams which were put into my hands a few minutes ago. The first comes from Brisbane, and is signed by Mr. Angus Gibson. It is as follows : -

If Mauger says, as reported in this morning's Courier, that I told him that I could grow cane without kanakas, he states what is not a fact. You have my authority to deny it. Further, he only spent two hours in Bundaberg plantations.

Another telegram from Brisbane reads as follows : -

Sample of methods inquiry by Victorians. Mauger arrived Cairns midday. Left next morning 10 O'clock.

Two hours on plantation. Distinctly promised support Government. Inquiry before end of sitting.

Legislative action. Can get ample proof of foregoing.

I have received the following telegram from Townsville : -

Have read report of your speech yesterday with much interest. Would suggest that you elaborately emphasize fact that vote of Northern Queensland carried Federation this State, and thus cemented Commonwealth, for New South Wales distinctly acknowledged would not join without Queensland. Absolutely cruel that Barton should now bite the hand that really fed him, for North Queensland will be the part this State most affected by the Kanaka Bill. Kindly post copy Hansard containing your complete speech.

Mr Barton

- I said a little while ago that libels were plentiful. The people of the North voted for federation in the hope that the kanaka traffic would, under just terms, be extinguished.

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Mr R EDWARDS

- The people of Northern Queensland expected reasonable consideration at the hands of the Commonwealth Government, and that they would be treated with justice, and not with the injustice with which they are meeting at the present time. Another Townsville telegram says -

Understand over 30 associations in Bamford's electorate have requested him move amendment Kanaka Bill, advocating extension of time, or appoint commission. - Suggest you get him admit this in House.

I have shown this telegram to the honorable member for Herbert, and he is at liberty to acknowledge the

truth of this statement or otherwise. Last evening, when the House ' adjourned, I was about to place before honorable members a report of a meeting of the Chamber of Commerce at Bundaberg. I propose to read the resolutions passed at that meeting, and also the remarks made by the Hon. Angus Gibson in support of the resolutions. That honorable gentleman's name has been frequently referred to in this House, and I think it is only fitting that I should place before honorable members what he has to say on the subject. The following resolutions were carried : -

That the Honorable the Federal Premier be wired to that in the opinion of this chamber, the proposed Pacific Island Labourers' Bill will have a paralyzing effect on the sugar industry of this State, also upon commerce and trade generally.

This chamber would most respectfully suggest to your honorable House that the Bill be altered as under :

-

That recruiting be permitted till 31st December, 1907.

That the kanakas in Queensland at no time exceed 10,000, and that they shall be solely employed for tropical agriculture and field labour only, under Queensland laws and regulations.

The reasons advanced by this chamber for the proposed suggestions are as follows : -

That owing to the large amount of capital involved in the industry this chamber is of opinion that if the proposed Bill is passed much of the capital invested would be absolutely lost, thereby causing irreparable ruin to many worthy colonists.

Ten thousand kanakas cannot possibly be a menace to Australia from a racial or moral point of view, as this chamber can safely assert that it is not aware of a single half-caste kanaka in this district.

That the kanaka is preferable to any other class of alien labour, and the money earned by him never leaves the Commonwealth.

That the kanaka does not come into competition with white labour, rather does he create work for white Australians.

That the immigration of kanakas has done very much to civilize and Christianize the South Sea Islanders. This chamber is of opinion that during the crushing season it would be impossible to get sufficient white labour to do the work, and if it could be got, it is not fit labour for white men.

An additional 1,000 hands would be required in this district. To maintain that staff a floating reserve of at least 6,000 white men, as past experience has shown, must be available.

This chamber would also suggest to your honorable House that the rebate of excise on sugar grown exclusively by white labour, be 6s. per ton of 10 per cent. cane, as from the 1st day of January next, as if sugar can be produced by white labour every inducement should be given at the earliest possible date to those farmers or planters who would endeavour to grow cane exclusively on those terms, and would prove conclusively whether it could be so grown or not.

The Hon. Angus Gibson seconded the resolution, and said -

He had lost all hope of their having any power to influence the Federal Premier. He had given his Bill, and refused to alter it. He thought they should forward the motion to Messrs. Macdonald, Paterson and Edwards, in the House of Representatives, and to Messrs. Drake and Ferguson in the Senate. Dr. Maxwell had informed the Premier that the question was how were they going to get the necessary labour to carry on the industry. He had a return placed in his hands showing that on a plantation employing 220 white men, their experience had been that during the month of September 20 of those men had thrown up the work. They gave no reason for their action, no did they care what inconvenience resulted from it to the mill. That plantation also had 400 kanakas and 60 Indians, and supposing they were replaced by white men, their position would simply be this, that in the same ratio there would be eighty of the employes leaving in each month. This was only one case, but there were many other similar cases in the district. How, in the name of common sense, could the planters carry on under these circumstances.

Speaking as a planter, he did not think he would trouble himself about the conditions the Federal Parliament might impose if he could see his way to obtain the necessary amount of labour to carry on his work. In connexion with the ten men who had left in the first week of this month, there were no others available to take their place, and the plantation had been compelled to put on Hindoos. Inquiries had been made even in Brisbane to fill the vacancies, but without avail. Yet they would see through the press that there were thousands of men going about looking for work in face of these facts. Those were the troubles that beset the planters ; it was not because of any love for him that they wished to see the

kanaka continued, but because he was a safe commodity to handle in times of difficulty, while other men were not. And when they were asked to increase the number of white men from 220 to over 600, goodness only knows where they were to get them. Hence he thought the motion proposed was a very fail' one, not only in the interests of the planters, but in the interests of the white workers and everybody else. In Brisbane during the last few days much sympathy had been given utterance to towards the planters, and the query put to him often had been : - "What are you going to do in the face of such drastic legislation?" and his reply had been : - "Whatever are you going to do?" He was very pleased at the sympathy tendered, but he had also assured such people that the planters ought to sympathize with them, for if it was found that north of Mackay they would not be able to grow cane - and half of the output of the State came from that area now - it would mean that three-quarters of a million less money would be placed in circulation as the result of such stoppage. He was very pleased to notice that the people of Toowoomba - whom, Mr. Barton said, had justified his action in abolishing the kanaka, by returning Mr. L. E. Groom to replace his deceased father - had at a meeting of the Chamber of Commerce there passed a resolution setting forth that if Mr. Barton carried through his present proposal, it would mean a great disaster to the country.

Mr Barton

- Nearly all the resolutions against the Bill are from Chambers of Commerce and agricultural societies, whilst nearly all the resolutions in favour of the Bill are from public meetings.

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Mr R EDWARDS

- The Hon. Angus Gibson continued his remarks as follows : -

They did not dream when voting for Mr. Groom that the Federal Parliament purposed inflicting such great injury as was foreshadowed in the proposals mentioned ; that in 1902, next year, they would only be able to import three fourths of the number of islanders who left the State this year, in 1903 only one-half, and at the end of March, 1904, none "at all. Speaking for Bingera he found that at the expiration of their agreements most of the boys did not go home after the three years, but went about amongst the small farmers accepting engagements from them. Thus they would see that the small growers took up their boys, and the large growers would not now have the opportunity of indenting fresh supplies. He was pleased with the suggestion in the motion regarding the excise, as he had held the idea for a long time that if it was possible to encourage the small grower to produce cane with white labour all that could be done ought 'to be done to being that end about. While it was pleasing to know that consideration on this head to the extent of 4s. per ton had been decided upon, he held that 6s. should be offered forthwith in order to offer greater inducement to the small men. The most difficult time 'would be in the opening years under the new order, and they should give these men as much as they possibly could to start straight -away, to demonstrate whether it was possible to grow cane exclusively by white labour. He had no doubt at all that many men in this district-would -take up the work and carry it out satisfactorily ; yes, and -.make money out of it. He thought there was every possibility of both millers -and.growers in this district doing very well under the- conditions proposed, that was, if the Federal Parliament gave then: 6s. per ton, and if they were honest that suggestion ought to go alongside the five years they were asking for as the term to run before recruiting was interfered with. It would be a great advantage to have it proved whether the work could be done successfully by white labour, and he had no doubt the manufacturer would supplement the 6s. .named, by 1s. or 2s. more .to encourage the production of sugar by white labour only. No one would be better pleased than he if the point could 'be successfully- established, for they would all greatly prefer to see in their midst a. number of white men settled with their families, and enjoying the benefits of a prosperous industry. On the other hand they must not close their eyes to the fact that it was possible to legislate to prevent that. He could assure them that he would to-morrow accept the whole responsibility of getting rid. of- his kanakas if he could be shown where he could get reliable men to take their place. He was quite convinced that if white nien would only do it, they Gould do it, and if they offered 6s. more -per ton for cane it would be a .great ; inducement, and would lead to the matter being given a very fair trial, and he hoped the Commonwealth Parliament would approve of the suggestion in the motion. Ho was sure that every planter in the district -would be delighted to forward any such object-as would enable them to grow cane with white labor, and it was evident the people were prepared to make a sacrifice to achieve this end. He noticed by that day's Courier that "Mr. E. 'B. Forrest, on being

interviewed, made a statement that he (Mr. Gibson) had said .in Melbourne that if £3 protection were given the Queensland planters they would be able to grow cane with white labour. He had never made any such statement, but on the contrary when he was in Melbourne he had fought for £5, but he did not say they would then be able to get rid of the kanaka. As he had said before, white men could do the work all .right if they would only take it up earnestly. (Mr. Fullerton. - In this district ?) Anywhere; but he did not say they should do it, in -fact he did not think they should be called upon to do it. 'But he had said in Melbourne, and still maintained, that white men could do any work if they were well paid. He hoped good would come of the motion, though he could not see any such promise at the present time.

In my desire to supply honorable members with all possible information on this subject I have gone to a .good deal of trouble, and amongst other things which I wish to lay before the House is the report of an interview with a man who has been accustomed to work on sugar plantations. The article is headed " A Worker's Opinion - the Hardships of Cane-cutting," and reads as follows : -

All classes of society have raised their voices against expelling the kanaka from the sugar plantations of .Queensland. The mill-owner and the small farmer are quite agreed on this point, and now we give 'the opinion of a working man who has worked in a mill, .and tried his hand in the field at cutting cane - and gave it up in three days.

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Mr G B EDWARDS

-. Harmsen was working in the Burnett district on a plantation near Bingera, the property of Mr. Gibson. He -was working inside the mill in the sugar and boiling rooms. It is looked on as easy work, and the wages run from 15s. to 23s. a week, while men who have had good experience at it get up to '35s. in higher positions. Some of the men desirous of -making more money, and willing to try if it were possible to do the field work, asked to be put on to cane-cutting. They were put on to this work, and promised 5s. 6d. a ton, which is, of course, considerably more than the kanaka gets It would also be impossible for this rate to be regularly paid, as the farmer only gets 10s. or 11s. a ton for his cane, and it is obvious he cannot pay half that away for cutting alone. But this was looked on as a trial, an experiment, and Bingera plantation, being a big one, was willing to see if .a very high rate of wage would make the men stick 'to it.

On the first day twelve men started. Hansen cut two tons that day, while a kanaka next him cut four, the average amount. At the end of that day five men out of the twelve went to the .manager and asked to be put back in the mill. They had had enough of cane-cutting. During the second day Harmsen cut one and a-half tons. Two .more men gave up that day. The third day five men put in an appearance, and Harmsen cut one and a-quarter tons. It may be said that all through he cut rather more than the others. The -third day' finished off the remaining men, and they all went back to work in the mill again. The heat is described as simply unbearable. The cane rose above their heads, and there was no wind to temper the burning rays of the sun, -which seemed to beat down with almost physical force on the men- working. To add to -this the ground swarmed 'withnts a and insects of all-descriptions. In spite of stockings and rags bound round the legs to protect them, these pests climbed up te men's legs and bit mostnmerciffully. What with scratches and bites the workers' legs were soon covered with sores and little boils. .For three or -four days afterwards most of them suffered from the effects of the sun, with headaches and sore backs. In the morning a damp mist -would lie all over the ground, which shows the moist unpleasant atmosphere the men had to work in.

The work has no ill-effects at all on the kanaka. The kanakas go shouting and laughing to their work in the morning, and in the evening one can hear them singing in their huts, or they go to their church. The white men and the kanakas are on the best of terms, as any one may see who goes into the plantation store and hears them chaffing each other. Up in the sugar district the white man realizes that he cannot possibly do the work of the kanaka, and if it were not for the kanaka doing it he (the white man) would lose his billet. It is not implied, as was said at the anti-kanaka meeting the other night, that the white man must confess himself the inferior of the kanaka, because he cannot do the work of the kanaka. The white man cannot do the work of a horse, but he does not look on himself as that noble animal's inferior in consequence.

And that was the end of the experiment on the plantation in question with white men cutting cane. They were strong, healthy men, eager to do the work if possible, so as to earn higher wages ; but it was a physical impossibility, and they gave it up because they feared serious consequences to their health if

they persisted at it. It may be possible for a man who is accustomed to tropical heat to do some cane-cutting in the early morning and late afternoon ; but these men are quite sure that no man could do it regularly. It would take about 4.0 white men to do the work of 20 kanakas at this rate. And the .main point is the absolute reliability necessary in sugar work. At a certain time the gates of the mill are shut, and all the cane must be in the yard by then. How could this be done with white labour - an uncertain supply and constant sickness ! On this plantation 300 kanakas are employed during the season, and 150 white men. During the rest of the year no kanakas are employed, but a good .many of the white-hands are permanent. Mr. Harmsen states that all these 150 men are quite prepared to -say they could not do a week's work at cane-cutting. Every plantation gives work to a number of white men, ploughing, clearing, burning, &c., but the kanaka is only used for the one purpose.

This is the experience of a man who is young and strong and willing to work at anything he can make the best wages at . It is his emphatic opinion that no white man can possibly do the work, and he for one, 'would -sooner take 10s. a week as odd man on a farm than try to cut cane, even at f»s. 'id. .a ton. That was the experience of men who have a thorough knowledge of sugar growing. They 'were strong, healthy young men, who were tempted with others to try what could be done in the way of cut-ting cane. It was an experiment, but although they received nearly double the price which the planter 'has any need to pay for kanakas, the latter in this instance-did about double the work performed by the white men, simply because they were acclimatised, said the heat, which was unbearable to the white men, did not trouble them in the least. I refrain from reading a very great deal of information which is at my disposal, because I realize that honorable members are growing somewhat tired of this unpleasant subject. That fact is made manifest by the very few honorable -members upon either side of the House -who have spoken .upon this question. Their silence is, I think, an evidence of their good sense, because there are not two honorable 'members in this Chamber who understand even a little about kanaka labour and the sugar industry generally. I have here a letter which is headed - "Another Plea -for Time," and in -this connexion I may add that my desire is to see a committee appointed to inquire into the conditions surrounding the employment of kanaka labour, and of tropical agriculture generally. The writer- of this letter says - Sir, -While there may be divided opinions upon the necessity for the employment of kanakas in tropical Queensland, if the coast lands in the north are to be profitably worked, there can be no doubt in the mind of any true Queenslander that one of our principal industries must not be assailed without mature deliberation and the fullest inquiry, though the attack upon it be made by muted Australia. Justice is an older and. more sacred heritage than the rule of the majority. If by our contract with om- fleshbours we have entitled them to a pound of flesh, at least we have the right to demand that it shall be cut by the surgeon's knife, and not -by the guillotine, that ample time shall be given to insure us all the skill that knowledge and science can produce to prevent even the surgeon's knife draining the life-blood of the State. The haste with which the Kanaka Bill has been brought before the Commonwealth Parliament (nothing has been done in any way to deal with - let alone to deport - the hordes of Chinese and other aliens in the Commonwealth) can -only be interpreted as an attack on Queensland, and unless time is given within which the fullest information can be obtained to justify such legislation, it is surely the duty of Queenslanders to use all constitutional means to oppose such an attack, and to demand justice for Queensland.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- What does the honorable member suggest that another committee would do 1

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Mr R EDWARDS

- I do not suggest the appointment of a committee composed of honorable members of this House. I should oppose any such proposal. But during my election campaign I advocated the appointment of a Royal commission, consisting of independent men to inquire into the whole question of the sugar industry. I notice that Mr. Philp, the Premier of Queensland, has suggested that three -Supreme Court Judges should be appointed. I have been thinking over that suggestion, and am of opinion that a committee should be appointed consisting of two Supreme Court Judges, with one practical sugar planter to assist them in their investigations. From such a body, I think we should receive the best possible advice as to what course should be pursued in connexion with the employment of kanaka labour and of the sugar industry generally.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- Is that the honorable member's intention now?

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Mr R EDWARDS

- Later on I shall move that the Bill be referred to a select committee, with a view to obtaining such complete information as will enable honorable members to legislate more intelligently upon this matter, and to prevent the destruction of this immense industry, which is second to no other industry within the Commonwealth. Possibly honorable members are familiar with the names of Young Brothers. I do not know the gentlemen save by repute. For a very long period they have resided near Bundaberg. They belong to a very fine class of men, and I should like, therefore, to place before honorable members a letter which was written by them to Mr. Philp, the present Premier of Queensland. It is as follows - Bundaberg, 9th October.

Dear Mr Philp, - We have to-day been discussing your very able protest against the proposed legislation of Federal Government, and wired you thanking you for it. You have, we all felt, stated our case admirably. If the proposals now before Parliament are carried out, sugar-growing in Bundaberg will rapidly cease ; next season we shall not have labour to get in our crops. We unanimously thought more time necessary, and suggested six years' unrestricted recruiting as at present, without any limit as to total number in State, and that after agreements expired in nine years from now no deportation should be insisted on, until at any rate all Chinese, Japanese, Hindoos, &c, were also deported. The deportation of kanakas is a peculiarly cruel and inhuman proposal, as many islanders who have been here fifteen to twenty years would, if they returned, be slaughtered by their savage friends. The Lochiel, just arrived, has two instances in point. They went as returns, and found that their tribe had been all slain, and, knowing the same fate would await them, recruited again and returned by same vessel ! We have two others on place, married, with four children, the wife New Ireland, husband Solomon. For fifteen years they have been unable to go back, as they are afraid of losing their lives, whichever island they return to. These are only instances, but they show the danger to ' ' boys. " Other aliens in returning to their countries run no such danger, as they are a civilized people. With regard to the rebate on excise for cane grown with white labour, surely this is unconstitutional. It is similar to central mill case, which home authorities objected to. But if a rebate is legal, why do they not offer the full rebate of 6s. at once to all those who grow entirely without black Labour, instead of 4s. now, and 6s. after five years ? The heaviest cost is incurred now, for fresh buildings, &c. In any case, no planter would willingly forfeit his island labour for 4s. or 6s. a ton cane ; but small farmers might try it for 6s. per ton cane. It is a misnomer to call it a rebate, as the farmer has not paid the excise ; it is really a bonus on cane grown with white labour only.

Your presence in Melbourne will be of untold value to Queensland, if you can spare time.

Apologizing for inflicting such a long letter, and again thanking you for your action in favour of industry. -

Yours very truly,

H. and E. YOUNG."

In Queensland, these people are well known to have taken a very great deal of interest in the welfare of the kanakas in every sense of the word. They are highly respected. The manufacturers' letter to Mr. Philp is as follows : -

Dear Sir, - We beg to confirm our telegrams, as per enclosed. The meeting of the Bundaberg sugar manufacturers was most enthusiastic about the vigorous manner in which you had protested against the unfair legislation foreshadowed by the Federal Parliament. The members are strongly desirous that you should, if possible, visit Melbourne, feeling assured that there is no one else in the whole Commonwealth who can put the case so forcibly for the sugar industry. 1st. On behalf of the welfare of the State as a whole. 2nd. On behalf of the sugar-growers and manufacturers. 3rd. On behalf of the Government, which has advanced so much money to encourage the industry.

We also desire to point out that it is desirable that the Federal Parliament be asked to give the sugar industry the unrestricted operation of the present Queensland Polynesian Act as at present in force until December, . 1907, and that the Federal Bill re kanakas should not make any alteration in this Act until that date. We also urge that the deportation of the kanaka shall only take place simultaneously with that of the Hindoo, Javanese, Japanese, Chinese, and other Asiatic aliens.

Trusting that you will be able to help us as in the past. - Yours faithfully,
JOHN JOSEPH EASTICK

I want to show the effect on business generally in Queensland of the proposal to abolish kanakas. The proposal affects all business, not only in the sugar districts, but in the extreme south of the State ; and I have no doubt that in New South Wales and Victoria similar effects, if they have not been felt already, will be felt in the near future. This is the experience of a Brisbane merchant : -

While engaged discussing the Tariff question with a Courier representative yesterday, the head of a large business firm in Brisbane said he was not by any means pleased with the new proposals, as he considered they were not to the advantage of Queensland in any way. but seemed to be framed mainly in the interests of certain industries in the south. Still, with all its defects the Tariff Bill was completely overshadowed as an instrument of destruction by the Kanaka Bill. His firm did a considerable business with the north of Queensland, but since the provisions of the Kanaka Bill had become known amongst the people in the northern sugar districts, his representatives had furnished him with information of an exceedingly doleful character. His travellers informed him it was absolutely useless for them to go out amongst the sugar-growers on the northern rivers, because the people there had buttoned up their pockets and declined to enter into transactions other than what were absolutely necessary to keep them going until such time as they knew for certain what was to be the fate of the kanaka. In view of the increasing volume of business his firm had been working up, he was on the eve of launching out into more extensive operations in the north ; but as a consequence of the information he had received, he felt compelled to stay his hand. Mr. Barton's proposals on the kanaka question had suddenly brought the north up with a round turn, and already his business in Brisbane was beginning to feel the effect of the depression that had already set in amongst the people who formed the mainstay of Northern Queensland. He was satisfied from what he had heard from others that his firm was not singular in regard to its experience, but that most of the Brisbane houses were already affected by the rash proposals of the Federal Premier.

Mr L E GROOM

-In what business is that merchant ?

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Mr R EDWARDS

- The communication says simply that he is a merchant, and the honorable member knows that merchants carry on business in a variety of ways. Mackay is one of the leading sugar districts in Queensland, and the people there took action in reference to this question previous to the introduction of the Federal Tariff. I hold in my hand the following protest, made by the Mackay Chamber of Commerce, of 5th October : -

The President explained the object of the meeting, and the following resolutions were unanimously carried : - " That this chamber, having had long and intimate acquaintance with the facts and circumstances appertaining to the employment of Polynesian labour in connexion with the Queensland sugar industry, hereby affirms - " (a) That the continued introduction of Polynesian labour into the State of Queensland, and the employment of the same in connexion with the sugar industry, subject to the restrictions contained in the existing Queensland laws and regulations relative thereto, do not involve any social, moral, or other clanger to the said State, or to the Commonwealth of Australia. "(b) That until a reliable substitute is available to perform the classes of work in connexion with the industry at present carried out by means of Polynesian labour, the withdrawal of such labour is calculated to ruin the industry and the many thousands of white citizens of the Commonwealth engaged upon it. " (c) That the withdrawal of such labour from the tropical portions of Queensland cannot be successfully counteracted by the imposition of any reasonable protective duty, especially seeing that there can be no security that Parliament will not at any moment substitute lesser duties for those proposed or to be imposed. "(d) That the proposed legislation inflicts immediate injury upon the industry by reason of its disturbance of the relations with financial institutions, and the fact that while next year it is expected that the sugar production will show a large increase, the labour supply will be considerably diminished. "(e) That further, even assuming that a high protective duty would enable the employment of European labour, such labour is not available in Australia in sufficient quantity without depriving other industries of their employes, while the Immigration Act, as recently amended, will effectually prevent the sugar-growers importing European

or any other labour under contract to take the place of the Polynesians. " if) That the abolition of the class of labour required for the sugar industry in the tropics, practically prohibits the development of any other tropical industries in the northern portion of the Commonwealth, thus destroying the agricultural resources of a very large proportion of the Commonwealth." " That this chamber therefore vigorously protests against the passing of the Pacific Island Labourers Bill now before the Federal Parliament, and respectively submits that the said Bill if carried into law, will inflict a cruel and unjust blow on the industry and will result in immense and irreparable damage thereto. This chamber further contends, as a matter of simple justice, that the whole of the conditions of the industry should be inquired into by a Royal commission before any legislation is enacted restricting the employment of Polynesian labour in connexion therewith."

The following resolution, moved by Mr. Holyoake, and seconded by Mr. Marsh, was also carried unanimously - " That the Mackay Chamber of Commerce heartily congratulates and thanks the Hon. Robert Philp for his able and emphatic indictment of Mr. Barton's drastic and destructive Kanaka Bill, and assures him of its unanimous sympathy and support."

That Chamber of Commerce met again after the Tariff was introduced into this House, and passed the following resolutions : -

That this chamber, having carefully considered the Federal Tariff proposals as affecting the sugar industry, hereby places on record its conviction that having regard to the terms of the Pacific Island Labour Bill now before the Federal Parliament, the said proposals cannot save the industry in Northern Queensland from great and irreparable damage, if not total extinction.

That this chamber urgently requests the Federal Parliament to postpone the passing of the Pacific Islanders Labour Bill for the term of five years at least, and that at the expiration of four years a Royal commission be held to ascertain to what extent, if any, the present Tariff proposals had resulted in the substitution of white labour for coloured in connexion with the industry.

That in the opinion of this chamber the effect of the proposed bonus to cane-growers employing only white labour will be to induce farmers in the north to emigrate to districts connected with the big centres of population by rail, and with a temperate climate, and thus diminish the settlement in the tropical districts, and entirely defeat the alleged object of the Tariff.

I notice that the municipal council of Mackay are taking action, and that only last Monday week, 28th October, they held a meeting, at which all members were present, and passed the following resolution : -

That the municipal council of Mackay protests against the Kanaka Bill, because, if passed in its present form, the injury it must inflict upon the sugar industry, upon which the prosperity of this town depends, must cause such a depreciation in the value of all property within the municipality that the ratepayers will be absolutely unable to discharge their loan liabilities to the State.

That a copy of the above be sent to the Hon. E. Barton and all members of the Senate and House of Representatives, accompanied by the following memorandum : -

In support of our contention that the Kanaka Bill, in its present form, will injure, if not destroy, the sugar industry in North Queensland, we, the members of the Mackay Municipal Council, beg to submit the following arguments to your fullest consideration : -

That we, having a thorough personal knowledge of all aspects of the sugar industry in this State (which it is admitted that the majority of the Federal Parliament does not possess), maintain that the bonus proposed on white-grown sugars gives no such guarantee of proving successful in its avowed object as to justify the Federal Parliament in forcing its adoption upon tropical agriculturists until a fair test of its efficacy has been afforded.

That we (and we are assured that the majority of tropical agriculturists agree with us) would hail with gratification the substitution of white for coloured labour throughout the Commonwealth as soon as it can be demonstrated that such a change can be effected without injustice and injury to many thousands of our fellow-colonists, and we therefore urge that the Bill be so modified as to permit of the Federal Government's experiment with the bonus system being practically tried for four or five years, without in the meantime any interference with the existing system of kanaka labour.

We, as reasonable men, contend that if the Federal Parliament refuses to institute exhaustive inquiries into the sugar industry, by Royal commission or otherwise, prior to legislating for that industry, we have the right to expect that the Federal Parliament should adopt such a course as may enable it to point to the

proved success of its proposed bonus system before it endeavours to force upon those engaged in tropical agriculture conditions which the experience of years leads us to fear will prove most injurious. We therefore urge that a fair trial be afforded to the bonus system, and that after that trial such legislation as may be thought desirable be undertaken, as that legislation could be based upon ascertained facts. Very much has been said by a number of honorable members as to the moral aspect of the kanaka question - of the danger of contamination, and the great desire we have to preserve the purity of our race. Since the previous debate on this question, I have endeavoured to, get as much information as possible with regard to the moral aspect of this question. I noticed that throughout that debate honorable members never seemed to think of any coloured men except the kanakas. Honorable members omitted to think, or at any rate, to speak of the Chinese, Japanese, Syrians, Hindoos, and men of several other nationalities who, I am very sorry to say, are numerous within the Commonwealth .

Mr Bamford

-They are provided for already.

Mr.R. EDWARDS. - But they are here in such numbers as to be a great danger so far as the working classes are concerned. It is those aliens who are competing with our working classes. I venture to say that no honorable member can honestly contend that kanakas have ever gone into business - have ever become storekeepers or tradesmen - whereas the men of the other nationalities I have mentioned, compete very successfully and keenly with the white workers.

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Mr JOSEPH COOK

- How many other aliens besides kanakas are engaged cutting cane ?

Mr.R. EDWARDS. - There are 2,000 or 3,000, I think. There are supposed to be 1,000 in the northern part of New South Wales, and, though I am not quite sure, I believe there are between 1,000 and 2,000 in Queensland. There are, however, very large numbers of aliens or coloured men throughout the Commonwealth, numbering no fewer, I believe, than 70,000. What has the Premier done with a view to deporting these latter aliens ? Nothing whatever. If we get rid of the kanakas, their places will be taken by Japanese, Javanese, and other men of colour, who are more undesirable in every sense of the word than are the kanakas. I have here telegrams received from the Government medical officers in several places, the object being to ascertain whether there are really these piebald youngsters of which we have heard in the House. I never thought there was any truth in the statements made. I have been far north in Queensland and inland to some extent, and I never saw any children of the kind, though possibly I may not be clear-sighted enough to note the difference between a white and a piebald person. The medical officer at Townsville wired as follows : -

I know of no half-caste kanakas in this district. - E. Humchrey.

I think that the honorable member for Melbourne Ports said that Townsville was the first place where he ran across two or three piebald youngsters. This telegram comes from Mackay -

In past four years seen only one half-caste kanaka. - Arthur P. . Henson, Government Medical Officer. Some credit should be placed upon the word of men employed by the Government, because they have records at their disposal which private individuals have not.

Mr Fisher

- Mr. Henson speaks only of those he has seen.

Mr R EDWARDS

- Yes ; but the telegram implies that he has not known more. From Cairns comes this telegram - No half-caste kanakas here, and have heard of none. - Wm.Cumming, Government Medical Officer.

Mr Wilkinson

- They are all paid by Philp and Co.

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Mr B EDWARDS

- I think that that is a very ungenerous -remark. Like the lawyer who has no case, honorable gentlemen abuse the other side. There is no justification for such a statement, and I feel sure that it is not correct.

Another telegram from Bowen says -

Only three half caste kanakas in this district. - J. B. Brown, Health Officer.

I think that the gentlemen whose telegrams I have read are in a better position to speak on this subject

than is the honorable member for Moreton. Personally, I am of opinion that there is no such thing as a piebald race in Queensland; but as I have not considered myself a sufficient authority, I have secured the evidence of gentlemen who are in a position to know. I wish to refer now to another phase of the subject, and it is not a very pleasant one. I shall quote a letter which is headed "Kanakas and other aliens compared" -

Sir, -One exasperating excuse given by Mr. Barton for his now famous Kanaka Bill was his desire to preserve the purity of the race. The following return, showing the number of half-castes in Queensland, not only completely upsets this, but at the same time goes a long way to prove that the white-skinned brother is by far the inferior animal in some respects. Just fancy, the dreaded kanaka, who has been living within our borders for the past thirty years, has left his stain upon the community to the extent of 181 half-castes, of which I would wager something the great bulk come of white fathers. But for the return : - Total half-castes in Queensland ; kanaka, 181 ; Chinese, 726 ; aboriginals, 1,533 ; other aliens, 41. Here, then, we see that the white man has contributed no less than 1,533 half-castes to the State. The bulk of aboriginal half-castes are to be found round station centres, where the white population is made up wholly of the labour class, or else on pearling stations, where the same conditions hold.

That the kanaka is not a danger in the respect Mr. Barton declares is by this return alone amply proved ; while it shows that the very men who clamour for a white Australia are bringing into the world hundreds of persons who are even more to be pitied than the full-blooded alien. The Chinese also, against whom Queensland has fought so hard, have left a lasting stain, and it must not be forgotten that Chinese women are practically unknown in Queensland ; therefore, these 726 half Chinese must be the offspring of Chinese fathers and white Australians, clearly pointing out the real danger of allowing the Chinese to flood our Northern Territory.

But when -we come to the number of half castes by white Australians and aboriginal women, the subject is indeed painful, as the whole burden of blame rests with the free and enlightened white man, who is so much superior to every one else that he clamours for the total exclusion of the "blasted nigger," and Mr. Barton says, "for the preservation of the race." But what of the Chinaman, the Hindoo, and others - aliens who are a very real danger to the race, and who, moreover, while competing successfully with the white Australian, and taking away from the country the fruits of their labour to spend in their native homes, give no compensating labour for the white man to live on as does the kanaka ?

It has been ably pointed out by you more than once how the kanaka makes work for thousands of whites, and then when he goes home he does not take a cent with him ; all his earnings (and they are considerable) go to the storekeeper or shopman for goods to take home. Here, then, we see a limited number of kanakas kept well in hand making work for thousands, and going away at the end of their term as empty as they come, so far as money is concerned.

I should like to ask those who cry about the "danger to our women," &c, &c, if the annals of kanaka crime can show anything to equal the Gatton tragedy or the atrocities of the Kelly gang, or even the frequent cases that come before our courts, of fathers who are so inhuman as to violate their own children ? There is abundant proof, then, that the morals of a "white Australia" can be little harmed from contact with the kanaka - rather the reverse, for the kanaka as a savage and as a civilized being do not compare favorably - the balance is mostly in favour of the savage.

But quite apart from the moral aspect comes the oft-repeated and not unproven statement that the white man cannot do the kanaka's work ; and failing a proper enquiry, then let Mr. Barton have his way by all means. Let the kanaka go, ruin the northern trade, and all those - both capitalist and labourer - dependant thereon, and what shall we see ? Desolation . in some ports, and in others an heroic struggle to grow cane by white labour. In this struggle will come the day when the white man will own up to the fact that "It's too 'Australian' hot to do this 'Australian' work," and will want a rise - and when the owner has been thoroughly bled, and driven at last to the wall, and the inevitable "strike" comes on, the summer sky will glow with the burning cane field or the costly mill ; for men who did not hesitate so to arbitrate with the pastoralist will not shrink from so treating the planter. Who then will be the great sufferer? Will it not be the unhappy wives and children of the very men who are now so blindly led ? Those who are possessed of sufficient knowledge to see the gate, but not sufficient to know how to open it, and they begin to destroy it to enable them to pass? No, sir ! the best thing Queensland can do now is to let Mr. Barton make his own soup. He will live, I hope, to be heartily anxious for a change of diet, and then the old days will come

again. Reason will reign, and labour may chalk up another failure alongside the Co-operative Community fad, or the new Australia bubble, and similar children of ignorance who have only turned their blind and discontented parents. Above all we should not commit ourselves to asking for an extension of time - for then we must admit, when the time expires, that we were wrong - unless such extension of time be used to prove absolutely that our contention is wrong. The lesson will be a bitter one, and Mr. Barton will need no other memorial, as Australia's first Premier, than the memory of the labourers' great trial when the sugar industry was killed at their behest.

Mr Wilkinson

- Who is the author of that ?

Mr R EDWARDS

- The writer signs himself "Anglo-Saxon." The Rev. J. Thompson has been labouring amongst the kanakas in Queensland for the past fifteen years. I have never met him, though I heard of him the other day when I was in Adelaide, and I have heard of him in Victoria. The following is a report of a lecture which he delivered at Horsham, Victoria, which appeared in the Age : -

The Rev. J. Thompson, who conducts the Christian mission to the kanakas in the Isis district of North Queensland, in which State he has worked for the past fifteen years, lectured here last night. He expressed strong opposition to the Pacific Islanders Labour Bill, and said that it would simply mean the ruin of the sugar industry. The white man could not 'work in the fields, and the continuance of the coloured labour was an advantage from the working man's point of view. The Pacific labourers were well treated, and the mortality last year, amongst a population of 1,060 kanakas, was only fourteen. There was not one half-caste kanaka child in the district, nor had he seen one during his fifteen years' residence amongst them.

It was stated during the debate that the mortality amongst kanakas is something like 40 per 1,000.

Mr McDonald

- 32 per 1,000.

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Mr R EDWARDS

- Well, this gentleman says that, in the Isis district, of 1,060 kanakas only fourteen died. The opinions of several clergymen have been made use of during the debate, as being in favour of the exclusion of kanakas from Queensland ; and I wish therefore to place before honorable members letters which have been written by clergymen on the other side. The Rev. Alexander Hutchison, who is President of the Queensland Methodist Conference, writing from Mosman, North Queensland, on 10th September - his letter appeared in the Argus of the 16th October, and was headed " Queenslanders and Kanakas" - says :

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It is to be feared that there are some politicians, even in the Federal Parliament, who are not desirous of learning the truth respecting kanaka labour. And upon those it is, no doubt, . useless to bestow any labour with a view to their enlightenment. Yet, all the same, every open minded Australian in our Commonwealth must deprecate the frantic efforts which some others are putting forth to bring about a cessation of kanaka labour, on the pretext, first, that they are in competition with the white man, and, secondly, that they are little better than slaves - and are badly treated at that. It has fallen to my lot to travel thousands of miles in this State on official duties, and my opportunities have presented themselves which enable me write with accurate knowledge on this theme. At the present moment, I am in the Mosman district, which is further removed from the busy centres of population than any other place where kanakas are employed. And I am bound to say that no man could look happier than do the " boys" who are living in this district. It may be as a fairy tale, or even as a " northern snake yarn" to many of your readers, when I say that for breakfast they have good curried meat, with boiled potatoes and bread (the same as we all eat), and tea. For dinner they have, alternately, fresh and salt meat, with vegetables, including peas and haricot beans, pumpkins, and, usually, pudding. For tea they have good stew and vegetables, whilst for afternoon lunch they have tea and cake at 4 o'clock. On Saturday last I attended the half yearly pay of the " boys," which is conducted by the Government agent ; and it was interesting to notice that about two-thirds of the money due was left in the hands of the agent for future use.

The Government agents look very carefully after the kanakas, and see that they are not abused, ill-treated, or badly fed. On pay-day a Government agent is always present to see that the kanakas get

every penny that is due to them.

At the present moment there is some £3,000 in his hands, most of which will be drawn when the kanakas leave for their home, and will be spent in calico, print, and portmanteaux, whilst the balance will be kept to trade for some kind of firearm, which can only be purchased on the high seas, and from some Continental trader, as the Government will not allow any of our merchants here to sell them firearms. No legislation could be more careful than that in operation respecting coloured labour, and the kanakas are fully aware of what they are entitled to. Indeed, sometimes it happens that the boys get wrong impressions about some things, and act very promptly in their own defence. For instance, some time since one of the planters here was giving his boys some excellent spiced beef. This being a new thing in the north, the men would not eat it, and presently one of their number went in 10 miles to Port Douglas, with a sample of the offensive (?) food, for the inspection of the Government agent. "What you call this fella?" "Well," said the agent "that very good meat - I wish I could have some for my own use." It was hard to convince the boy that good spiced beef was a fit article of food for men of colour, but they understand it better now. It was probably some of this kind of beef which was referred to the other day by one of our Federal legislators as "rotten beef."

As to the kanaka competing with the white man, let it rather be considered as to what the white man will do if this labour is abolished. I do not suppose that with £7,000,000 of money invested in the sugar industry, our planters are going to allow the Federal Premier to wipe out the whole business. Labour they must have, even if the low-class labour of Belgium, Italy, and other countries, is imported. But it is an ill-advised policy which proposes to prevent these coloured men from earning an honest living, and the substitution of European labour for this will be no gain to the working man, but rather the reverse. It might be well for our politicians to read Joseph Cook's lectures on labour and capital, and especially those on co-operation, the hope of the working man. The employment of hundreds of kanakas in Queensland insures work for thousands of whites, and I am bound to say that, though I have lived in this State for nearly twelve years, I have never once seen any ill done to any coloured man. Again, let it be said that there is not an employer of kanakas who will not readily court the fullest inquiry under the most searching light, and from any and every point of view. The kanaka is essentially a class which does not fuse. This may be objectionable. But if there is anything at all in the catch-cry, "A White Australia," then the Indian, the Chinese, and the Japanese are all a much greater menace than any number of kanakas.

Mr SPEAKER

- Will the honorable member take his seat? I have been very unwilling to call attention to the length of time occupied by the honorable member, as I recognise that he is expressing the views of what appears to be a minority, and I should be very sorry to limit the expression of the views of any minority. At the same time, I wish to direct the honorable member's attention to the fact that the question before the House is not whether or not the Bill should be passed into law, because its second reading has already been agreed to. The matter we are now considering is whether or not the Bill should be referred to a select committee instead of a committee of the whole House. I think, therefore, that the honorable member should confine himself to the point whether or not it is necessary to so refer the Bill, and if he can adduce any reasons to support his view he will be perfectly in order in doing so. I would direct the honorable member's attention to Standing Order 276, which under certain conditions enables the Speaker or the Chairman of Committees to call upon an honorable member to discontinue his speech if he considers that he is proceeding to an unwarrantable length. I would ask the honorable member not to compel me to take any action of that sort, but to confine his remarks to the necessity of referring the Bill to a select committee.

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Mr R EDWARDS

- I have no desire to transgress the rules of the House; but, under the present circumstances, I think it would be very unfortunate if the House declined to hear any one of the representatives of Queensland. The Bill before us is one which interests Queensland more than any other State, and, if any honorable member were to be prevented from placing information before the House, I would almost say that it would be adding insult to injury. I therefore most respectfully ask leave from the House to place before it the information which I have been at considerable trouble to collect, with the sole object of enlightening honorable members.

Mr SPEAKER

- I would point out to the honorable member that the second reading debate afforded an opportunity to the honorable member to bring forward all the information which he desired to place before the House. The question now before us is whether or not the Bill should be referred to a select committee, and I would ask the honorable member - I will give him every latitude - to confine his remarks to reasons why the Bill should be so referred, and not deal with the broad question, whether or not the Bill should be passed. The honorable member will be able to discuss that point in committee, and on the third reading, as fully as he pleases ; but on this occasion I hope he will confine his remarks to the question I have indicated.

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Mr R EDWARDS

- I shall confine my remarks as much as I possibly can. I should like to refer to what the Attorney-General said when he was on a visit to Queensland some time ago, because the Queensland people maintain that faith has not been kept with that State by more than one of the Federal Ministers. I have here an article headed " The Interests at Stake," which reads as follows : -

The New Zealand Premier, when approached on the subject of federation, is said to have replied - " Do you think it is likely that we will go into federation when you don't know anything about us?"

Mr. Seddon was pretty wide awake, but Queensland unfortunately was not, and is sorry for it. The article continues -

For better or for worse Queensland has become a partner in the Commonwealth, and a sharer in its destinies, but there still appears to be good reason for the fear that southern ignorance of the problems of the tropical north has not been dissipated by the fraternal enthusiasm of federation, and may result in disaster to many of the most deserving pioneers, who have done battle with Nature under difficulties unknown to settlers in other parts of Australia. Many of the problems of Queensland are peculiar to the State, and when a newly-formed Federal Government threatens to interfere with the accepted policy of the State Government, which is directly responsible to the people, such interference can only be justified after fullest inquiry, and with the clearest knowledge of all the facts of the case. This sound principle was recognised by the Federal Attorney-General (Honorable A. Deakin), who, in an address to the people of Queensland, said - " We must be -one in knowledge- knowledge of each other. This trite remark impresses itself upon me particularly in regard to Queensland. Your vast territory, probably but imperfectly known to the bulk of your own people, possesses products and problems peculiar to itself, still less mastered by your southern neighbours. My ignorance is shared by many others. Our southern conditions, though doubtless in many respects novel to you, are more likely to be comprehended by you than, your situation is to be grasped by us. One of the first tasks of the Commonwealth must be to make us better known to each other, and one of the many duties that still appeal to all. true federalists will be to remove misunderstandings, overcome local prejudices, and listen to the views of those who geographically remote from us have separate interests and aims. We must listen to the men who are carrying on the work, of settlement in the far north and the far west."

This is what the Attorney-General said, and it was this speech and others of a similar nature that induced Queensland to join the Federal Union. I maintain that faith has not been kept with Queensland, because it was promised that no industry would be interfered with until proper inquiries had been made. The article proceeds -

The population of Queensland is distributed over such a wide area that, even amongst those who are engaged in different pursuits in the Southern districts and in the interior, there is much ignorance respecting the conditions of the sugar industry, and its relative value as a factor in the prosperity of the State. It is only natural that this ignorance should prevail to a still greater degree amongst the people of the other States, who have still vague notions respecting the industry, gained probably from reminiscences of " Uncle Tom's Cabin " and stories of American slavery rather than from the reading of plain statements of actual facts. To combat prejudice is a more difficult task than to dispel ignorance, but the endeavour, must now be made to accomplish both, results. It is alike in the interests of Queensland and of all Australia that the serious reflections thrown on those who are responsible for the present conditions of the sugar industry should be removed. Dealing first of all with the value of the industry, it was estimated by the Royal commission of 1889 that there were then 51 ,815 acres of land under sugar-cane. The capital then invested in the industry was about £5,000,000 ; machinery alone

representing a value of £1,000,000. In the year 1900, the area under cultivation had increased to 110,657 acres, distributed over the large coastal districts represented by such towns as Childers, Bundaberg, Rockhampton, Bowen, Mackay, Cairns, and Port Douglas. Various estimates as to the amount of capital now invested in the industry have been given. The estimate of Mr. Barton is £6,000,000; others have given the amount as high as £9,000,000 or £10,000,000. Apart from private capital, the Queensland Government, under the Sugar Works Guarantee Act, have made advances to twelve sugar-mills to the amount of £497,245 3s. 3d., and the total indebtedness, including interest up to the end of 1900, amounted to £542,742 4s. 7d. A clearer idea, however, is given both of the aggregate and relative importance of the industry by the annual amount of sugar produced, and its value. Taking in both cases the figures of the Registrar General, it appears that the total output for 1898 was 163,734 tons, for 1899 123,289 tons, and for 1900 only 92,554 tons. The prolonged drought is mainly responsible for the decrease of the last two years. Taking, however, the whole three years the average annual value of the crop is £1,328,449. As the population of Queensland is only about half-a-million, the average annual value of the sugar industry is 2'6s. per head.

I want to impress upon honorable members the importance of the sugar industry as compared with that of other industries. The writer proceeds -

The importance of these figures will best be understood by comparing the relative value of the sugar industry to Queensland with the relative value of other great industries to the States in which they are the most essential to the general prosperity. New South Wales is justly proud of her mining industries. Her coal-fields alone give her an immense advantage over the other States. Being in proximity to the sea they have given the greater facilities for the shipping trade, and have given an impetus to manufactures of all kinds. Prosperous towns have sprung up in the neighbourhood of the coal mines, and make other industries possible by the new wealth which has been created and distributed. One can imagine the fiery indignation aroused if it were proposed to make coal mining impossible, and to allow such a district as that of Newcastle to relapse into its primitive wilderness. The indignation would be intensified if it were further proposed to abandon every gold mine throughout the State, or to impose such restrictions as to render gold mining impossible. Yet the aggregate value of the whole of the coal industry of New South Wales is less than that of the sugar industry of Queensland. For the year 1899 it is estimated by Coghlan at £1,325,799, as against £1,328,449, the average aggregate value of the sugar produced in Queensland during each of the last three years and about £3,000 more than the coal industry in New South Wales. But the population of New South Wales is nearly three times as great as that of Queensland, so that, taking again the exact figures as given by Coghlan, the average value per head of the coal industry to New South Wales is only £0-97, as compared with the average value of £2-6 per head, which represents the wealth of the sugar industry distributed in the same way amongst the population of Queensland. In other words, the value of the sugar industry to Queensland is nearly three times as great as the value of the coal industry to New South Wales. If to the coal industry of the latter State we add the gold mining, with its returns of £1,751,815 for the year 1899, the equivalent value is still far from being reached, and, roughly speaking, it may be said that to Queensland the value of the industry which is now threatened is as great as that of the total mining industry, with the exception of the silver mines in the far West, to New South Wales.

The same method of comparison brings out some interesting results in the case of the other States. During recent years nothing has done more to enhance the agricultural prosperity of Victoria than the development of dairy farming, which has thus contributed very largely to the development of all other industries. It is in this way that primary production is more important to national progress than any manufacture which simply gives added value to a product which has been received from another country. For the year 1899 the total value of milk and its products, and of the return obtained from swine, together with the total value of dairy produce, in Victoria is estimated by Coghlan at £2,491,000. On a population basis, this gives an average value of £2. 14, which is considerably under the average value of sugar to the Queensland population. If again we take the total value of the Victorian wheat crop for the year 1899-1900, as given at £2,031,800, we are brought to the same result that the loss of wheat-growing would cost less to Victoria than the loss of the sugar industry would cost to Queensland. In the same way the comparison when applied to the case of South Australia shows that the equivalent loss of wheat growing to that State is only about equal to what Queensland will suffer if the sugar industry of

Queensland should be ruined by hasty legislation. Objection may of course be raised as to details in the application of such comparisons to respective States; but the general result will in no way be affected, even where further comparison would be still further advantageous to Queensland.

Can it for a moment be imagined that either Mr. Barton or the people of New South Wales would tolerate legislative interference with the whole mining industry of New South Wales, because a few thousand kanakas were employed to do a certain class of necessary work under Government regulations which made it impossible either that injury should be done to the kanakas, or that they should engage in any class of labour acceptable to a white man ? It is necessary to drive the question home. Would New South Wales be content to lose all her mining industries, with the prospect of ruined towns and thousands of unemployed, merely to vindicate the principle that no black man of any race should be allowed to work under any conditions within the boundaries of the Commonwealth ? Would Victorian statesmen who are now supporting Mr. Barton in making Queensland the vicarious sufferer in the endeavour to conciliate a small section of their Parliamentary supporters, be willing for the same purpose to make a similar sacrifice of the whole dairying or wheat-growing industry of Victoria ?

It will, of course, be urged that Queensland is not asked to make any sacrifice ; but on a matter of this kind the unanimous verdict of the sugar growers themselves, and of the responsible State Government, is surely more valuable than that of outside politicians, who know nothing of the real condition of the industry. It is surely in itself an injustice that the sugar-growers should find that whereas their own State Government was practical and conciliatory, that of the Commonwealth has become academic and intolerant. Further endeavour will be made to put the case of Queensland in the clearest possible light. Doubtless honorable members generally have received the same information bearing upon this question as has been forwarded to me. But, inasmuch as the papers addressed to them have not been made use of, I am in duty bound to place the facts which they contain before the House. I should like honorable members to understand what this industry has done for Queensland. Many thriving towns have grown up in northern Queensland which owe their existence chiefly to the sugar industry. Such towns, for example, as Childers, Isis, Bundaberg, Mackay, Geraldton, and others owe their existence entirely to that industry. If the sugar industry were destroyed those towns would die, and, as a result, all the other industries which have been established in them would suffer to such an extent that they would inevitably succumb. The article continues -

Before dealing in detail with the question as to whether kanaka labour is or is not necessary for the carrying on of the sugar industry, it is important that we should have a clear conception of the value of that industry to Queensland and of all that makes for its stability. The Federal Premier has asserted that the employment of kanaka labour is in itself a wrong, and that in providing for its abolition he is only carrying out the declared policy of Queensland for the last twenty years. We shall fully discuss these and similar contentions in other articles ; but even from Mr. Barton's own stand-point, it is easy to show that his present action has been hasty and inconsiderate, and in his determined energy to rectify what he assumes to be a wrong, he is likely to perpetrate another wrong of still greater proportions. To begin with, it is a self-evident fact that the Federal Government is acting without the slightest heed being given to the protests of the Government of Queensland or of the sugar-growers themselves, to whom, as Dr. Maxwell says, the questions debated in Parliament are questions of life and death. It is inopportune and impolitic - to make the appeal on the lowest grounds - that a serious blow should be struck at a great industry at the very time when Queensland is suffering from a series of reverses, which have retarded her progress and diminished her public revenue. The effects of the recent prolonged drought are still strongly felt in many districts. The Government railways have been running at a heavy loss. The flocks and herds of the West have been decimated, and in the course of one year there has been a loss of over 5,000,000 sheep and 1,000,000 cattle. In ten years the number of sheep in the State has been reduced from 20,289,633 to 10,339,185, and the number of cattle from 6,192,759 to 4,078,191. It is a dangerous policy at any time to tamper with the pioneering industries of a young country, and "when one great industry is suffering from natural causes, disaster may be the result of hasty interference with the conditions which regulate the prosperity of other industries. It has already been shown that the relative value of the sugar industry to Queensland is three times as great as the value of the coal-mining industry to New South Wales. That, however, does not state the whole position. The whole industry is attended with conditions peculiar to itself. In the other States, and in Southern Queensland, Where mixed farming is possible, the settler has

means of recovery where there is a failure in one crop. He has numerous resources in the disposal of his wool, sheep, cattle, maize, wheat, fruit, or dairy produce. Cane-growing on the other hand, is almost the sole resource of 2,610 Queensland settlers, who have 110,637 acres under that crop. The area of the holdings, as well as climatic reasons, make it impossible that at a short notice these settlers should adapt themselves to new conditions or avail themselves of other pursuits. Their success or failure depends on the success or failure of the sugar industry itself. Mr. Barton has raised the old suggestion that the extension of smaller areas for sugarcane would lead to greater production, and assist in the eradication of black labour without destroying the industry. That is quite true, and the reduction of holdings, with a consequent diminution of black labour, are demonstrable facts. The other fact remains, however, that even now, when the area of holdings under the sugarcane crop has been reduced to an average of a little over 42 acres, the cane-growers insist that at present a minimum of kanaka labour is still indispensable for the trashing and cutting of the cane. As will be shown, this is not merely the opinion of those who are engaged in the industry on a large scale, but of the small settlers whose interest it is to dispense with all hired labour of whatever class. The special commissioner of the Courier, after a prolonged visit to the whole of the sugar districts of Queensland, gave it as an irrefutable conclusion that it was the almost unanimous opinion of sugar-growers, both in a large and small way, that to interfere precipitately with the present labour conditions would mean the destruction of the sugar industry in this State. In no other industry in any part of Australia has the problem of closer settlement been so successfully solved, and solved under the most difficult conditions, as in the case of sugar-growing in Queensland. The men engaged in cane-growing are not the representatives of a few large companies gaining wealth from the soil to be expended elsewhere, but the sturdiest and most enterprising of small settlers, who have won success from the very teeth of difficulties which would have daunted less resolute men. In the case of the great majority of the 2,610 settlers engaged in cane-growing, it may be said that their very livelihood, apart from their future success, is involved in the stability of the sugar industry. How readily that stability may be shaken is shown by Dr. Maxwell in his explanation that sugar-growing is very different to growing potatoes or maize. In the latter case, if labour is short and the farmer cannot produce 2,000 bushels of maize, then he can grow 1,000 bushels and find a market for it. But sugar is a manufactured article, and must be made where the cane is grown. If the mill requires 30,000 tons of cane to make it possible to open up and pay running expenses, and only 5,000 tons of cane are grown, then the mill is stopped just as effectively as though not one stick of cane is grown. To say that £6,000,000 or £10,000,000 have been invested in the sugar industry does not convey the full apprehension of what would be involved in the ruin of that industry. There are now large and prosperous towns, scattered along the Queensland coast, whose very existence depends on the maintenance of the industry which has reclaimed some of the most fertile lands from the tropical wilderness, and made other industries possible. To give concrete examples. The town of Mackay may be regarded as the centre of the sugar industry, both by reason of its situation and relative importance. Within the municipality there is a population of 4,600 people, that of the district being about 13,200. Government buildings are represented by a post and telegraph office, court-house, Customhouse, two State schools, police barracks, and immigration barracks. There are in addition a railway and tramways. Four Australian banks have established important branches in the town, which has also numerous churches, and eighteen hotels. All this represents investment as a result of the belief in the stability of settlement in the district and the determination to make provision for future requirements, as well as for present needs. Consider, therefore, how the ruin of the sugar industry would affect Mackay. During the last ten years, the exports from the town amounted in value to the sum of £2,788,231. Of this amount sugar alone represented no less than £2,524,470, all the other exports put together only being of the value of £263,752, inclusive of £9,196 by products of sugar - molasses £56, and rum £9,140. Take the sugar industry away from Mackay, and not only will the money invested in cane-growing and sugar-mills be absolutely lost, but all the money invested in other industries, and spent in building the town, and providing for its future will be rendered as profitless as if thrown into the sea. There is good reason for the consternation created at Bundaberg by the Kanaka Bill. Here is the case of another important town which depends almost entirely on the sugar industry. The population of the town and district is about 17,000 whites, and 2,500 blacks. The Millaquin and Fairymead refineries have been built in the district at considerable expense. A steel bridge across to South Bundaberg was opened last year, and cost £75,000. The Harbour Board, in addition to past improvements, is now spending £100,000 in

carrying out a scheme providing for a minimum depth of water in the river from the bar of 12 ft. at low tide, necessitating nearly four miles of training walls. The importance of the sugar industry to Bundaberg is illustrated by the fact that in 1898 - which as will be seen from figures already given, was an exceptionally good year - the value of the product shipped from the port was no less than £402,394. In addition to this there was a large quantity of sugar sent away by rail. The only other exports for the same year were gold, valued at £28,563, and tallow, hides, and sheepskins, to the value of £4,349. It should hardly be necessary to repeat the comparison in the case of other towns, such as Childers, Maryborough, Ingham, Ayr Geraldton, Cairns, and Port Douglas, all of which are mainly dependent upon the success of the sugar industry. Their aggregate population is 34,153, and in addition to them there are smaller centres which would be affected in the same way by

* 20 k the loss of the staple trade in which the prosperity of every coastal town in Northern Queensland is involved. Every item of this kind must be taken into consideration when reckoning the cost of legislation which interferes with sugar - growing in Queensland. The Government have made advances of over £500,000 to twelve sugar-mills, but they have also expended many millions sterling in improving the various ports along the coast, dredging and deepening the harbors and rivers, constructing breakwaters and railways, building schools, post-offices, and all other public buildings, which were rendered necessary by the expansion which was chiefly due to the development of tropical agriculture. In speaking of the relative value of the sugar industry of Queensland, we must have regard not only to the facts just considered, but also to the loss of trade and the loss of profitable employment throughout the whole of the State as the result of the loss of the primary industry. It is estimated by Mr. Macnish, who speaks officially for the sugar-planters of the North, that the industry gives direct employment to 22,000 white men, of whom 13,500 are permanently employed, the additional 9,000 being employed during the crushing season. This, however, is far from being the only consideration. Take the case of the shipping trade. There is now a splendid steam-ship service along the coast, which makes possible not only the development of the sugar industry, but of the mining industry, and other industries both along the coast and in the interior, which is tapped at various ports. The A. U.S.N. Company, Howard Smith Company, the Adelaide Company, and the Collins line are all running steamers between Brisbane and Northern ports. It is safe to say, as Mr. John Arthur has said in his address to the Chamber of Commerce, that the very life-blood of the shipping trade of these companies with Northern Queensland is given by the sugar industry.

An Honorable Member. - Do 9,000" kanakas accomplish that 1

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Mr R EDWARDS

- I am not speaking of the kanakas. I am endeavouring to show honorable members the extent of the sugar industry. The kanakas help to provide the white people with employment.. If all the kanakas were deported to-morrow, a great many white people would have to leave Queensland because they would be deprived of their means of employment. The article continues -

The communication thus insured gathers tributary streams from other sources, and in turn gives back what has been received. For example, what shipping trade would be possible from the mining industry alone of such a centre as Charters Towers ? It is true that the miners need supplies, but the return trade could be put in a steam launch. What again would be the value of the pastoral industry alone to the shipping trade of Northern Queensland ? A few trips each season would meet all requirements, and not even the addition of the meat trade would make a decent shipping trade profitable or possible. The establishment of large industrial centres in the sugar districts has, however, created an important trade which both gives and receives to the advantage of the whole of Queensland. One firm of ironworkers at Maryborough, an establishment which now does work for every portion of the State, has during the last five years received work from the sugar industry to the value of £300,000. This foundry gives constant employment to between 600 and 700 men. The existence of the northern towns has also given markets for the products of Southern Queensland, and here again the shipping trade and the farming interests of the State have derived benefit. Mr. Reid (Messrs. Hutton and Co.) has made the statement that the trade in dairy produce alone with the north is worth £300,000 per annum. Sugar thus means to Queensland the prosperity of the shipping trade, markets for farmers, avenues of employment for workers of all kinds, and business of every description. It is not an accretion which may easily be removed, but an essential part of

the commercial life of the State. Even if it be only assumed that the industry is in danger, its importance is such as to call for deliberation, and the most honest investigation, before legislation is passed which may cause ruin which can never be undone.

I have no doubt honorable members are familiar with the position of affairs in Queensland in 1890. It has been pointed out more than once that in 1885 Sir Samuel Griffith, who was then Premier, passed a Bill through the Queensland Parliament limiting the employment of kanaka labour to five years, and providing that none should be indentured after December, 1890. The condition of things in 1890 and in 1891 was very dreadful.

Mr Fisher

- What was the cause of it ?

Mr R EDWARDS

- White men to the number of many thousands were thrown out of work.

Mr Fisher

- Will the honorable member give the sugar industry statistics ?

Mr R EDWARDS

- Many of the plantations, as is well known, were abandoned, although they were fitted with valuable machinery ; and I have it on the best authority that a number of these plantations have not since been taken up. Once abandoned it is seldom plantations are resumed ; at any rate, such has been the case in the neighbourhood of Maryborough. I intend to conclude my remarks by making brief reference to the change of policy introduced by Sir Samuel Griffith at the beginning of 1892. Honorable members from Queensland are familiar with the fact that Parliament was specially called at an early period of the year, to legislate with a view to relieving the sugar industry.

Mr Fisher

- We are painfully familiar with the fact.

Mr R EDWARDS

- As a rule, the Queensland Parliament meets in June or July, but in 1892 it met on the 29th March, and Sir Samuel Griffith then placed before the House his manifesto, which was a change from the policy he had introduced a few years before. Sir Samuel Griffith did that in consequence of the necessities of the sugar industry, which had, in fact, almost collapsed. He recognised that something must be done if the industry was to be saved to Queensland, and under the circumstances he subordinated his own opinion. I maintain that Sir Samuel Griffith has not changed his opinion, but that he is still strongly in favour of a white Australia. He found, however, that the time had not arrived when the kanakas could be done away with, and the result was that Parliament, without a division, or, at any rate, by a large majority, accepted the manifesto put before the country by the right honorable gentleman.

Mr Fisher

- When?

Mr R EDWARDS

- In March, 1892.

Mr Fisher

- There was no election then.

Mr R EDWARDS

- But Sir Samuel Griffith had published his manifesto proposing to re-introduce kanakas.

Mr Fisher

- He was a " rat."

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Mr R EDWARDS

- I cannot accept that statement ; Sir Samuel Griffith saw he had made a mistake, and was willing to rectify it. I know it went very much against him to go back on what he had already decided, and on what he still believed in ; but such a step was necessary to save not only the sugar industry, but Queensland. Sir Samuel Griffith on that occasion said -

Parliament has been summoned so early because, as stated in the Governor's speech, it is thought desirable that we should deal at once with matters of urgent public importance. I intend to refer now especially to the question of the introduction of coloured labour, on which so much has been said of late.

It is just six weeks ago, I think, since, with the consent of my colleagues, I addressed, through the press, a manifesto to the people of Queensland. I am glad to know it reached not only the people of all Australia, but also a great many people in Great Britain and in some continental countries. The matter has attracted, if I may say so, worldwide attention. The Government considered it to be a matter of most serious consequence, and of such importance that they were bound to take Parliament into their confidence, and ask their opinion upon it, at the earliest possible moment. I shall ask honorable members to bear with me while I read what I said on that occasion through the press, and it will shorten the rest of what I have to say. I may confess also that I should like to see it embodied in the pages of Hansard. I know the course adopted was somewhat unusual. This is the manifesto I addressed to the people of Queensland, and all others who would read it. I do not propose to read the manifesto, because I think honorable members are familiar with the contents of it to a considerable extent. As I said before, the object was to re-introduce kanaka labour, with the view of saving not only the sugar industry, but Queensland itself.

Sir John Quick

- Did Sir Samuel Griffith say that he had been mistaken in his previous attitude?

Sir Malcolm McEacharn

- He said so.

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Mr R EDWARDS

- I do not know that Sir Samuel Griffith used those words, but the fact of his consenting to re-introduce kanakas showed that he realized that a mistake had been made. Sir Samuel Griffith concluded as follows :-

I believe that the adoption of this course at the present time will tend to that end, and for the reasons I have given, I am satisfied that the social and political welfare of the people will not now be imperilled by it. I should add, that while my colleagues concur in the conclusion, I am alone responsible for the political retrospect, and for the arguments. I have read that manifesto, because it is upon that matter I have to speak. That manifesto, I believe, has produced already considerable effect. I believe it has given a tone of encouragement and hopefulness to the people in many parts of the colony, where before there was a feeling almost of despair. That is something to have done. On the other hand, as has been said by the honorable member for Maryborough, Mr. Annear, it has been met by the most extreme vilification. No attempt has been made to meet argument by argument ; no attempt has been made to combat the arguments I have put forward ; but they have been met by the wholesale vilification of those who do not consider themselves so wise that they cannot be taught. I do not think that sort of argument will have much effect, however. As has been pointed out by Mr. Howell, vilification is the special weapon of a particular class of people who have lately made a great noise - condemnation. of all those who will not do what they are told by them. I am very sorry that a matter of such serious consequence should be so dealt with. I hope that during the debates that will take place on the subject during this session, it will be dealt with as a matter of serious importance to the welfare of the colony, and not by the vilification of one man or another. I certainly shall not be deterred by any amount of abuse from pressing forward anything that I consider to be for the benefit of the country, and 20 e z

I do not think any useful purpose is to be served by adopting the arguments of abuse. Only to-day I received a resolution on this subject, which contained the most remarkable combination of abusive epithets which I have ever seen in any resolution respecting myself. But that sort of thing does not carry any weight. This is a matter that must be carefully considered and earnestly thought out. I ask honorable members to consider the present state of the country. There is no doubt the country is in a state of very serious depression. How is that depression to be remedied ? I will put the arguments very briefly. How can you remedy the depression ? To establish confidence is a good thing to begin with, but confidence alone will not produce bread and butter. Food must be got from somewhere. Where is the food to come from ? The only possible way is to increase the producing powers of the earth. Let us begin with the case of the unemployed persons at present in Brisbane - the people who disgraced themselves to-day by insulting one of the noblest gentlemen who ever set foot in Australia. Take the case of those men. They want money to buy food. How are they to get it? By work, I suppose. I hope so, at least. That is the way they ought to get it. How are they to get work! Are they mechanics or general labourers? No one wants houses built in Brisbane just now. Very few people want repairs, and, therefore, that sort of work is not

required. Why ? Because the population of Brisbane have not so much to live upon themselves as to have any superfluity to expend for such purposes. But it is necessary that these people should find work. There must be some kind of employment found for them unless the population of the city is to decrease instead of increase. The proportion of the population of these cities who earn their living by direct production is a very small proportion of the population. The greater number really are distributing media. They receive goods from abroad ; they distribute them to the people in the interior who produce, and in the same way they deal with goods for exportation. They are middlemen and media of transit. There is no doubt that, as a matter of fact, the people in the towns are to a great extent consumers, and the beneficial work they do is for the most part the work of middlemen ; that is to say, they transmit productions from one part of the earth to another. But that work cannot be increased unless there is more work found for them by men who are actually engaged in raising produce. The pastoral industry finds employment for a great many people, and the mining industry keeps a great many in the city going, but beyond those what have we ? The only thing we have to look to to raise the country out of its depression and to find employment for the people who are here, and for more people whom we hope to see here - because I suppose most of us desire to see the population vastly increase during the next few years - I say the only thing we have to look to is an increase in the agricultural production of the country. That is the only thing to which we can look for a permanent alleviation of the depression existing at the present time. There is nothing else. If honorable members do not believe it, let them controvert the argument. Will honorable members bear that in mind, and also persons outside the House who denounce every proposition made by the Government, as if the Government were a set of malignant demons who go about seeking whom they may devour ; as if the Government were not charged more especially than any one else with the duty of seeking the welfare of the country, and as if it were not a sufficiently difficult task for them to see how best they can do it. Can we not have credit for trying to do our best, and to reach to the root of things, and base our proposals upon the only sound foundation? It may be said, "Why not borrow more money ? " That is the advice given by some persons,, which, if followed, might produce a temporary and fictitious, but only apparent prosperity. That is to say, it would give higher wages for a time to a number of people. But that comes to an end, and then you have to pay the interest. The honorable gentleman says it is only lately we have found that out. Are there any of us who can afford to throw stones at one another ? I certainly do not claim to have been wiser than my generation for the last twenty years. We are all of us to blame more or less, and I think it is our business at the present time not to engage in recrimination with one another, but to help one another, and to help the country as best we can out of its difficulties. I have pointed out the absolute necessity of looking to the increased productiveness of the land, and getting more people to settle upon it, as the only certain means we can look to for getting over the

present depression. What agricultural industries have we in the colony at the present time ? We have the growing of wheat and maize. Maize is certainly not a very profitable crop at present, I understand ; but wheat is profitable everywhere, and no doubt the cultivation of it will be largely increased in the future. But there are large areas of rich agricultural land in the colony that are not fit for growing wheat, and are fit for growing sugar. We have had for some years a large sugar industry going on in the colony. At present it is certainly not increasing ; indeed it is suffering under a very great depression - so great indeed that only three or four months ago it was the avowed intention of the owners of certain mills and land to withdraw from the industry - to save as much out of the wreck as they could, and then withdraw. It is of no use denying that. But if the sugar industry is doomed to disappear, what have we to take its place ? Nothing. Some of us - I for one - have been struggling for years to induce white people to engage in that industry - taking the place of the kanakas whom they desired to displace. I have done my best, and what do we find ? How many amongst the unemployed persons in the community who are clamouring to go upon the land have been found willing to go to work upon the canefields at reasonable wages ? Not one of them. In one instance some men did go ; they were said to have been sent by the unions. But there is very strong reason to believe that before these men went on to that plantation it was arranged that they should make the experiment a failure. That was the only experiment that was tried. It is a fact that these men who are clamouring for access to the land, and to keep out the kanaka, have absolutely refused to do his work. I should like now to put before the House the views of the late Sir Thomas McIlwraith, whom I look upon as one of the ablest statesmen that Australia has ever seen, and who at this time was a member of the

coalition Ministry of which Sir Samuel Griffith was the head.

Mr SPEAKER

- Does the honorable member think that the speech he is about to read bears on the question of referring the Bill to a select committee 1

Mr R EDWARDS

- I think so; but I am quite willing to submit to your ruling, sir, and abstain from further quotation.

Mr SPEAKER

- The honorable member must comply with the standing orders, and confine himself to the question before the Chair. If the quotation he is about to make bears upon the question of referring the Bill to a select committee, I shall be very pleased to hear the honorable member read it, but, if it does not, I cannot hear it.

Mr R EDWARDS

- I think it is closely related to my motion, and to read it will not occupy very long. .

Mr SPEAKER

- If the honorable member thinks that, he is entitled to proceed. .

Mr R EDWARDS

- Sir Thomas McIlwraith said -

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Mr Speaker

- I think it is due to the honorable member who has just sat down to compliment him to this extent : that while he has been a member of this House, and representing a black labour constituency all the time he has been here, still he has got the debate out of the black labour rut into which it had fallen, and referred to other subjects which are equally as important as that which has been the subject of the debate up to the present time. Too much attention has been given to the black labour question. In fact, up to the time the honorable member for Mackay spoke, we heard very little more than that from any honorable member. But we must take a wider view of the subject to understand the remarks that have been made, especially those of the honorable member for Enoggera. I have risen principally on account of the remarks made by that honorable member. I want to direct attention to the wider view that I take of the subject. Early in the year it was apparent to the Ministry and to the whole colony that we were in a very miserable position. Business was bad ; employment could not be got by men ; the smaller financial institutions were shaky ; and there was a want of confidence all round, not only of ourselves among ourselves, but of people at home whose opinions we are bound to value. The Government were not in a nice position, and I know that if we had simply studied our own comfort we should have been very glad to have been out of it. We were bound to recognise the position, and to face the causes of our condition with remedies, and that is what we have attempted to do. We saw plainly that there was one very prominent point in which we had failed in past legislation, and that we had by our legislation hurt an industry that might have been prosperous now. That was the sugar industry in the north. We saw that plainly. It was plain to any man who went north. He had only to go to the towns to see the effect, not because there were starving blackfellows there, but because he would find starving white men in all the towns, although he would see evident vestiges of the towns having been much larger in past years. That can be seen from Brisbane right up to Cooktown. Then if he went into the interior a little, and visited the plantations, he would find that what were formerly the scenes of industry now show a decaying industry, and an industry that is bound to go unless some means are adopted to keep it in existence. We had to face that position, and we did face it, and we came to the conclusion that the first thing to be done, the best remedy at the present time, was under proper restrictions to give them black labour again. We also faced the question that is such a stumbling-block to the honorable member for Enoggera and other honorable members, of " What will the constituencies say ? " It would have been an easy matter for a weak Ministry to say that they would throw the responsibility upon the constituencies by going to the country. But I ask honorable members to consider the state of affairs here for the last three months, and say whether we would not have put ourselves down as a lot of cowards if we had dissolved Parliament, and left the responsibility upon the country of finding a remedy for the wretchedness of the colony. We determined to face the position, and we are doing that now with the full responsibility that we are quite prepared to go to the country when we see a manifestation that the country desires it. We believe that the country is with us in

the policy enunciated by the Chief Secretary. When the Chief Secretary boldly enunciated that policy, the country at once sprang to it. Every important centre in the colony rose and said that that was the proper policy to pursue. Take, for instance, the city of Brisbane. At the last general election, when I took up the position that in order to let political matters go on we must let the black labour question be dead for the time, there were three daily papers in Brisbane, all of them opposed to black labour, whilst a fourth paper, edited by the honorable member for Enoggera himself, was also dead against it. Now, if we take those four papers as exponents of public opinion in the South - and I think we may safely do that - everyone of them, and more particularly that formerly edited by the honorable gentleman, is now in favour of black labour. Is not that an indication of the change that has taken place in public opinion in the colony ?' What better indication could we have than that ? I will take the honorable member to his own milk and water meetings. The honorable member has conscientiously attended to his duties to his constituency - because I will give the honorable member the credit of being one of the most conscientious members in the House, sparing no pains in attending to the wants of his constituency, and performing whatever they may legitimately call upon him to do - and they would be a very bad lot to please if they quarrelled with him on account of his not working for their interests. That is why they actually stood him at his meetings at all. If he had been another member they would have quietly shunted him, and said, "We have had quite enough of you" ; but they would not. They want a member like the honorable member, who will perform the duties of a member well and conscientiously, and work hard for them. At the same time they want a member to be of their opinion. They did not want to tell the honorable member so in plain words, but they did it in fact ; and the honorable member knows as well as I do that he will have to change exactly as the Boomerang, the Courier, the Observer, and the Telegraph have changed before he has the slightest chance of getting back for Enoggera again. I - have said that the position of a Minister at the present time is not a bed of roses. I admit that what we propose is against the opinion expressed at the last general election ; but having come to the conclusion that public opinion had changed, and knowing that we ourselves had changed, the first thing to do was to let the country know what we proposed to do. The Chief Secretary did that as soon as arrangements could be made, and we then made arrangements for the meeting of Parliament. That was a much bolder course than drivelling on, getting deeper in debt till the month of June, and then coming helplessly forward and saying, " We did not get you into' this fix. The only thing is to have a dissolution." We are prepared to fight it out, and do the best for the country, and that is the whole object of the policy indicated in the speech. The first thing we want to remedy is the depression in the sugar industry. I am not going into the kanaka question, but I will simply state as a fact that the introduction of kanaka labour, or the mere promise of it, will give great impulse to the colony at the present time. . If the honorable member for Enoggera studied public opinion he would see that the labouring classes, who are so much out of employment, are the men who have been converted. I admit that the labour leaders have not been converted. It will take a great deal to convert them, because they are not out of employment. If the honorable gentleman takes the most legitimate means to find out what the labouring people think on the question, he will come to the conclusion to which I have come - namely, that the more black men are employed on the sugar plantations the better it will be for all the industries in the towns, and in the country too. I speak for the towns from my own knowledge ; and with regard to the country, I refer to the meetings held there. Look at Mr. Atkinson's speech at Gin Gin. He is one of the most sensible men I know, and his speech was most eloquent. He said to the farmers, "Look how well we lived while the sugar plantations were going on ! They were good customers. And look what a lot of poverty-stricken devils we are now ! " That was the gist of his sermon, and its truth is abundantly proved. If the honorable member will ascertain the opinions of such people, .he will find a better indication of public opinion than he can get from the Barcoo election. Public opinion must not be gauged by the Barcoo election on a question of this sort ; and if he thinks we were deceived by the Barcoo election he is quite wrong. I had openly expressed my opinion that the Barcoo election would be lost, simply because the workers had complete control of the rolls. The policy they advocated was to insist on a continual rise in wages without the slightest consideration as to the ability of the employers to pay higher wages ; and we can scarcely fancy any candidate opposed to that policy, so successful for the time, being returned at present. A remedy will come in time, however ; and the remedy will come, not by employers bringing down wages, but by employees being glad to be employed at wages which the employer can afford to pay. Until then it is likely that the Barcoo will return members pledged entirely to the doctrines supported by Mr.

Ryan, whom I am glad to welcome here to-night.

There is a good deal more here, but I will not trespass any further on the time of the House. I only wish honorable members had read all the papers which have come to them regularly from Queensland, and to which I am inclined to think, they have not given much attention. I regret that the Prime Minister is not present, as I had intended to make an appeal to him to reconsider the request for a committee to inquire into the kanaka question. I think the right honorable gentleman can afford to be generous.

Sir Malcolm McEacharn

- And just.

Mr R EDWARDS

- And also to be just. I think that the present action of the Commonwealth Government is unjust, not only to the planters but to Queensland as a whole. I am not here to advocate the interests of any special class - not even of the planters or of the working man - but I am speaking in the interest of the community as a whole. I have had many friends among the working classes for many years, and there are none of whom I think more than some working men with whom I am even now on the most friendly terms. I would appeal to the labour members from Queensland and the other States to look with some consideration upon the sugar industry. They can afford to be generous. They are an influential party in this House, and they have it within their power to force the Government to do anything they like. I should like them to make use of that great power to influence the Prime Minister to postpone this Bill until next session. No harm could be done, but I believe it would be in the best interests of the Commonwealth.

Mr Fisher

-It would be a cruel thing for the planter.

Mr R EDWARDS

- It would not be a cruel thing for the planter. The Bill would be delayed for only a few months, and no evil consequences need be feared. I have explained the position of the kanaka in Queensland, and have pointed out that there is no moral danger connected with him, but by delay for the purposes of inquiry we might be able to save the sugar industry, and allow it to continue and prosper as it has done in the past. I appeal to the labour members to be generous, and to make use of their great power, because I recognise that the Government are utterly unable to take any other course than that they now propose except with the consent of the labour party. Personally, I have nothing to say against that party, because during the time I have been in the House I have received the utmost courtesy, consideration and assistance from them. I now ask them to think seriously before they allow this Bill to pass in its present form. A committee of enquiry ought to be appointed, and if the Government have a good cause they have nothing to fear from delay. I strongly urge the House to consent to the appointment of a select committee. I move - That the Pacific Island Labourers Bill be referred to a select committee.

Mr FISHER

- I think it is fitting that a Queensland representative should reply to the remarks made by the honorable member for Oxley. This question of the retention of kanakas on the Queensland plantations has killed many public men, and, from present appearances, I think it is likely to prove disastrous to many more. At the outset, I desire to say that I think it is due to the late Mr. W. H. Groom to characterize the statement that he, in his later years, was in favour of kanaka labour on the Queensland plantations, as an unmitigated falsehood.

Sir Malcolm McEacharn

- That has not been stated here.

Mr FISHER

- It has been published by journals that consider themselves reputable, and statements of this kind which have been made by those who are leading the movement in favour of retaining the kanaka are dastardly and most detestable.

Sir Malcolm McEacharn

- That statement has not been made in this House.

Mr L E GROOM

- It was contained in the petition that was presented to-day.

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Mr FISHER

- It is painful to observe the callous way in which some men make statements that are entirely false. A great deal has been said about the history of the kanaka question in Queensland, and if it were not that the House is already wearied with statistics, I should be inclined to put in the whole of the figures showing the production of sugar in Queensland from the beginning right up to the present day. Perhaps, however, it would be unwise to do that. I shall take the liberty of replying to the remarks of the honorable member for Oxley with regard to those who violated the pledges they made to the people in 1888. Sir Samuel Griffith and Sir Thomas Mcllwraith coalesced, and behind the backs of the people and without their authority, and against petitions and the resolutions of public meetings, demoralized the Queensland Parliament, and passed a law abolishing what had previously been done according to the express wishes of the electors. How did this coalition take place? Sir Thomas Mcllwraith said, in the statement just now read, that he was never in favour of doing away with the kanakas, and he was too strong and bold a man to surrender his principles. In 1888, however, the year of the general election, in Queensland, he found the position so strong against him, and the electors so determined that there should be no further recruiting of kanaka labour, that he was compelled to issue a manifesto in which he said that although he could not abandon his principles, he would promise that he would not countenance the introduction of any further kanaka labour. What happened? He returned to power under this sacred pledge; he quarrelled with his colleagues, and coalesced with Sir Samuel Griffith, who had also pledged himself to the electors to oppose the introduction of coloured labour. I had the pleasure of hearing Sir Samuel Griffith in 1888 deliver a speech to the electors of Queensland, and I well remember that, when speaking on the black labour question, he warned the electors of Queensland that the question was not settled. He stated that the matter was not at an end, notwithstanding that he was then in favour of putting it aside, and of not introducing any more kanaka labour. He knew what the position was, and he told the people so; but in later years, after again becoming Premier in coalition with Sir Thomas Mcllwraith, through circumstances over which he hardly had control, he was almost compelled to repeal the Act he had passed in 1885. What can be said of a Government that acted contrary to its pledges to the people, and reversed the distinct verdict of the electors? What would the people of Australia say if this Government did anything of the kind, and what would they be entitled to say of honorable members who took action that was capable of that construction? They would regard them with scorn. We labour members asked the Government of Queensland to conduct themselves as honorable men, and to go to the electors upon the question, but they did not do so. I would ask honorable members who have read the history of this movement, what were the causes of that great depression that has been so much spoken of? What were the causes of the small financial institutions being in trouble at that time? Many of the larger financial institutions were also in trouble, but the labour party could not be blamed for that. Is there an honorable member who would argue that, because the financial institutions were in difficulties - as they were throughout Australia, as in other parts of the world, we should submit to having undesirable labour thrust upon us in opposition to the verdict of the electors. That was the position when the coalition Government in 1892 reversed the policy of Queensland. It was during that session of that Parliament, which was the last to be elected for a term of five years, that the Queensland Government reversed everything that had been done, presumably from a democratic point of view. They passed an electoral law which destroyed a third of the workingmen's votes. At the general elections in 1893, the electors of Queensland returned fifteen brand-new labour members to the Queensland Parliament, although one-third of the workingmen's votes had been destroyed in order to secure the return of a Conservative majority. Speaking from memory, the votes that were cast for the labour party numbered 27,000, as against 29,000 cast for the whole of the Ministerialists. In spite of the fact that we as a party polled nearly as large a number of votes as all the Ministerialists put together, some people told us that the electors of Queensland had been converted; but the electors had never been converted into believing in black labour of any kind. Nor do a majority of the electors of Queensland believe in the employment of kanaka labour. Without dwelling too long upon this point, I should like to say that if the agitation which has been raised against the proposals of the Commonwealth Government is a popular one, the electors have an easy way of showing it. But what is the use of a society with 100 sub-societies tacked on to it, and governed practically by it, drafting a code of resolutions and saying that they must all be passed uniformly? Does that declare the public opinion of a State? Yet that is what has been done in this case. How many public meetings have been held at which resolutions have been passed against the policy of the Barton Government? In the Port Denison

Times is to be found an interesting report of a meeting which was held recently at Bowen. The mayor of that town called the meeting openly and read the telegram which he had received from the managers of the meeting which had previously been held in Brisbane. Strange to say, it was proposed that the identical resolution submitted in Brisbane should be submitted to the meeting in Bowen. The result would then be wired down as evidence of how uniformly the people were opposed to the policy of the Barton Government. Fortunately the mayor of Bowen was more open than were some others who had presided over similar gatherings. He told the people the authority upon which he had called the meeting, and read out the resolution which was to be submitted. The result was that an amendment was moved in favour of the policy, of the Barton Government. This was carried by such an overwhelming majority that the original question was never put. At Gympie a public meeting was held at which a resolution in support of the policy of the Federal Government was unanimously carried. The same thing occurred at Maryborough. So far no meeting has been held at Bundaberg, which is the centre of the sugar industry, and a division of the Wide Bay electorate, which I represent. This is one of the towns which, it is urged, will be destroyed if kanaka labour be abolished. It is a very important town. I may here remind honorable members of the support which I received in Bundaberg when contesting the recent election against Mr. Annear, who was entirely in favour of the appointment of a Royal commission to inquire into this matter, for the purpose of delaying its settlement. The polling in this town resulted in Mr. Annear obtaining 387 votes, as against 768 which were cast in my favour. Why has not a public meeting been held in Bundaberg if the policy of the present Government is calculated to ruin it? After Mr. Philp, the Premier of Queensland, had forwarded to the Prime Minister his remonstrating letter, which breathed out threats of a certain kind, and alleged that the electors of Queensland were up in arms against the Government proposals, the following challenge appeared in the Brisbane Courier. It is dated 21st October last -

Sir, -Will you kindly grant space in the columns of your journal for the insertion of the following : - In case there should be one person who would be likely to be influenced by the statements in your journal, "that the people of this State are entirely with the Premier in his able protests to Mr. Barton against the passage of the kanaka Bill," and also to refute the statement that the people of Bundaberg are anxious that Dr. Maxwell should be sent to Melbourne at this juncture, we, the undersigned citizens of this important centre, strong in our faith that Bundaberg stands firmer than ever on the kanaka question, her people having already, on two separate occasions during the present year - namely, in March and July - given their emphatic and unmistakable verdict for a "White Australia," and following the line of the leader of the Opposition - we hereby invite and challenge Mr. Philp, the Courier, and all or any of their champions, to come to Bundaberg, and at an advertised public meeting, called for the purpose, to carry resolutions that will revoke or affect the oft-given verdict of the people of Bundaberg. We are, sir, etc.,
Mat. Neill, O. W. Hayles, J.P. ; John Guthrie ; J. A. Sinclair, J.P.

Mr Page

- Did they take up that challenge ?

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Mr FISHER

- We have heard nothing of any meeting in Bundaberg : but I have received very respectful wires and resolutions from public bodies there in opposition to the Ministerial proposals. At the same time it will be a bad day for Queensland, and indeed for any State in the Commonwealth, when it is governed entirely by the resolutions which may be passed by pettifogging public bodies. That, however, is by the way. But, as against the resolutions which have been transmitted in opposition to the Bill under discussion, I have received numerous resolutions from other public bodies and associations, which are entirely in favour of the Government policy. I have already told honorable members that in 1893 a majority of the votes polled in Queensland were recorded in favour of the abolition of kanaka labour. The same thing occurred in 1896, although the election at that time was complicated with many issues, and for the first time in the history of the world a Government issued a manifesto which was directed solely against the labour party. That party was attacked and denounced in strong terms. I think that the present President of the Legislative Council of Queensland, when he issued his manifesto, called upon every law abiding citizen of that State to protect those rights which had been won by the blood of their forefathers.

Mr Page

- And "down" to the labour party.

Mr FISHER

- I am merely indicating what was the position at the time of which I speak. The vote given upon that occasion was one of which any party might reasonably be proud. Although great attempts have been made to show that the " constitutional " party - as some choose to call it - secured a majority of the votes cast, any fair analysis of the figures will show that the verdict registered upon that occasion, as at previous election, was against the employment of kanaka labour. A similar verdict was recorded at the election held in 1899, although that election was complicated with other issues. But our opponents ask " Why do you not get a majority of representatives returned to the State Parliament ? " That is a very reasonable question. Our reply is that we have the worst and most iniquitous electoral laws prevailing throughout the Commonwealth .

Mr Page

- One man may have 67 votes, and a special polling booth is opened for him so that he may record them.

Mr FISHER

- He cannot very well have 67 votes, but he can have 61. I have in my hand a document relating to Queensland, called the " Preliminary Statement of Census for the year 1901." This census was taken on March 31st last, and was laid before both Houses of the Queensland Parliament. In this document the Registrar-General, of that State says : -

Table No. 0 shows the total population in each district in a condensed form, and also the coloured population, similarly divided into minors and adults of each sex. The number of adult males in Queensland, exclusive of those on board vessels, was 158,972, and the number stated by the principal electoral registrar to be on the electoral rolls of this State at the same date was 99,982, which would indicate that 50,990 adult males were not registered on the rolls as being entitled to vote. This number would be still further increased by deducting from the 99,982 the number of persons whose names appear on more than one electoral roll, but to what extent it would be thus affected

I am unable to learn. A large number of these adult males, being aliens or aborigines, would not be entitled to vote, except under a property qualification. Some of those included amongst the coloured population are on the roll, as Chinese, for instance, but the number is uncertain. As there are thus two factors of uncertain quantities, exact results are impossible ; but it will be seen that the total number of adult males who are aliens, aborigines, lunatics, prisoners, &c., was 24,075, to which may be added about 1,000 for police magistrates, clerks of petty sessions, and members of the police force, or a total of 25,075, which would leave the number of other adult white males in this State not on the electoral rolls at approximately 32,000 persons.

If there are 99,982 names on the plural voting roll, it is absolutely certain that there are 32,000 male persons who cannot get their names upon the roll. How is it possible to ascertain the verdict of the people of Queensland under such circumstances ? What sort of a Government is it which retains an electoral law of this character ? Yet, when the representatives of Queensland come down here amongst people who enjoy a proper system of parliamentary representation, they are met with the statement that the Queensland Government is disappointed at the representation of that State. I am quite sure that when we came to Melbourne as labour members a very large number of the representatives of other States thought we were wild and incompetent, and totally unfit to be the representatives of the great State of Queensland.

Mr Ewing

- Did the honorable member not think that the Federal Parliament was worse than it is ?

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Mr FISHER

- I did not, but when I entered the State Parliament in 1893 I found that it was a great deal worse than I had anticipated it would be. Generally speaking, I have found that all Parliaments are a little worse than they might be. But the question which we are now discussing is one of national importance, and it is of little moment in my opinion - although I come from the State of Queensland and love it quite as much as does any man - whether the non-settlement of this matter is injurious to the interests of that State or not, if it is injurious to the whole of Australia ? For that reason, it has a national aspect, and it is from that stand-point that I propose to deal with it. Why, I ask, is it that those who are so anxious that this labour shall be retained have not submitted some alternative scheme ?

Why was it that when the federal elections were announced the Brisbane newspapers, which have been so highly spoken of, should have been so confident of success, in consequence of the result of the State elections, that they issued a challenge to the labour party, pointing out that the question before Queensland was, "Are we to have the coloured labour necessary to develop our northern land?" If there be any blame for this throwing down of the gauntlet to the labour party that blame must be attached to the Brisbane Courier. The challenge was not left a day unanswered. The immediate and everlasting reply of the labour party to questions of that kind has been, and, I hope, always will be, that so far as we are concerned we do not think kanakas are profitable in Queensland or necessary for any industry, and that, even if they were necessary, there are evils inseparable from their being recruited and their remaining in the country, which more than counterbalance any benefit gained from their presence. For that reason the labour party are entirely against the traffic; and we take up the position at our own risk. We are told that two-thirds of the electors are against us. If that be so, what a stupid lot of politicians we must have been when, seeking our own aggrandizement, as we have been told by the press, we asked the electors to give us power to exclude kanakas whenever we thought fit as members of the Federal Parliament. Not a labour candidate, either for the House of Representatives or for the Senate, asked for any terms at all. I always said that we were prepared to be generous and liberal, and we have been generous and liberal. Had we been revengeful or had we felt any feelings of resentment against those who fought us so hardily, we should have agreed to the proposal of the honorable member for Parramatta for the immediate abolition of the traffic; but we did not do so. We intimated that we did not wish to deal with this question in any other but a fair way. I will say for the Government that, taking this Bill in conjunction with their fiscal proposals, they have dealt with the question in a statesmanlike way. One of the points which was made during the elections by the distinguished and enlightened press we have heard so much about, was put forward in graphic language by a defeated candidate for the Senate, namely, the Hon. A. -J.

Thynne, a very able man. That gentleman, after the labour candidates for the Senate had been announced, said that when he saw the character of the men who were being nominated to represent Queensland, he thought it his bounden duty to come forward and give the electors an opportunity of sending a fit man to the Federal Parliament. The defeat of that gentleman has not to me so much significance as his words. They are a proof of what I have seen indicated in Queensland for a long time. There is growing up in that State, as in every State and country where servile labour is employed, a feeling that the well-to-do and the professional people are a superior class removed from every-day workers who make a country worth living in. If that feeling continues to grow together with the interests -which control kanaka or semi-civilized labour, sooner or later one part of this continent will be the scene of racial strife, which will be dangerous to the welfare of the Commonwealth. What happened when this great man, Mr. Thynne, made the announcement to which I have referred? According to the other side, men like Mr. Thynne were plunging in to save the reputation of the State; but Mr. Thynne was handsomely defeated. Is that not a warning that the hearts and minds of the people of Queensland are in the right direction? The report of no Royal commission can be equal to the verdict just recently given by the people, when there was simply the one question to be decided. The fiscal issue, in my opinion, did not turn twenty votes in Queensland. There was not one word of the fiscal issue, except, perhaps in the district represented by the honorable member for Capricornia, where they have no kanakas, and where the people are strongly free-trade.

Mr A Paterson

- And where there is a strong labour party.

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Mr FISHER

- That is a district in which, I am sure, the honorable member would have found it difficult to succeed had he been in favour of kanaka labour. This is not a matter for amusement. If the electors, who know the condition of affairs, are dead against the traffic, surely that is a good reason for its abolition. There are times, I admit, when a whole electorate, or a whole State, may go mad on a particular question; but when we find that for twenty years the liberals and radicals of Queensland have been fighting with the one object of ridding that State of coloured races, and especially with the object of stopping the traffic in kanakas, we must admit that it was not a spasmodic effort to be moral when they sent a number of representatives to this House and to the Senate, pledged against the further recruiting of kanaka labour. I

have said that this kanaka question has ruined the reputations of many public men. Immediately a public man, however eminent, has felt himself compelled to interfere with this question, or to depart in any way from the straight path, he has lost his position, and all this was an indication of what was coming to pass. I care nothing for the past history of the traffic as a convincing factor in a debate like this. I should like here to quote from the Queensland Hansard, and in every instance, or nearly so, the quotation shall be from the speeches of my opponents. On 17th July, Mr. A. Gibson, speaking in the Legislative Council of Queensland, said -

On a former occasion in this Council I pointed out what I believed would be the advantages of federation, not only to this State, but to the whole of Australia. I do not know whether I have changed my mind much since I made those statements. I know that the sugar industry of Queensland commands a considerable amount of sympathy from people outside, as well as inside, Queensland. I know also that a good deal has been unnecessarily said concerning the position we occupy. I am also aware that the Prime Minister of the federated States of Australia made a very unfortunate statement when he declared that one of the planks of his policy would be the removal of the kanaka at a very early date. Whether he meant that or not I am sure I cannot say, but it is certain that he has taken some time to consider the determination that he expressed when making his first declaration. I have still a very strong opinion that both he and the House of Representatives, and the Senate, will make haste slowly in doing anything likely to injure such an important industry as the sugar industry is to Queensland and to Australia generally.

Here is an important remark -

But while we have reason to fear the result of federation in that direction, we also know that there was very grave danger in our own State prior to any federation of Australia.

Is that in accordance with the statements of those who urge us to leave this matter to the State Parliament ?

Sir Malcolm McEacharn

- Does Mr. Gibson say what the danger is from ?

Mr FISHER

- From our being dispossessed of the kanaka. He continues -

And I think we have ourselves very much to blame, possibly, that we occupy the position we do occupy in the Federal Parliament. I think it is a fair question to ask ourselves whether we did our duty to our own State, when we allowed so many persons known to be diametrically opposed to one of the greatest industries in the State to get seats in that Parliament.

Further down he says, speaking of the battle for the retention of the kanaka -

For twenty years we have been fighting this battle and endeavouring to prove, in season and out of season, that the kanaka was doing no harm to anybody, but was indeed a great advantage to that particular industry.

Sir Malcolm McEacharn

- Hear, hear. Mr. FISHER. - " To that particular industry." The speech continues -

Some of our best men who have been in Parliament for years have been turned out of their seats because they stood up for the planter and the industry, and others have been left outside Parliament altogether, because they were standing in the best interests of the State in reference to that industry. And the time has very nearly arrived when it will be hardly worth while fighting under these conditions. But we feel that if the industry is to go it would be better that it should be strangled by united Australia, rather than by the particular State in which we carried out our operations. I was once sent to Melbourne to advocate such a duty as would justify planters in believing that it would be possible for them to carry on without so much alien labour. That is the position I took up, by instruction, on one occasion, and I have been blamed for it all the way through.

There is a great deal more I might read, but it would be unwise to make lengthy extracts.

Mr Ewing

- Is Mr. Gibson a Bundaberg man ?

Mr FISHER

- He is the principal sugar planter in the Bundaberg district.

Mr McDonald

- And it ought to be said that he is one of the best employers.

Mr FISHER

- Mr. Gibson is one of the best employers. I should now like to make a short quotation from a speech made during the same session by the Hon. George Thorn, who is a native of Australia and an ex-Premier of Queensland. In the same number of Hansard as that from which I have already quoted, Mr. Thorn, who is a Government supporter, is reported to have said -

With regard to the black labour, I knew very well what the result would be, when it was decided to join in federation. I knew when one daily metropolitan paper raised a question, and made it a shibboleth, black labour would be wiped out in Queensland. The labour party knew what they were about, and knew that many others who were not supporters of their party would vote with them on this question.

Mr Barton

- To what newspaper is he referring?

Mr FISHER

- To the Brisbane Courier. I prefer newspapers which are owned and controlled by people in the State, because then the proprietors are likely to know what they are talking about. It is all very fine for people who live elsewhere to declare that kanakas are good enough for Queensland. A great deal has been said against the climate of Queensland, but, in my opinion, over two thirds of that State the climate is perfect, and, so far from working havoc upon the constitution of the population, I may mention that we are sending from Queensland athletes who can compete successfully with any in the world, and our students are taking the chief prizes at the Sydney University. Maryborough girls have three times won the Fairfax prize, and at the last examination two girls from that town came first and second in the competition for it, although they had to meet the scholars of New South Wales.

Sir Malcolm McEacharn

- When we spoke of the climate we spoke of places further north.

Mr FISHER

- One of our athletes came from Rockhampton, and the climate of that town is said to be the worst in Queensland. I deplore nothing so much as the ignorance which prevails on this subject. It is to Queensland that the surplus population of the States will migrate in time to come. I know of families who have come from the north of Queensland to southern States, and who desire nothing so much as to get back again. Of course, people who have made their money easily in Queensland, like all those who belong to the wealthy classes, desire a society in which they can spend their idle time amidst the comforts and luxuries which can be obtained by the expenditure of money ; but the climate of Queensland is excellent, and in no way injures the health of the white people living there. I do not say that in the coastal districts of the far north the climate is perfect.

Sir Malcolm McEacharn

- And what about the effects of the climate upon women living in the interior ?

Mr FISHER

- I am not going to accept statements of whose truth I have no evidence.

Mr Page

- I know that my wife is anxious to get back to Queensland from Melbourne.

Mr FISHER

- Mr. Thorn continues-

I noticed with amazement that in the district north of Mackay, the people returned an anti - black labour candidate, who beat an old resident like Mr. Brown. Cairns also returned an anti black labour politician, although there is a good deal of coloured labour employed in that district. The industries there all depend very largely upon getting reliable labour - I do not say cheap labour - because I always look upon kanakas as not being cheap labour. I believe that a white man can do quite as much work in sugar growing as the kanaka. From Mackay southwards to Brisbane cane can be grown by white labour just as well as by kanaka or any other coloured labour. It is no worse for whites in the portion of the colony comprised in that area than it is in Brisbane. I got that from a sugar planter at Mackay, who informed me that he only employed white people, and that he made more money out of sugar growing than other people who employed kanakas. When an inhabitant of Mackay talks in that way, I think that it is time we gave the matter a little further consideration, and agreed with the Labour party on this question.

Mr Ewing

- What is Mr. Thorn's electorate?

Mr FISHER

- Fassifern.

Mr Ewing

- Somewhere near Brisbane?

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Mr FISHER

- I was going to quote what the honorable member for Mackay said. Mr. Paget, who is down here on a special mission, has supplied us with a lot of tabulated information on this question, which I might also quote, but it is unnecessary. I think, however, that I may be permitted to make a quotation from a speech delivered by Dr. Taylor, a member of the Queensland Legislative Council. He said -

I firmly believe the Federal Parliament have made up their minds on that point, and, unfortunately, most of the representatives from Queensland are of the opinion that this class of labour must cease. And the most curious fact is, that at the very centre of this industry - the town of Bundaberg - the people are the most callous as to its abolition. A more shortsighted policy cannot possibly be imagined. If this industry is to be handed over to those people - and, unfortunately, I am afraid it will be so - then, I say, the sugar industry will be a thing of the past, and one of the greatest and most progressive industries will be ruined simply from sentiment, nonsense, and claptrap - nothing more or less. While all this is going on the colony is suffering, necessary works are not being carried out, money is not being circulated, and there are numbers of people going about our streets who can find nothing to do. Not a day passes - not even excepting Sundays - but somebody comes to my door to beg a ticket for a night's lodging. This state of affairs should not exist in a country like this - a country teeming with natural wealth and with its small population. Surely there must lie something radically wrong for that condition of affairs to exist. We know that in every community there will be individuals who are impoverished by their own acts, but that is not the case here. Those people say that they have been all over the country - to Maryborough, Bundaberg, and elsewhere - and they cannot get work ; they are starving. They are sleeping out these cold nights, with very little to eat- a lamentable state of affairs which should be thoroughly inquired into. Instead of appointing Royal commissions to inquire into this, that, and the other thing, it is time we had a Royal commission to inquire into the causes which induce this condition of poverty.

It appears from that statement that, although Queensland has had all the assistance it could have from kanaka labour, and is being now governed and guided by a Ministry which denounces the Federal Prime Minister, men travel from Bundaberg, Maryborough, and other places to Brisbane looking for work. Surely if the policy of employing kanakas is a good one, this state of things would not exist 1 The facts are, however, that the men cannot get work because the kanakas are employed in their place. One of our greatest difficulties in dealing with this question is to deal with it in a rational way, because of the taunts and jeers we have to submit to. In Queensland the white man is never free from the taunt, " Why don't you compete with the kanaka ? You say you don't believe in him." The whip of the Philp Ministry made a challenge to any white man to go to a Northern Queensland plantation and compete there with a kanaka picked out by the manager.

Mr McDonald

- But he would not put up the money when the time came.

Mr FISHER

- That is so; though I am not concerned about it just now. I ask honorable members if the fact that a white person is physically incapable of greater effort than a coloured person is a proof of his inferiority. We have advanced a stage since it was believed that ability to club one's neighbour was a sign of superiority.

Imagine the excruciating pain that a sensitive, delicate white man must feel when he is told that he is not to be compared with the kanaka. The challenge I speak of was delivered in a speech made on the 30th July, and appears on page 203 of the Queensland Hansard report. To show to what lengths people will go in denouncing those who take the side of the white labourer, I should like to make a short quotation from Mr. Hamilton's address -

The other day we saw in a southern newspaper -I think the Herald - a letter written by Major Reay, in which he said he had been to the north, and was perfectly satisfied white men could do the work.

Major Reay's experience was to go in the dead of winter for about an hour in a canefield. But I recollect hearing something about Mr. Reay from a Melbourne man who was here the other day. This gentleman and some others sent a wire to Lord Kitchener to the following effect - " Our cup of joy is full, owing to the manner in which our colonists have distinguished themselves. If you will only put Read where he will get shot, our cup will flow over. "

That is the utterance of a distinguished gentleman, who received his information from a Melbourne man. Is there any honorable member in this House who believes that there is another man in Melbourne who would make any such statement ? These are the kind of men we have to meet as opponents "on this kanaka question ; and is it to be supposed that they will scruple to tell little stories to their own advantage? These are not matters of ancient history, but they are the utterances of our opponents, who are in the Queensland Parliament.

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Mr Isaacs

- Who said that 1

Mr. FISHER, Mr. J. Hamilton, the Government "whip" in Queensland. We hear a great deal about the distressing character of the work that has to be performed in the cane-fields, and we are told that white men cannot do this or that, or the other kind of work. It has been long contended that white men cannot work in the cane-fields ; but it is now being argued that white men cannot work in the mills. . If the political pressure were not so great they would not be able to work at any occupation in any part of Queensland. Here is a rather lengthy question and answer, which will show that we are not safe against the introduction of coloured labour into the mills -

Mr. Givens(Cairns) asked the Secretary of Agriculture

Is it true that at the present time a gang of coloured labourers is being employed in the Mulgrave Central Sugar Mills, tending the cane carrier ?

Is not the employment of coloured labourers in Central Mills contrary to the spirit and intention of the Sugar Works Guarantee Acts?

Will he make representations to the directors of the Mulgrave Central Mill Company, to try and induce them to discontinue the employment of coloured labourers in their mills ?

The Secretary for Agriculture, Hon. D. H. Dalrymple (Mackay), replied -

No ; but a gang of Hindoos, presumably from New South Wales, is employed in delivering cane to the carrier. The secretary of the company wires that the mill started work this season with contract, white men at carrier at 3d. pelton of cane ; that the contractor finding that white labour was unobtainable, threw up his contract after nine days. The work was then carried on for a further period of nine days with Japanese and Hindoos, when a contract was arranged with Italians. This contract had to be cancelled after five days, as the Italians were unable to perform the work. The company then advertised in the Southern States for Europeans, and in the meantime are carrying on work with Hindoos. Although only 95 Europeans are required in the mill, the books show that during the past five weeks .194 Europeans have been employed. The rate of wages paid is 25s. per week, with board and lodgings.

I am advised by the Crown Solicitor, that the spirit and intention of the Act, as disclosed by its provisions, is simply one to give authority to the honorable the Treasurer, to advance money to owners of freehold in the State, for the establishment of sugar works, and to secure the repayment of such advances and interest thereon.

I have already recommended the directors of the Mulgrave Central Mill Company to employ white labour only in connexion with their mill, and so far as the Government are concerned, I am advised by the Crown Solicitor " that the Treasurer is only mortgagee, and until default is made in payment of instalments due, he cannot legally interfere with the directors in the management of the business, or the employment of coloured labour under any of the provisions of the Act referred to."

I cite this case to show how far it is possible to depart from the spirit and intention of Parliament. I was in the Queensland Parliament in 1893, when the Sugar Works Guarantee Bill was introduced. There was an ambiguous clause in that Bill, and as we had found from previous experience that we must use exact language in dealing with those who were desirous of employing coloured labour, we introduced an amendment to exclude all coloured people from the mills that were being erected with State money. We " stone- walled " all night, with the result that early en the morning of the following day Sir Thomas

McIlwraith stated that whilst he was not prepared to make a special exception of mills erected with State money, he was entirely against the employment of coloured labour in these mills, and that if he found later on that coloured labour was employed in mills he would pass a measure dealing with the question and putting all mills on the same footing. No such measure has, however, been passed, and coloured labour is creeping into the mills. I have a communication from my electorate, stating that one mill is now using coloured labour, and that as a consequence other mills are being unfairly competed with. Surely this is a question that is worthy of being mentioned, although it is not one of the matters that the Federal Government have touched. I entirely agree with the proposals of the Federal Government that the laws shall be administered by the States as far as possible. It is best for us to touch this question as lightly as we can - to say what shall be done, and allow the State authorities to carry out the law in the light of their own experience. They are mostly sympathetic with the planters, and will no doubt render them every possible help under the circumstances. We all of us desire to assist the planters, but we cannot depart from our principles. If we were to try and help everybody by giving up our principles, we should land ourselves in a state of chaos, and destroy all industry. The kanaka is not essential to the success of the sugar industry, and I contend that he should be displaced by white labour at the earliest possible moment. I take exception to the statement made by the Premier of Queensland regarding the position of the representatives of that State in this Parliament. We do not need that gentleman's help, and we know that we should not get his vote or any other vote that he could control. The labour members in this House were returned by very substantial majorities, and that fact in itself affords a sufficient answer to the statements made by the Premier of Queensland. Regarding my own position, which was challenged by the honorable and learned member for Brisbane, I should like to tell him that neither Brisbane nor Oxley is the most important electorate in Queensland, because I have a larger number of electors in my own district. The number of votes polled in the Wide Bay electorate will speak for themselves. The details were given by the returning officer in a statement published in the Maryborough Chronicle of 10th April. The number of votes polled were as follow : - At Bundaberg - Annear, 387 ; Fisher, 768. Burnett - Annear, 465 ; Fisher, 584. Burrum - Annear, 442 ; Fisher, 532. Gympie - Annear, 1,009 ; Fisher, 1,246. Maryborough - Mr. Annear's own district - Annear, 804 ; Fisher, 967. Musgrave - Annear, 370 ; Fisher, 282. Wide Bay - Annear, 390 ; Fisher, 460. In six of the seven electorates which comprise that federal division I had substantial majorities, and in one district only did my opponent secure a majority. Yet the honorable and learned member for Brisbane had the temerity to say that I represented only the diggers. The election was a straight-out test, and at Maryborough, where Walker's foundry - a magnificent foundry, one of the best in Australia - was situated, I had a substantial majority. I also headed the poll at Bundaberg, at Gympie, and at Burrum. These figures are only an indication of what occurred in other districts, but in order to have the whole of the details placed on record, I shall give the figures, which showed how the votes recorded for labour candidates compared with those polled in favour of all other candidates. In Brisbane, the votes recorded for labour numbered 2,201 ; and those against labour, 4,003. In Capricornia, the labour votes numbered 3,523, against 3,650. In Herbert, the labour votes were 3,350, against 3,133. In Kennedy, the labour candidate polled 3,936 votes, against 2,325. In Maranoa, the labour votes numbered 2,926, against 2,609. I am quoting in each case the labour votes as against the votes recorded for all other candidates. I am putting matters in this way so that there can be no doubt as to the position of the labour candidates. In the Moreton district, 3,892 labour votes were polled, as against 2,682 ; in Oxley, 3,299 labour votes were polled, against 3,753 ; and in Wide Bay, 4,844 labour votes, against 3,955. These figures give a total labour vote of 27,971, as against 26,110 anti-labour votes. I have left Darling Downs out of consideration, because no labour candidate stood for that electorate. At the same time, we can claim that the late honoured representative of that electorate was against kanaka labour ; and if we add the senatorial proportion of votes given to Senator Higgs in that district, it will be found that the labour candidates polled 31,215 votes, whilst anti-labour candidates polled 28,834 ; or a majority in favour of labour of 2,381. That was the majority against all the other candidates. But we also have here the honorable member for Capricornia, who is entirely in favour of the position which we take up. The return to this Parliament of such a large number of labour members from Queensland is a proof of the position which we hold in the esteem of the electors of that State. I come now to the larger question, with which I shall deal very briefly. As I have already pointed out, there is in Queensland a class of people which is in touch with a band of speculators resident outside of Australia.

For years past these people have been contending that the white race should not attempt to cultivate the soil of, or, indeed, to live in, a large part of Australia except as governors, and directors of semi-servile races. That aspect of the question has been forcibly put in London again and again. In Queensland the leading newspaper openly urges the same point. But whilst this journal is pleading for delay by advocating the appointment of a Royal commission to inquire into the sugar industry, it has maintained that it will never be possible for the white race to develop the tropical portion of Australia. When a newspaper of such standing adopts an attitude of that kind with the object of leading the average elector to suppose that it is opposed to the employment of kanaka labour, we should be treading on very dangerous ground if we listened to it. We are not afraid of the facts. At the same time, I fear the result of delay in the settlement of this question. The speculators of whom I have spoken are a sleepless body, who are gaining wealth by the employment of this class of labour. Many of them are living comfortably in other countries. I ventured the prediction a short time ago that if the industry and the interests involved were three times as large as they are, civil war would result. A prominent politician in the northern State, in reply, said - " If the interests were three times as large as they are, you would not be able to deal with the industry." Yet we are asked in circumstances of this sort to delay action. This question admits of no delay. It can be best dealt with now. We have told the world, by means of the Immigration Restriction Bill, that we do not desire the presence of coloured aliens here. I hope that we shall tell the world just as emphatically, by means of this Bill, not only that do we not need coloured labour to develop our States, but that we deem it inadvisable to have it in our midst. I desire that we shall be able to proclaim to the world that the whole of Australia, and not a part of it, has been reserved for the use of the white man. If the northern tropical lands are not developed so speedily by the white race as they would be by Asiatics - and I admit that they will not be - we shall at least have as a set-off against that disadvantage one race and one people who " are equal in voting power, and who are ready and able in time of emergency to defend our shores. I do not admire those advocates of coloured labour who urge that Australians are equal to any men in the world when they go forth to fight the battles of the Empire, but who, when they are sent to earn a pittance of 4s. or 5s. a day in Queensland, say that they are inferior. Every other page of the Brisbane Courier reports contains an insult to the white man. It is urged that he will work for two or three days and then get drunk ; that he cannot be relied upon. In my early days it was said that the white man could not be relied upon because a goldfield might break out, and he would leave his employment to tempt fortune upon the diggings. The truth is that the white man can never be relied upon if he is to receive only poor habitation conditions and 25s. a week. How can we expect men to forsake all the attractions of a city life for a wage of 25s. a week 1

Mr McDonald

- They were offered only 1 2s. 6d. a week in Bundaberg at one time.

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Mr FISHER

- This is an economic question which has to be faced. I am of opinion that the proposals of the Government will be better for the whole of the planters than if no proposals had been made at all. Is there an honorable member in this House who would give protection to the sugar industry if it had to be carried on by coloured labour ? I do not believe that any Government -would be strong enough to force a protective Tariff through Parliament, if the employment of kanakas in the sugar industry were to be continued. The policy of the Government is in the interests of the planters themselves. The other day sugar was £7 10s. a ton in London. Surely, if we are to go to the outside world for the cheapest labour, we cannot logically object to competing with every kind of labour. The taunt is sometimes used that so far it has not been proved that white labour can be successfully employed in the trashing of cane. My reply is that nearly 20 per cent, of the sugar growers grow their cane solely by white labour. The kanaka labourer, our opponents declare, can do more work in the cane - field than can the white man, and for less than half the wages. I have the greatest admiration for the man who will compete against the kanaka. At the earliest opportunity we should pass this measure into law, so that the white workers ' who are prepared to cultivate cane by means of white labour will be entitled to the rebate provided in the fiscal proposals of the Government. If I am taking a wrong step upon this question, I am taking it cheerfully. I have received no indication from my constituency, which practically produces half the sugar of Queensland, that this measure is an unpopular one, or will be injurious to that particular district. I have in my mind quotations

which would be a complete set-off to those submitted by the honorable member for Oxley, but I shall not detain the House at this juncture by using them. Immediately the Tariff proposals were submitted, Mr. Harrington, of Maryborough, an astute business man, stated that if they were carried every portion of the land in the "Wide Bay district which is capable of growing cane should be put under cultivation immediately. Surely that will be a benefit to that district. I ask honorable members where we shall find an inferior class of labour upon inferior land 1 I have never read or heard of it. It is upon the best lands of Queensland that we find the kanaka, as it is on the best lands in other countries that we find servile labour. Such a class of labour cannot exist anywhere else. After the first fertility of the soil has departed, and the land has become impoverished, the white man has to go in and till it. Whether it be at Bundaberg, Mackay, Cairns, or further north, the same rule prevails. Only on the most fertile spots do we find the kanakas employed, and is it the aim of the Government that the best lands shall be utilized by inferior labour ? I think that the action of the Government will be beneficial to Queensland. It will certainly be beneficial to Australia, and I am proud to have the honor of assisting in the passing of this measure. If the electors of Wide Bay think that I have made a mistake they will have an opportunity of saying so when the next election comes round. I am sure that if this Parliament discovers that an injustice has been done it will take steps to remedy it. I feel strongly that no interference on the part of Great Britain will be tolerated on this great question. I am ashamed of those in the State of Queensland who talk about appealing to the Colonial office. If they are going to appeal to the Colonial-office to frustrate the wish of this Parliament I shall oppose them very strongly. If there is to be an attempt to work up an agitation to show that Australians are an inferior class of people, who are to be governed and guided by Downing-street, the sooner they are told that they are on the wrong track the better. Australians will then take a course which will not be at all palatable either to Downing-street or to any other street. I would not tolerate for one moment the interference of British statesmen in a matter in regard to which we are sure of our facts.

Mr Barton

- I have not the slightest fear of any interference.

Mr FISHER

- I have no fear either. I would not for one moment remain in a Parliament which tolerated any such interference. I would rather be hounded out of Parliament twenty times over. I shall always resist any encroachment upon the right of Australia to govern itself in its own way.

Mr MAHON

- As one coming from another State, I think I can approach this question in a dispassionate spirit - with a mind undisturbed by any of the details which very properly agitate the minds of the inhabitants of Queensland. Now it seems to me that the people who advocate the continuance of this traffic must be strangely oblivious of the teachings of history. Never yet has a servile race existed alongside a superior race without sooner or later resulting in the downfall of the civilization and institutions of that country. As a representative of a Western Australian constituency, it is right that I should give the reasons why I intend supporting this Bill.

Mr SPEAKER

- I would remind the honorable member that the Bill is not before the House. The question is as to the appointment of a select committee.

Mr MAHON

- I was about to refer to the motion submitted by the honorable member for Oxley. I do not consider that the demand for a Royal commission or for any further inquiry into this question to be a legitimate or an honest demand. This traffic has gone on for very many years, and so long as I have been in Australia I have heard it objected to. For over twenty years I have known of an agitation against the continuance of the importation of labourers from the Pacific Islands. In view of the fact that the Parliament of Queensland has legislated against the traffic, and at one time had actually resolved to stop it, and that the evils of this system have been generally recognised in the State in which the kanakas are employed, nothing is likely to be gained by delaying our decision on the question. I have carefully read most of the literature on this subject, and I have not been able to ascertain that we are likely to ascertain any further facts by delay. Neither do I find that the advocates of Pacific Islands labour agree as to the remedy. I find that Mr. Philp, the Premier of Queensland, says one thing, and that the Chamber of Commerce of Mackay says another. Mr. Philp, in a letter to the Prime Minister, says -

The Government of Queensland are convinced, from their intimate knowledge of the whole circumstances and conditions of the industry, that, as stated in my telegram, a period of at least seven years of absolute non-interference with present conditions would be necessary to allow of such preparation as might avert disaster by giving a fair opportunity for progressive change with regard to the sources of labour supply.

The Mackay Chamber of Commerce, a body representing the planters of that important centre, do not ask for seven years, but absolutely insist that coloured labour is necessary, and that without such labour the industry will be destroyed. Here is what the Chamber of Commerce says -

That the continued introduction of Polynesian labour into the State of Queensland, and the employment of the same in connexion with the sugar industry, subject to the restrictions contained in the existing Queensland laws and regulations relative thereto, do not involve any social, moral, or other danger to the said State or to the Commonwealth of Australia.

Mr McDonald

- There were only six members at that meeting.

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Mr MAHON

- I take it that what I have read is an assertion that this labour, not being dangerous to the moral condition of the Commonwealth, must be continued and my view is borne out by the additional resolutions which this Chamber of Commerce adopted. I find also that the Premier of Queensland has taken up a most extraordinary position in regard to the action of the Commonwealth Parliament. Mr. Philp seems to lay down the principle that before any legislation is taken in hand by this Parliament the Government of Queensland should be consulted. I shall read the extract in which Mr. Philp asserts that principle. He says

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In a matter so vitally affecting the interests of this State, and regarding which the local legislation has been the result of long and careful consideration by a succession of Governments, it appears to me to be a most extraordinary course of procedure that the Government of the Commonwealth should introduce fresh legislation, superseding entirely all our Acts on the subject with which it deals, without consulting this Government, or in any way recognising its right to have an opportunity of expressing itself on the nature of any proposals which the Federal Government might have it in contemplation to make. Apart from the consideration of the courtesy due in such case to the Government of a State, this Government claims, as a right, that, previous to any parliamentary action, it be consulted on any proposed innovation on its economic system, especially where, as in the present case, such innovation is directed specially against this State.

Now, I consider that the Tariff proposals of the Government are of a character that will affect Western Australia much more seriously than the legislation under discussion will affect the sugar industry of Queensland. But I would never dream of expecting this Parliament to consult the Government of Western Australia before undertaking such legislation. An argument of that kind is very ill-considered; and, coming from a gentleman of the standing of the Premier of Queensland, it shows that he must have a very weak case. But his weakness is further exemplified in the position he has taken up in regard to the representation of Queensland in this House. I was amazed when I read the telegraphic summary of his letter to the Prime Minister, and I took care to get the full text. I find that the Premier of Queensland contends that because some of the representatives of that State hold extreme views in regard to socializing the means of production, therefore their opinions in reference to coloured labour should not be received with any consideration in this House. That seems a most extraordinary contention, but, in order that I may not do the Premier of Queensland an injustice, I shall read his exact words. They are as follows

: -

It will no doubt be urged, and has, indeed, already been urged, that the voice of Queensland has been heard in the matter in the election of her representatives in the Federal Parliament, the large majority of whom are pledged to the abolition of coloured labour, and perhaps this may have been regarded as rendering unnecessary any further expression of opinion from this State. In reply to this contention, I beg to observe that the gentlemen constituting the majority referred to, though legitimately elected, do not represent the various interests of their State.

But if the honorable members represent the majority of the people, that should be sufficient for all practical purposes.

Mr McDonald

- We do not represent the "boodle" crowd ; that is it.

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Mr MAHON

- Mr Philp continues-

It must be perfectly well-known to the Federal Government that the success of most of these gentlemen at the late federal elections was the result of the solid vote of one particular class, whose attitude in regard to Pacific Island labour represents only one aspect of their opposition to present social conditions. Here is a most extraordinary statement : -

If the Federal Government are prepared to accept these gentlemen as being from the fact of their election the exponents of public opinion in Queensland, they must also be prepared to regard it as the opinion of Queensland that capital should be abolished, and that the State should assume the entire property in, and control of, the means of production. It is much to be regretted that the various classes and interests of this State are, so far as numbers are concerned, so inadequately represented in the Commonwealth Parliament, but it will be still more lamentable if men to whom the prospect of the disorganization of an industry can hardly appear to be an unmixed evil, affording as it might do an opportunity of forwarding their own special economic views, should be regarded as representing the experience of the classes of citizens most entitled, from intimate practical knowledge, to be heard on all subjects relating to the maintenance and development of the industries of the State.

In other words, the Premier of Queensland wants this House to delay legislation, on the ground that the majority of the members representing that State hold extreme opinions in regard to subjects other than those on which they were returned to this Chamber. But every one of the honorable members for Queensland placed their views on this black-labour question before the electors, and told the people that they would do exactly what they are doing, if they were returned. I can see no force whatever in the contention that because these honorable members hold extreme views on some other points, this House should therefore disregard the opinions which they have expressed respecting this industry, and which the people of Queensland have indorsed. At any rate, it is sufficient for me that the people of Queensland have sent these gentlemen into this House prepared to abolish the system of kanaka labour, and I am content to accept the verdict of the people of that State, given in a legitimate way. If the Premier of Queensland thinks that the honorable members representing that State do not fully reflect public opinion there, why does he not do what is within his power, seeing that his Parliament is now in session, and take a referendum of the people on the question ?

Mr Fisher

- The Opposition in Queensland have challenged the Government to go to the country.

Mr MAHON

- Here is a simple and inexpensive way of ascertaining public opinion. Instead of demanding that legislation on this subject shall be delayed, the proper course would be to put the simple question to the people of Queensland - " Are you or are you not in favour of the continuance of Pacific Island labour? " As Mr. Philp has not done this ; as, so far as I know, he does not propose to do it, I shall resist any attempt to delay the action of this Parliament. If the people of Australia have ever declared with complete unanimity for anything it has been for the extinction of this system of semi-slavery ; and I, for one, am here to loyally carry out the mandate of the people on this question.

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Mr BAMFORD

- I feel it incumbent upon me to make a reply to a telegram read by the honorable member for Oxley, in which I am challenged to say whether I have been asked by a number of associations in my district to move for an extension of time in regard to the abolition of kanaka labour, or for the appointment of a Royal commission. I admit that I have been asked by some 30 associations to take action of that kind, but those who made the request represent very few of my electors. Every one who has had experience of Chambers of Commerce, or of other organizations of that kind, knows how limited their influence is. They are not representative, the members paying a subscription and then being permitted to join, while a committee of perhaps half-a-dozen members is usually responsible for any recommendation that the body itself may make. Those who sent the request to me, opposed my election tooth and nail, and I was

returned, not by their influence, but despite it. During my candidature I made no secret, on the hustings and elsewhere, of my intention to oppose to the best of my ability any motion for the appointment of a Royal commission, and it was a piece of temerity, to say the least of it, for these associations to ask me to politically stultify myself by acting in direct opposition to my pledges to my electors. Another matter of which I should like to speak is a statement which has been made by Mr. Cowley, an ex-Speaker of the Queensland Legislative Assembly. He represents the State electorate of Herbert, and he said, in the Assembly a short time ago, that I had not a majority in any of the sugar-growing districts, and, therefore, did not represent the cane-growers. The facts, however, are these : The federal electorate of Herbert comprises seven State electorates - one of which is the State electorate of the same name - returning nine members to the State Assembly. Five of those electorates may be termed sugar-growing districts, and the returns show that I had an absolute majority in three of them, and a substantial majority in the other two. I commenced my electoral campaign on the 4th March, and as polling-day was on the 30th March, I had less than four weeks in which to travel over my large electorate. Consequently I could hold only three meetings in the Mackay district. In Mackay itself, I was beaten at the poll by a majority of twelve votes, whereas at a place outside Mackay, which my supporters told me was the stronghold of the black labour party, I obtained a majority. Possibly, if I had had time to go through the electorate, as I should have liked to do, I would have beaten my opponents still more badly. The honorable member for Oxley has read a number of telegrams and letters ; and I have also a large pile of similar communications, of which I will read one or two, to show the tenor of the others. These are not fictitious telegrams, and they do not come from places like Billy-can Gully, Cow Flat, or Howling Dog; they are genuine telegrams from political organizations within my electorate. This telegram comes from Herberton - Central Council, Woothokata Political and Labour Organization, send congratulations to Hon. E. Barton, Federal Premier, on prompt and reasonable terms of Pacific Island Labourers' Bill, and trust the Bill will speedily find a place in the statutes of the Commonwealth.

Another telegram comes from Coolgana -

Members of Coolgana Workers' Political Organization are thankful for your own and labour party's support of Kanaka Bill, trusting that with your influence it shall become law.

Then from Mackay - the place where it has been made to appear there is a great outcry against the Bill - comes this telegram -

Mackay constituents cordially indorse Prime Minister's action regarding kanaka legislation.

Another telegram comes from Coen -

Resolution unanimously passed, meeting workers' association, upholding Federal Premier's action re Kanaka Bill.

I have other telegrams here to the same same effect, but I shall not weary the House by reading them. They distinctly disprove the allegation of the honorable member for Oxley, that the opinions held in Queensland in regard to the kanaka traffic are all of the same character. I say that they are not. The majority of those whom I represent are people who will be directly affected by the proposed legislation. The telegrams come, not from associations comprising two men and a boy, but from large organizations of workers representing the people who, it is said, will be prejudicially affected if the Bill passes. A number of local authorities have also sent messages, but they were not empowered to do so by those whom they represent, and had the people been consulted, the messages would not have been sent. At Townsville, indeed, a large public meeting was called, at which the Municipal Council was censured for the action they had taken in sending a message. During the election I was opposed by two Ministers of the Crown, the Premier of Queensland, the representatives of Townsville, and the State representative of Herbert ; but notwithstanding all the influence - political, commercial, and financial, which was brought to bear against me, the people in that part of Queensland were so impressed with the necessity of doing away with coloured labour at the earliest opportunity, that they sent me here to do what I could to bring, about its abolition. I am sure that the defeat of the motion is a foregone conclusion, and therefore it would be a waste of time to discuss it longer.

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Mr A PATERSON

- I have listened with prolonged and breathless astonishment to the arguments of the honorable member for Oxley. I do not think they have any reference to the Bill. The title of the Bill is " An Act to Provide for

the Prohibition of the Introduction of Labourers from the Pacific Islands and for other Purposes," and I do not think that the member for Oxley gave any reason why it should not be passed. All his arguments, if they were arguments, were in support of the retention of the kanaka for the benefit of the sugar planter. But what has the nation to do with the sugar planter more than with any other section of the community?" The objection to the kanaka is on account of his colour. Australia has pronounced with clarion voice that colour shall not be introduced into our race, and I do not see how we can oppose that pronouncement.' Even if the Bill were referred to a Select Committee or to a Royal commission, that difficulty could not be got over, and the mass of evidence presented by the honorable member for Oxley could not be exceeded by the work of a body of that kind, even if it sat for six months. I feel certain that upon the evidence submitted we cannot do otherwise than insist upon the prohibition of the kanaka. I have every sympathy with the sugar-planter, because he has invested a great deal of money in his industry, though the amount has been very much exaggerated. For the past 20 years he has dined each day with the sword of this threatened legislation suspended over his head by a hair, and he is now finding his position uncomfortable, because it looks as though the sword will cut the hair, and he will be extinguished. But we have to consider the interests, not of the few but of the people at large. I do not think that it is necessary for us to prove that sugar-cane growing could be carried on without kanakas. I take the position of the honorable and learned member for Northern Melbourne, who said that even if the sugar industry had to be sacrificed, it would be better to lose it in order to insure the purity of the race. There has been a great deal of talk about public opinion in Queensland, but I assure honorable members that Queensland is almost unanimous upon this point. She has returned seven out of her nine representatives in this assembly pledged to the abolition of the kanaka traffic. The desire to exclude coloured aliens generally was due to the fear that their introduction would have the effect of lowering wages, but in reference to kanakas the feeling is different, and the motives are thoroughly unselfish. We desire to see the kanaka excluded, not because we think he will compete with the white man, but because we desire to secure the purity of the race for ourselves and our children. We have three reports before us from Dr. Maxwell, who is an expert in this business, and I will read briefly what he says about the cane-growers -

It is found that most of the large sugar-growing estates, which were originally in the hands of large planters, have been cut up into farms, and rented or sold to numerous cane-growers. Particularly in the case of the areas that are furnishing cane for the Government Central Mills the growing is done by farmers, who have taken up and own or OCCuPY those lands. These facts place before us a situation that is almost unique- and peculiar to Queensland. In other cane sugar growing countries the estates are in the hands of extensive owners or controlled by large corporations, which state carries with it the consequence that a minimum number of white men are located on the land. In this colony the ownership or occupancy embraces a vast number of strong, responsible, and progressive white men, who are planted over all the sugar-growing areas. These men furnish the material which puts the mills into operation, and, as the mills depend wholly upon the field, it appears that the future of the sugar industry of the colony is very much in the hands of those numerous and small canegrowers.

The principle of small ownership and occupancy is right and sound, and leading, as it does, to the dividing of the matters at stake amongst a maximum number of responsible men, it furnishes a broad and safe basis for the industry, and promotes development along lines that are agreeable and of value to the State. This statement occurs in a report furnished by Dr. Maxwell to the Queensland Government on the 13th January, 1900. Dr. Maxwell gives some very good advice in connexion with sugar-growing and the manufacture of sugar. As to the cultivation of the sugar cane, he says that the solution of the difficulty lies in deep ploughing, and more of it, in manuring and in irrigation. At the only sugar plantation in my electorate I made an arrangement with the manager to try bone-dust as a manure, and in order to show my sincerity, I gave him the bone-dust at something less than cost price. This manure was tried with very extraordinary results, which showed that with the same amount of labour, a larger amount of sugar could be produced than under ordinary circumstances, and no doubt if irrigation were added to the judicious use of manures, permanent and certain success would be assured even in the worst seasons. Dr. Maxwell says -

The further equipments of the mills generally are such as to allow of moderately good work being done. The engine power of the mills is unusually ample and good. Some of the newer central mills are in a very good state of equipment. The more recent introductions into modern sugar houses, however - such as

superheating and the latest mode of crystallization in movement - were not seen in the mills in Queensland. Superheating is at once strongly advised by us, and especially because of what is believed will be its particular value in handling highly diluted or gummed juices.

Then he closes his report by saying -

More urgent than all alterations along mechanical lines is the introduction into the central and some other mills of a more thoroughly trained and scientific system of management. The men in charge have executive ability, and they are able to get relatively good results from the labour they command ; but they require training and aid in those specific parts of manufacture which demand a thorough knowledge of the chemistry of sugar juices, and of the nature of the agents which aid in clarification.

These statements are taken from the first report of Dr. Maxwell furnished to the Government of Queensland in 1900. Now I shall refer to Dr. Maxwell's report of this year to the Prime Minister of the Federal Government. In the letter which was sent from the Prime Minister to Dr. Maxwell on, the 24th May of this year, it was stated -

Mr. Barton will be glad, with regard to the statistical information asked for, if returns can be so divided as to show the difference in the three separate sugar districts of Queensland mentioned in your report ; and also whether your information enables you to afford similar details with regard to New South Wales.

I have looked carefully through this report, and I do not find any reply upon this most important point. We have separate returns for each district with regard to the mean temperatures, separate returns as to wages of the white labourers and of the mill hands, and as to the cost of the islanders, and we also have one return as to the acreage of cane. There is not, however, any return furnished as to the acreage of cane or the yield of sugar in the different districts, so that it is very difficult to arrive at a proper estimate of what would be abandoned if it became necessary to give up any part of the sugar-growing industry. In the Herald report, however, there is a short paragraph that may give us some explanation. It relates to the number of kanakas working in the northern and southern plantations. At page 44 of the report, I find it stated that the kanaka labourers south of Mackay number 5,268, whilst north of Mackay there are 3,596 employed, so that very nearly two-thirds would be preserved, supposing that the value of the labour were equal in both north and south. Other particulars are supplied in this report by Dr. Maxwell as to the cost of food and clothing, but all these are of no practical value without returns showing the quantity of sugar produced in each district. If we had these we should be able to come to some conclusion. Dr. Maxwell closes his report by saying -

The increment of white settlers upon the sugar-growing lands during the past decade, and the concurrent increase in the volume of sugar produced, with the reduction in the number of islanders employed, demonstrate the present tendency, and indicate that, under the current operation of given natural laws, and particularly in certain latitudes, the Pacific Islander is a relatively declining factor in sugar production in Australia.

If the kanaka is a declining factor why should we make all this fuss about him? Our legislation will exclude the Japanese and Javanese and other coloured races, and it will be impossible to get any other coloured labour to supply the place of the kanaka. Therefore the question of substituting labour for that of the kanaka will have to be faced sooner or later, and I think that Australia demands that it should be solved at once. Nothing can be gained by delay, and the appointment of Royal commissions has proved to be exceedingly unsatisfactory in the past. In his third report, furnished to the present Premier of Queensland, - Dr. Maxwell says -

I had to reply to Mr. Chataway that my experience in other countries, with my observation in this country, and the history of the labour experimentation in the State, forced me to conclude that if the industry should be made wholly dependent upon white labour, then sugar-growing north of Mackay must die out. It will not be instant, but I consider it certain.

Again he says -

I consider it certain that cane will not be grown solely by white labour north of Mackay to keep the mills in existence.

Then he closes his report by saying -

I trust, Mr. Premier, that this brief statement of the policy of the Sugar department of the Government will inform you more effectively than a verbal opinion on the matters upon which you request my views. I shall, however, have to urge the most careful consideration of the Government, in the interest of the

cane-farmers, if legislation should render cane-growing impracticable. We have 2,610 of these men, the backbone of their districts, and they must not be lost ; yet the subjects which are matters of opinion and of divisions in Parliaments are questions of life and death to those men in the fields.

There is nothing said here about the life or death of the nation, and yet that is the most important question of all. I do not believe in these highly coloured reports in reference to the difficulty of getting white men to work in these northern cane fields. I have met cane-growers who have worked as far north as Cairns, and immediately before my election I met an old Scotchman who had five sons, and who had carried on cane-growing in the neighbourhood of Cairns. He told me that it was the worst day's work he ever did in his life when he sold out, because his sons were not satisfied to remain in the county, and if he had the money to buy his farm back again that would be the first thing he would do. I do not say that there will not be hardship inflicted upon the planters by the passing of this Bill, but they have carried on their business under the threat of legislation to abolish kanaka labour for many years past, and I do not think we should now consider them too much. The Government have gone far enough in giving them five years within which to make all their plans. Honorable members are inclined to pooh pooh the idea that there is any feeling of excitement in Queensland over this question, but I had the utmost difficulty in pacifying the electors of my constituency when I stood out for a five years' term. They wanted the kanakas abolished at once, and the most I could get them to consent to was an extension of three years. It was very difficult to get them to keep within bounds, even though I explained to them the magnitude and wide extent of the interests involved in the industry, and that the matter was not one to be decided offhand, but only after serious consideration. There is only one remarkable thing I have noticed in connexion with the reports, and that is the shifting of the line beyond which sugar could not be grown except by the employment of black labour. The Queensland commission in 1889 dealt with this subject. One of the points was that sugar could be grown anywhere south of Townsville without the aid of black labour. They were very firm upon that point. There was no division of opinion between them. In 1900 we find Dr. Maxwell stating in his report that sugar cannot be grown without the aid of black labour north of Mackay. Then we have the evidence of another expert, Mr. C. Van de Velde. He says -

In the semi-tropical zone of Queensland, that is to say, from Bundaberg to the south, the climate is totally different. The mean temperature is lower and there is less moisture in the atmosphere, rendering it less oppressive and enervating. It is abundantly proved that in that region white men can and will do the work on the plantations. There are there at the present time about 5,000 coloured men that can be replaced by white labourers. The whole situation can thus be summarised as follows : - In the tropical zone of Queensland the industry must disappear with the blacks. In the semi-tropical zone coloured labour can be replaced by white at the Australian rate of wages provided that the Federal Customs Tariff shall sufficiently protect the industry. In New South Wales the industry under a system of protection, is entirely carried on by white labour. And if the beet sugar industry is to be introduced, for which there is urgent necessity, as I will endeavour to show, it will have to be done by white labour earning Australian wages. Further on he says -

If Australia desires the planters to replace gradually their coloured by white labourers, they should be given an interest in doing so, and the best inducement is to make, by a tax on the employment of coloured men, their labour slightly more expensive than that of white labour. We may be assured that under such conditions the evolution will be completed within the shortest period, and the kanaka traffic will die a natural death.

That is just what the Government propose to do. The imposition of this countervailing duty will afford sufficient protection to the sugar industry to enable it to be carried on under natural conditions, and by the employment of our own race. It will be observed that the line beyond which it was stated that a white man could not work, was originally fixed at Townsville. Then it was shifted to Mackay, and later on to Bundaberg. If a select committee is appointed to investigate this matter, I very much fear that the line may get down to the Tweed River. If the select committee is followed by a Royal commission, it will probably get into the middle of New South Wales. To my mind, the sooner this question is settled the better. One of the strong reasons which induced Queensland to enter the Federation was that the great bulk of her people thought that this black labour question would be quickly and finally settled. It is shown by these reports that not much more than a third of the sugar lands - and very rich lands they are - would have to be abandoned, even on the assumption that the planters were right in their contention. But surely if we

give the sugar growers an extension of time for five years, they will be able to raise sufficient money within that period to discover men of science who will provide them with machinery with which to overcome the difficulty of trashing. The trashing of the cane is the only real difficulty to be surmounted. But even if that difficulty does not disappear the sugar lands of Queensland will not run away. That State will not be any poorer because she does not grow sugar upon these particular lands. Queensland already grows the best maize - she needs it, too, because last year she did not grow enough for her own consumption. If it is found that sugar cannot be grown in these northern latitudes, why should not the mills, plant, &c, be removed to the southern latitudes where it can be grown? Then we should have no necessity to import any sugar. In England it is quite a common thing for manufactories - and indeed, for whole towns like that of Saltaire - to be removed to the locality which is best adapted for their operations. I do not see that it would be difficult to adopt the same plan in connexion with the sugar mills. I shall vote for the Bill, because it gives me all that I ask for. At the commencement of my campaign I stated that I would support any Government which gave reasonable consideration to the sugar grower with the certain extinction of the kanaka. I said that a five years' final extension, with legislation on the question immediately, was, I thought, a fair thing.

Mr Higgins

- Would the honorable member extend the time for recruiting, or the time for keeping the kanakas in Queensland.

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Mr A PATERSON

- I would not extend the time at all. A good deal of mention has been made of the feelings of religious men upon this question. I am not going to despise or ridicule those feelings. They have to be taken into account. Amongst the sugar planters themselves there are men of the highest education and culture and Christian principles. There are benevolent and philanthropic individuals who are really good men, but they have been so accustomed to the employment of this servile labour, that they have come to believe there is no harm in it. The same remark applied to the owners of slaves in America. Some 60 years ago an uncle of mine nearly lost his life in the State of Carolina simply because he tried to teach the slaves to read. Yet these planters were men of education, who thought that there was no wrong in oppressing the poor despised black man. It is undesirable that this servile labour should be allowed in any civilized country, not only on account of the bad effect which it produces upon the men, but because of its bad effect upon the masters. If we have a race of men who are servile, we shall inevitably produce a race of arrogant tyrants, whose presence will be far more disgraceful to us than is that of the blacks themselves. Several missionaries have spoken strongly in favour of the retention of kanakas, because of the good influence that our teaching will have upon them. I want honorable members to note that, when their sons and daughters are quite little children, the missionaries invariably send them either to England, or to Sydney or Melbourne, to be educated. Do they do that for the sake of their health? No. They do it to keep them from the black taint. It is quite right that they should do so, and the Government merely propose to do the same thing. During my election campaign I was repeatedly confronted with an argument which I found somewhat difficult to answer. A distinguished Plymouth brother urged that it was most unchristian like to talk of excluding the kanaka; and in support of his contention he quoted the Biblical verse that God

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Hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth.

I replied that we did not object to the kanaka's blood, but to the colour of his skin. I also reminded my friend that he had not quoted the whole of the verse, the remainder being -

And hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation. "We have taken the kanaka out of his habitation. We have kidnapped him. His case is quite different from that of the Chinese or Japanese, who come to Australia voluntarily. We force the kanakas to come here, and we enslave them, so that the whole of the argument urged by my friend falls to the ground. The honorable member for Wide Bay has asked my opinion of the climate of Queensland. To my mind it is first-class for men, but it is not altogether good for English women. There have been a good many exaggerations indulged in during this debate which ought not to be allowed to pass unnoticed. One has reference to the rate of wages. It is accepted by many honorable members as Gospel truth that the kanaka gets 14s. 3d. per week. Nothing of the kind! It is a deliberate deception to make such a statement. The real truth is, taking

the varying accounts of the different districts, that the kanaka's wages are not more than £10 annually upon the average. His food costs £10 a year, and his clothes and medicine £3. That represents a total of £23 annually, or 9s. per week. But all that the kanaka gets in cash is 2s. 4d. per week. Can any one say that such a paltry allowance represents a fair wage? It is a downright swindle. The wages paid to these islanders constitute an infamous protection to the sugar-planter. Coming to the question of the plant employed, I am very glad to be able to quote the other side, because my figures have been previously questioned. With regard to the plant employed, the Mackay Association in their pamphlet say- We cannot conclude this communication without reminding you of the vast interests at stake in connexion with the industry, and we feel assured that your delegate will not fail to impress this phase of the question most strongly upon the conference. After making a very careful calculation founded on the last official statistics, we believe that we are well under the mark when we place the present value of the various factories and plant employed in the industry, inclusive of the plant employed in the field, at £3,500,000. That is the first time for many a day we have heard of so moderate a figure as £3,500,000. I have heard the estimate placed at £5,000,000 or £6,000,000, and even up to £10,000,000 ; whereas the official statistics, taken from the Queensland Gazette, for the year 1899, show that the total value of machinery, plant, land, and premises is £2,750,000. It must be remembered that that is the value of the premises, and includes all money lent by the Government.

Sir Malcolm McEacharn

- Does that refer to the whole of Queensland?

Mr A PATERSON

- To the whole of Queensland. And the figures can be seen in the Queensland Government Gazette for 1899, page 415.

Sir Malcolm McEacharn

- We have had figures from the Premier, from which it would appear that the figures now quoted are wrong.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- Do the figures quoted include the value of the crop ?

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Mr A PATERSON

- The figures do not include the value of the growing crop, but they include the value of the land. With regard to the number of white workers employed, the most ridiculous and exaggerated statements have been made. I have heard it stated that some 50,000 white workers are directly affected by this trade ; but when one begins to think of the total number of operatives in Queensland, it is seen how absurd this estimate is. The statement of the sugar planters themselves is -

That the total number of kanakas employed in the colony, inclusive of those engaged in the pearl industry at Thursday Island, is only 8,795, or less than two percent, of the white population of the colony, while the industry gives direct employment to no less than 22,500 white men, of whom 13,500 are permanently employed, the additional 9,000 being employed during the crushing season. Thousands more white men are directly dependent upon the industry, and many more thousands are more or less dependent directly upon it in the various ways indicated below.

That is the statement of the Mackay Sugar Association, and we see that 13,500 white workers are employed permanently, and 9,000 casually. I shall strongly support the Bill, which I hope will be carried. I have received telegrams from political opponents, as well as from friends, unanimously in favour of the Bill as submitted to the House. To these telegrams I replied that I did not think there would be the slightest difficulty so far as Queensland representatives were concerned, because I thought there would be seven solid for the Bill, but that all I was afraid of was that the Government might be shaken on the question, and take amendments into consideration. I think I represent Queensland feeling when I say that we are decidedly in favour of the Bill as it stands.

Mr PIESSE

- I feel that we are in the position which the honorable and learned member for Northern Melbourne expressed last evening, when he said that we who represent other States than Queensland occupy a judicial position, and have to listen to both sides of the case. There is something to be said even for the delay which has been caused in debating the motion for referring the Bill to a select committee, in that it

does give some answer to the complaints which may have been made that the House is prepared to assent to a measure without hearing what is to be said on both sides. Even if every member had already made up his mind, I would rather see the House spend more time on this question, so that we may not be open to the charge of acting with undue haste. When I come to look at the question, there appears to me one point on which I have not heard sufficient in order to enable me to know whether I should be right in assenting to the proposal to discontinue the importation of kanakas in five years. I would draw the attention of honorable members to Dr. Maxwell's report, in which he spoke of an instance taken from the extreme north, in the Cairns district, where there were 409 white labourers passed through the books in order to provide and maintain 88 hands required daily to keep the mill in operation for a season of 30 weeks. The honorable member who has just addressed the House has told us that in the northern districts there are 3,696 kanakas employed ; and if the instance I have quoted is to be taken as showing the proper proportion of white labourers that will have to be available - I believe white labour will be found more efficient than black, but I pass that point for the moment - it will be necessary to have 15,000 or 16,000 white men employed for the 3,696 kanakas.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- The honorable member can only make that inference properly when he knows all the circumstances.

Mr PIESSE

- I take it that the wages paid would be the wages white men will work for; but I do not think wages come into this question. Another difficulty arises, as Dr. Maxwell shows in a preceding portion of the same report, when he says -

Consequently it is apparent that much of the instability' which is attributed to the loose unstable habits of the white transient labourers, should be put down to the sheer inability to do given kinds of continuous work in those natural conditions.

Mr Poynton

- Does the honorable member think it will take five whites to do the work of one black ?

Mr PIESSE

- That is not the point. But in the district to which I am referring, there must be a supply of white labour in the proportion of four to one of what will be the continuous number of workmen. That has been shown over and over again, and it was admitted by the honorable member for Melbourne Ports in his speech last night.

Mr Page

- Give white men a fair wage and they will stick to this work.

Mr PIESSE

- Unfortunately, according to the official returns, white men are not able to stick to the work.

Mr Page

- What rot !

Mr PIESSE

- If the 409 men were of the physical capacity of the honorable member for Maranoa, there would be no doubt on the point ; but what we have to consider is whether ordinary labour is likely to be available for the work. Seeing that 16,000 labourers would be required in the northern portion of the country, and possibly 7,000 men in the southern portion, or 24,000 to make up the supply for the whole year, is it likely that that labour can be obtained within the time provided by this Bill ,

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Mr Mauger

- Yes ; because the white labourers will not be retained all the year, or anything like that time.

Mr PIESSE

- That does not affect the argument at all. If it be a fact that in order to get 88 men, there have to be 409 men available, it makes no difference whether they have to work all the year round or not. Dr. Maxwell, in another part of his report, says -

A second example is taken from a location in the extreme south. In this case the mill records of last year show that 133 men were employed in and around the mill. Of this number 43 left before the close of the season.

In that case there were three men for every two men kept employed. I have kept that in view in making an

estimate for the southern districts, in which 5,628 labourers are employed.

Mr McCay

- Would a rise of wages affect the flow ?

Mr PIESSE

- I do not know that any fault is found with the wages actually paid to the white men.

Mr McDonald

- They were paid 12s. 6d. in Bundaberg at one time.

Mr PIESSE

- But there are circumstances which will always tend to make men shift about if better work can be obtained. This point has not been sufficiently dealt with in the arguments adduced to the House, and I think we ought to listen still further to what has been urged by the Queensland Government, and by those engaged in the industry. I need hardly say that I have no personal interest whatever in it. I come from a State where the conditions which have been alluded to do not prevail ; but I am in full sympathy with all honorable members who urge the desirability of ceasing this traffic, and we in Tasmania are prepared to pay our share of what will be the considerable cost attaching to the abolition of the kanakas. When the proposals of the Government come into full force we shall be giving up about £1,000,000 a year, or £6 per ton on 170,000 tons of sugar for a great many years. I am prepared, on behalf of Tasmania, to pay my share of taxation which is going to support an industry under the special condition that white labour shall be employed. But it is very desirable that we should give full consideration to all the circumstances, and not agree too hastily to any terms which may prove insufficient to enable the industry to continue. We are, I believe, enacting this measure with the desire to give an opportunity to Queensland. We do not desire to shut up any mills or destroy any enterprise in that State, and the question is whether we are giving sufficient time. I hope further attention will be given to the question I have raised as to whether the necessary labour can be obtained to overtake the necessities of the case. If that be so, I am prepared to yield any scruples I may have ; but until these scruples are removed, I shall be prepared to vote either for further inquiry, or for an extension of the time proposed.

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Mr KNOX

- The honorable member for Capricornia said that he attached a very great deal of importance and weight to the concluding words of the text, the first portion of which had been previously quoted to the House. He said the concluding words were to the effect that God had determined the bounds of man's habitation, and that it appeared to him as being distinctly unconvincing that the tropics were the place for the black man. I think, on the contrary, that the concluding words distinctly show the strength and force of the quotation which has been made, because, undoubtedly, the bounds of the employment of the black worker to-day are the low-lying areas within the tropics, where, as I have contended before and still contend, the white man cannot work without detriment to himself and to his race. I am sure that honorable members will agree that Australia as a whole has given its verdict that black alien labour must go, but the verdict has been given so emphatically that it should make this Assembly cautious in its action, so that vested interests may not be injuriously interfered with. Honorable members must admit that the honorable member for Oxley has brought evidence of the existence throughout 'Queensland of a strong feeling against the proposed Bill, and the representations which he has made deserve our careful and thoughtful consideration, since, although he quoted a large number of individual opinions, he also quoted opinions expressed by large representative bodies in all parts of Queensland. I admit that there has been a strong declaration in Queensland in favour of the Bill upon the introduction of which the Prime Minister delivered so effective and convincing a speech, but I am persuaded that no one desires that our first steps in legislation should create a feeling of bitterness in any part of the Commonwealth. We should, therefore, pay respectful attention to the expression of opinion which has been voiced by the honorable member for Oxley,, because, unless we do so, an embittered feeling will exist, which will be regrettable. Those whom the honorable member represents asks that this subject may receive judicial consideration. It is all very well to say that we have before us the array of testimony which was presented to the Parliament of Queensland, but, so far as the Commonwealth Parliament is concerned, we have only the report prepared by a gentleman eminent in his profession, the general tenor of which is that, for the prosecution of the sugar industry in the low-lying tropical districts of the continent, the black man is essential. Surely

this House in its strength should give consideration to that report, and to the public opinion which has been voiced by the honorable member for Oxley. If there would be any serious delay in making the inquiry which the honorable member asks for, I should object to it ; but that could be avoided by requiring the select committee or commission to report within a certain time. I think that the chairman of the commission ' should be a Judge of the Supreme Court, and that its members should comprise representatives of the labour party and of the other parties in the House.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- The honorable member for Oxley asks for a select committee.

Mr KNOX

- Yes ; but I hope that he will see his way to alter his motion to a request for the appointment of a commission. I see no reason why such a commission should not consist of honorable members of this House, with a Judge of the Supreme Court as chairman. There are members on each side of the Chamber who would be absolutely impartial, and anxious to see that all the evidence which would aid us in coming to a decision is brought before us. There need be no unnecessary delay, because the commission can be asked to report within a specified period, and its appointment would. take away all grounds for the bitterness and soreness which now unquestionably exist. It is for that reason that I support the motion, and add my voice to the appeal to the House to look at the matter from a judicial standpoint, and not to be carried away by the eager demand to have the matter settled immediately. The accomplishment of this reform is a thing which we all desire, but let us see that it is accomplished without the creation of ill-feeling, so that at the very beginning of our national life the large and important State of Queensland, or a large number of its electors, may not feel embittered and regretful at having entered the union of the Commonwealth.

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Mr EWING

- Apart from the representatives of Queensland, there are but two members in this assembly who represent men engaged in the growing of sugar cane, the honorable member for Cowper and myself, and it may, therefore, not be out of place for me to occupy a few minutes in directing the attention of honorable members to the view of this subject taken by the white men engaged in the growing of sugar cane in the northern parts of New South Wales. You, Mr. Speaker, ruled this afternoon, when the honorable member for Oxley was speaking, that the question under discussion was, not the objection of the people of Australia to kanakas, but whether the House is in possession of such facts as enable it to decide upon this matter without further inquiry. Upon that aspect of the case, and upon it alone, I shall address a few remarks to you. I hope, too, to have a word or two to say with regard to the difficulty besetting the honorable and learned member for Tasmania, Mr. Piesse. I had an opportunity, 25 years ago, to witness the advent of sugar - cane growing on the northern rivers of New South Wales. At that time the industry was in its infancy on the Richmond, and subsequently a large mill was built on the Tweed. In those days, and for a decade or two afterwards, there was no talk of the climatic influences being such as to injuriously affect the white men working there. Year after year the white man did the work alone, and the industry worked by white labour seemed to be established upon a thriving basis. But, as time passed, black men made their appearance in dribbles from Queensland and various parts of New South Wales, and apparently almost simultaneously with their coming arose the need for them. Now, it is no unusual thing to hear it said, in districts where previously there was no doubt that white men could do the work, that it is not possible to do without black labour. But all over the world when cheap and docile labour is obtainable, there is work for it to do. The moment that the farmer becomes accustomed to employing kanakas, Syrians, or Hindoos, he finds in them an urbanity and manageableness not always to be found among whites. The question of the capacity of white men to work in the cane fields is limited to their employment in the operations of trashing and of cane cutting. I think the honorable member for Oxley will concede that point.

Mr McDonald

- They have shifted their ground in Queensland now, and they say that the white man cannot do the work at all.

Mr EWING

- That, however, has been the contention, and the legislation which has been passed makes it fairly clear.

The honorable member for Oxley will also concede that the climatic objections need not hold in regard to the operation of trashing, because the winter months, when white men can work well, can be chosen for it. Trashing is done most advantageously shortly before the cane cutting.

Mr Macdonald-Paterson

- It is done according to the rainfall.

Mr EWING

- It is done a little before the cutting - that, at least, is the right time to do it. As the cane-cutting begins in July, it stands to reason that the trashing can be done during the winter months. It is a moot point whether trashing is required at all. I do not desire to enter into the details of the question, but it appears to me to be a moot point whether there is any necessity to trash the cane, and, if it is clear that it can be done in the winter months, we can almost eliminate the question of trashing from our consideration in connexion with the labour question. A good deal of the cane-cutting can also be done in the cooler weather, and, therefore, for all practical purposes, we can also eliminate a portion of the cane-cutting from our consideration when we are speaking of the capacity of white labour to do the principal work upon a sugar plantation. Therefore, the whole of the difficulty so far as trashing is concerned, and at least half the difficulty with regard to cane-cutting disappears. I should like to explain, for the information of honorable members who are representing southern districts, how the cane-cutting is done on the northern rivers in New South Wales. A number of men go to the northern rivers periodically year after year to cut cane. They are most of them men of very fine physique, and with considerable independence of spirit. It suits these men to work very hard and to put an immense strain upon their physical powers, which are great, so that in three or four months they may make a large wage, and afterwards have a comfortable time. This is the type of man of extremely good physique who make their appearance on the northern rivers during the cane-cutting season. These men work by contract, and I will now come to an essential point, so far as the honorable member for Tasmania, Mr. Piesse, is concerned. These men on the northern rivers have told me, and I give their statements for what they are worth on their own authority, that they would as soon work up at Cairns as on the Tweed River. It seemed a remarkable statement, and I pressed them just as any other honorable member would press them upon the point, and this was their explanation : A considerable proportion of the cane land on the Tweed River, for instance, lies on a great basaltic tableland, broken here and there by sharp declivities, and here and there by rolling slopes. On these tablelands there are strewn a considerable number of boulders, and the cane-cutters tell me that the extra labour involved in dealing with a ton of cane on these slopes and declivities and amongst these boulders takes more out of them than if they were dealing with a ton of cane at Cairns. On the Richmond and Tweed River the men make something like £2 to £3 per week with dry rations. I understand that dry rations do not include beef.

Mr Macdonald-Paterson

- We have never heard of dry rations before.

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Mr EWING

- That is exactly the position at which I desire to arrive. The men working on the Richmond and Tweed rivers working by contract make from £2 10s. to £3 per week, and they also get a dry ration which is worth about 5s. a week. Therefore they earn about £3 per week all round. They tell me, further, that the only opportunities they have ever been given to cut cane in Northern Queensland has been at the rate of £1 5s. per week. If that be a fact that the planters of Northern Queensland have never offered the white man contract work which would enable him to make £3 per week - as much as they would make by working a thousand miles to the south - it simply shows that white labour has never had a chance in the north. I do not like to be unreasonable, as

I know how very important the industry is. I know that not only money, but flesh and blood have been expended in the sugar industry in Northern Queensland, but if this Parliament is appealed to on the ground that white men cannot be obtained to do the work, that appeal possesses no force if it can be shown that white men have been asked to do the work for £1 5s. per week, whereas they can make £3 per week in New South Wales.

Mr Macdonald-Paterson

- Under contract.

Mr EWING

- Under any circumstances. If the facts are as stated, the white man has not had a fair chance to work in Northern Queensland, and I look to some other honorable member to prove whether I have correctly stated the case or not, or for a reply.

Mr Poynton

- How many tons of sugar cane are handled by these men on the Richmond River for £3 a week?

Mr EWING

- The trashing of the cane costs about 1s. 6d. per ton, or about 30s. per acre. Then the price for cane cutting varies - according to whether it has to be cut on the level banks of the river or on the table-lands, such as I have described - from 1s. 9d. to nearly 3s. per ton, or an average of say 2s. 6d. per ton. Therefore the whole cost of trashing and cutting would be 4s per ton, and that is the total amount per ton that is at issue in connexion with the labour question. That is to say, that giving the honorable member for Oxley the full benefit of his argument, there is only 4s. worth of work at issue in connexion with each ton of cane. I do not think there is half of that amount involved. Queensland at present sells her sugar, or most of it, in the open market. The production of sugar in Queensland is so great that she is able - with what comes from New South Wales - to almost supply the Australian markets. At present she sells her sugar at about £8 or £9 per ton free on board. Following upon that we have to consider that the Queensland sugar industry is not in a wholesome condition to-day. I am sure that honorable members do not desire to mislead, but the utterances of some of them would cause the House to suppose the Queensland sugar industry is in a satisfactory condition, and that the action of the Federal Parliament in putting a stop to the employment of kanaka labour will bring ruin on a prosperous industry. The position in Queensland is that a large number of people, acting together on the cooperative principle, have borrowed money from the Government to start mills, and in almost every instance the central mills have failed to meet their obligations.

Mr Macdonald-Paterson

- No.

Mr McDonald

- In a large number of instances.

Mr EWING

- I will say that they have failed to meet their obligations in a large number of instances. In addition to this, in many parts of Queensland one can see evidences of abandoned mills connected with the sugar industry. The price of sugar is so low, consequent upon the production of beet sugar with a bounty behind it, that I do not think that either in Queensland or the West Indies or in any other part of the world cane sugar can possibly be grown without the assistance of a protective duty.

Mr McDonald

- Does the honorable member not think that the price of land has something to do with it?

Mr EWING

- It might have some influence, but that point is not so vital as the matter to which I am now referring. Because of the low price of sugar, and the large amount of cane grown, the sugar industry in Queensland is in a very unstable condition.

Mr McDonald

- How does the honorable member account for the large dividends paid by the Colonial Sugar Company?

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Mr EWING

- The Colonial Sugar Company does not limit its operations to cane growing in Queensland or to growing sugar at all. It carries on its operations in Fiji, in Queensland, and New South Wales, and also in New Zealand, and it is an extremely well-managed company, which is not dependent solely upon the success or otherwise of Queensland sugar production. What appears to me to be the crux of the situation is this. I have just explained the position of the Queensland sugar industry. Because of the lowness of the price of sugar, and the fact that Queensland has to sell her sugar in the markets of the world, it is very doubtful whether there is any money in it. The Government proposal - to which the leader of the Opposition makes no very great demur - practically amounts to saying to the Queensland sugar-growers - "We are prepared to give you a £5 per ton. duty if you employ white men." That is what it comes to. Now what does this

mean ? Queensland produces approximately 120,000 tons of sugar per annum, and the amount of sugar required for Australia - 170,000 tons - is rather more than the combined production of New South Wales and Queensland. Although I am a protectionist, I quite admit that when the local supply is less than the local demand, the producer of an article gets the full benefit of a protective duty that may be placed upon that article. This means that the Federal Parliament is virtually making a present of £600,000 to the Queensland sugar planters in order to induce them to give up black labour.

Mr Fisher

- They expect to get the protection and to be allowed to [employ black labour as well.

Mr EWING

- I do not think the Federal Parliament will give them the right to the white man's market and the run of black labour too. As I say, £600,000 is proposed to be distributed annually amongst the sugar growers of Queensland, and I ask if that is not a fair thing for them? What does it mean ? By the way, honorable members may recollect that the kanaka costs Queensland £300,000 a year in wages. We must also bear in mind that that State makes 120,000 tons of sugar per annum. On the assumption that 10 tons of cane make 1 ton of sugar, Queensland must cut 1,200,000 tons of cane annually. If that were paid for, trashed, and cut at the New South Wales rate it would cost £240,000 per annum. But Queensland will, under the Government proposals, be annually £600,000 in advance of her present position. Therefore, if this legislation passes, she will have £840,000 to pay for the cutting of 1,200,000 tons of cane, and if she pays that amount of money for cutting and trashing it, she will be in just the same position as she is now. What does that amount to?

Mr Fowler

- That the Government proposals are too generous.

Mr EWING

- Let us assume, after passing of the Tariff, for the sake of argument, that the sugar planters of Queensland can give twice as much for cutting and trashing as do those of New South Wales. Let us suppose that they can pay 8s. a ton for cutting and trashing. Does the honorable member for Oxley tell me that if planters offered white men an opportunity of earning twice £3 a week for four months in the year, at Cairns, they would not be rushed with men ? That was the trouble with the honorable member for Tasmania, Mr. Piesse. If the honorable member visited Mount Magnet, Bulong, and Broad Arrow, and saw the men working there, and if he realized that the planter of Queensland would be able to give the thrasher and grower of cane work by which under the contract system he could earn £6 a week, and be in no worse position than he is to-day, he would see that there is not the slightest doubt that white labour can be successfully obtained in these branches of this industry. Indeed, it seems to me that the indictment would be from the farmers in other parts of the States. So magnificent are the opportunities, and so large the wage fund, that the cry about the disturbance of labour would come rather from them than from the men who are given this splendid chance.

Mr Deakin

- Until production outruns consumption.

Mr EWING

- I am not going to enter into a discussion of that question now. Every honorable member knows that on the sea-board of Australia there are magnificent areas fit for sugar-growing ; and we need not now pause to consider what will be the price of sugar in years to come. I am dealing only with the present.

Mr Poynton

- The same reason for the payment of the bonus will always exist.

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Mr EWING

- The question raised by the Attorney-General was that a time will come in the life of the sugar industry when Australia will produce more sugar than she needs. Then, under such circumstances, of course, the price must come down. I am not dealing with that aspect of the case, but with the condition of tilings which prevails at present. For the reason that honorable members do not desire the presence of the kanaka permanently in our midst, I consider that the scope of our arguments is limited to to-day and a little time in the future. Under these circumstances it must be evident that this Parliament is endeavouring to do all that it can. I think it is acting most generously in regard to the sugar planters. I do not wish to

discuss the question of the docility of the kanaka. Of course some people would rather work with Assyrians, Japanese, kanakas, and other people who are more docile than themselves. The white workmen have what are called the "growing pains" of society. We cannot take into consideration at all the argument as to the ease with which alien labour is controlled. I have mentioned only a few of the points in the speeches of honorable members opposite that appear to me to be pregnant with meaning. I shall conclude by saying that I think the masses of Australia are doing quite as much for the sugar industry, and are paying as high a price for the abolition of black labour, as the Queensland sugar-grower had a right to expect.

Sir MALCOLM McEACHARN

- I have no intention of detaining the House by making a long speech. As much has been said upon this subject as can reasonably be said. There is one point, however, which has received very little attention up to the present. I allude to the moral aspect of this question. The honorable member for Parramatta laid very great emphasis upon this phase of the subject. To-night we were told by the honorable member for Capricornia that in Queensland the sugar planters send their children to England in order to have them educated, not because they cannot receive the necessary education in Australia, but in order to set them free from the contamination of black people. I desire to read to the House a very short extract in reference to this question from the address of the Bishop of Brisbane to the Synod in 1892. It is as follows : -

While I should be disposed to suspend my judgment if I found men of the strong sense and calibre of Bishop Selwyn, with their long experience in the Islands, taking a distinctly opposite view, yet, viewing the matter from Australian shores, according to my present knowledge, and from what I have observed during the last seven years on the sugar plantations at Bundaberg and elsewhere in this diocese, I fail to see that it is a bad thing for these Islanders to be brought face to face with the more trying conditions of an unaccustomed civilization. Where such care is bestowed upon their welfare as is the case on some of the plantations which I have visited on my pastoral tours, and from my intercourse with the "boys" themselves, the inference to which I am led is that it is a good thing they should be here with us ; and when they have become, as many have, Christian churchmen, it is well that our white people should have before them the good example in discharge of religious obligations which is set them by their coloured brethren.

In 1893 he wrote-

The brave visit of the Bishop of Tasmania to the Melanesian mission field takes high rank among the events of the year that has gone.

That he used his powers of observation and induction to some purpose is evident from the interesting account which he gave of his visitation tour, and the inference he drew from the facts before him. To myself, at least, his report is welcome reading, as it wholly confirms the view of the black labour question - almost to its very illustration - which I ventured to put before you last year. We approached the question, it may be remembered, not in the light of the changing phases of popular opinion or political necessity, or supposed rival interests, but in the fuller and truer light of that humanitarianism which we have learned from the Incarnation, and it is also from this same point of view that the Bishop of Tasmania has supplied such strongly confirmatory evidence. My words were spoken as from Australian shores ; he has viewed the question from the Islands themselves, and his testimony is the more valuable because he entered upon his visitation tour with preconceived ideas of an opposite character.

In order to be sure that he had not altered his opinion, I caused a letter to be written to him recently. In reply to that communication, he writes as follows, under date 24th July, 1901 : -

With reference to the particular point mentioned in your inquiry as to whether the presence of the "boys" involves immoral traffic in Japanese women, I can only say that so far as concerns the sugar plantations in the neighbourhood of Bundaberg and the Isis in this diocese, I am able to give a flat contradiction to such charge.

Mr McDonald

- Why, the Isis is full of them.

Sir MALCOLM McEACHARN

- I am referring to the allegation that the kanakas make use of this traffic for immoral purposes. The Bishop continues -

I have heard it said that it is unsafe for young women to be about alone in districts in which the "boys,"

i.e., the South Sea Islanders, are largely employed. I can only say that no single case has ever come to my knowledge, and I have been a good deal in the above-mentioned localities.

Mr Mauger

- Is that letter from the present Bishop ?

Sir MALCOLM McEACHARN

- It is from the present Bishop of Brisbane.

Mr Fisher

- It is utterly worthless.

Sir MALCOLM McEACHARN

- I thoroughly believe what the Bishop says. A great deal has been said in this connexion which is utterly untrue. I- would rather accept the opinion of the Bishop of Brisbane, supported as he is by Bishop Selwyn, than I would take the opinion of those who have seen very little of the traffic themselves, and who are speaking merely from hearsay.

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Mr Mauger

- What about Canon Pyke's opinion?

Sir MALCOLM McEACHARN

- I think that the honorable member for Melbourne Ports, all through this debate, has assumed a knowledge which he does not possess. He has given the House perhaps more positive information than has any other honorable member who has spoken. He mentioned the condition of affairs at Cairns. In this connexion I will read a telegram from Mr. John Arthur, chairman of the Kanaka Bill Protest Committee of Brisbane. It is as follows : -

Sample of methods inquiry by Victorians. Mauger arrived Cairns midday. Left next morning ten o'clock. Two hours on plantation. Distinctly promised support Government inquiry before end of sitting.

Mr Mauger

- How does he know.

Sir MALCOLM McEACHARN

- The honorable member has acknowledged that it is true.

Mr Mauger

- Not as to the time I was on the plantation.

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Sir MALCOLM McEACHARN

- If the honorable member arrived at Cairns late in the day he could not very well go on to the plantations at night. The wire continues -

Can get ample proof of foregoing.

I have in my hand another telegram which reads thus -

If Mauger says, as reported in this morning's Courier, that I told him that I could grow cane without kanakas, he states what is not a fact. You have my authority to deny it. Further, he only spent two hours in Bundaberg plantations.

That message is signed by Mr. Angus Gibson. I believe that the honorable member for Melbourne Ports will himself have some explanation to make in connexion with this matter. I believe that there is no difficulty about growing sugar in the Bundaberg district without black labour. But no amount of protection will assist growers in the north, because we cannot get white people to work there. Even supposing we could get white people to work there, they would prove very expensive, and I am led to that opinion from my experience in the north. I am not now interested in the sugar industry, but I had the satisfaction of gaining my experience at the cost of some £20,000 in an endeavour to grow sugar a great many years ago. I say, without fear of being directly contradicted, that so far as the northern portions of Queensland are concerned, we cannot rely on white labour for growing sugar cane I am convinced that if a great deal more money than the amount mentioned by the last speaker were available for distribution in order to assist the grower, it would prove of no use, in consequence of the impossibility of getting labour. To grant a Royal commission would be doing something to assist Queensland at a time when the people of that State are extremely and justly irritated at the action taken by the Government. Had the people of Queensland known or anticipated, when the question of federation was under discussion, that such a Bill

as that now before us would have been introduced, the vote in favour of federation would have been much less, even had it proved possible to carry an affirmative vote. I hope that further time will be given in the Bill, but if this question goes to the vote I shall be found in favour of the motion.

Mr. JOSEPHCOOK (Parramatta).The honorable member for Melbourne has told us very emphatically - and I suppose he speaks from experience, like the rest of us - that it is impossible for white men to do this work in the north of Queensland. The answer to that statement is simply that, so far as we have any knowledge at present, white men have never been tempted by a fitting wage to work in that part of the continent. Until a fitting wage is offered, which would tempt the Australian working men to go there, it cannot properly be said that white men cannot or will not do the work. White men decline to do the work under existing conditions for a mere pittance of 4s. or 5s. per day, which, so far as we have any evidence at present, is the utmost that has been offered. When men can get 7s. or 8s. a day further south, under altogether more favourable conditions, they would be foolish indeed if they went to work in tropical regions for a paltry 5s. Further, if 5s. per day is the extent of the wages offered to white men in an industry which is protected with a duty of £5 or £6 per ton, it is a poor look-out for the encouragement of what we call our "native industries." I am inclined to think that a "native industry," protected to the extent of £6 per ton, which can give a black man only 2s. 4d. per week, and a white man 5s. per day, is not worth much encouragement. I sympathize to the full with the vested interests which have grown up in the north of Queensland. Nobody can view with equanimity the prospect of men losing their hard-earned savings, and I believe they have the fullest sympathy of every man in this assembly. But what we have to look at, as has been said by other speakers, is the purity and integrity of our race. We have to consider not only the present passing conditions, but what north Queensland and the whole continent will be in generations yet to come. We should keep this in mind in carrying out what is undoubtedly the mandate of Australia, namely, that this country shall be kept "white." I have yet to learn that any fresh argument has been offered for departing from the position already taken up by the Government, or for reversing the decision unanimously arrived at last night. I listened very carefully to what the honorable member for Oxley had to say, and the many quotations he made use of simply amounted to the fact that there are people in Queensland who believe that black labour should be maintained. So far as I heard, the honorable member did not quote a single telegram which advocated a few more years' extension for black labour. All his correspondents desire inquiry. What for? For the purpose of trying to establish the fact that the sugar-growing industry must fail if black labour is not continued. 'It is not an extension of time that is sought; what is desired is to make black labour permanent. It is not so much the kanaka that the advocates of coloured labour are thinking of. Every one knows that in the north of Queensland, and in the islands, the kanaka is a diminishing quantity. He is decaying in his own home in consequence of the enormous deportation to this country, and this is recognised by the people of Queensland who want coloured labour permanently established, so that when the supply of kanakas ceases the industry may be continued by means of other kinds of alien labour. On the other hand the people of Australia have unanimously determined that there shall be no black labour on this continent, but that it shall be abolished as rapidly and prudently as may be; and the proposal is that the Government shall give a certain time within which this labour must cease. The honorable member for Oxley asks for a select committee of this House, and at the same time tells us that he does not want a select committee. When I asked him a question on the subject, he made it quite clear that he did not want a select committee, but a Royal commission composed of experts. If that is the honorable member's object, the motion is entirely out of place, and he ought not to be taking up the time of the House in asking for a select committee. It is the first time I ever heard a man stand up in Parliament and say he did not want a select committee, and yet at the same time solemnly move that the matter under consideration be referred to such a body. It might have been proper for the Speaker to consider whether the honorable member should not be stopped from debating the matter under consideration. In any case it does seem strange that an honorable member should propose a select committee, and, in the course of his speech, make it quite clear that he does not want a select committee but some other kind of tribunal.

Mr R EDWARDS

- I rise to a point of order. The honorable member for Parramatta distinctly states that I asked for a Royal commission of experts. I never mentioned the word "experts" during the whole of my speech, either last night or tonight.

Mr SPEAKER

- That is not a point of order. If the honorable member for Oxley desires to explain he may do so after the honorable member for Parramatta has spoken.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- May I ask if the honorable member for Oxley did not distinctly say, in reply to an interjection, that he would prefer a Judge to preside over the inquiry he proposed 1 Surely that would not have been possible under the motion now before the House.

Mr R EDWARDS

- Judges are not experts on sugar.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- We do not usually call on Judges to preside over select committees of Parliament ; neither do we call in any other kind of expert assistance. The honorable member, above all things, made it clear that he did not want a select committee of this House. Moreover, I should not think many honorable members would be willing to sit on a committee after the remark of the honorable member to the effect that there are not more than two in the House who understand anything about this question.

Mr R EDWARDS

- Quite right.

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Mr JOSEPH COOK

- What folly it would be under the circumstances, to ask honorable members to make further inquiry into this matter.

Mr R EDWARDS

- They would get knowledge if they went up to Queensland.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- I suppose the honorable member knows a little about the subject himself.

Mr R EDWARDS

- Not very much, practically.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- I am glad to hear that confession. I suppose that the honorable member for Oxley and the honorable member for Brisbane are about the only two honorable members who, in the opinion of the former gentleman, know anything about this question. The honorable member tells us that we are ignorant of the very question which he asks us to inquire into.

Mr Piesse

- That would not prevent honorable members being good judges.

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Mr JOSEPH COOK

- Perhaps not. May I remind the honorable member that, according to his own statement, we might very well judge this matter without any inquiry such as is proposed. We have looked into this question and searched all available records. We have investigated the figures presented, read Dr. Maxwell's reports, and also reports of various Royal commissions, and I really do not think that much fresh information can be gleaned unless we make a personal investigation on the spot. If the honorable member had seriously suggested that we should take a trip north there might have been some reason in his proposal. But if he means that we are to have an inquiry within the precincts of Parliament House, and to invite Dr. Maxwell to give evidence, I am afraid that gentleman could not tell us any more than he has already told us in his reports. If we are to call Mr. Angus Gibson and other gentlemen who have from time to time given the Queensland Parliament the benefit of their knowledge," I am afraid they could not tell us anything more than we are now able to read in the Queensland Hansard. What, therefore, can be gained by any further investigation or delay ? I should be glad, indeed, if I thought we were not sufficiently well informed on the matter, to agree to further delay in order to enlighten our minds, but since nothing fresh can be gathered, we ought not to grant further postponement. The honorable member read us telegram after telegram, and article after article, but there was nothing fresh in all he read. We have read ourselves, time and again, of the possible displacement of some of the labour in Queensland in consequence of legislation of this character. The Government were aware of that when they framed and introduced the measure, but we

believe, rightly or wrongly, that the people of this continent have made up their minds that, notwithstanding what may happen to the sugar industry, this black labour must be removed. That is the position in which we stand. If the honorable member who asks for further delay could make it clear to us that we were not interpreting the real feelings of the people of the country there would be something in his proposal. But he does not touch that point at all; nor do any of those who speak through the intermediary of the telegrams and reports which have been read. All that they say is that unless black labour is continued the industry must go down. We contend that the verdict of the people of the country is that if that is the price to be paid for the removal of black labour from the continent, great and serious as it may be, the price undoubtedly has to be paid. That is the verdict of the constituencies, and we are here to carry it out in the best and most prudent way possible. The honorable member for Richmond said that if we passed the duty on sugar proposed by the Government, Queensland would be very much better off than it is at present, even with the substitution of white for black labour. I think the honorable member succeeded in making it clear that there was a margin of this duty which could be safely struck off in committee. That is how the matter presented itself to my mind. When he referred to the additional sum of £600,000, which would accrue to the industry as the result of the duty, it struck me that that amount could be safely reduced when we got into committee. The honorable member must not shake his head, because he told the House very plainly that even with black labour banished from Queensland, and white labour substituted for it, the people interested in the sugar industry there would be in a very much better position than they are at the present time. I fail to see that we need to put them in any better position. As it is they are doing particularly well, if we have regard to the fact that the Colonial Sugar Company recently paid a 10 per cent dividend. If that is an indication of the general condition of the industry, then it is doing admirably. The honorable member's own figures make it clear that we may safely reduce the sum when we get into committee. Then we were treated by the honorable member for Melbourne to some letters from the Bishop of Queensland, relating to the moral aspect of this traffic. The honorable member and the bishop gave only one aspect of this question from the point of view of morality. So far as I am aware, I did not say one word as to the condition of the kanakas in Queensland in my speech of a few weeks ago. My remarks related to the moral effect of this traffic upon the kanaka in his own home. That, I think, is the most serious part of the question. Missionaries who go to these men tell us that the traffic demoralized the homes of the kanakas in their own islands. It breaks up their family life. It causes them to become nomadic in their habits. It creates the greatest possible feuds and jealousies on the islands, which lead often to conflict and death. We are told too that in some instances disease has decimated the villages, and that this disease is the result of the traffic in the North of Queensland. It is the moral aspect of the question so far as it affects the kanakas in their own homes that I refer to more particularly, and it seems to me to be a far more serious one than that relating to their condition in North Queensland. I do not know what the position is in North Queensland. I have heard that it is bad, but in the consideration of the moral aspect of the question I rely upon that which is told me by the men who have seen the kanaka in his own home, and who speak of the serious consequences which arise there as the result of this traffic. Until the honorable member is able to give us rebutting evidence concerning the influence of the traffic upon the kanaka in his own home life I shall continue to say that in my judgment this is a most immoral traffic, which should be stopped at once in the interests of the kanaka himself and in the interests of the integrity of the islands from whence he comes. I have yet to learn that the depopulation of those islands is to be regarded as a light matter. To my mind it is a very serious thing. We have been told of the way in which many of these islanders are kidnapped and brought away from their own islands under every kind of pretence - by methods which are not honest and upright. That, again, I think is a most serious aspect of the moral question involved in this traffic. An industry which perforce has to depend upon the kidnapping of these people--

Mr Macdonald-Paterson

- The kidnapping of these islanders is a matter of ancient history.

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Mr JOSEPH COOK

- I am told it is not. I am told that it goes on now just as it used to do. Any system which depends upon such a condition of affairs should not be tolerated by the Parliament of this country. I hope, and I believe, that the resources of science, and the enterprise and energy and initiative of the people will be available

to meet the condition of things which may be brought about by the displacement of the kanaka in the sugar industry. I cannot believe that the £7,000,000 of money invested in it will be dropped quietly even if the kanaka is dropped. I am of opinion that the sugar growers of Queensland have too much pluck and enterprise to permit such a thing to happen. If we continue to allow this cheap labour, however, they will continue assuredly to take advantage of it. What does it mean? According to Dr. Maxwell's own statement, the substitution of white for black labour represents only, at the most, a difference of 6 per cent. upon the capital invested. We are told that a very small proportion of the sugar produced in Queensland is grown north of Mackay. Dr. Maxwell makes it clear that to the south of Mackay; and even so far as the districts around Mackay are concerned, there will be no difficulty even if the planters are confined to the employment of white labour. It is only to the north of Mackay that any difficulty will arise, and I do not believe that the resources of science, as applied to cane cutting, cane growing, and the tending of the cane, have reached their utmost point of development. It is notorious that the planters do not possess a machine which will cut or even trash their cane. The inventions relating to the sugar industry are not nearly so forward as are those which have to do with the reaping and garnering of our grain crops. Surely with all this field of invention open to them the task of making up the difference of 6 per cent., represented by the substitution of white for black labour, should not be insuperable. If they will give the white man a fair wage to tempt him to go up to Queensland and cut sugar cane, he will go there just as readily as he travels to other parts of the world where the climatic conditions are as bad. Miners go to New Guinea, Klondike, and other parts of the world in which there are extremes of climate. All that is required is that there shall be a sufficient inducement. It seems to me to be a pity that with a duty of £5 or £6 a ton on sugar there is not available for distribution among the labour employed in the industry in Queensland a sum sufficient to induce white workers to wend their steps thitherwards. It is clear that this traffic has to go regardless of what the consequences to Queensland may be. The only hope is that the displacements will be as few as possible, and that the difficulties will be got over speedily. Then we shall settle down to a condition of things in which this menace will be removed for ever, and we shall have what we are all striving for : a clear straight future before us with respect to the integrity of our race, and the industrial conditions under which we live.

Mr Mauger

- May I be permitted to make a personal explanation in regard to one or two telegrams, bearing on my visit to North Queensland, which have been read? The first telegram to which I wish to make reference is one from the Honorable Angus Gibson, a gentleman whom I had the pleasure of meeting at Bundaberg. I stated last night that he had said that so far as he, as well as others in the district of Bundaberg were concerned, the kanaka could be dispensed with, especially if an adequate duty was imposed upon sugar. I have here Mr. Gibson's remarks as reported by the commissioner of the Herald, who accompanied me on that occasion. The writer says-

Mr. Gibson is an honoured member of the Queensland Legislative Council, and a man held in high estimation by all who know him. Black labour suits him as well as his neighbour, but he is one of the few men of his class who view the future with equanimity, and he declines to admit that sugar growing is wholly dependent upon the kanaka.

Mr. Gibson went further than that. He assured us that, so far as Bundaberg was concerned, there could be no doubt about the matter. He said that in the northern districts there would be some difficulties at first, but if time were allowed, and compensation given in the way of a duty of a differential character, he believed the difficulties could be overcome. The same honorable gentleman has stated that I was only in Bundaberg for two hours. I reached Bundaberg at 8 o'clock in the evening, and I spent something like 21 hours there.

Mr R EDWARDS

- The telegram sets forth that the honorable member spent only two hours on the Bundaberg plantations.

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Mr Mauger

- Mr. Gibson, as well as Mr. Young, assured me that if I had remained there for two months, I could not have witnessed more than I did during my stay. They showed me the kanaka at work, and at his meals. They told me of the conditions of the kanaka's life ; of his religious services, and his mode of living. As I said last evening, I was assured by the Government officials, the planters, and mill managers at Cairns,

on the Herbert River, at Bundaberg, and, in fact, wherever we called, that if we stayed there for six months we could not learn more in regard to this traffic. They gave us all the information on the subject that they could. The pamphlet which I hold in my hand has been quoted time after time in this House, and generally commended. Unless the information that we gained was of the fullest character, how could a pamphlet of this kind have been produced, containing as it does official documents and statements? I affirm that owing to the facilities offered to us by the Government, and by the sugar planters, we were enabled to gain all the information that was necessary, and that we saw and heard quite enough to convince us that, looking at the question in its moral aspect, it was necessary to get rid of the kanaka. The honorable member for Melbourne stated that I had made most damaging statements during this debate, and then he confessed that he had not heard my speech.

Mr Deakin

- The honorable member for Melbourne said that the honorable member had made the most definite statements.

Mr Poynton

- The honorable member for Melbourne said that he had not heard the whole of the honorable member's speech.

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Mr Mauger

- He evidently did not hear the whole of it, because he stated that he did not hear the quotation I read from the Church Commonwealth newspaper, in which the opinions of Canon Pyke upon the moral aspect of the kanaka question were given. With all due respect to the Bishop of Brisbane, I hold that the opinion of a clergyman who has lived among these kanakas for many years is entitled to the greatest respect. I will quote his words -

The writer has lived in North Queensland many years, and has personally studied this question from its alphabet. He affirms deliberately that the Cairns incident is a reduction to the lowest common denominator of the facts concerning every sugar district in the State. The alien races come here from social and moral conditions essentially different from our own. Their customs, their instincts, their laws of thought and life have been developed under circumstances which cannot be compared with those existing here. They cannot understand us, nor readily adapt themselves to our ideas. We have imported into the country thousands of men who know nothing of self-control, whose passions have been undisciplined by social custom, religious authority, or moral consideration, and to whom sexual morality, particularly, is almost unknown. Can the moral life of any community be secure when these immoralities are regarded complacently? Can any consideration justify these things? Whatever the economist may have to say, surely the Church can find only one verdict, a verdict which is summed up in two words - "white Australia."

That is the opinion of a gentleman who has been resident in the district, and who has worked in all parts of it. He knows all about the mission to the kanakas, and the lives the kanakas lead; and surely his statement is worthy of at any rate as much consideration as that of the visiting bishop connected with the Brisbane episcopate. I can assure honorable members that I was speaking within the mark in every statement I made with reference to the morality of the kanaka, and his general environment and conditions of life; and I am quite certain that if honorable members could visit Northern Queensland, they would bear out every statement I have made.

Mr MACDONALD-PATERSON

- It is not congenial to me to have to speak again on this kanaka question after having addressed the House during the debate on the second reading of the Bill. Although I made my remarks as brief as possible on that occasion, and omitted very important matters from my speech, I do not intend to introduce now anything that I then left out. The honorable member for Parramatta closed his speech by stating that the resources of science would doubtless in due time obviate the necessity for employing kanakas, or any other form of black labour. The observation reminded me very much of the speech of the leader of the Opposition at Toowoomba. The right honorable gentleman said that as we had developed a certain breed of men in the different parts of-

Australia - upon the plains and in the bush, in the scrubs and in the forests, and in the Saharas of the west, so should we in due time develop a breed of men who would be fit to work in connexion with the

sugar industry in tropical Australia. I put these two statements in juxtaposition.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- I do not know about the statement of the leader of the Opposition, but the honorable member is misquoting my statement.

Mr MACDONALD-PATERSON

- I have no doubt about the resources of science. I believe that we shall be cutting cane by electricity and trashing by machinery, but we cannot wait for the growth of the special breed of labourers whom it may take any time from fifteen to 40 years to produce in order to carry on the sugar industry. The honorable member for Richmond observed that he did not want to go into the future, but wished to cut off the kanaka at once - to guillotine him. The honorable member reminded me of an old writer who was rather severe on both sexes when he said that man lived upon the future and woman upon the past. The honorable member for Richmond says that he does not want to look to the future, and if that old writer, to whom I refer, were alive, he would probably want to inquire into the sex of the honorable member. I now desire to say a few words that I omitted to say when I spoke on the previous occasion in connexion with this Bill. I charge the men who wish to extinguish the Polynesian labour traffic and to put a stop to the employment of kanakas in Queensland, and in other parts of Australia, with entirely ignoring the most important consideration in connexion with this great question, and that is the large number of white people who will lose their employment and their bread and butter if the kanaka goes.

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Mr JOSEPH COOK

- Has there been any protest from those people ?

Mr. MACDONALD-PATERSON.- Yes; I have no end of protests from them. I charge those honorable members who are trying to do away with the kanaka with conspiring under the cloak of the parrot cry of a white Australia to attack capital, to destroy the credit of the great financial institutions of Queensland, and to obliterate all the results of the wholesome pluck and enterprise of Australians in the tropical parts of Queensland. Where will the labour party be when they once get the Government to fall in with their wishes? They are the tail that is wagging the dog now.

Mr Page

- How about the honorable member, who is trying to wag the Opposition tail ?

Mr McDONALD

- PATERSON. - I defy any honorable member to say that I have made any attempt to influence a single vote, except by the expression of my honest opinion, in the course of these debates, that we should give fair play to the planter and to the kanaka, and to all the whites whose living is involved in this black labour question. I unhesitatingly say that kanaka labour should not be done away with within a shorter time than ten years from the present. But if that proposition is not accepted, an inquiry should be made by a Royal commission, whose time for bringing up a report should, as the honorable member for Parramatta has suggested, be limited. Let us have an inquiry made by honorable members, representing the southern States, who have shown such a want of knowledge upon this subject. Let us dispel the ignorance that is hanging not only over this Chamber, but over the public outside. I am now going to say something which is perfectly premeditated, and that is that if, as the result of such an inquiry as I have indicated, the commission recommend that the kanaka should go within six months, I shall accept their decision and support it most cordially. If the commission come to that conclusion I shall stand by the result of their inquiry, and vote for the deportation of these kanakas to their homes at once. It is, however, unworthy of the first House of this Commonwealth Parliament that they should attack capital under the cover of the cry for a white Australia; that they, should cruelly throttle one of the finest industries in Australia. For years and years, as far back as the sixties, Queensland has been selling her land under the old 1868 Act, and under the Sugar and Coffee Lands Act, and has been encouraging men to come from all parts of Australia and from other parts of the world, and to enter upon the occupation of sugar and coffee growing. Provision was made upon the statute book for facilities to enable these men to take up land; and to bring coolies down to work their plantations. There was no stint of coolies in the first instance, but the kanaka was preferred afterwards because he was nearer home.

So the matter has gone on. The kanaka has never been regarded as a permanent institution, but he has been looked upon as necessary for the purpose of carrying out all the lower classes of work, such as

draining swamps, and that sort of thing, which white men could not do. The honorable member for Maranoa, who has referred to his work in connexion with railway construction in Northern Queensland, must know that we had a large percentage of white men stricken down by fever and other diseases in connexion with the construction of the Rockhampton Western Railway.

Mr Page

- That is quite true.

Mr MACDONALD-PATERSON

- We had to put on extra medical men. The same thing occurred between Dalby and Roma. . The turning up of the soil in that locality in railway making does not conduce to the health of white men.

Mr Page

- They built the railway all the same.

Mr McDONALD

- PATERSON. - They did; and died.

Mr McDonald

-What right have we to murder the kanaka ?

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Mr MACDONALD-PATERSON

- The kanaka is not murdered. It is the change of life which carries him off. The kanaka dies at a higher rate in his own islands than he does upon the mainland. He is delighted to come to the continent, in order that he may acquire the habits of the white man, which he imitates very closely. There is not a kanaka in Queensland who dresses less stylishly than does the honorable member for Maranoa. The kanaka would not accept a cast-off coat from the honorable member for Maranoa, the honorable member for Oxley, or myself. He buys his clothes direct from the shop.- He does not take one penny out of the country. Only the other day I noticed that one steamer leaving for China had a couple of thousand sovereigns on board, whilst another took 1 2,000 sovereigns and a third 6,000. The Minister for Trade and Customs was eloquently persuasive a few days since in impressing on honorable members that it is a desirable thing to retain our money in the country. The kanaka does not take one penny away with him ; whereas the Chinese, Italians, Greeks, Syrians, and Japanese are emptying Australia of sovereigns every month. Why did we not begin at the other end of the stick by tackling the British Cabinet upon our right. to expel Chinese and other undesirable aliens who are filling the avenues of trade and industry within the Commonwealth, and who engage in storekeeping, hawking, and other occupations which the kanaka never touches? Why did we not begin there, and leave the humble kanaka alone for a few years, which is all that the planters and people desire. The Government, it seems to me, have "kow-towed" to the labour party in order to secure their votes upon the Tariff and other questions. This Bill is the reward of the labour party. I feel humiliated that this question is to be voted upon by a congregation of men the majority of whom are utterly ignorant of the subject. Why cannot we postpone this measure for another year ? What harm would transpire as the result of such delay ? Is not capital already dislocated, . and trade not merely dull, but dead, in consequence of this threatened legislation ? I would further point out that in the early days Queensland sold her lands to cash purchasers and to selectors upon terms. Those terms included an understanding that every encouragement should be given for the development of the sugar industry. It was agreed concurrently with the purchase of those lands that the labour traffic necessary to fit them for the cultivation of sugar cane should not be disturbed without reasonable notice. Does this Bill give such notice?

Mr McDonald

- It gives a very liberal ' notice.

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Mr McDONALD

- PATERSON. - The honorable member has been trying to get the Government to fix the notice at six months. He and the members of his party have no sympathy with capital or vested interests or credit. They have no consideration for any of these things. This Bill, I am told, is to be the revenge of a certain section for the shipping strike and the shearers' strike. I could cite quotations from journals whose utterances are not at all fiery in favour of the position which I take up. There is in Queensland a seething discontent bordering upon revolution owing to the determination of the Government to force this Bill

through the House. I do not expect any quarter from the labour party upon this subject. I am pleading tonight, not for the black man, but for that large section of our own people which will be bread less and houseless if this Bill be carried. In this connexion I wish to read an extract from the report of Walker's Limited, one of the largest foundries in Australia. Their works are thoroughly up to date, and they turn out some of the best quartz crushing machinery and locomotives in the world. At the annual meeting of shareholders held on 30th August last, Mr. W. F. Harrington, chairman of directors, said -

If with that boon they could only obtain from the Federal Parliament a fair and reasonable settlement of the labour conditions for the sugar growers, the outlook generally should be good. Shareholders must bear in mind that sugar machinery had always formed a large item in the business of this company. Some few months ago the Johnstone River Central Mill Company Limited accepted the tender of Walker's Limited for the supply and erection of their mill on the Johnstone, subject to the Amended Sugar Works Guarantee Act (passed by Queensland last session) meeting with the approval of the Home Government. The approval, as they were aware, having been withheld, the contract could not be proceeded with, and therefore an expenditure of approximately £50,000 had been lost to the white workers of Queensland, to say nothing of the disappointment and money losses sustained by the cane farmers on the Johnstone River.

He goes on to say that nobody ever dreamed that the kanaka traffic would be discontinued within a less period than ten years. The prospect of this Bill becoming law has led to the cancellation of other contracts. Quite £100,000 worth of white worker's labour has passed away like a mist before the rising sun. What does Dr. Maxwell say? It seems to me that his letter of 5th October has been denied a fair and generous consideration by some honorable members of this Chamber. I will read a portion of it. It is addressed to the Premier of Queensland. Dr. Maxwell says -

Sir, -I have the honour to receive your letter of the 4th instant, requesting my views "upon the Pacific Islanders Bill now before the Federal Parliament " ; and further requesting me to " furnish you with an unreserved opinion upon the great importance of the sugar industry, and upon the probable effect of such a measure, if passed, upon the industry." The text of the Bill was set forth in the official telegram recalling me to Brisbane, and is before me. Concerning the measure, with its present provisions, if it is passed, I am persuaded it will paralyze the industry.

The Prime Minister says that the policy of the Government is revenue with incidental protection, and no destruction of industries. What does Dr. Maxwell say ? -

I am persuaded that it will paralyze the industry.

Personally, I am convinced that if we do not give a longer period the industry will perish instantaneously. Dr. Maxwell, continuing, says -

One effect will be instant. A very large proportion of the cane-growers are depending upon the banks and other financial sources to aid them in producing and harvesting their crops, and in the permanent development of their farms. This aid will stop, and in many cases at once.

I could have told honorable members that before I came back from Brisbane, four or five weeks ago. I found at Bundaberg and elsewhere that the financial nutrition to every one engaged in the sugar industry in Queensland has been frozen. Sugar is not grown south of Bundaberg to any extent. The honorable member for Richmond spoke of the cane plantations upon the New South Wales rivers. But one might just as well compare Gippsland with Wagga Wagga, or Hay or Deniliquin, as compare the southern districts of Queensland and northern New South Wales with Cairns or the Johnstone River.

Mr McDonald

- Dr. Maxwell classes them as the same.

Mr MACDONALD-PATERSON

- He classes them according to the rainfall, and the rainfall is very different in those places. In one district the rainfall was 6£ feet for the year, while in other places the rainfall is only 6£ inches. Dr. Maxwell continued -

My relations with the grower on the one hand, and with money institutions, who seek my opinions, cause me to be painfully well aware of the situation, and of what must happen, if given action is taken. A further effect will be that the industry must stop from want of labour to make and harvest future crops if the time provisions of the Bill are enforced. I never read that letter until this evening ; but my election campaign shows that I considered a period of time was necessary, and that I would be prepared to close the ports

at the end of that time against black labour, just as heartily, enthusiastically, and loyally, as any honorable member.

Mr McCay

- What would happen to the sugar industry then 1

Mr MACDONALD-PATERSON

- If time were given it would enable the sugar growers to look round, and perhaps to get that breed of white labourer to whom the leader of the Opposition has referred. The men who receive £2 10s. or £3 a week on the Clarence River, do not work only eight hours a day. Anyone who has been an employer knows that contract labour means the exertion of muscle and brain to the uttermost. These men are up at daylight, and after a spell in the middle of the day work until they can go on no longer. Dr. Maxwell further on in his report says - Putting the matter briefly, and assuming that it will be enacted that the Pacific Islander must go, then in those districts which may survive the abolition of such labour, ten years is the minimum of time within which it will be found possible to adjust the industry to the proposed new conditions, and provide labour for its continuance.

I never met Dr. Maxwell until the other day, but here on the 5th October he writes words which really formed the text on which I fought the battle of my election. I never wanted to come into this Parliament, but I thought that the experience of a man who had been 39 years in the country would be valuable in many respects. I am a commercial man by training and instinct, and I say unhesitatingly that to move in the direction proposed, without further inquiry, would be destructive of the best interests of Queensland, and would be a blot upon the reputation of the Commonwealth for many a day. The honorable member for Wide Bay charged me with having the temerity to say that he represented only the diggers. Is it possible that that honorable member can think that I did not know intimately that part of the country before he was born, or, at any rate, before he came to this country? I wish the labour party to understand that I represent labour at least as much as they do. Wage-earners sent me into this Parliament, and they were not the white men sparsely distributed over the coastal regions. Is it not the fact that the bulk of the votes received by the honorable members for Maranoa and Kennedy were from wage earners in the west ?

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Mr Page

- That is right.

Mr. MACDONALDPATERSON. There is no more splendid type of men than the men in the west ; but there are very few whites in the tropical jungles of the sugar districts on the east coast. The fight was fought on the old prejudices created when the squatters took blacks by the hundred, or certainly by the score, to the western districts to erect fences, shepherd sheep, and do work which the white men had hitherto done. The honorable member for Maranoa knows that I fought the kanaka question in 1883, and was beaten by a capitalist because I would not allow the kanaka to leave high watermark localities. I merely mention this incidentally, because I do not mind being defeated. I believe in fighting the battle again, if it be a good, wholesome battle. I am sorry to find that it is necessary for me in the Commonwealth Parliament to defend men from the old country, Victoria, and New South Wales, who have put their millions into this industry, which it is proposed to destroy without giving breathing time. As was well said by a newspaper the other day - What are ten years, or twenty years, in the life of a nation? It is possible to kill a tree either quickly or slowly. If we desire to kill a tree slowly we girdle it - which is a little more expensive than ring-barking. When a tree is ring-barked, it seems as though Nature had her revenge by causing a rapid undergrowth, which proves more expensive by far to remove than if the tree had been girdled in the first instance. Under the process of girdling, a tree may take two or three years to die; but, in dying, it does not hurt its neighbour which is required to give shelter to cattle or sheep. I believe trees have much sympathy from each other, and that when one is injudiciously killed, the others die from the change of climate which is caused thereby. There are men in this Chamber who have no more sympathy with the labour, with the solvency and enterprise of those men and those dependent on them, than they have with the granite pillars which grace the entrance to this chamber. Why is it that there is such a dearth of knowledge? Why do men not cultivate a knowledge of commerce, of the laws of the money market, and the operations of banking, which is the blessing of the world ? I remember that when the tutor to the late Duke of Edinburgh wrote a book about money many years ago, I was startled by the statement that there is not enough

money in the world to serve the exchange of Now York. And neither there is ; credit is more precious than gold.

Mr SPEAKER

- I am afraid the honorable member is wandering from the subject.

Mr McDONALD

- PATERSON. - I want to show that gold is labour, and that every sovereign husbanded by the working man, when in the prime of life, is so much labour saved. As to climate, I find that many well-bred horses taken from the Darling Downs die in the north of Queensland ; and will it be said that that is a proper place for white men where good horses cannot live?

Mr Page

- Horses cannot be expected to live for ever.

Mr McDONALD

- PATERSON. But 50 per cent, of the horses die within the first few months.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- It is not a place for anybody to be in. That is what the honorable member's argument means, if it means anything at all.

Mr McDONALD

- PATERSON. - It has been said that the incidence of the Tariff will benefit white sugar-growers ; but here we read that the Bundaberg planters would not be able to do without kanaka labour even with a bonus of 4s. per ton on cane. That is my reply on the question of bonuses. Then there was a meeting of the Toowoomba Chamber of Commerce.

Mr L E GROOM

- How many were present at that meeting? If the honorable member fathers the resolution, he is responsible for it.

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Mr McDONALD

- PATERSON.- I will also read an extract from a speech by the late honoured father of the honorable member. As to the Toowoomba Chamber of Commerce, we read that they arrived at the following resolution : -

That in the opinion of this Chamber, it is undesirable to pass any legislation dealing with the question of kanaka labour until the receipt of report from a Royal commission duly appointed by the Federal Legislature for the purpose of making an exhaustive inquiry into the subject.

I have copies of similar resolutions passed, I think, by all the Chambers of Commerce in Queensland, but I shall not take up the time of the House by reading them. I desire, however, to quote from an article published by the Brisbane Courier of 10th ultimo, in which it says -

It must not surprise the Southern States that there should be extravagant allusions to armed resistance. Reasonable men will of course have nothing to do with such nonsense. But reasonable men may soon have to decide whether the Federal Parliament should not be asked to allow Queensland to leave the Commonwealth, and no less an authority than Mr. Chamberlain has given it as his opinion that such a request under certain conditions ought to be granted.

Here is another newspaper extract relating to Dr. Maxwell and the new sugar duties -

A telegram has been received by the Chief Secretary from Dr. Maxwell, who is now at Bundaberg, under Tuesday's date, as follows : - "Federal Tariff provisions for sugar do not in any way affect any previous statements to you concerning the northern sugar districts - .

Honorable members will see that Dr. Maxwell keeps to the northern districts -

It is neither a Tariff nor a wage question, but one of available labour to keep the mills going.

That is why we ask for extra time. As the hour is getting late I shall conclude with the following quotation from an article on the Kanaka Bill, published in the Brisbane Courier of the 9th ultimo. Referring to the report of the commission on Polynesian labour, of which, I believe, the late honorable member for Darling Downs was chairman, the article sets forth -

Mr. Barton here makes a point of the fact that the two commissioners who signed the majority report did not think that there should be an indefinite continuance of kanaka labour. The late Hon. W. H. Groom, he says, differed from them, and supported the termination of the licences in 1890. It is thus left to be

inferred that Mr. Groom did not recognise the importance of- kanaka labour in the carrying on of the sugar industry. Now, what are the facts ? In his own report (page xlvi.) he says : - "Is Queensland in a position to do without the sugar industry or to confine the cultivation of sugar to white labour exclusively ? " In answer to that question, he says : - " We are bound to look at the surrounding circumstances of the case." I have been endeavouring to elucidate this evening the surrounding circumstances of the case - He refers to the tropical climate in the districts north of Townsville, with their impenetrable jungle, and says that in these districts there is, in a great many instances, a disposition on the part of Europeans to have nothing whatever to do with agriculture until the land had been cleared and made ready for cultivation.

That is the crux of the question. We should keep the kanaka in Queensland to clear the land, and prepare it for the white man. The article continues -

His conclusion is : - " If the question, ' Is Queensland able to do without the sugar industry except on the basis of a white population?' is answered in the affirmative, then undoubtedly a very large portion of the coast districts of the north will not be cultivated, at all events for a long time to come, and from £4,000,000 to £5,000,000 of capital, which has been invested in the industry, will be wiped out of existence, and the whole of the population now dependent on the sugar industry for a livelihood, will, for a time, and until new industries arrive, be thrown out of employment. Can Queensland at the present time afford to do this?"

When this report was written, we had not suffered from the terrible drought which has since come upon New South Wales and Queensland. We had not lost millions and millions of sheep and cattle. Our revenue had not been diminished by the curtailed expenditure of the people. Our railway revenue had not been reduced from a net profit of from 3 per cent, to 3¼ percent. to from 1½ percent, to 1¾ per cent. Yet he asked at that stage " Can Queensland afford it ?" Even at that time we could not, and now when we are on our backs, struggling against the most violent wrench to trade and commerce that has ever occurred in the history of the States, we are to have this proposal thrust upon us, and the people of Queensland are to be called upon to carry a fresh load of disaster. I do not harbour resentment in my heart, even in politics. I could not do it, but I say that if I am not here after the next general election, some other representative of Queensland will be in my place, who will feel it his duty to endeavour to place the load upon the proper back, and secure the suitable punishment of those who are trying at the present time to bring the blackest of disasters upon Queensland. We are asking for a few years time in which to make this change. Dr. Maxwell said that ten years would be necessary. I said so some time before he made that statement. Others say that seven years should be allowed. It is because I have an intimate acquaintance with the ramifications of business, and because of the effects of this change which I can foresee, that I make this appeal. I foresaw the disasters of 1893 two years before any man. in Melbourne foresaw them. If I had not done so I should not have been here now - I should have been in the insolvency court. I do not say this egotistically, but I have a foresight, politically, commercially, and financially, which teaches me to express the conviction that if the Government proceed with this Bill without giving proper time to dispel the ignorance which exists, both inside and outside the House, by means of a commission of inquiry, they will abstain from the performance of a duty which is due to themselves and the country.

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Monaro

Mr CHAPMAN

. - After listening to the impassioned speech made by the honorable and learned member for Brisbane, one would almost imagine that he was in the predicament of a man who had adopted the principle " when you have no case abuse the other side." The honorable member takes an extreme view in debating this question. I regret that we should have such extreme speeches, because many of us are anxious to learn the ins and outs of this question, so that we may give our votes in way that will best safeguard this great industry and yet be in keeping with the election pledges that nearly every honorable member has made upon the well-worn question of the kanaka. The honorable member for Brisbane says that in his opinion the Government have " kow-towed " to the labour party.

Mr McDONALD

-Patekson. - No ; I said that the labour party had " kow-towed " to them.

Mr CHAPMAN

- I have seen very little of it. If the honorable member means by that expression that the Government have knuckled down to the labour party, I should like to point out that, whenever a big question has arisen, the labour party have either been divided, or they have voted in a solid body against the Government. That does not look as if the Government had knuckled down in any way to the labour party. Whatever may be said regarding the Prime Minister, no one can assert honestly that he is not sincere on this question. We know that there is no man in Australia who takes a greater pride in his native land than does the Prime Minister. He has proclaimed from the house-tops, so to speak, that the black man must go. There can be no doubt about that. In proposing the policy which is now before Parliament, he is fulfilling only the pledges which he has made to the people from time to time. But the honorable and learned member for Brisbane goes further. He says that the leader of the Opposition told the people of Queensland that the solution of the trouble was that we should wait until we could breed a type of men capable of performing the arduous work, now discharged by the kanaka.

Mr REID

- Why is the honorable member stone-availing? Let us come to a division.

Mr CHAPMAN

- If my memory serves me rightly, the leader of the Opposition is the only honorable member who has proclaimed himself to be in accord with the proposal made to-night by the honorable member for Oxley. I shall wait with interest the casting of his vote, for I believe that he told the people of Queensland that there must be some further inquiry before he could make up his mind. Consequently I can't quite understand why he takes such an interest in this matter.

Mr R EDWARDS

- I claim the right honorable and learned member's vote. 1

Mr CHAPMAN

- Unless the right honorable and learned member has turned round again, the honorable member for Oxley should have it. Those of us who do not understand this question have to depend to a great extent upon what we are told by honorable members who have had some experience of the industry, and by men who have read what has been written by the great authorities on this subject. I have read with a great deal of pleasure the very able report presented to the Prime Minister by Dr. Maxwell. I have read also some of the able articles written on this subject by men who are deeply interested in it, and some of those published by the newspapers, which take great care to ascertain what are the rights of the question. I have here a paragraph from the Brisbane Courier. I presume that very few honorable members would go so far as to say that the Courier would write of this question in any way other than what it believed to be true, and I confess that paragraphs such as these, as well as Dr. Maxwell's report, influence me in the vote I am about to give. The paragraph is as follows: -

No Government dare re-open the black labour question, even in the attempt to save a doomed industry. The present Government are pledged to the hilt to have no more to do with coloured labour, and political tergiversation of so black a kind as would be implied in the adoption of the recommendation of a majority of the commission is not possible; honour would not permit it, and all but unanimous people would not suffer it. The Queensland sugar industry is not doomed to extinction: the possibilities of science and invention are endless, and if only the planters were manfully to face their losses as other speculators have had to do instead of dolefully appealing for help to the State, they would in time surmount all difficulties, and see a fair good arising out of a past evil.

Mr R EDWARDS

- In what year was that!

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Mr CHAPMAN

- In the year 1889. This statement shows that, in the opinion of the Brisbane Courier, the kanaka traffic ought to have been stopped twelve years ago. I can quite understand the question of the honorable member for Oxley as to the year in which that statement was published, because this expression of opinion, taken in conjunction with others which have been given by the Brisbane Courier, shows what we have to face in connexion with this question. The whole cry is "Give us time." The honorable and learned member for Brisbane asks for a year, but what is the use of waiting a year to settle this question?

Mr R EDWARDS

- AYe do not want a year - six months would be sufficient.

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Mr CHAPMAN

- If we wait a year, or even six months, the cry will still be " Give us time." The honorable and learned member for Brisbane said that if the kanakas were abolished the capitalists would be ruined and financial institutions would be broken down. We always hear that cry whenever a monopoly is being attacked, but very few men in this House will dare to resist the mandate of the people at the last election that the kanaka must go. We are told that it is not the wish of Queensland that the kanaka should go. Probably the honorable and learned member for Brisbane knows better than I do what the public sentiment is in Queensland, but I cannot ignore the result of the election for Darling Downs, when Mr. Bell, who had the full force of the Queensland Government behind him in opposition to the Bill now before us, was defeated by a large majority by the honorable member now sitting for that electorate. The only conclusion I can draw from this and other circumstances is that Queensland has spoken most emphatically on this question, and has declared that the kanaka must go. But for the strong evidence I have in front of me, I should hesitate, after the terrible pictures painted by the honorable member for Oxley and the honorable member for Brisbane, to take any extreme course, because I recognise that in great matters of this kind it is sometimes well to make haste slowly. On the other hand, this is not altogether a Queensland matter, but is one which affects men in all the other States of Australia, and if there is one question upon which we should rise above provincial considerations, it is that of the purity of the race. These kanakas are a menace to the people of Australia., and as it has been pretty clearly proved that the white man can do the plantation work, coloured labour should be dispensed with. The one consideration underlying the whole question is that of pounds, shillings, and pence. The white man will not work for the same wages as the black man, and as a consequence the white man has gone without work, and all the employment has been given to the black man. I have had a little experience with labourers, and I have never seen a black man who could work better than a white man. All the white man requires is to be paid for his labour, and he can do anything, and it is all moonshine to say that we cannot cope with this plantation labour question until a different type of man can be bred for the work. I think that very fair compensation will be afforded to the men who have invested their money in this industry, by the proposals of the Government in connexion with the sugar duty. Honorable members would not so calmly have accepted the proposal to impose a high duty on sugar if it had not been for their desire to deal considerately with the sugar planters. We realize that some hardship must be inflicted upon the planters, and we are desirous of offering them fair' and generous consideration, so as to soften the blow to them as far as possible. I feel that the hardships will only be temporary, and that the change now contemplated will not be attended with any of the dire results indicated by the honorable member for Brisbane. From what I have seen on the northern rivers, I feel sure that there is plenty of country there upon which sugar can be cultivated by means of white labour, and there is no necessity to despair as to the future of the sugar industry. I am quite sure it will prosper and grow under the system of employing white labour, and I cannot see why there should be any further delay in arriving at a settlement of the question. The honorable member for Brisbane said that very few honorable members knew anything about this question, and, if that be true, I ask what would be the use of referring this matter to a select committee composed of honorable members who are uninformed. It is preferable to thresh the whole matter out in the House, so that we may have the benefit of the united wisdom of the representatives of the people here, and do our best in the interests of those who have their money invested in the industry, and at the same time meet the demand of the people for a white Australia. It has been stated that there is a strong feeling of bitterness in Queensland in connexion with this matter, and that if Queensland had known what this Government were going to propose, they would not have joined the Federation. These statements and the talk about sending a delegation to the home Government are all moonshine. It is idle to say that the majority of the people in Queensland are in favour of retaining the kanaka, and it is also ridiculous to pretend that the home Government is in any better position to deal with the kanaka question than is this Commonwealth Parliament. I have no hesitation as to the way in which I shall vote upon this subject. I listened with care and with pleasure to the speeches of the honorable member for Oxley and the honorable member for Brisbane, but I would point out to them that they are fighting for a dying cause, for something which the people of Australia have said must go.

The people may not have considered the cost, but it is for us to do that. Whatever the cost, however, the people have decided that the kanaka must go. If we are to retain the sugar industry, it must be carried on by means of white labour. If it came to a question of having to decide between retaining the kanaka and losing the sugar industry, I am quite sure that the large majority of the people would be in favour of sweeping the industry out of existence rather than of prolonging it by means of black labour.

Mr THOMSON

- I have waited until this stage of the debate before speaking, as I recognised that it would be only right to hear what the representatives of Queensland had to say before expressing any opinion. I must say that owing to lack of information on the whole subject of black labour I was almost inclined to vote for the motion of the honorable member for Oxley.

Mr PAGE

- We expected that.

Mr THOMSON

- The honorable member may expect what he likes, but I will not do as some honorable members have done, and vote against ray stated convictions.

Mr Page

- We are not ashamed of anything we have done.

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Mr THOMSON

- No, perhaps not, because it takes so much to make some people ashamed. When the honorable member makes a remark that is not called for, he must expect to be paid back in his own coin. For the information of honorable members - excluding the honorable member for Maranoa, who possibly does not desire to be enlightened - I might say that I have all along had a strong objection to kanaka labour in Queensland. I hold the same opinion to-day - that this labour, apart from the question of black labour generally, ought to be abandoned, and as far as I am concerned, I should prefer to see it abandoned at a date even earlier than is provided for in the measure before us. I have had some opportunities of knowing the injury that is being done to the island populations by this traffic, and I hold that if we are decimating the islands, or hastening in any way the natural reduction of their populations, we are incurring a responsibility which the profits that may be made in any industry will not justify us in incurring. Under these circumstances, I have no doubt whatever as to how I should vote on the kanaka question pure and simple, but there are considerations beyond that, as the representatives of Queensland have admitted. I think that the Government have not taken sufficient pains to lay before us information such as they ought to have obtained ; firstly, as to whether white men can carry on tropical agriculture ; secondly, whether, if they can, they will do it; and thirdly, whether, if they can and will do it, they ought to be allowed to do it. The reason I raise the question as to whether white men ought to be allowed to do this work, is this : We know that the white men who have been engaged in plantation work in the Southern States of the American Union and in other hot parts of the world have deteriorated physically and mentally. Work in the sugar plantations has produced people whom we do not wish to see produced in this continent. Whilst we naturally object to the reduction of the standard of our civilization by an inter mixture with the coloured races, we have also reason to object strongly to the reduction of their physical standard by allowing them to perform work in tropical latitudes to which they may not be equal. If it can be shown that white men can do this work without deterioration, and that they are willing to do it, we shall have every reason for prohibiting the introduction of any class of coloured labour into our northern areas. But if it can be shown that white men are not able or willing to undertake this work, or that they should not be allowed to do it, the further question arises - is there good reason for not admitting any coloured labour at all on conditions of temporary employment and return, under the control of the Government? The Government being responsible for the interests of the whole of the continent, and for the future policy of the Commonwealth, and having been asked to take over a large area containing many millions of acres of tropical land, should have given firm and decided answers to these questions. Holding the views which I had previously expressed, I could well have voted against the motion, and have taken the more popular course without further troubling the House on this matter. But I have no desire to conceal my views in any way, and therefore I have taken this opportunity to place them before honorable members. If this had been the only opportunity for getting the question of coloured labour in the north definitely settled, and of conceding to

the Queensland Government what it asks, namely, inquiry, I might have been inclined to vote with the honorable member for Oxley. This Bill provides for the cessation of a traffic which, under no conditions, if my opinion of the wrong done is correct, ought to be continued. I do not say that the wrong has been done in Queensland. I am quite willing to accept the assurance that the traffic is properly regulated there, but there is a wrong being done to the inhabitants of the South Sea Islands. We are affecting their lives, disturbing the natural balance, interfering with their customs and habits, and giving them nothing steady or permanent in return. We are sending back to these islands disease which, in many cases, is decimating the population. No country, and especially no British country, which has set for itself a high standard in dealing with these semi-civilized nations, has a right to continue that traffic for the mere purpose of gain. But, as I have already said, there may be, even though this measure passes, if Queensland desires it, an opportunity for full inquiry into the whole question. That is to say, a commission such as the honorable member for Oxley wishes, could ascertain whether, and in what way, our tropical agricultural areas may be used, and could do so in the light of all the views of our people, of their determination that there shall be no deterioration in our white population, of their desire to exclude any admixture, and to prevent the reduction of our white labourers to the level of the dark races. Such an inquiry could be made and a decision arrived at by this House when the report came before it. That can be done independently of the kanaka question altogether.

Mr Fisher

- It would take three years.

Mr THOMSON

- However long it might take, it could be done. I should vote for such a proposal, but I shall vote against this motion for the reason that it is purely a kanaka question, and I should not be justified in the light of my own knowledge in supporting a continuance of that traffic.

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Minister for External Affairs

Mr BARTON

. - I do not wish to say more than one or two words. I have not been able to discover that the necessity which the mover of this motion has put forward for further inquiry, really exists. My belief is that there is before this Parliament a more complete body of facts than has ever been before the Parliament of Queensland when it has been asked to deal with this question. In addition to all that has been before that Parliament, a report has been obtained, since it legislated, from the expert employed by the Government of that State, Dr. Maxwell - a man of very great ability and research. He has also made a report at our special instance, and with the leave of the Government in whose employ he is. Opinions will, and must, differ on such a subject as this. I have formed my own opinion, with an anxious desire to be just and fair. I give those who differ from me credit for the same desire, and for the same anxious eagerness not to do anything that is wrong for want of the necessary knowledge. I have tried to make myself possessed of that necessary knowledge. It is utterly untrue, as suggested in a section of the press, that at the recent Premiers' Conference I professed to know all that was to be known upon the subject. All that I said at any stage of the proceedings was that there was a large body of information before this Parliament, and a larger body than, was ever before any other Parliament that had to deal with the question. I was never so presumptuous as to say that I possess any special knowledge on the subject. I cannot admit the claim that, before legislating upon great questions like this, it is an absolute necessity that every honorable member should visit the district or State concerned. If that were admitted, legislation would be impossible, and Parliament would become a mockery. That is not the spirit in which to approach this subject. It is not right to say that legislation should not take place until Parliament, in the personnel of its members, has visited every district concerned, or, on the other hand, to urge, where large bodies of facts have been presented, where protests have been made, and where representations upon both sides have been frequent and continuous, that greater knowledge can be obtained on the question, without attempting to offer some proof in support of this contention. We have no proof in that direction. It seems to me, therefore, that I am justified in asking the House to vote against this motion.

Question resolved in the negative.

In Committee :

Clause1 (Short title).

Progress reported.

POST AND TELEGRAPH BILL

Mr. SPEAKER reported the receipt of the following message -

The Senate acquaints the House of Representatives that it doth not insist on its amendments to amendments Nos. 16, 19, and 20 of the House of Representatives to which the House of Representatives has disagreed, and does not insist on its disagreement to amendment No. 6 of the House of Representatives upon which the House of Representatives insists, in the Post and Tele-' graph Bill.

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23:12:00

House adjourned at 11.12 p.m.