J. R. KEMP, THE "GRAND POOH-BAH":
A STUDY OF TECHNOCRACY AND STATE
DEVELOPMENT IN QUEENSLAND, 1920 - 1955

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Statement of Originality

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original, except as acknowledged in the text. The material has not been submitted in whole or in part for a degree at this or any other University.

Kay Teresa Cohen
March, 2002
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ABSTRACT

The principal aim of this thesis is to explain the rise of civil engineer, J. R. Kemp, to a position of unrivalled administrative power and his role in the subsequent characterisation of Queensland as 'the state of development'. Kemp was appointed head of Queensland's first Main Roads authority and was the first Co-Ordinator-General of Public Works in the history of Western democracies. He also had administrative responsibility for the Bureau of Industry's three major Depression-era projects, Brisbane's Story Bridge, the Somerset Dam and the new University of Queensland at St. Lucia. His supervision as Deputy-Director of the Allied Works Council of the Allied Forces defence works program in Queensland during World War Two confirmed his national reputation as an effective administrator while, in the post-war period, he devoted all his energies to the realisation of his controversial vision for central and north Queensland's economic growth through large-scale infrastructure development. The most notable projects were the restructuring of port facilities, development of the central Queensland coalfields, and the Tully and Burdekin water conservation, irrigation and hydro-electricity schemes.

Kemp conforms to the theoretical model of a technocrat whose capacity to acquire and exercise administrative power is a function of a pro-development political climate. He served five Labor premiers, two of whom, William Forgan Smith and Edward Hanlon, strongly endorsed an overall policy of state development with its concomitant emphasis on achieving efficiency through forward planning and co-ordination. I argue that, rather than being the recipient of the benefits of an existing situation, Kemp played a determining role in the evolution of the political
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INTRODUCTION

In describing J. R. Kemp as “the grand pooh-bah”, J. M. Powell evoked the image of an unassailably powerful public official who had forged his own administrative “empire”. In Queensland Parliament, Kemp was variously described as the Government’s chief technical adviser, “one of the best public servants in Australia”, a “superman” who held more positions than any other public official in Queensland, and a “Hitler” on whom the government conferred “despotic” powers embodying “the principles of fascism.” A civil engineer, John Robert Kemp was widely regarded as the most influential official in Queensland government administration in the years from his appointment in 1939 as Co-ordinator-General of Public Works (Co-Ordinator-General) until his retirement in 1954. Although he was respected both personally and professionally, and never lacked supporters willing to defend him in public debates, his role in government administration was the subject of on-going controversy. This was due in large part to the wide-ranging decision-making powers delegated to him and the administrative independence they allowed, the government’s acknowledgement of its dependence on him in planning and co-ordinating state public works development, and the “empire” of influence he consequently assembled.

3 Unless otherwise stated, all following references to engineers are to civil engineers.
The principal aims of this dissertation are to explain why and how Kemp achieved his position of administrative power and to assess the extent of his influence on the direction of public works development in Queensland. In 1932, the Labor Government or, more particularly, the Premier, William Forgan Smith, had announced the intention to pursue for the first time a policy of planning centrally-controlled public works of a permanent nature. Its intended aim was to counter high unemployment and to secure the livelihood of workers and small producers in the State’s primary industries. The decision, initially manifested in the creation of the Bureau of Industry, signaled a political commitment to large-scale infrastructure development programmes which was not readily accepted either by the Labor Party and its constituents or by senior departmental officials. Endorsed by strong Labor leaders, it endured through successive governments and laid the foundation for the characterisation of Queensland as “the state of development” and its politics as “the politics of development”.

Much of the analysis covering this period is concerned with charting cause and effect, or inputs and outcomes, within a strictly political discourse. The role of public officials in particular policy areas has tended to be equated with the advisory, instrumental role assigned to them by the Westminster model of responsible government and thus undervalued or ignored. One exception was the Public Service Commissioner, J. D. Story, whose advice the government of the day heeded in matters extending well beyond his principal responsibility for public service industrial matters. Another was economist, Colin Clark, who is seen as the dominant official of this period and whose influence on the overall direction of Queensland

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4 Colin Hughes, “Queensland” in John Rorke (ed.) Politics at State Level – Australia, Sydney: Department Adult Education, University of Sydney, no date (n.d.), p.44.
economic policy has been accorded political significance.\(^5\) On the face of it, Kemp was unexceptional. He was a man for the times, one of the many administrators with technical expertise whose professional goals were in step with those of development-oriented governments and who were given responsibility for the efficient delivery of specific infrastructure projects. Yet he was exceptional in that none of his professional colleagues in Queensland achieved anything approaching Kemp’s level of administrative power. Arguably, the range and comprehensive nature of his powers and responsibilities were not matched by other well-known engineer-administrators influential in aspects of state development, such as John Monash in Victoria, Allan Knight in Tasmania and R. J. Dumas in Western Australia.\(^6\)

Within Queensland, not only was Kemp’s singularly powerful role acknowledged, if not always endorsed, by his contemporaries but his influence on the State’s infrastructure development has also endured. He set the precedent for the dominance of the engineer-administrator in this field and the continuing identification of the Co-Ordinator-General as “the most powerful public servant” in Queensland well into the 1980s,\(^7\) as well as instituting public works’ planning and construction processes that

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are still being followed today. Yet, for all that, Kemp is a largely forgotten figure and even studies of Queensland development politics that highlight the role of public officials ignore him or refer only to his functional responsibilities.

Kemp arrived in Queensland in 1920 to take up an appointment as head of the newly-created Main Roads Board, the State’s first centralised roads authority. Trained as a civil engineer in Victoria, he had held positions in government departments and with Karkarooc Shire in the Mallee district, before being promoted to senior engineer with the Country Roads Board shortly before he moved to Queensland. The Main Roads Board was created in response to pressure from Ministers representing northern Queensland electorates seeking improved transport access to ensure the economic survival of new agricultural settlements being opened up in their region. Main roads, defined as passing through two or more local authority areas, were not intended to challenge railways as the prime mode of bulk transport facilities and, as he was given little in the way of staff, funding and political support, Kemp struggled to form an effective organisation. He travelled constantly throughout the state, slowly achieving a cooperative relationship with local authority representatives who were naturally suspicious of any government authority with the capacity to undermine local control over works programmes. Consolidating his position with his appointment as sole Main Roads Commissioner in 1925, Kemp built up a cohesive, efficient organisation that was useful to the Government as a non-political, reliable channel for allocating

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8 A topical example is the contract for construction of the Brisbane River footbridge. Under a process introduced in 1939, the contractor is “overseen by the Department of Main Roads and is answerable to the Co-Ordinator-General”. *Courier-Mail*, 2.6.2001.

channel for allocating local works funding and boosting local employment on a state­
wide basis. By the end of the 1920s, Main Roads had become so effective in carrying
out its charter that it began to challenge the status of railways as the agent of state
development through land settlement. As Main Roads Commissioner, Kemp was
appointed to the newly-created State Transport Board in 1931. Established by the
Moore Country-Progressive-National Government as a body to advise on the co­
ordination of state transport, it was accompanied by the transfer of Main Roads from
Public Lands to Transport, in an attempt to control the expansion of Main Roads’
influence.

At the onset of the 1930s economic Depression era, Kemp was appointed to the State
Employment Council which the Moore Government established to generate
employment-creating public and private works projects. After Labor was returned to
government in 1932, it established the Bureau of Industry which retained the same
committee structure and carried on the Council’s work on a more comprehensive
scale. Kemp was appointed Chairman of the Bureau’s Roads, Mining and General
Works Committee and later the three Works Boards responsible for the construction
of the Story Bridge, the Somerset Dam and the new University of Queensland at St.
Lucia, the major large-scale employment projects of the Depression era. The benefits
of Kemp’s close links with local government were acknowledged with his
appointment to chair the Royal Commission on Electricity Supply which, in its 1936
report, recommended the centralisation of electricity generation and supply under a

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10 For a short biography, see Kay Cohen “Sir John Kemp”, in John Ritchie, (general editor),
(eds.), Labor in Power: The Labor Party and Governments in Queensland 1915-57, St. Lucia:
UQP, 1980, p.86.
new statutory authority, the Queensland Electricity Commission. The following year, he was a member of the Royal Commission on Transport. In January 1939, on his return from an overseas tour during which he inspected large-scale infrastructure development schemes in Europe and North America and also investigated the coordination of public works in Sweden and Germany, he accepted the Premier's offer of an additional appointment as Co-ordinator-General of Public Works, the first administrative position of its kind in Western democracies. Under the enabling legislation, powers were delegated to the Co-ordinator-General to co-ordinate and make recommendations for the approval of all public works proposals within an overall co-ordinated plan of works. After being approved by Treasury and the Executive, a step that was reduced to little more than a formality within a few years, the co-ordinated plan was presented to the Australian Loan Council for inclusion in the determination of annual loan funding allocations to the Commonwealth and the States. Thus Kemp joined the Under-Secretary, Treasury, in accompanying the Premier to Loan Council meetings where his bureaucratic networking and technical soundness proved valuable in the bargaining process, while the presentation of a co-ordinated plan of public works denoted administrative efficiency and tended to increase the prospects of a more favorable outcome for Queensland.

As Main Roads Commissioner, Kemp made decisions, subject in principle to Ministerial approval, on main roads' routes, variations in financial agreements with local authorities and numerous transport vehicle regulations. Together with the Co-Ordinator-General's delegated powers, they comprised an unprecedented level of powers and responsibilities to be vested in one official.Both government and

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12 Thomis, op.cit.
opposition MLAs\textsuperscript{13} soon recognised the advantages of a rational, technical, and thus demonstrably non-political, approach to public works' approvals. The delegations of their constituents who came to Brisbane to petition for basic public works for their local areas realised that gaining the approval of the Co-Ordinator-General was as essential as gaining ministerial approval. The positive relationship Kemp had achieved with the majority of local authority representatives through his Main Roads' work also defused the perceived threat to their autonomy posed by the Co-Ordinator-General's so-called "coercive powers", the most contentious of which was the power to compel local authorities to undertake approved works.

With the outbreak of World War Two, Kemp provided the technical and administrative backing for the Premier's unsuccessful campaign for a share of Commonwealth defence works' funding and, in 1942, was appointed chairman of the committee appointed to consolidate the State's shipbuilding industry. In May that year the Commonwealth set up the Allied Works Council under National Director E. G. Theodore. Kemp was appointed the Council's Deputy Director in Queensland with responsibility for co-ordinating and implementing the northern defence works programme. He had the Government's confidence and, as head of the Main Roads Commission (MRC), the only organisation in Queensland with the structure and capability to initiate and supervise a state-wide works programme, as well as the official who controlled all information on the State's public works position, he was well-qualified for the appointment. The value of Queensland's co-ordination initiative in addressing the problems of organising a national defence works programme was acknowledged with the appointment of a National Works Co-ordinator to the Loan Council and similar appointments by State governments.

\textsuperscript{13} Members of the Legislative Assembly.
The shift of the Allied war effort in the Pacific to Queensland in 1943 called for the immediate construction of defence works on an unprecedented scale. Defence and southern state public works authorities were publicly skeptical about Queensland’s capacity to carry out the task but the programme was implemented in record time and to the satisfaction of the Allied Forces’ command. The administrative and technical skills Kemp displayed in fulfilling his wartime responsibilities were widely acknowledged as the critical factor in the success of Queensland’s defence construction programme. By 1943, planning for post-war reconstruction had become an important item on the national political agenda. In Queensland, Labor created the Bureau of Investigation of Land and Water Resources to further its decision to support state development through regional water conservation, irrigation and hydro-electricity schemes. The implementation of these schemes became one of the most controversial and divisive issues of the post-war period, wherein politicians and specialist officials from the three levels of government vigorously contested the merits of every proposal put forward. Kemp was appointed chairman of the Bureau rather than an irrigation and water supply specialist. Seconding specialist advisers from government and industry agencies and using Main Roads staff and resources, he initiated an on-going series of surveys and reports which laid the foundation for the majority of future infrastructure projects in this field. The Bureau provided the means by which Kemp advanced his own preference for large-scale water conservation, irrigation and hydro-electricity projects in Central and North Queensland. In this, he was strenuously but unsuccessfully opposed by Colin Clark, the Government’s chief economic adviser, who advocated what he considered to be

the more economically viable and popularly acceptable option of a widely-dispersed programme of small-scale projects.\textsuperscript{15}

Under the auspices of Prime Minister Ben Chifley, the Northern Australian Development Committee was established in 1944 to investigate proposals for post-war infrastructure development in northern Australia. Kemp was one of two Queensland members of the Committee's technical sub-committee with responsibility for reporting on Queensland proposals to be considered for inclusion in a post-war northern development plan. Queensland alone retained the mechanism of public works co-ordination in the post-war period and, as Co-Ordinator-General, Kemp continued to be the Government's principal liaison with the National Works Council in the on-going battle to reinstate State public works priorities for loan funding allocations. As a member of the Secondary Industries Committee which in 1946 produced a report judged to be "the most comprehensive attempt to consider the role and prospects of manufacturing in Queensland\textsuperscript{16} and as chairman of a broad range of investigative committees and advisory boards, he was also the Government's adviser on private sector proposals for joint venture resources and industrial development schemes.

The Co-ordinator-General was made a construction authority early in World War Two and, in the post-war period, took over responsibility from the Bureau of Industry for the uncompleted Works Boards' projects. The organisation not only


\textsuperscript{16} Kenneth Wiltshire, "Manufacturing" in Murphy, et al., 1980, \textit{op. cit.}, p.277.
became the State's dominant construction authority but secured the best of its civil
design and construction engineers. The resentment expressed by other construction
authorities at Kemp's control of the available engineering expertise under Main
Roads and the Co-Ordinator-General was just one of the reasons for the spate of
public attacks that followed against the Co-Ordinator-General and, for the first time,
against Kemp personally. Kemp retained the confidence of Premier Hanlon who
successfully defended his Government's decision to continue its high level of
reliance on one official. In the aftermath, Kemp survived a challenge to his
domination of irrigation and water supply development but, in 1949, relinquished his
appointment as Main Roads Commissioner. Soon afterwards, Main Roads was
designated a public service department while Kemp took on another administrative
responsibility as Chairman of the newly-created Burdekin River Authority. From this
position, he used the resources of Main Roads and the Co-Ordinator-General, and
personally lobbied for the support of influential men across Australia, to advance his
visionary plan for North Queensland development. As he approached the statutory
retirement age and Vincent Gair succeeded Hanlon as Premier, Kemp's influence
with the Premier of the day diminished. In 1949 he had been appointed Deputy-
Chairman of the Queensland-British Food Corporation with responsibility for
implementing the Peak Downs "food-for-Britain" scheme. By 1954, he had retired
from all his official positions, but the Gair government subsequently appointed him
to oversee the scheme's liquidation, a task he completed shortly before his death in
February 1955.

Kemp had a life-long commitment to raising professional engineering standards. A
foundation member of the Institution of Engineers, Australia (IEAust), he served as
President in 1931, having been President of the Queensland Division in 1927.
Although he was not regarded as an "engineer's engineer", his expertise in the science of road construction was widely recognised. In 1929, he succeeded in having established in Queensland, Australia's first Professional Engineers' Registration Board, and encouraged local authorities to appoint qualified engineers to oversee their public works programmes. A Government representative on the University of Queensland Senate, he liaised with the Engineering faculty on curriculum content and, through his organisations, was a major employer of engineering trainees and graduates. His enduring contribution to Queensland engineering lay in the opportunities his support for large-scale infrastructure projects provided to demonstrate that Queensland's engineering expertise was equal to the best in Australia.

There are innumerable Australian and international studies on power and its distribution in the politics-administration relationship. The construction of theories for its definition and analysis can have any number of starting points and utilise widely differing methodologies. However, there are as many critics as there are theories, their verdict being that particular theories fail to address the complexities of the concept and resist comprehensive application to actual situations. One outcome of particular relevance to specialist administrators in the Australian context has been to invalidate the politics-administration dichotomy as a means of controlling potential political influence or actions on the part of senior officials. The notion is predicated on the neutral, instrumental role conventionally assigned to them under the 'Westminster' model of responsible government, but there is clear evidence that governments do give them legitimate decision-making power in certain circumstances, while heads of semi-government authorities often hold statutory

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17 Personal interview, Ben Russo, formerly design engineer, Co-Ordinator-General, 31.3.2000.
powers in their own right. Moreover, the assertion that policy advice is value-neutral has been labelled a myth.\(^{18}\) Given the difficulties of using outcomes to prove the level of individual decision-making power, some analysts have broadened their approach to examine a range of elements as variables capable of influencing how and why administrators accumulate and exercise power. There is a particular emphasis on the administrator’s personal attributes and the societal and professional basis of the values he brings to the administrative process.\(^{19}\) With reference to technical specialists, attention is also paid to their identification with vocational goals and the effect of the formation of elite professional corps within an administration.

This type of study has been used in the United States to formulate prescriptive models of bureaucratic decision-making while, in Australia, the focus on the administrator as a value-oriented individual has also been directed towards substantiating the concept of administrative style. A precise definition having proved elusive, writers have been reluctant to assess an administrator’s relationship to power in terms of administrative style. Biography has been suggested as an appropriate analytical vehicle and Serle’s study of Victorian engineer-administrator, John Monash, is cited as a successful example of its use.\(^{20}\) Its success as biography owed

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much to the author’s access to the comprehensive private records Monash maintained, a practice that Kemp and many other specialist administrators in Australia did not emulate. In any event, the aims of the dissertation take it outside the realm of biography, although its analysis of Kemp’s career in terms of potentially influential elements may have some resonance with an assessment of administrative style.

Some studies in the body of literature on specialist administrators suggest that engineer-administrators have a relationship to decision-making power that becomes comprehensible through the identification of common elements of influence. I argue that, while this approach supplies a framework for explaining Kemp’s position, it does not adequately explain the unique concentration of responsibilities and powers vested in him and the associated outcomes. Being necessarily framed in general terms, it is also unable to accommodate the effects of local personality and environmental factors. The dissertation tests this argument in charting Kemp’s progression to a position of power, the exercise of his administrative power and the outcomes in terms of influencing the direction of Queensland public works’ development. To expand on the previous introductory discussion, it begins with an overview of the literature on specialist administrators with particular reference to the profession of engineers and its influential place in government administration. The most comprehensive analyses of professionals in government service are found in the literature relating to France and the United States, while many of the reference texts published before the 1980s were selected in order to reflect more closely the particular theoretical orientation of the period under review. To retain some thematic clarity in dealing with its complexities, the investigation and analysis of Kemp’s rise to a position of administrative power are separated into chronological periods loosely
defined by additions and changes to his functional responsibilities and organisation bases.

This is the first study of Kemp's career in its entirety. Evan Richard, an engineer with the Stanley River Works Board who also worked on the wartime construction of Cairncross Dock, intended to write Kemp's biography but died before he could make a start on it. The few other studies to examine his administrative role deal with one particular area of his responsibilities. Minnery's 1988 thesis makes reference to Kemp as one of the four men to hold the appointment from 1939 to 1988 in examining the concepts of co-ordination and their application to Queensland's Co-Ordinator-General. Minnery offers some constructive insights into the exercise of the Co-Ordinator-General's delegated powers and its implications for administrative dominance, and determines that personality was also important in explaining Kemp's influence. A. J. Wheeler presents a more detailed study of Kemp in the context of his relationship as Co-Ordinator-General with the Australian Loan Council. Drawing on departmental sources, he presents a complimentary picture of the complexities of Kemp's responsibilities, his approach to handling them and the Government's reliance on him to bring about the efficient implementation of public works through co-ordination. Bruce Davidson and J. M. Powell are critical of Kemp's role in irrigation and water supply development and his support for the mega-infrastructure schemes proposed for North Queensland. Powell was outraged at the coercive

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23 A. J. Wheeler, "To Be a Superman: Intergovernmental Relations respecting Queensland Local Bodies and Loan Works Coordination, 1938-45" Master Urban Studies, (Government Option), University of Queensland, 1974.
authority Kemp employed to block the Department of Irrigation and Water Supply and its engineers from what he considered was their right to control water resources administration. His account of the post-war interdepartmental struggle provides a useful counter to uncritical assessments of the means Kemp employed to hold his position of power. Elsewhere Kemp is given space in a range of publications on Queensland’s politics and history, either in the form of a biographical summary or with reference to the exercise of his powers as Main Roads Commissioner and Co-Ordinator-General. Histories of local authorities acknowledge Kemp, usually seeing him as synonymous with the bureaucratic processes involved in advancing local works programmes but occasionally noting his assistance with particular development goals. Apart from confirming the extensive nature of his contact with local government, business and producer representatives throughout Queensland, they are useful for illustrating the organisational and operational procedures he instituted.

By contrast, there is a wealth of primary source material on which to draw. It includes parliamentary debates, numerous commissioned reports, annual reports and departmental files of relevant authorities at three levels of government, the Main Roads oral history series, and the Evan Richard collection. I also interviewed engineers formerly from Main Roads and the Co-Ordinator-General who knew Kemp towards the end of his administrative career. Kemp apparently did not maintain a collection of private papers which might have provided information on his personal attitudes and ambitions. However, if the anecdotal evidence that his work


was his life is accepted, it is possible to build up some sense of the individual from official sources. Kemp had the freedom accorded to heads of semi-independent authorities to express his opinions on particular issues in annual and other reports. Additional information came from personal correspondence scattered through departmental files, comments he made as file margin notes and the themes of talks he gave on radio and to select groups. Newspapers were helpful in identifying the events and issues deemed to be of public importance and supplying more information on Kemp’s administrative viewpoint. Their use also raised interesting questions about the ministerial-official relationship and the assumption of shared goals between specialist administrators and political leaders. Queensland’s political leaders knew the value of newspapers as a vehicle for promoting the “government line” in potentially sensitive policy areas and turning public works funding announcements to their electoral advantage. As senior technical adviser, Kemp drafted the press releases and it was in this capacity that he also built up a high public profile. In the reporting of government announcements of public works and development decisions, he was routinely cast as the impartial, technical assessor. Ministers clearly made use of his comments in this role to defuse any ensuing controversy over the decisions, but Kemp was also adept at utilising newspaper coverage to promote his own goals.

That so much archival material has been preserved says a great deal about the ethos of the organisations Kemp instituted. However, its comprehensive nature created a problem in the significant investment of time needed to complete the background research and organise the results. Fulfilling the aims of the dissertation determined the selection of reference material and the emphasis on certain sections in preference
to others. As a result, some issues arising from Kemp’s operational activities and aspects of Queensland’s public works environment have not been examined or have rated only a brief mention. Where possible, reference is made to existing publications to supply the contextual background of political events and issues.

The persistently negative image of State development which has extended to the work of Main Roads and the Co-Ordinator-General, and the engineer-administrators associated with them, may account for the failure of serious studies of Queensland to give proper weight to their role in what was entailed in the governing of Queensland during this period. The importance of the specialist administrator was brought home to me initially when I researched the construction of the Mount Isa to Camooweal road in World War Two. Having already decided to upgrade the central Australian supply line from Adelaide through Alice Springs to Darwin, Commonwealth defence authorities refused to consider Queensland’s proposal to link Townsville with Tennant Creek by building a road west from the Mount Isa rail terminus. Kemp persuaded the Queensland Government to finance a start on the road while he lobbied in Melbourne and Canberra for defence works funds to continue. Even E. G. Theodore, (a former Queensland Premier) then Director of the Allied Works Council, initially turned him down. The Allied Forces convoys which were using the road even as it was being constructed demonstrated its value as a supply line but it was not until the U. S. Army Command backed the project that the Australian defence authorities agreed to fund the road’s completion. The legacy of Kemp’s persistence, successful co-ordination of an extraordinary logistical exercise and use of the

wartime situation to Queensland ends, was a bitumen road servicing a remote region of the State and built principally at Commonwealth expense.

In explaining Kemp's influential position, this study attempts to convey an understanding of the dynamics of the administrative process and the politics-administration relationship in the context of Queensland's public works and infrastructure development. As the influence of engineer-administrators in this area of state government policy is still a controversial issue, it also makes a case for the adoption of a broader analytical perspective which routinely acknowledges senior public officials and their role in Queensland's governance.
ENGINEER-ADMINISTRATORS AND TECHNOCRATIC POWER

Any attempt to explain John Kemp’s position as Queensland’s most powerful government official in the 1940s and early 1950s needs to include some review of the concept of power and its distribution in a democratic society. In referring to the vast body of available work on this topic, the dissertation runs the risk of becoming immersed in the complexities and contradictions of the debate on power. The debate itself then becomes the subject, instead of providing the context for developing an understanding of the particular features and circumstances of Kemp’s relationship to power. Accordingly, the following discussion begins with a summary in this context of issues and trends in the literature on power before proceeding to examine in more detail the principal themes of the relationship between the engineer-administrator and administrative power.

Studies of power demonstrate wide-ranging variations in scope and focus. The approaches to the problem of determining what constitutes power in a democratic society and how it is acquired and exercised have been aptly described as “inevitably eclectic”, being dependent for the most part on the orientation of the writer and the purpose of the analysis.¹ The debate on power revolves around distribution, access, conflict and controls, and highlights issues of legitimacy, equality, accountability and responsiveness. Just as there is no general theory of democracy, there is no general

theory of power in a democratic society. The critical responses to inconsistencies in, for example, pluralist, elite and ruling class theoretical explanations about its sources and its distribution, which have fostered new theories of groupings or divisions, confirm that power remains a dynamic concept and thus not amenable to any universal formula. Individuals, organisations and the act or process of decision-making have, at one time or another, been assigned a leading role in theories of power. Each of these strands developed its own distinctive body of work in which, more often than not, the issue of power became peripheral.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the literature on administration. The volume of writing that followed the pioneering work of Burns and Stalker on organisation and management, Taylor and Fayol on administration as scientific management, and Elton Mayo, his colleagues and sociologists such as Robert Merton and Phillip Selznick on human relations, took the organisation as its theoretical paradigm.

Ensuing studies were principally behavioural or structural-functional in orientation and used both theoretical and empirical approaches to analyse the features of organisations and their members, and the dynamics of their inter-relationships. A further major dimension was the presentation of organisation as bureaucracy initiated by the writings of European theorists, including Weber, Michels and Crozier.

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2 For a summary of trends in Australian studies of political power, see, for example, Dennis Woodward, Andrew Parkin, and John Summers, (eds), Government, Politics and Power in Australia, (Third Edition), Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1985, Section 2.

Weber's "ideal-type" approach to understanding the role of bureaucracy in society fostered an on-going debate on the potential of a rational, legal-authority model of organisation to deliver the most efficient, if not the perfect mode of administration. At the same time, attention was drawn to the importance of policy- or decision-making as a function of organisation and, as such, a characteristic function of administration and administrators. As well as an outcome, decision-making was seen to be a process of "problem definition, alternative development, alternative appraisal, and solution selection". The work of Wildavsky and others not only highlighted the interaction of numerous internal and external participants and the conditions of uncertainty and inconclusiveness in which decision-making took place but, as the new field of implementation studies indicated, also gave rise to new conceptual approaches to its understanding. However, instances in the United States of the failure of public policy to deliver expected outcomes and inconsistent conclusions from the application of accepted analytical models raised doubts about the efficacy of prescriptive models. The reasoning behind one writer's comment that; "Everything is normatively correct, but human beings don't operate that way", supported the complementary usage of prescriptive and descriptive models to address the perceived gap between theory and practice. According to Robbins:

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Normative models determine actions that produce an optimal solution. In contrast, descriptive models are functioning properly when they accurately describe the activity they represent ... An understanding of both kinds of models and their differences is mandatory for the development of administrators capable of dealing with the realities of organizational life; politically motivated behaviour, power struggles, and the desire by administrators for peaceful and harmonious relations among organizational members.  

His view of the role of descriptive models is particularly relevant to a discussion of engineer-administrators. In his textbook approach, Robbins summarised the concerns of leading writers to restore the centrality of power to the debate on decision-making and to acknowledge the political dimension of organisational behaviour.  

As with "administration" and "policy", power can have any number of meanings and attempts to arrive at a precise definition have been more likely to promote controversy than to settle it. One point of agreement is that power is a relational concept, in that it has meaning only in relation to another person or entity, and that power-seeking behaviour requires two or more parties to be involved. Various early definitions proposed a consideration of power as the potential to induce or influence the decisions and actions of others. They were criticised as one-dimensional for failing to accommodate the multiple layers of power relationships, for being too specifically attached to one theory of the distribution of power, especially in view of Edelman’s contention that governments initiated and used policy decisions for symbolic purposes, and the work of Bachrach and Baratz on the manipulation of the

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8 Robbins, op. cit., pp.52-53.

9 Ibid; See also T H. Rigby, “Bureaucratic Politics: An Introduction”, Public Administration, (Sydney) March 1973, pp.8-9, who refers to the work of Michel Crozier (The Bureaucratic Phenomenon, 1964) and Amatai Etzioni (A Comparative Analysis of Complex Organisations, 1961) as correcting the over-emphasis on human relations in the study of organisations; Self, op. cit., p.251; Davis, et al., op. cit., pp.202-03.

10 Ham and Hill, op. cit., p.62.
decision-making agenda.\textsuperscript{11} However, the concept of power as influence remained persuasive as it was readily observable, applicable to the actions of individuals and groups or organisations as well as their societal relationships, and provided a substantive link between decision-making and power conflicts.

Influence is the common factor in the five sources of power identified by French and Raven as reward, coercive, referent, expert and legitimate power.\textsuperscript{12} Although the point is made that power as simply enforcing one's will is different from authority, Weber equated legitimate power with legitimate authority, a key principle of his bureaucratic model, which derived from "the belief of the subordinate in the legitimacy of the commands of his superior".\textsuperscript{13} As Dunsire explains, in Weber's view this belief could be based on:

First, the sacral nature of the superior person, 'charismatic' authority; second, the inheritance of 'traditional authority'; third, that commands were derived from duties within a code of rules embracing both the superior and the subordinate ... legal authority ... the type of authority found in a modern organisation.\textsuperscript{14}

Legitimacy conferred rights of command but there were differing views on whether these rights were attached to an organisational position or were derived directly from the information, expertise and functional competence held by the person. Whether power is exercised hierarchically or collectively in an organisation is a further matter for debate. In the first case final decision-making power rests with an individual,


\textsuperscript{13} Dunsire, \textit{op. cit.}, p.83.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, pp.83-84.
usually the leader or head of the organisation whereas, in the second case, it resides within the organisation and is exercised by discrete groups of experts.\textsuperscript{15}

Thus, authority, influence and decision-making as they apply to government officials and bureaucratic organisations comprise the key concepts to understanding the relationship between administrative power and technical specialists such as engineers.

**ENGINEERS AND TECHNOCRACY**

Theories of the distribution of power have identified engineers as part of a power elite by dint of their monopoly of a particular technical expertise regarded as essential to the functioning of modern society. As an entity, they are regarded as a profession and where they hold senior positions in technically-oriented organisations, they are labelled "technocrats". The considerable debate surrounding their influential role in government decision-making has tended to weigh perceptions of the positive aspects of rationality, impartiality, efficiency and overall public benefit against the negative aspects of a high level of administrative autonomy, an over-riding technical bias in policy advice and political dependence on their particular expertise.\textsuperscript{16} It was feared that the characteristics of technocratic power had the potential to compromise


the traditional notion of power in democratic societies as ordered and controlled by
hierarchically organised institutions to safeguard the public interest. In other words,
technocrats were in a strong position to evade democratic mechanisms of control and
exercise power without responsibility. Moreover, they would win the competition for
power to the extent of controlling the influential participation in the policy process of
business, labour and community interests.

Similar alarmist views had been expressed about administrative power from the time
the bureaucratic form of organisation was accepted as the means of achieving an
impartial and efficient administrative system. While many researchers found the
definition of bureaucracy as “government by officials” unremarkable, taking it as a
base for advancing debate on the relative nature of official power,¹⁷ propositions such
as Michel’s “Iron Law of Oligarchy”, and the possibility, attributed to Weber, of
bureaucratic expansion leading to officials controlling the economy, appeared to
validate these views.¹⁸ Their development was most evident in sociological and elite
theory studies. In challenging the public interest theory which advocated the concept
“that conscientious, educated and well-disposed public servants will behave in the
general public interest”,¹⁹ these studies built up a more detailed understanding of
occupational and behavioural characteristics at both individual and organisational
levels in order to prescribe measures to redress inequalities in the distribution of
power. One clear example of the application of these measures lay in the

¹⁸ For details of Michel’s ‘Iron Law of Oligarchy’, see Dunsire, op. cit., p.185; Page, op. cit., p.5,
quoted in Francis Rourke, Bureaucracy, Politics & Public Policy, Second. Edition, Boston: Little
administrative arrangements for the United States' Tennessee Valley Authority which also served as a model for Australia's Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area. As outlined by their most notable proponent, Phillip Selznick, and the Authority's first Chairman, David Lillienthal, they epitomised the "grassroots" doctrine of administration which opposed centralised, expert dominance as inimical to the project's aims. According to Lillienthal:

When the technicians and the people live together, away from the central seat of power, by that very fact the power of knowledge and of decision is diffused. ... The technician ... has no more excuse to pursue his expertness simply for the pleasure its refinements give him or to increase his own or his profession's repute, ...  

Writers have analysed the relationship between senior public officials and administrative power in the separate contexts of bureaucracy, professionalisation and technocracy. It is an artificial distinction in many respects as all use the same language, explore similar issues and acknowledge expertise as a source of official power. The terms “administrative state”, “professional state” and “technocratic state” are used to identify the heightened influence of officials as an outcome of a particular synthesis between organisation and expertise. At the same time, assertions that “bureaucracy and professionalism are two sub-types of a larger category – rational administration”, 21 or that “professional power is... a sub-category of bureaucratic power”, 22 support an argument for them being variations of one central theme.


22 Ham and Hill, op. cit., p.142.
Technocracy in this context is a further sub-type characterised by technological expertise as the source of official power. It is seen as a process of reaching decisions that allows the views of individual technical experts to dominate and technical factors to be “exalted” over broader economic and social considerations. Prior to the information technology “revolution”, engineers in public administration were routinely cited as examples of technocrats. How they came to occupy that position derived from a number of factors; their command of the technological expertise needed to deliver the requirements for stability and growth in an industrialised society, a capacity for organisational management, the determination to control their own work and protect it from control by others, a process of training and work socialisation that reinforced professional values, efforts to convert their expert status into the social status and respect accorded to traditional professions, and their identification as part of the administrative, or power, elite.

Throughout history, regimes have depended on the technical expertise associated with engineers to develop infrastructure for both civil and military purposes. Engineers’ inventions made the Industrial Revolution possible and their innovative solutions to the problem of building transport networks allowed the potential of industrialisation to be realised through the growth of trade and commerce. In the early eighteenth century, in the course of defining the state in terms of civil rather than military administration, France elevated engineering and engineers to the central administrative role. The Corps des Ingénieurs des Ponts et Chaussées (variously translated as Highways Department Engineers or Roads and Bridges Engineers), created in 1716 to construct and administer France’s transport and communications systems, was to be the means by which the state organised its control over the

23 Self, op. cit., pp.208-09.
nation's defence, foreign affairs and economic activities. It was the first example of
state administration through the appointment of officials grouped according to their
functional specialty. The establishment in 1747 of *L’École Nationale des Ponts et
Chaussées*, (ENPC  The National School for Highways Engineers), followed almost
immediately by the Inspectorate of Finance, initiated the formation of the *Grandes
Écoles*. The purpose of the five administrative and two technical colleges which
comprised the *Grandes Écoles* was to train the members of the *Grands Corps*, the
semi-independent corporations around which France's administrative system is
organised. Offering the first formal engineering training in Europe, the ENPC trained
engineers for the state and for private industry within France and abroad. By the
1970s, just under half the key positions in French ministries were held by members
of the technical corps (the ENPC and the School of Mines), with engineers in the
majority. French engineers pioneered designs for roads, bridges, ports, dams and
canals which noted British engineers such as Thomas Telford and John McAdam
later used to advantage in carrying out their own infrastructure projects across
Europe. Sweden's Gotha canal which so impressed John Kemp during his 1938
European tour was built by Telford in 1834. In North America, West Point Military
Academy provided the only formal engineering training in this era and the military
establishment, through the Army Corps of Engineers, maintained an influential role

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24 Ibid, p.197; This is a simplified summary of complex issues and events in an era of widespread
political upheaval in Europe. For a more detailed coverage, see Jean Michel, "Les Grandes Écoles
Françaises: Origines et Développement du Système de Formation des Ingénieurs en France"
typescript, Paris: École Nationale des Ponts et Chaussées, 1981. (For English translation, see Jean

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in national and regional development projects for many years. Canals rather than roads remained the preferred mode of commercial transport in both America and Europe until large-scale construction of railways began in the second half of the nineteenth century. The concept of extending infrastructure planning from purely local roads towards national roads and highways, first developed in Europe, became a reality in other countries by the 1920s.

Engineers were employed in private industry and by public boards and privately-financed corporations for the construction of public infrastructure and utilities. The early European model of state-trained engineers forming the basis of an administrative elite was exceptional. The majority of engineers, particularly in Britain, were regarded as essentially technical workers, trained and employed under the apprenticeship system and operating in a wide range of industrial and public works. However, the leading engineers, most of whom undertook commissioned works projects, were by then distinguished by university qualifications in mathematics and physical sciences, even as universities were still resisting the establishment of dedicated vocational courses. Accounts of the lives of some of these engineers highlight their sense of contributing to the public good. This is well illustrated in the little-known story, spanning the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, of the three generations of engineers in author Robert Louis Stevenson’s

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family. With innovative genius and a determination to direct their efforts to the public good, they succeeded in building all of Scotland's lighthouses. Their employers, the Northern Lights Commissioners, treated them indifferently and their work was often threatened by local communities of ship-wreckers for whom lighthouses meant destitution. Yet the family eventually established a financially viable business while training young engineers in the new lighting techniques. The lighthouses they built withstood the elements and were instrumental in saving countless lives, as well as a significant tonnage of commercial shipping. Their story is also a microcosm of the power issues associated with the administration of public works and an example of the traditional model of the separate but complementary roles of politics and administration. Decisions on the location and budget for the lighthouses were usually open to strongly-contested input from the engineers as well as diverse public and commercial interests. The Board made the final decisions on these matters but thereafter allowed the engineers a totally free hand to complete the projects.  

Historically, society was seen to benefit from the work of engineers as it contributed to the conditions for economic growth and, in enabling mechanical power to replace man-power, gained more leisure time and greater independence for the worker. In this context, it did not seem excessive to claim that "engineering has become an increasingly powerful factor in the development of civilizations". Yet, with the exception of France and Russia, which followed the French model in determining that engineering training was the appropriate background for training an administrative elite, engineers did not occupy positions of effective power in public

administration. In Britain and in the United States, it could be said that public service reforms introduced the concept of a profession of public servants defined by a set career path and service principles and, in that sense, they fitted the bureaucratic definition of expert or professional officials. More generally, the line was drawn between generalist administrators with a traditionally broad training which, in terms of ruling class theory, reflected the background and values of the dominant class, and those with specialised technical and scientific training who were regarded as specialist administrators and, in some systems, classified as professionals. Self, for example, asserts that the distinction becomes “outmoded at higher organisation levels” but, in Britain at least, generalist administrators were consistently successful in blocking technical specialists’ access to administrative power. They were assisted by the preservation of a separate “professional” public service classification system and the quarantining of technical professionals in nationalised industries, public utilities and infrastructure development authorities.

How then did engineers arrive at a position where they were identified as technocrats and what that implied in terms of administrative power? The value of engineers became recognised in the climate of mass production and large-scale public works that characterised industrialised societies in the post-World War One period. In relation to the United States, Larson’s sociological study identifies engineers with the movement for the formation of technology-based professions. They campaigned for professionalisation and saw in their migration from private to public organisations the means of achieving protection from exploitation as well as greater control over their work. Moreover, as they became part of the state administrative apparatus, they stressed a commitment, shaped in terms of professional values, to serving the public.

interest rather than the interests of capitalism, and expected their stance to strengthen
claims to the social status and respect accorded the traditional professions. By the
mid-nineteenth century, as Larson outlines, the technical expertise, functional
competence and "uncompromising" integrity of engineer employees replaced
ownership as a guarantee of results. Yet it was their skill as managers that propelled
them to the centre of the administrative power debate. In France, it was argued, two
features of the technical corps' training equipped members to be managers; firstly,
the strict hierarchical principle accustomed them to command at an early age and,
secondly, provincial isolation at the early and middle stages of their careers
protected them from political interference and taught them self-reliance. In the
United States, they became the epitome of Frederick Taylor's theory of "scientific"
management which, in applying the principles of science to decision-making and
organisational process in large-scale industries, enabled productivity increases of up
to two hundred per cent. Legitimacy was conferred on the commercial benefits of
increased productivity through their implied capacity to translate into social benefits.
While attracting little support in Britain and Germany, "Taylorism" was popular in
France and in Russia where its capitalist associations were overlooked since it held
the key to the rapid industrialisation needed in the 1920s to deliver both political and
social benefits. The employment of engineers as managers in Russia's state
enterprises became the guarantee of successfully achieving production targets.

31 Armstrong, op. cit., p.222.
32 See, among others, Robbins, op. cit., p.35.
33 Armstrong, op. cit., p.189.
In industrialised countries, the search for the “one best way” reinforced the ideal of organisational efficiency and the instrumental role of engineer-managers in its achievement. As the expanded interventionist role of the State became established, more engineers were appointed to senior administrative positions in public works, public utilities and the great regional development works, some of which pre-dated the Depression-era employment projects. Dominating the period up to 1937 in the United States was the concept of “government by the efficient”, when efficiency replaced administrative reform as a moral imperative. In the ideology of efficiency promoted by Taylor, the utilisation of science or “rational and systematised knowledge” allowed a means of exerting control over the physical and social environment. In legitimising “practical choices and everyday courses of action”, it provided an antidote to the inefficiencies associated with bureaucracy. For Larson, the appeal of science provided:

The overall cognitive and normative legitimation for the rise of the manager and the rise of the expert: ideologically ‘the carriers of embodied science’ – that is to say, trained and credentialed experts ... are assigned a crucial and directive role.  

It has generally been accepted that, armed with technical and managerial credentials, applied specialists such as engineers moved into government administrative organisations with the expectation of increasing control over their functional responsibilities. In joining a power structure already established on the basis of expertise, they would achieve “technobureaucratic power”. There is some resistance

34 Dunsire, op. cit., p.108.
35 Albrow, op. cit., pp.89-90; Mosher, op. cit., p.81.
36 Ibid, p.83.
37 Larson, op. cit., p.142.
to equating professional and technocratic power with bureaucratic power in these terms as, for example, technocracy is seen to add a new power factor to bureaucracy. This view is reflected in the concept of professional bureaucracies where professionals dominate the process of achieving the primary goals of public agencies. Moreover, it is noted that professional expertise increases the well-documented tension between the bureaucratic principles of hierarchy of authority and the autonomy of expertise and that, while the primary purpose of many government agencies defines the goals of both bureaucrats and professionals, there is the potential for conflict between professional and bureaucratic orientations in terms of loyalty and organisational goals. Although bureaucratic participation may have been the enabling factor for technocracy, technocrats are characterised as enlightened, morally responsible and committed to action, and thus represent the antithesis of the bureaucratic world of inertia. This characterisation fosters a sense of what can be called “technocratic egoism” wherein the technocrat delivers the optimal, objective solution to economic and social problems. His superiority derives from the rationality he embodies in giving precedence to facts over preconceived, that is, political values. The engineer is thus the rational administrator who, “believes he can carry over his ability in engineering situations (where, at least in principle, he can know all factors) to ‘human engineering’ or ‘economic humanism’”.


In undertaking an analysis of the prevailing views and theories on a particular aspect of government administration, the problems of interpretation associated with isolating it from the potential causal influences of contemporary political, social and economic factors are soon apparent. They also surface in relation to comparative studies of industrialised and/or democratic societies exhibiting considerable variation in their systems of government, culture and socialisation, and the relationship of state to society. These problems notwithstanding, in this discussion technocracy, within the more general category of professionalisation, is considered an issue of the transfer of power. Opposition to technocracy can thus be summed up as a reaction to its perceived capacity to exacerbate the unequal distribution of power in favour of the expert official.

The arguments are played out through the critical analysis of technocratic ideology, the goal of organisational efficiency and the concept of a power elite. In terms of the role of technocracy in administration, all of them revolve around the central theme of the political-administrative power relationship.

Technocratic ideology is seen to rest on the concept of knowledge as “beneficent power”, and to derive popular support from society’s respect for the kinds of knowledge and ability relevant to everyday life. One danger of technocracy, it is argued, lies in the uncritical acceptance of technocratic knowledge as providing the means of achieving solutions, and the consequences of the professional egoism and expansion of power it engenders. Thus:

A technocratic ideology, ... regards democratic participation and political debate and accountability with impatience: superior ability and rational

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43 See Page, *op. cit.*, pp.7-8; see also, Dunsire, *op. cit.*, pp.134-36.

knowledge should not and cannot be hindered by an ignorant citizenry and nonrational political processes.45

Another concern is that technocratic ideology opens the way for uncertainty, if not loss of control, in setting the boundaries of legitimate authority. Technocrats are known to exert their authority in areas not justified by their experience or expertise, so that, as the often-quoted example of the expansionist activities of New York mayor, Robert Moses, demonstrates, there may be little formal authority but a high degree of effective power.46 Legitimate authority, defined more simply than in Weberian terms as “the right to give orders and the power to exact obedience”,47 is a source of power in a bureaucratic organisational context and is seen to be strongest when linked to “operationally vital knowledge”.48 The exercise of informal authority based on technical expertise challenges the concept of authority legitimised through hierarchical control and the formal delegation of decision-making powers. Of concern is its extension beyond the organisation to the policy process where it is applied to decisions on a potentially unlimited range of policy matters. Moreover, the popular basis of technocratic ideology confers on this type of authority the legitimacy of social acceptance.

Another strand of opposition to technocracy derived from attacks on the “cult” of efficiency promoted by Taylor’s scientific management approach. While Britain was scarcely affected by these changing trends in administration, in the United States the results of the so-called “Hawthorne” experiments in the dynamics of small groups supported a rejection of the rational-efficient model of administration as too

45 Larson, ibid.
mechanistic. The "human relations" theories associated with Elton Mayo and the work of sociologists led by Phillip Selznick\(^a\) pursued the theme that the model, preserving as it did the centrality of engineer-administrators, delivered outcomes that ignored the importance of human values both within organisations and in the wider society. Crozier's claim that it was "French high administration's relentless search for 'the one best way' which led in the 1930s to abandoning 'the world of means' to engineers",\(^b\) questioned the capacity of the engineer-administrator to assess the economic and social consequences of his work. Moreover, Marxist theorists in particular argued against the assumption of an objectivity derived from the factual basis of rational decision-making that effectively excluded technical experts from the ideology of class. According to Miliband, for example, professions in public service worked to achieve their own class ambitions, that is, to achieve middle class or bourgeois status and, consequently, to assist the state in the process of "capital accumulation".\(^c\) Since engineers actively sought to improve their social status through membership of an identifiably middle-class profession, they exemplified, perhaps inadvertently on their part, that rationality did not remove them from the influence of class values.

On the other hand, Meynaud reaffirms the commitment of technocrats to advancing the public interest which, he claims, rarely corresponds with their material interests, and instances the reputation of senior officials in France for preserving national

\(^{48}\) Self, op. cit., p.256.

\(^{49}\) For an explanation of the 'Hawthorne' group experiments and the scope of 'human relations' theory, see Dunsire, op. cit., pp.101-06; Selznick, 1953, op. cit., p.135.

\(^{50}\) Michel Crozier, "Pour Une Analyse Sociologique de la Planification Française" Revue Française de Sociologie, VI, 1965, p.150, quoted in Armstrong, op. cit., p. 188.

continuity in the face of extreme political uncertainty. Elsewhere, the concepts of public interest and public service impartiality were challenged by the theories of Downs and Tullock which, in effect, proposed that senior officials in bureaucratic organisations were motivated by self-interest rather than public interest, although the rationale behind these theories was criticised in turn. Elite theory, with its image of a self-perpetuating power elite of senior representatives of politics, business and administration, was developed from C. Wright Mills' dissatisfaction with pluralist and Marxist approaches to the issue of power distribution. Even with the concerted criticism it provoked from a range of theoretical schools, the value of Mills' work remained its identification of centralised decision points in bureaucratic systems which were amenable to influence. It raised questions about the nature of the people who made decisions, the people who influenced them, and consequent effects on the distribution of power.

One outcome was a detailed examination of the characteristics of professionals, leading to the proposition that, far from exhibiting the value-neutrality associated with the objectivity of rationality, they had their own set of values which might or might not conflict with public interest values. While acknowledging a definition of professionalism as characterised by, “systematic theory, authority, community sanction, ethical codes and culture,” Ham and Hill believed that attempts at definition have tended to suffer from a lack of differentiation between occupational

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54 C. Wright Mills, The Power Elite, New York, Oxford University Press, 1956, as appraised by Ham and Hill, op.cit., pp.54-55.
characteristics and the societal status of professions. From the viewpoint that professionalism, applied to the entry of professional groups into government service, threatened to overwhelm the central departmental structure of the United States' administrative system, Mosher presented a representative characterisation of professionals in public organisations. Reflecting the trend in research away from prescriptive to descriptive modelling, he stated:

Each profession brings to an organisation its own particularized view of the world and of the agency’s role and mission in it. The perspective and motivation of each professional are shaped, at least to some extent, by the lens provided by professional education, prior professional experience, and professional colleagues. These distinctive views are further moulded and strengthened through training and experience in the agency itself. ...  

He rejected Tullock’s stance that career conformity and orthodoxy are significant in determining elite status and values, stressing that the critical factor is the identification of professional knowledge and skills with the primary purpose and activities of the organisation. Where this occurs, he sees the professional elite group becoming the “core” of the organisation, achieving control of the hierarchy of authority and providing its leadership.  

There is a broad consensus that education and organisational socialisation maintain a professional/technocratic elite and reinforce its particular values. The social and economic rewards associated with professional status intensify the competition for, and thus restrict access to, professional ranks. The outcome is a process of pre-selection and pre-socialisation, although it may be overstating the case to conclude

55 Ibid, pp.143-44.
56 Mosher, op. cit., p.132; For a similar view of France’s Grands Corps, which include the two technical corps of Mines and Ponts et Chaussées, see Marie Kessler, Le Conseil d’État, Paris: A. Colin, 1968, p.16.
that the “professional minorities who control a field” receive “a super-filtered, superclassified, specialised and hierarchical cohort”. As access to professional education is a function of class, on this basis, professionalisation is seen to entrench inequalities in the distribution of power and contribute to the formation and maintenance of a professional elite. Whether or not this process supports the case for homogeneity among professional elites is an issue for debate. According to the education/socialisation approach, France’s technocratic elite demonstrates the characteristics usually associated with homogeneity and this is evident in the notable solidarity among members of the two technical corps of Mines and Ponts et Chaussées which have dominated the administration of France’s public works and nationalised industries. The corps are also part of an informal network across the Grands Corps administrative elites which are said to share a common ideology, reflecting professional values, of belief in the centrality of the State and the importance of State intervention to France’s economic and social development. The particular character of the role of the State and the administrator’s concept of it appears to influence the value base of the administrative elite while reinforcing its cohesion. In Britain, generalist administrators form an elite corps with common career-oriented beliefs, values and ethics, yet the view of the role of the State to which they relate, differs markedly from that of the French administrative elite.

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58 Larson, op. cit., p.204; see also Armstrong, op. cit., pp.213-14.
59 Meynaud, op. cit., p.121.
Common social and educational backgrounds leading to shared administrative values do not guarantee uniformity of administrative behaviour and, it is argued, to use them to confirm a relatively homogeneous technocratic elite, is to oversimplify a multifaceted set of interactions. Nor is the possibility of shared project goals promoting co-operative relationships enough to sway a general preference for a model of conflict and negotiated compromise. Bureaucratic/professional conflict is well recognised and conflict among professional elites is seen to occur in certain circumstances; when each group has a different type of professional expertise, they will compete to be the dominant influence on the basis of superior expertise, and when they dominate agencies with similar functional expertise, they will compete to protect their particular agency’s position from encroachment by other agencies and to reinforce its dominant status. At the same time, numerous organisational, decision-making and external variables, some of which have been previously identified, can effectively challenge any dogmatic application of conflict theory to issues of professional elites and their administrative power status.

The political-administrative relationship provides the overall framework for assessing the nature and extent of professional/technocratic influence, with the central issue being the proper roles of politicians and officials in government administration. It has been the subject of numerous studies which, if nothing else, have demonstrated the difficulties of developing a prescriptive model for a politics-administration dichotomy that can be convincingly applied in practice, and to the particular as well as to the general. Moreover, the issue is made more complex by the

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preference, sometimes ideologically-driven, for structuring debate around the use of values as a determining principle. Most of the studies are concerned with defining the components of a political-bureaucratic relationship and often take the Weberian "ideal-type" model of bureaucracy as the orientation point for their analysis. What they highlight is that there are clear differences over time and across different systems in the perceived importance of prescribing the limits of administrative power and that, in many instances, the differences reflect particular socio-political situations and the prevailing political ethos.

Protecting officials and their areas of administration from political interference and patronage proved to be a major impetus for establishing a dividing line between politics and administration. In France, the segregation of an elite of trained engineers in the *Ponts et Chaussées Corps* was intended as protection against an administration "still somewhat attached to aristocratic methods". In the United States, the overt political corruption at all levels and in early government-supported development projects such as the Trans-continental railway provoked popular agitation for the reform of government administration, as was demonstrated by the history of the Progressive and Populist movements of the late 1800s and early 1900s. "Politicians decide, officials carry out", the often-quoted statement of President Woodrow Wilson, himself an engineer, defining the separate roles of politics and administration was made in this reform context. As with the traditional politics-administration model, its usefulness is limited, since it was a response to particular events and issues of administration in the United States. It was primarily associated

64 See, for example, Ambrose, *op. cit.* (The Union Pacific railway was a government corporation, the second to be established in the United States). James Edward Wright, *The Politics of Populism: Dissent in Colorado*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974, especially p.260.
with the much broader aims of marking a distinction between career service and politically appointed officials, as well as strengthening the powers of the executive and extending their scope to include administration.65

The expanded interventionist role of governments throughout the Depression and World War Two focused attention on policy-making as a source of official power and as a political process in which officials had a participatory role.66 The concept of bureaucratic politics and the methodological problems associated with prescriptive modelling encouraged a behavioural approach which assessed the political-official relationship as a series of interactions. Efforts to define the differences between the two roles in the policy process were not abandoned. Rather they were charted in terms of goal orientation, area of competence and scope of responsibilities, as a division of labour or as ends versus means. Simon’s revival of “decision-science” theory, in which he proposed ascribing facts to officials and values to politicians, proved to be unexpectedly durable in that a 1991 survey of administrative elites found empirical support for a “facts/interests” model of the political-administrative relationship.67 Evidence of officials disguising values as facts and the failure of both politicians and officials to disclose their guiding values undermined Simon’s argument, and the consequent critical debate identified the significant issue of

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65 This section draws on Mosher, op. cit., pp.84-89, who refers to the 1937 report by President Roosevelt’s Committee on Administrative Management, (the Brownlow Committee), and Dunsire, op. cit., pp.98-99. See also, C. Campbell and J. Halligan, Political Leadership in an Age of Constraint: Bureaucratic Politics under Hawke and Keating, Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1992, p.95.


political mistrust of the values of incumbent officials whenever governments with
different ideologies and policy programmes were elected to power. Some
commentators argued that doubt about public service neutrality derived from the
stereotyping of officials' values as the outcome of conservative conditioning and that
the Machiavellian view of bureaucratic politics was exaggerated. Nevertheless,
recommendations for public service restructuring made by successive committees
and commissions were shaped by the assumption of value bias and self-interest on
the part of officials. The threat of dominance by officials was seen to be an outcome
of bureaucratic characteristics rather than a failure of political mechanisms of
control.

In the conceptualisation of bureaucratic politics, conflict was identified as a
determining characteristic of the political-administrative relationship, with senior
officials competing against other officials, organisations and ministers for the prize
of controlling the decision-making process and its outcomes. Another sustainable
view was that ministers and senior officials held competing or ambivalent goals yet
worked in partnership to deliver government policy. Conflict was accepted as a
normal interaction aimed at securing the best choice from a range of policy or
program options, negotiation and compromise to accommodate political needs and
technical preferences or realities were intrinsic to the policy process, and there was a
tendency towards cooperative interaction to minimise the influence of external
interests. The concept of mutual trust is not generally associated with the debate on

Civil Servants in Western Europe: A Preliminary Report”, British Journal of Political Science, 1973, p.289; see also, Self, op. cit., p.43.
69 See Ham and Hill, op. cit., pp.56-59 for an overview of this view; and Mosher, op. cit., pp.89-90.
political-administrative interactions but Self, for example, believes its importance to the process of democratic government cannot be overstressed. A heightened mistrust of the role of politicians in decision-making is one characteristic presented as distinguishing senior technical professionals from their bureaucratic counterparts. Thus, the rationality of professionalism provides the correct way of solving problems whereas;

Politics is seen as being engaged in the fuzzy areas of negotiation, elections, votes, compromise - all carried on by subject-matter amateurs. Politics is to the professionals as ambiguity to truth, expediency to rightness, heresy to true belief.

The sense of mistrust is fuelled by the perception that political expediency is foremost in decision-making. Lack of expertise does not inhibit politicians from encroaching on areas of technical expertise for their own ends nor from transferring responsibility for unpopular decisions or failed policies to officials who have no formal means of public redress. Acknowledging that decision-making takes place in conditions of complexity and uncertainty, Meynaud describes the political approach to the process in terms of the concepts of “bounded rationality” and “satisficing” usually associated with bureaucratic decision-making. According to this view, politicians might, for example, endorse the majority opinion of competing experts, opt for the least dangerous method which, in the event of failure, will cause the least damage, or go with the opinion of a trusted adviser. The process will also be influenced by the strong commitment of individual politicians to particular

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72 Mosher, *op. cit.*, p.119.

technology-dominated organisations for status or goal achievement purposes." It is suggested that politicians have the means to control technocrats, particularly by taking a more decisive, responsible role in the political-official relationship. According to this view, the potential threat to the democratic process lies not so much in the potential for technocratic expansion as in the shift in control over government decision-making from the legislature to the executive branch, with the latter exerting direct authority over senior officials.

It is in the area of administrative discretion that the reality of demonstrating political control finds its greatest challenge. Beyond the formal delegation of tasks which is essential to carrying out the business of government, there is an often open-ended or undefined transfer of discretionary decision-making power. Although the traditional model of restricting officials to implementing decisions made elsewhere was intended to remove them from policy-making, the implementation process became recognised as a source of bureaucratic power. It called for discretionary decision-making that was often not subject to public accountability and was therefore outside public control.

The importance of controlling policy implementation was underlined by the instances of officials commanding the means to block the process and Allison's example of the lead-up in the United States to the Korean War where decisions were made but there was a lack of agreement over who was responsible for implementing them. The problem of controlling the level of discretionary authority delegated to technocrats on the basis of their particular expertise was exacerbated by the

propensity by governments to adopt the principles of business corporations to
implement industrial development policy. Engineers predominated among the
technocrats appointed as operational heads of public corporations, being granted a
range of corporate powers and a high level of operational autonomy specifically to
distance them from political control and associated intimations of political
corruption. They were removed from direct ministerial control, so that ministers
were answerable but not formally responsible to parliament for operational decisions,
enabling the transfer of operational responsibility from the amateur, as represented
by the minister, to the technical expert. Nationalised industries and government
investment in major public works and regional development schemes were used
increasingly in many countries from the 1930s as instruments of economic
development policy.

This trend was epitomised by President Roosevelt's declaration that the legislation
establishing the Tennessee Valley Authority in 1933 was intended to create a new
form of administration, "a corporation clothed with the power of government but
possessed of the flexibility and initiative of a private enterprise". It promoted an
exhaustive debate on the public corporation in terms of balancing autonomy,
efficiency and accountability, while achieving policy objectives. The principal
concerns were, that there was a fine line between discretionary decision-making and
rule-breaking, that the decision-making freedom allocated to professionals-
technocrats enhanced their power and that they possessed authority without
accountability. Some striking examples of what were perceived to be independent
corporate decision-making tended to provoke periodic moves to bring semi-

79 Quoted in, among others, Clapp, op. cit., p.8.
government bodies back under the centralised, hierarchical authority of the
departmental structure. At the same time, detailed arguments were presented to
demonstrate that, in practice, there was effective political control over public
corporations through a range of often informal mechanisms and through recourse to
the law as defence against “the arbitrary exercise of power”.

The relationship between administrative discretion and political control may, in
practice, be determined on the basis of bargaining and negotiating, usually described
as “partisan mutual adjustment”, within the decision-making process, or, “allowing
professional groups to do their own thing, or administrators to roll their own logs and
push their own barrows”.

Some aspects of this argument are associated with the
widely-held view that effective political leadership holds the key to controlling
government administration and its officials. Reference is made to particular eras in
both France and the United States when weak leadership resulted in the expansion of
professional-technical influence on government policy, while Weber’s search for a
viable power relationship between politicians and officials is seen as a response to
the “rule by officials” that characterised Prussian administration in the era of
Bismarck.

Numerous studies have attempted to identify the essential characteristics
for effective organisational leadership, whether political or bureaucratic. They have

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80 Ham and Hill, op. cit., pp.154-55.
81 Ibid., p.159; W. A. Robson, Nationalised Industry and Public Ownership, Second Edition,
Administration in Britain Today, London: Unwin Hyman, 1989, Chapter 11. There are numerous
other reference works on the public corporation, including, W. Friedmann, (ed) The Public
Corporation, Toronto: Carswell, 1954; Herbert Morrison, Socialisation and Transport, London:
Constable, 1933; J. Thurston, Government Proprietary Corporations in the English-Speaking
Countries, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1937. See also Leon Peres, “The Resurrection of
tended to run into problems such as confirming the portability of characteristics among different areas of responsibility, identifying the particular leadership qualities needed to command authority in different situations and accounting for the variations in effectiveness of individual leadership styles. In his study of leadership, Selznick refers to empirical tests which, while recording a wide variation in individual characteristics, confirm organisational leadership as "situation specific" and patterns of leadership behaviour as "persistent and relatively stable". Along with other analysts in this field, Selznick finds it easiest to discuss leadership in relation to the relatively controlled environment of military situations and personnel. Where he refers to government administration, it is political administration, so that proof of leadership is found in the achievement of statesmanship. This concept of leadership, with its overtones of beneficial motivation and assumption of clear public benefit goals, has been difficult to translate into the world of practitioners.

A more realistic approach to the issue of control has been to focus more on leadership as the exercise of authority and to acknowledge the operation of constraints on the effective exercise of political and bureaucratic authority. The policy process may occur in a centripetal system, that is, through the interaction of politicians and senior officials, but is more likely to occur in a centrifugal system, where politicians have to manage the competing influences not only of specialist advisers but also of various external interests. Extending this argument, Rourke refers to what is essentially a "corporatist" idea of competition among elites to stress

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83 Page, op. cit., p.135.
85 Ibid, pp.22-23.
86 For an overview of studies of political authority, see Page, op. cit., pp.168-70.
that business interests represent a further constraint on any perceived political or administrative hegemony in policy areas. He also notes the sometimes overlooked influence of media representatives in constraining or promoting political or administrative agency objectives.  

Even if the debate on politicians and the imposition of effective controls has been inconclusive, there is strong endorsement for the pluralist approach that the policy process and the influences on government decision-making are multi-dimensional and too complex to concede officials the dominant role. Accordingly, as officials “win some and lose some just like any other sector”\(^8^9\), the threat of technocratic government can be discounted. As Armstrong expresses it:

> It is indeed questionable whether “technocracy” can ever be more than a synonym for a special kind of elite administration underwritten by a distinct potent political authority.\(^9^0\)

There may be too many constraints operating to allow technocrats to take over government policy-making or to constitute any long-term threat to a democratic distribution of power, but they do exercise influence in the policy process. While the construction of a typology is not attempted,\(^9^1\) it is possible to identify the conditions which foster an expansion of technocratic influence, largely as a sub-set of the expansion of bureaucratic influence. They are: professional socialisation and identification; membership of a bureaucratic organisation in which technological goals equate with organisational goals and technical specialists comprise the dominant professional and administrative group; political emphasis on centralist, pro-development policies allied with effective ministerial sponsorship; a high level

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\(^8^8\) Rourke, *op. cit.* pp.170-71.

\(^8^9\) Campbell and Halligan, *op. cit.*, p.200; see also, Page, *op. cit.*, p.170

\(^9^0\) Armstrong, *op. cit.*, p.191.

of administrative autonomy; coercive authority over other technical and administrative elites; power to co-ordinate the work of government agencies with similar functions; supportive client and media relationships; and the authority conferred by proven competence, professional status and social respect.

When it is a matter of assessing the level of influence associated with the individual technocrat, there is the immediate problem of isolating and proving it in what is generally agreed to be a multi-dimensional and far from linear process, shaped at arbitrary points by an indeterminate range of participants. The central question becomes why, given a broadly similar professional socialisation and occupational status, one technical specialist will have a discernibly higher level of administrative power than another. One approach is to acknowledge scientific rationality as the basis of technocratic influence and apply the classical or rational actor model of decision-making to the process of decision-making. It personifies the actors in the process and focuses on their acts and choices. As Allison explains:

> It focuses explicitly on an individual leader or leadership clique as the actor where preference function is maximised and whose personal or group characteristics are allowed to modify the basic concepts of the paradigm, and a more complex version "attempts to explain or predict an occurrence by reconstructing the calculations of the victorious actor." The latter goes some way towards addressing the problem of the post hoc ergo propter hoc fallacy, that is, to determine after a decision is made whether or not the influence of a particular person was the critical factor, the problem being compounded by the secrecy that usually surrounds bureaucratic participation in decision-making. Another approach has professionals using the idea of the individual and "the uniqueness of individual

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92 Allison, op. cit., p.37.
capabilities" to explain their claim to autonomy which, in turn, consolidates their ideological position of disinterest in serving the public interest.\textsuperscript{94}

Overall, the power of an individual is widely held to be explicable only in an organisational context, so that an individual derives his power from his organisation and organisational position and, less conclusively, from the status of the organisation in the administrative system. As Rourke summaries this view:

\begin{quote}
... while an institution is often described as the lengthened shadow of man, it may be equally correct to say that an executive is the lengthened shadow of an institution, since his own prestige may largely reflect the appeal of the organisation he commands.\textsuperscript{95}
\end{quote}

Inevitably, individual power at the highest levels of organisation tends to be correlated with leadership skills. Studies of U. S. government administration in particular, put forward examples to support this premise but it suffers in the same way as the debate on political leadership from evidence that the exercise of these skills is dependent on external factors and the effectiveness of such elusive qualities as confidence, honesty and trust. One such study found, for example, that Congress was more likely to approve agency funding when it had confidence in the head of the agency.\textsuperscript{96} In discussions on the reasons for technocratic influence, considerable emphasis is placed on the technocrats' command of indispensable knowledge and expertise but it should also remembered that their management capabilities made it possible for them to acquire bureaucratic power. It is interesting to note that whereas leadership is usually assumed to depend on an arbitrary combination of

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Larson, \textit{op. cit.}, p.206.}
\footnote{Rourke, \textit{op. cit.}, p.96.}
\end{footnotes}
organisational and personal factors, some management courses are developed on the basis that leadership skills can be taught and that they are the tools of managerial success.\(^7\)

A high degree of similarity in the language used and the variable factors identified can be discerned among the analytical approaches to the acquisition and exercising of individual administrative power, ranging from management theory and the various theories of decision-making to technocratic theory. With the aim of establishing a causal relationship, all are concerned with substantiating possible sources of power and advocating techniques and strategies for winning the competition for power, or preventing others from doing so. In the final analysis, they are all exploring how the individual administrator acquires authority over others and thus has the capacity to manage people and processes and to influence decisions and actions in line with his/her own priorities and those of his/her supporting organisation.

The very nature of personal attributes has made it difficult to determine or predict which of them, separately or in combination, contributes to the power exercised by one individual rather than another. The concept of personality is too diffuse and involves the coordination of too many influencing variables to allow any clear application. A more rewarding approach is to refer back to the process of professional socialisation. Taking Larson’s view that “subjectively, career is a pattern of organisation of the self”,\(^8\) it is proposed that the attributes of technical professionals, evident in their self-selection, career expectations and occupational socialisation, predispose them to achieving administrative power. Technocrats are frequently characterised as single-minded, decisive and energetic, with the inference

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\(^7\) See, for example, Sayles, op. cit.

\(^8\) Larson, op. cit., p.229.
of a causal relationship between these attributes and personal power. Personal ambition is rarely mentioned, probably because it runs counter to the professional ideology of disinterested public service, while Rourke argues that the personalities of bureaucrats provide the ultimate restraint against abuse of the power they exercise on behalf of others. To test this approach, a review of one hundred short biographies of the engineers of the Corps des Fonts et Chausées was consulted. The consistent theme throughout was that they achieved their positions of power by means of outstanding technical and managerial skills. Issues of excessive influence and abuse of power are already assumed to be negated by the professional training and socialisation process associated with the ENPC and its guiding principle of continuing, progressive reforms which enable it to dismiss all challenges to the competence and integrity of its members.

Given the uncertainty evident in attempts to prescribe the personal, occupational and organisational factors that secure individual administrative power or, alternatively, that an individual must control to rise above other administrators, the cliché that some men are born to be leaders should not be dismissed as simplistic. Rather it encapsulates the particular combination of personal attributes which may be intangible but which are associated with leadership. Moreover, chance or fortune cannot be discounted as having a significant effect on the opportunities for individual power which may well be the outcome of an appropriately qualified individual being in the right place at the right time. As no less an authority than Machiavelli noted; "men are successful while they are in close harmony with Fortune, and when they are

99 Rourke, op. cit., p.177.
100 École Nationale des Ponts et Chausées, 260 ans de l'École des ponts en cent portraits, Paris: ENPC, 1997 (no page numbers); See also, Michel, op. cit., p.19.
out of harmony, they are unsuccessful". Numerous personal and environmental factors have been identified as having the potential to enhance or control the effective power of a senior government administrator, but it seems that no amount of determinism can offset the random effect of chance as the final arbiter of individual power.

The elevation of civil engineers to a position of public power in Australia followed a similar pattern to the United States, Britain and countries of Western Europe. The issues identified and the range of theories, opinions and explanations debated in the body of literature produced in relation to these countries was also generally applicable to Australia. The catalyst for their achieving, collectively, a position of importance in government policy-making was the recognition by business and government that large-scale infrastructure works to develop natural resources were essential for economic growth and the fact that men with engineering skills and experience had a monopoly on the expertise necessary for their realisation. One of the most important aspects of the Australian experience of economic development was the high level of government intervention dating from the establishment of each of the Australian colonies. Distance, sparse population and a harsh environment are the reasons commonly cited but, more broadly, Australia’s wealth was in the land and what it could produce, not only for its citizens but also for colonial governments, as both depended for survival on its exploitation. Moreover, while there was a long

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102 There are numerous historical sources for variations of this view. See, for example, the works of historians Geoffrey Blainey and Russel Ward, and W. Hancock, Australia, Ernest Benn: London, 1930. For the public administration viewpoint, see Roger Wettenhall, "Public Ownership in Australia", in Public Enterprise and National Development: Selected Essays, Canberra: Royal Australian Institute of Public Administration (ACT Division), 1987, pp.1-2.
history of private investment along these lines, there were comparatively few success stories of their provision of large-scale permanent infrastructure.

The operation of these factors was said to account for the widespread view of the institution of the State in Australia as “a vast public utility”, 103 needing to be serviced by an ever-expanding bureaucracy. As already noted in relation to other Western democracies, an expanding interventionist role increased the complexity of government, and favored the advancement of the specialist over the generalist administrator, while the emphasis on resources development advantaged technical specialists, particularly engineers. Apparently regarded “with appreciation and even awe”, 104 they were routinely appointed to senior administrative positions, usually with responsibility for planning and implementing a range of public works and infrastructure programmes.

Two distinguishing features of Australian administration which derived from the priority given to economic development were firstly, the status associated with a professional public service classification, and secondly, the early and widespread use of the public corporation. It is generally acknowledged that the Australian colonies adopted the principles and the institutions of the British “Westminster” system of government but adapted aspects of them to local conditions. One of these adaptations related to public (civil) service classifications. By the 1860s, Queensland had followed Victoria’s initiative in introducing separate professional and administrative (clerical or ordinary) divisions but, unlike the British system on which it was based, being in the professional division was no barrier to senior appointments and the

103 Hancock, op. cit., p.30.
administrative influence associated with them. Indeed, William Tully, Queensland’s
Surveyor-General and Commissioner of Public Lands in the 1870s, was classified
concurrently in both divisions. 105 The number of professional officers in the
Queensland Public Service did not significantly increase until the early 1950s and,
under Public Service classification provisions, were generally obliged to change to
an administrative classification to be eligible for senior appointments. Recognition of
professionals as senior administrators was then largely absent from the
Commonwealth Public Service, with national governments preferring to follow
Britain in favouring generalist administrators. Speaking in 1964, Sir Frederick
Wheeler, then Chairman of the Commonwealth Public Service Board, confirmed:

   We do not deny that there may be a place for a highly paid expert, with a
   relatively narrow advisory role, within the senior ranks of the Commonwealth
   Service. Such a specialist would not have administrative or management
   responsibilities, but would act as a technical advisor to the administrators
   concerned with the formulation and management of policies. 106

Wheeler allowed specialists to be accepted into the highest levels of administration if
they renounced their particular, narrow code of professional conduct for the more
appropriate, generalist code. 107 This was the generalist-dominated stance that so
frustrated skilled engineers in public service. As Lloyd argued:

   Why is it that non-engineers do not understand that the management of
   engineering functions cannot be effective in other hands. It is difficult for
   engineers to explain the obvious to technologically illiterate managers ...
   Any explanation is difficult to accept by people (including some engineers)

105 Kay Cohen “Lands Administration”, in Kay Cohen and Kenneth Wiltshire (eds.), People, Places
and Policies: Aspects of Queensland Government Administration 1859-1920, St. Lucia: UQP,
1995, p.141.
Administration (Sydney), 23, 4, 1964, p.296.
107 Ibid.
with ‘generalist’ mind-sets, simply because such people do not comprehend the engineering ethos and function.  

As for the public corporation, Australia was belatedly credited with its invention as a mechanism of public ownership which was clearly dissociated from the socialist overtones of state interventionist action. The vesting of corporate powers and levels of operational autonomy in administrative agencies responsible for public utilities, public enterprises and infrastructure development programmes took many different forms. Whether the result was a departmental corporation or an independent statutory body, the intention was, as in other countries, to minimise the potential for political corruption and to maximise efficiency in the achievement of policy goals. At the same time, public works and infrastructure programmes were carried out by line departments identified with functional specialities.

The system of engineer training, inherited from Britain, also supplied Australia with numbers of experienced practitioners and a prestigious professional body in the Institution of Civil Engineers (London), which was replaced by an Australian equivalent in 1919. Although, historically, the majority of civil engineers in Australia were employed by governments, Lloyd’s account of the struggle towards professional recognition conveys no sense of Larson’s view that it was assisted by membership of a government bureaucracy. Writing in the early 1990s, Lloyd argued that the historic contribution of engineering technology to economic growth and society’s well-being had remained largely unrecognised. Engineers were not


accorded the status and respect due to members of such an important profession and, to make the case for industrial action, he equated low status with low salaries. One of many over the years to accuse senior engineer-administrators of failing to take action to improve the pay and conditions of junior engineers, he also believed they had failed to use their position to raise professional standards.\textsuperscript{111} On the other hand, leading consultant engineers, one of whom was John Monash,\textsuperscript{112} believed that the solution lay in the formation of a national professional body to institute and control a national accreditation process.

Nevertheless, from colonial times authoritarian heads of departments and statutory authorities consolidated their empires based on organisations which effectively monopolised the various areas of technical expertise. Through their command of vital technical and organisational skills, and with the relative inexperience of most politicians in planning and executing development programmes making a high level of administrative autonomy inevitable, they exerted considerable influence on government development policy. At different periods during the twentieth century, spokespeople for a range of vested interests mounted efforts to reassert public control through the mechanism of ministerial responsibility by bringing agencies back under the central departmental umbrella. However, even with vigorous debate on the reasons for the failure of many agencies to achieve the goals for which they were created, continued recognition of the political benefits of semi-independent authorities or statutory corporations in the area of development policy guaranteed

\textsuperscript{110} Brian Carroll, \textit{The Engineers: 200 Years at Work for Australia}, Barton, A. C. T.: The Institution of Engineers, 1988, pp.73-74.

\textsuperscript{111} Lloyd, \textit{op. cit.}, pp.11-12, p.138.

\textsuperscript{112} Serle, \textit{op. cit.}, p.188.
counter-movement for their re-establishment. As in the United States, France and other European countries, the industrial expansion of the 1920s and the large-scale regional development programmes of the 1930s in Australia increased the demand for skilled engineers, with the need to create more construction authorities reinforcing the administrative status of senior technical specialists. When this pattern was repeated in the post-war reconstruction period and from the late 1960s in the resource-rich states of Queensland and Western Australia, the same issues of public control, the value of efficiency, and the threat of technocratic dominance were again debated. The link between engineers and the principles of scientific planning was acknowledged, with economist J. B. Brigden declaring that, contrary to accepted thinking, the scientific approach set the benchmark for social planning:

The scientific approach is different. It is less exciting and may even seem to be pretentious. But that is nonsense. We can have the spirit of the competent engineer who sets out to make a preliminary survey. He will not deceive himself by hopes and fears and his personal likes and dislikes. He will carefully measure all of his materials. He will test his foundations very thoroughly. He will know the breaking-strain of his steel. He will check up on the reliability of his power-supply. So must the reliable social planner behave.

The identification of professional characteristics, the issues associated with the rise of professionalisation and the relationship between professionals and bureaucrats followed the general trends previously outlined. Engineers were members of a

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professional elite and, in claiming superiority over other professions on the basis of their importance in creating Australia's wealth,\textsuperscript{115} they articulated the precepts of a technocratic ideology.

Determining the sources of power of individual engineer-administrators, while isolating their effective influence on policy decisions and their implementation, is as problematic in Australia as elsewhere, despite their numbers and the political environment in which they operated both being comparatively small. Patronage or sponsorship is one source of potential technocratic power not adequately dealt with in studies of administrative power. Rigby, for example, has a useful commentary on sponsorship in the context of the superior-subordinate relationship in an hierarchically-ordered organisation,\textsuperscript{116} but references to patronage are usually negative and associated with issues of political corruption and bureaucratic self-interest. There are two aspects of patronage to be examined, the first being the control the head of an organisation exerts over staff appointments and promotions. Various centralised controls over these functions have been instituted for line departments but the staffing powers delegated to heads of statutory agencies are often specifically excluded from them. In agencies engaged in public works, control over workers' employment has been exercised by unions and government mechanisms such as labour exchanges but decisions on the appointment of skilled technical staff tended to remain the province of the executive head. In fiercely-contested areas of development policy, such as the provision of transport, irrigation and water conservation facilities, the capacity to select and nurture staff of high

\textsuperscript{114} J. B. Brigden, "The Devil a Saint would be", Radio talk, 4QQ, 16.10.1933, typescript, \textit{J. B. Brigden Papers}, MS 730, Item 34, National Library of Australia (NLA).

\textsuperscript{115} Lloyd, \textit{op. cit.}, p.11.

\textsuperscript{116} Rigby, \textit{op. cit.}, pp.6-9.
quality allowed him to build an empire of technological superiority which would compete successfully against other agencies in the same field, ensure the future of his agency and expand his influence in the development policy process.

The corollary of the staffing power vested in an agency head was his influence over career prospects. Issues of merit and seniority aside, the sponsorship of certain staff members instead of others has been a source of power for the agency head and a source of future power for the subordinate individual. In the early twentieth century, the New South Wales Department of Public Works, the Victorian State Rivers and Water Supply Commission, and the Victorian Country Roads Board, were cases in point. Moreover, they were early examples of the formation of a technocratic elite which consolidated its authority within a bureaucratic structure. The strength of their monopoly position was such that they were able to reject any political encroachment on their operations and, within the direction of overall government policy, maintain their operational independence. The same could be said for the Queensland Co-Ordinator-General in the post-war period. In contrast, the administration of main roads in New South Wales and railways in the various states was too important to a wide range of public and political interests to allow the conditions for empire-building and the autonomy of technical expertise, the lesson having been learnt from the adverse reaction to Victoria's early experiment in independent railway administration.


the adverse reaction to Victoria’s early experiment in independent railway
administration.118

The second aspect of patronage is the relationship between the technocrat and his
political superior. Several studies examining the role played by senior officials in
state development have noted its relevance to explanations of individual
administrative power. It is particularly so in view of the widespread preference for
the direct line of responsibility established by the appointment of a single
commissioner or chairman as agency head, the associated use of the corporation sole,
and the vesting of these appointments and removals in the executive rather than in
parliament. A striking example is that of C. Y. O’Connor, the engineer famous for
his association with the construction of the Coolgardie water pipeline and its tragic
aftermath. In 1891, amidst strong local objection, John Forrest, Premier of Western
Australia, appointed O’Connor the colony’s Engineer-in-Chief with responsibility for
implementing Forrest’s ambitiously comprehensive infrastructure development
program. As O’Connor’s biographer described their relationship:

For nearly ten years, until Forrest decided to enter federal politics, these two
men were to work closely together in the pursuit of a common end: the better
equipping of the colony with ‘Railways, harbours, everything’ 119

The true measure of Forrest’s support and protection became evident after it was
withdrawn. For years, unsuccessful attempts had been made in parliament and
through numerous committees of inquiry to discredit O’Connor’s professional
competence but, early in 1902, a fresh assault, formalised in the appointment of a

118 See Wettenhall, R. Railway Management and Politics in Victoria, 1856-1906, Canberra: Royal
Institute of Public Administration, ACT Group, 1961.
119 Merab Tauman, The Chief: C. Y. O’Connor, Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press,
1978, p.53.
select committee of inquiry into the Coolgardie Water Scheme and enthusiastically promoted by the local press, questioned his personal integrity. With Forrest in Federal Parliament and the new Premier, Leake, indifferent to O'Connor’s position, there was no strong Ministerial presence to defend him. Deeply affected by the strength and direction of the attacks, he committed suicide six months later.120

Another example from Western Australia in the late 1940s and early 1950s, was the relationship between R. J. Dumas and David Brand, his Minister and later Premier, whom Layman describes as Dumas’ “admirer”121 Layman gives Dumas, who was Chief Engineer of the Public Works Department, first Chairman of the State Electricity Commission (SEC) and later Co-Ordinator of Works and Industrial Development, sole credit for initiating the talks with private enterprise which resulted in a new direction for the state’s industrial development. She goes on to acknowledge that, in a general climate of indifference, Brand’s support was essential to securing Executive agreement for Dumas’ plan.122 In Tasmania, Alan Knight, Chief Engineer of the Public Works Department and sole Hydro-Electricity Commissioner from 1946, worked closely with Premiers Cosgrove and Reece to achieve economic growth through the development of the State’s hydro-electricity resources123 and, in Queensland, a successful resources development program from the 1970s owed much to the relationship between the Premier, Joh Bjelke-Petersen, and successive Co-Ordinators-General, Charles Barton and Syd Schubert.

120 Ibid, pp.212-27.
121 See Layman, op. cit., pp.245-46.
122 Ibid.
technocratic influence. As engineer John Monash found during his controversial time as Chairman and General Manager of Victoria’s State Electricity Commission, the problems associated with its administration were compounded when his initially supportive Minister, F. W. Eggleston, not only withdrew his support but actively sought Monash’s dismissal. Eggleston was joined by Electricity Commissioner, George Swinburne, who, during his term as Victorian Premier, was among the chief proponents of “State Socialism” and the benefits of administrative autonomy. Their stance, that Monash was acting independently of government directives, epitomised the general concern over the issue of controlling developmental policy. From the distance of two decades, former Tasmanian Premier Eric Reece dismissed environmental activist Bob Brown’s view that, as Hydro-Electricity Commissioner, Allan Knight was “the power behind the throne at a time of weak-kneed politicians” and that “the drive for hydro-industrialisation came from Knight himself”, asserting that Knight’s role was never more than “an adviser to government” And while Layman tempers her case for Dumas’ dominant influence on Western Australia’s development policy by warning against overestimating it, Walker’s analysis of the process over those years gives Dumas only a minor role. In the context of federal-state relations, he emphasises the instrumental role of the many senior specialist officials involved and the clear responsibility of politicians for making the actual decisions in concluding: “We have seen quite clearly that the range and complexity of the issues raised by the problems of ‘development’ are not amenable to decision by administrators or specialists” 

The image of "weak-kneed politicians" was one aspect of the debate on political control of technocrats that has been exploited by academics and other public commentators to criticise governments on a partisan basis. Engineer-administrators were said to dictate the planning and selection of developmental projects on their own terms and for their own professional self-interest or, more generally, to take advantage of the awe with which unqualified politicians regarded their undoubted technical expertise. Moreover, the threat of administrative dominance perceived in the fostering of a professionally-based, organisational *esprit de corps* over the life of a development project was often enough to warrant the subsequent disbanding of the organisation. As was the case with the Snowy Mountains Authority, the Victorian SEC and other statutory authorities established for developmental purposes, executive control, if not parliamentary control was imposed through the numerous statutory financial and regulatory checks, as well as a conventional retention of final Ministerial approval over a range of decisions. Recourse could also be had to other control mechanisms; naming and blaming senior government officials under parliamentary privilege, various modes of official parliamentary inquiries, with the publication of selected evidence to the inquiries, and the scrutiny of annual estimates and use of parliamentary standing and/or select committees. Technocratic dominance to the extent portrayed in development politics was more political propaganda than actuality.


The examples cited also complicate the proposition put forward by Rourke and others that individual administrative power exists only as a function of organisation. Monash with the SEC, William Calder with the Victorian Country Roads Board and William Hudson with the Snowy Mountains Authority were just some of the engineers appointed on the basis of already established technocratic reputations, that is, they had reputational power, to set up and administer entirely new organisations. Thus, their organisations were potentially more a reflection of themselves than otherwise, although it cannot be disputed that, over time and if they were perceived to fulfil their purpose, the organisations did serve to enhance their chief administrator's individual power. Overall, however, it appears that the technocrat's role follows the conventional path of advising, negotiating and bargaining in the highly competitive environment of the decision-making process and that individual influence has a direct correlation with bargaining skills and some of the managerial skills also identified as characteristics of leadership. In terms of competing for policy influence with other specialist elites, it seems that, in the period under review, engineers found the greatest competition from economists. The influence of academic economists such as L. F. Giblin and D. Copland predominated in national economic policy during the Depression era and most commentators on Queensland politics during the late 1930s and 1940s ascribe a similar level of influence to Colin Clark.  

At the same time, the capacity for specialist administrators to influence political choices in developmental policy was most effective when they formed an alliance

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with economists or heads of Treasury and particularly when their minister had the
dual portfolios of Premier and Treasurer. It was said that HEC chief, Allan Knight,
and Under-Treasurer, Ken Binns, “an unbeatable team”, built up useful insights into
the strengths and weakness of Reece, at that time holding the two portfolios, and his
deputy, Roy Fagan. Having consolidated an harmonious working relationship with
them, engineer and economist exerted the influence on the Tasmanian Cabinet\(^{130}\) that
elevated the HEC and Knight to what is widely acknowledged as an unprecedented
level of administrative power. During the years from 1983 to 1987 when Queensland
Premier, Joh Bjelke-Petersen was Treasurer, the working partnership of Under-
Treasurer, Leo Hielscher, and Syd Schubert, then head of the Premier’s Department
and Co-Ordinator-General, also had an identifiable influence on the direction of
developmental policy. However, it has been the role of Hielscher rather than of
Schubert that has been equated with that of Dumas in Western Australia and
Wainwright in South Australia in Queensland’s re-orientation from primary to
resources-based industrial development.\(^{131}\)

A. F. Davies’ discussion of the concept of administrative style offers some indicators
of individual administrative influence. Instancing the “dramatic enlargements of
talent” which occurred in wartime in Britain, he asks if some men have “a
generalised gift for management and administration”\(^ {132}\) In keeping with the trend
elsewhere he endorses the usefulness of laboratory studies aimed at identifying
leadership characteristics, but the conclusion to be drawn from his discussion is that

\(^{130}\) Lowe, op. cit., p.16, p.23.

\(^{131}\) Humphrey McQueen, Gone Tomorrow. Australia in the 80s, Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1982,

\(^{132}\) A. F. Davies, Skills, Outlooks and Passions, A psychoanalytic contribution to the study of politics,
there are too many unmeasurable and situation-specific variables to allow any definitive outcome. His application of role theory, that is, the official's public self, or presentation of self, has some merit, as does the linking of characteristics such as "autonomy and dominance", and "a hunger for power" with "early socialisation". When he delves into psycho-analytic theory for explanations of individual administrative power, however, he makes little distinction between politicians and officials and his argument suffers from its dependence on subjective information which is not universally acceptable and a range of interpretative theories. Self observed that when administrative style was attributed to an official, it was usually indicative of administrative influence, and Davies follows the same path in agreeing with the popular idea of individual power as a function of organisational position and possibly reputation. But generally, the deconstruction of individual administrative behaviour in terms of administrative style fails to give sufficient weight to professional, occupational socialisation to provide explanations for the administrative power that accrues to the individual technocrat.

Another approach is to refer to the biographies of leading engineer-administrators in Australia with a view to determining whether or not these technocrats, already identified as influential in some aspect of government developmental policy, had personal and professional attributes in common. There is little doubt that they displayed the professionally conditioned belief in scientific rationality as the correct basis for decision-making, and the benefits to society of applied engineering outcomes. Most of them had established reputations as skilled engineers and organisational managers which, together with a pronounced self-belief, not


\[134\] Davies, 1980, op. cit., Introduction.
infrequently interpreted as arrogance or "ruthless egotism"\textsuperscript{136} in Monash's case, gave them an unmistakable authority, so that it was said of Allan Knight:

His personality and judgment had played a role more significant than almost any other person in post-war economic development ... As an engineer and designer, he was exceptional, as an administrator, he was inspirational; and as a man he personified uncompromising strength.\textsuperscript{137}

Although attempts to draw out the elusive concept of personality may blur the difference between occupational and personal characteristics, they deliver a high degree of consistency in identifying those that distinguish influential technocrats. Work was their life, they were "natural leaders of men"\textsuperscript{138}, with the ability to make incisive decisions and, when it came to influencing decisions, to excel at negotiating and bargaining. As Raxworthy, for example, portrayed J. J. Bradfield:

... (he) was able to play a crucial part in events at a vital moment, for he learnt to wait patiently for that moment and then act swiftly and decisively. He learnt to become "the unreasonable man" \textsuperscript{139}

Engineer-administrators appointed to implement major infrastructure projects won the trust of the public as being above the taint of political corruption but were nevertheless routinely attacked by opposing interests for both promoting excessive technocratic influence and enhancing their personal power. Overall, however, the issue of personal ambition or Davies' "hunger for power" is not addressed in the biographies cited. Isolating its function in the acquisition of individual technocratic power might have proved to be too difficult, but a more important consideration may

\textsuperscript{135} Self, \textit{op. cit.}, p.152.
\textsuperscript{136} Serle, \textit{op. cit.}, p.509.
\textsuperscript{137} Lowe, \textit{op. cit.} p.70.
\textsuperscript{138} Tauman, \textit{op.cit.},p.52.
\textsuperscript{139} Raxworthy, \textit{op. cit.}, p.52.
have been the effect of the negative connotation of self-interest on the
characterisation of a professionally socialised official working in the public interest.

Although it is far from conclusive, individual prominence appears to result from a
particular occupational environment, together with professional and personal
characteristics which, separately, may be relatively inconsequential but when
combined, make the effective difference. The best articulation of this proposal is
found in Serle’s interpretative assessment of Monash’s claim to greatness:

If Monash was a genius, it was his ‘infinite capacity for taking pains’ which
made him so. ... He achieved greatness, essentially as an administrator, by
cultivating to a super-pitch of excellence the ordinary talents and virtues; a
tentative memory, energy and capacity for hard work, concentration,
orderliness, common sense, power of logical analysis, attention to detail, fine
judgment - and a temperament and constitution which enabled him always to
work harmoniously with colleagues and to stand heavy strain ... Almost his
greatest gift was to be a teacher. His clarity of mind and of exposition was his
strength above all others. To define the heart of a problem and reduce it to the
simplest terms was his central quality of leadership.

Serle then records what Monash believed were the contributing factors to his
success:

It was a matter primarily of concentration, of study and hard work, not
genius. One must be thorough master of one’s self, know one’s own mind and
be courageous enough to formulate what one wants. Character, personality
and the capacity to inspire were necessary; pick the right men and impress
your views on them. Be indifferent to praise or blame, admit it when you are
wrong; yet be confident enough to carry on independently of criticism.

Although, not surprisingly, they raise Monash to the status of an administrative
paragon, these assessments provide a useful base of occupational influences,
professional values and personal characteristics from which to develop an
explanation for the administrative power of a particular engineer-administrator.

140 Serle, op. cit., p.507.
141 Ibid, pp.507-08.
In 1920, the Main Roads Board, Queensland's first central roads authority, was constituted and John Robert Kemp, formerly a senior engineer with the Country Roads Board in Victoria, was appointed its Chairman. These decisions by Queensland's Labor Government under Premier E. G. Theodore marked the beginning of, and provided the means for, Kemp's rise to a position of administrative power. They were levers of change insofar as they marked the introduction of a new element in government developmental policy, but they were more a matter of political pragmatism in the face of sustained public pressure than considered policy initiatives acknowledging the economic importance of roads. The main roads authority (Main Roads) was established with a modest set of aims but went on to fulfil largely unforeseen, often crucial aims and functions, while successive governments came to rely for the co-ordination of the State's entire infrastructure development programme on a man first appointed for his experience as a roads and bridges engineer.

State control of roads was a long-standing item in the policy platforms of both Labor and non-Labor Parties in Queensland. Nationalisation of roads was a plank in Labor's fighting platform amended for the 1920 Labor-in-Politics Convention, which confirmed Premier T. J. Ryan's earlier statement on its desirability. Conventional analysis of Labor's first decade of government in Queensland focuses on its reformist "socialist" ideology and the extent to which these ideals were achieved. Many have commented on Labor's failure to implement a European style of
socialism with its emphasis on new structures of shared power. They point to the watering down, and ultimate failure of, the nationalisation objective and Labor's increasingly ambivalent attitude to reforming worker conditions. Preferring legislation to direct action to achieve Labor's ideological goals, T. J. Ryan was typified as a liberal radical reformer rather than a hardline socialist, espousing a pragmatic brand of socialism tailored to his Queensland constituency and its particular geographic, economic and social circumstances. That the union movement and the Labor Party in Queensland developed, not from urban-based unions but from the 'bush' worker unions in the aftermath of the 1890s shearer's strikes, was unique, both nationally and internationally, and Labor's support base remained predominantly rural. Ryan was accepted by the union movement despite having a non-union background. He worked to foster an alliance with worker, small land holder and businessman to achieve improvements to living and working conditions. An enduring emphasis on rural constituencies and agricultural development earned Labor's policy orientation the label of "agrarian socialism".

Giving the interests of small farmers priority over those of workers implied a turning away by Labor leaders from their traditional labour movement constituency, although Ryan's 'small man' was already a significant component of Queensland's population and Labor's electoral support base. As numerous published local histories demonstrate, in class terminology, many of them were workers; teamsters, station employees, miners, seasonal meatworkers and cane cutters, whose goal was the long-

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1 See, for example, D. J. Murphy, T. J. Ryan: A Political Biography, St. Lucia: UQP, 1990, especially pp.517-19; D. J. Murphy, "Thomas Joseph Ryan" in Denis Murphy, Roger Joyce and Margaret Cribb, (eds.), The Premiers of Queensland, St. Lucia: UQP, 1990, pp.272-73.

term economic security they believed agriculture and land ownership offered. Thus, the agricultural settlement policy initiated in the late 1860s was accelerated under Labor. Government policy was oriented to support small producers and land holders through market protection and the development of decentralised infrastructure. Labor also continued the aggressive railway construction policy of previous governments appreciating, as they had, that railways were essential to maintaining an economy dependent on primary production. Railways represented a substantial avenue of employment and hence a ready reservoir of electoral support, while routinely contributing more than a third of the state's annual revenue.3

Transport had long been acknowledged as a critical factor in state development. When Labor came to power in 1915, transport policies were concerned principally with railways and shipping, despite many rural areas being dependent on road transport which usually provided the sole access to the nearest railway. Yet, apart from the provision of access roads to new settlements, roads were not a State policy concern. Railways were considered to be the enabling agents of agricultural settlement. Through its substantial rural constituency, Labor was sufficiently aware of rural transport problems to include State control and management of roads in its original platform but remained overwhelmingly committed to railways' expansion.

Central control of roads first appeared on the Caucus agenda on 23 October 1919 when Secretary for Agriculture, William Gillies, submitted an interim report on proposed legislation to establish a State main roads authority. A Caucus resolution that "the Minister give notice to introduce that afternoon", was not acted on at the

time. A week later, the submission of a further report was followed by a successful motion that “the Minister be allowed to proceed with the Bill, with amendments as proposed by the Committee”, although no record has as yet been discovered of either these amendments or of the committee proposing them. Caucus was already subject to the final decision-making powers of Labor’s Central Political Executive (CPE) in matters relating to any plank in the Party’s platform on which it was unable to reach a decision. CPE minutes for this period do not record any discussion on the Main Roads Bill and a further twelve months elapsed before Gillies presented the Bill to Parliament. In the meantime, the premiership had passed to Theodore, while the London loans embargo severely compromised Labor’s State Enterprises and infrastructure development programme. In October 1918, after Theodore, as Treasurer, had outlined the railways’ financial position, Cabinet recommended either closing down or restricting future railway projects which mostly related to the construction of branch lines to link small farmer settlements with main line railways.

In a letter to the Government in 1918, Thomas Stopford, who had replaced Gillies as Chairman of the Public Works Commission responsible for approving branch railway line construction, declared his support for roads:

... many of the branch lines that were asked for by the people should not be branch railways but branch roads ... good solid motor roads as feeders to the lines.

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4 Caucus meeting, 29.10.1919, Australian Labor Party, Queensland Branch, Caucus Minutes, 1, 24.7.1917 - 23.2.1920, TR 1893, John Oxley Library.

5 W. J. Gall, Diary Notes, 29.8.1918 43/D/30, William James Gall W. J Collection, MS 43, University of Queensland Fryer Library.


7 Quoted by Gillies, Main Roads Bill, Second Reading, QPD 1919-20, 133, p.1811.
Railways Minister in the Ryan Government, James Fihelly, was a surprising advocate for roads. An often fiery opponent of Ryan and Theodore, he had ambitions to become Premier and apparently would have preferred the Agriculture portfolio as the least troublesome for him. Early in 1920, he and Railways Commissioner Davidson spent three months in the United States assessing the relative merits of rail and road construction. Davidson was impressed with the efficiency of road construction and transport but nothing he saw on the inspection tour changed his view that light railroads cost less to construct than good roads. It became apparent that the Main Roads Bill’s introduction had been delayed until more information was gathered and assessed as, at the same time, Gillies and two other (unnamed) ministers were sent to Victoria to examine the operations of its Country Roads Board.

Based on the model developed in New York State, the Board, established in 1913, was Australia’s first state road authority. Since Separation, Queensland had adopted Victorian models in several areas of government administration, and the legislation to provide for a main roads authority followed the principles and much of the practice of the Country Roads Board. Essentially the Victorian Board was a semi-independent authority with at least one Board member a qualified engineer. It was funded by Treasury loans and motor vehicle taxes and, although designated a central authority with all the implications for centralised road planning, its purpose was to ensure co-operation and cost sharing with local authorities. By this time, the New South Wales Government had failed in several attempts to establish a similar road authority and a proposal was under discussion to constitute the New South Wales

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8 Gall, *Diary Notes*, 2.9.1918, 43/D/32, *op. cit.*

Minister for Local Government the Main Roads Board. Gillies rejected rumours of his appointment to the Queensland Board, branding the New South Wales proposal a blatant attempt at political control.10

The form of the Main Roads Bill was not discussed in Caucus before Gillies presented it to Parliament in November 1920, but the second reading speeches shed some light on the decision-making process leading up to its introduction. Although there are no Cabinet minutes for these years, Ministers were generally in favour of the measure, partly because of the minimal appropriation needed for its establishment but also because the Victorian Board’s operations had demonstrated the benefits of such an initiative. Ministerial support was also influenced by strong lobbying from the Automobile Association, carriers’ associations, farmer groups, progress associations and some local authorities.

The Bill passed through Parliament with little dissention. All speakers who participated in debating its provisions confirmed their awareness of the positive aspects of centralised planning and funding directed towards the provision of rural roads to assist rural settlers. The legislation provided for the Main Roads Board, to declare a road a main road, subject to the Governor-in-Council’s approval and after consultation with the local authority to apportion fairly the local authority’s financial liability. Despite the intention, (inherent in its designation as a semi-independent authority) to remove the Board and its operations from political influence, the possibilities for political patronage were immediately recognised.11 It was an issue that continued to permeate debate on main roads legislation throughout subsequent

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10 The Roadmakers, Department of Main Roads, N. S. W., 1976, pp.77-79; Brisbane Courier, 9.3.1920; Main Roads Bill 1920, op. cit., p.1810, p.1827.

decades. It also remained directly relevant to Kemp’s position as administrative head of the authority.

Under the Act, the Board became the only main roads authority in Australia to be delegated the collection of motor vehicle registration fees, previously a police function. Of particular concern to representatives of rural electorates was the consequent regulation, once the Board’s operations commenced, making vehicle registration compulsory. This was seen as taxation without any guarantee of road services, with the prospect for local authorities of an inequitable distribution of vehicle tax revenue. The issue of control of vehicle licenses became an effective government tool in the battle between roads and railways for freight haulage, a dispute that was not resolved in Queensland until the late 1970s.

The Board comprised three members appointed for a five-year term. At least one was required to be an engineer qualified “by experience and examination” Kemp, previously an engineer with the Victorian Country Roads Board, was appointed Chairman in October 1920 at a salary of £1,000 per annum. J. A. Fraser, Deputy Chief Engineer for Railways, was appointed in January 1921, and D. A. Crawford, Engineer in Charge of the Public Estate Improvement (PEI) Branch, was appointed in March 1921, both at a salary of £800. It is speculated that, on Gillies’ visit to the Country Roads Board early in 1920, the position of Chairman was first offered to the Board’s Chief Engineer, A. E. Callaway. Callaway, with the approval of Board Chairman, William Calder, apparently recommended Kemp who accepted the offer and arrived in Queensland in October 1920. Kemp’s role in drafting the legislation was confirmed in the preamble to the Board’s first official meeting in which
members referred to the Government's confidence in Kemp in accepting his recommendations concerning the Board’s establishment.\textsuperscript{12}

John Robert Kemp, the only son of a schoolteacher father, was born in Yeldon, Victoria, in 1883 and educated privately and at local State schools. His school years coincided with the era of Monash, Swinburne and Watts, when statutory corporations were established to undertake the major public works programmes deemed necessary for Victoria’s development. As the importance of technical professionals to the successful completion of these programmes was widely acknowledged, the engineering profession was in the ascendant. Unlike Monash, Kemp’s family circumstances did not allow him to study engineering full-time at university. In 1902, from a temporary position as draftsman he was accepted as a cadet-engineer in the “pupillage” system, working under William Davidson and Carlo Catini in the Department of Public Works. Studying part-time at Melbourne University, he completed the first year of the engineering course and passed some second year subjects. Possibly because of the resistance among senior departmental staff to university-based training for engineers he was not allowed time off to attend lectures, and it became increasingly difficult for him to keep up with his studies. Melbourne University’s engineering faculty was then small in numbers and low in status, while most working engineers still received their training under the apprenticeship system. In the event, Kemp withdrew from the course and did not complete the degree. In 1910, after three years at the Commonwealth Patents Office, he was appointed Shire Engineer for Karkarooc shire, one of hundreds of small local government areas established following the passage of the 1874 Local Government Act.

\textsuperscript{12} Preamble to Main Roads Board, Record of Agenda for Board Meetings (Record of Agenda), Department of Main Roads (DMR) 78, 1.2.1921.
Road Districts with local Road Boards, established under the 1854 Act, provided the initial infrastructure for the development of local government in Victoria. Road Boards were later replaced by small local boroughs administered by ratepayer-elected councils. Their local responsibilities, including roads and public works, were defined, with a mechanism established for the receipt of grants from the colonial government.\textsuperscript{13} Gazetted as a borough in the 1890s, Karkaroo was located in the marginal wheat growing Mallee region of north western Victoria, where the survival of local farmers depended on a viable rail link to Melbourne and a network of irrigation channels to maintain a reliable water supply.\textsuperscript{14} Karkaroo was a small shire in terms of ratepayer numbers, and plans for improvements in local public works were always framed within, and subject to, the shire's rating base. At the time of Kemp's appointment, the council's approach to its public works responsibilities was amateurish and inefficient. According to Council Minutes, Kemp began work immediately with an enthusiasm made even more impressive by the results he achieved within a short time. Delivering long detailed engineer’s reports to monthly council meetings, he always took the opportunity to offer constructive recommendations for the shire’s works programme,\textsuperscript{15} and imparted an attitude of professionalism which raised the standards that councillors employed in dealing with


\textsuperscript{15} A. Hilton, (Karkaroo) “Historical Notes re J. R. Kemp,” prepared May 1967, handwritten, no page numbers, Evan Richard, \textit{Papers}, Box 2 of 2, Folder 9, Heritage Panel, Institution of Engineers Australia, (Qld Division); see, for example, J. R. Kemp. Engineer’s Report, appended to Minutes of the Karkaroo Shire Council, 11.9.1911, pp.462-44. (A typed copy has been made of the handwritten Shire Council Minutes for this period. With few exceptions, no page numbers
their responsibilities. It may also be speculated that patronage and preferential
treatment in public works schedules were much reduced, if not abandoned, under his
dedicated assault on the shire’s works problems. He instituted strict surveying and
costing methods to the tendering and contracting for the multitude of small jobs,
usually involving road and bridge construction, irrigation and drainage works. Close
supervision of the work carried out by local contractors was maintained, and Kemp
was not averse to requesting Council’s approval for the termination of contracts
when work was unsatisfactory.\textsuperscript{16}

In addition to roads, the railway link to Melbourne and the maintenance and
expansion of irrigation channels were high on the shire’s priorities for public works.
To resolve problems or obtain government support in these areas, Kemp, with the
shire president, organised visits to Melbourne. There he consulted with appropriate
departmental officials but, if a satisfactory response was not forthcoming, did not
hesitate to enlist the support of the local Member of Parliament to bring the matter
before the relevant Minister.\textsuperscript{17} Kemp appeared to be well-prepared for these meetings
and employing such direct action was usually successful. Problems arising from low
rates’ revenue prompted Kemp to undertake the valuation of the entire shire, which
he completed in 1912.\textsuperscript{18} For this purpose, he studied for, and was awarded, a valuer’s
and surveyor’s certificate. Throughout 1910 and 1911, Kemp developed and
maintained an achievable programme of public works across a large range of areas.
He ensured that the Council obtained full benefit from the State Government’s

\textsuperscript{16} See, for example, Engineer’s Report, \textit{ibid}, 21.2.1911.
\textsuperscript{17} General Business, \textit{ibid}, 17.5.1910; 18.10.1911; Engineer’s Report, \textit{ibid}, 8.10.1912.
\textsuperscript{18} See, for example, J. R. Kemp, Valuer’s Report, \textit{ibid}, 14.11.1911; General Business, \textit{ibid},
29.10.1912.
annual Mallee Roads Grants. He initiated plans for the installation of electric lighting in Hopetoun and Beulah, the shire’s two main towns, consulting former colleagues in the Patents Office on the respective merits of gas and electricity and asking a friend to draw up the first plans and specifications. He also played a major role in the selection of consulting and electrical engineers for the project.

By 1912, a council sub-committee was established to deal with tendering for all public works contracts. While Kemp continued to propose, cost and supervise every contract job, his dominance in public works matters appeared to be waning, possibly because his efforts to institute efficient practices had been too successful. Following his campaign to compel the Victorian Water Supply and Irrigation Commission to accept greater responsibility for its functional area, the Commission took over all water supply and irrigation matters from Karkarooq Council. A consulting engineer was appointed to the shire and Kemp responded to this apparent slight by asking permission to take up a part-time appointment as consulting engineer for a neighbouring shire. The installation of electric lighting was taken out of his hands when electrical engineers were appointed to the project and the tendering sub-committee made all the decisions on works contracts. Kemp was left with the still important, but routine, duties associated with the construction and maintenance of roads, bridges and various small works projects.

This situation was clearly not challenging enough for an energetic, ambitious man, now possessed of proven engineering and administrative skills. In 1912 he attended a Municipal Association conference convened to discuss the response of local

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20 Minutes of the Karkarooq Shire Council, op. cit., 27.8.1912 and J. R. Kemp, Engineer’s Report, ibid.
authorities to the Country Roads Bill then before the Victorian Parliament.\textsuperscript{21} It is possible that he was approached informally there about a position with the proposed Country Roads Board as, shortly afterwards, he offered his resignation to Karkarooc Council. Aware of his value to the shire, the councillors offered him an increase in salary\textsuperscript{22} which Kemp accepted but, in November 1913, he again tendered his resignation. This time it was to take up an appointment as assistant engineer with the newly-formed Country Roads Board. There were generous tributes from councillors and local residents, acknowledging his substantial contribution to the development of the shire under very difficult circumstances. While they regretted losing his services, they were proud that their engineer had secured such a prestigious appointment.\textsuperscript{23} Kemp had demonstrated his capacity to “get on” with people, to achieve results when resources were scarce, and to liaise successfully with other local authorities and state government officials. Although he may have been judged a hard but fair man, his generally effective dealings with small, local contractors gave him valuable experience in assessing the respective merits of contract and day-labour employment for local works. There is also little doubt that, during his time with Karkarooc council, his engineering training advanced rapidly. He kept himself informed of new developments in engineering techniques and applied them where possible to resolving the broad range of technical problems he constantly faced.

Kemp’s training and experience shaped a reputation which helps to explain why a shire engineer, particularly from a remote, marginal shire such as Karkarooc, was selected for appointment to the Country Roads Board. As much as the Board needed

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{21} President’s Report, \textit{ibid}, 11.11.1913.
\item\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Minutes of a Special Meeting, Karkarooc Shire Council, ibid}, 1.1.1913; \textit{Minutes of the Karkarooc Shire Council, op. cit}, 21.1.1913.
\item\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Ibid}, 11.11.1913.
\end{itemize}
experienced roads and bridges engineers who understood the local authority environment, the conditions under which its staff was obliged to work required energetic, young men accustomed to remote, rural areas. Kemp's demonstrated competence while working in the Mallee's difficult and variable conditions was to his advantage in the selection process. Other contributing factors may have been his public service contacts in Melbourne and his standing in the Victorian Municipal Association. On a personal level, one reason for his taking every opportunity to visit Melbourne became apparent when he married Iva Lilley of Melbourne, soon after the confirmation of his appointment to the Country Roads Board.

One of the first tasks of the Country Roads Board was to conduct a survey of road conditions in all shires and to hear submissions on road requirements from local councillors and residents. It entailed Board staff travelling twenty-one thousand miles in the first year, some of the time on horseback, and resulted in the proposed declaration of just over two thousand miles of main roads. The survey showed that closer settlement, agricultural development and marketing had all been severely retarded by the absence, particularly in rural areas, of trafficable roads. By 1916, with the increasingly adverse effect of the war on manpower and materials, the Board was obliged to curtail both its planned programme of roads and bridges construction and the extension of categories of roads to be brought under its provisions. As the end of the war marked the Board's fifth year of operations, William Calder, its highly respected Chairman, took the opportunity to praise the dedication and self-sacrifice of the small number of staff, including Kemp, during the

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war years. The increased responsibilities gave Kemp an extra degree of maturity and professional self-confidence, while the reduction in staff allowed him more direct experience with planning and administrative activities, the benefit of which became apparent in the way Main Roads administration in Queensland evolved. He was rewarded with a promotion to senior engineer early in 1920 but, within six months, had accepted the offer of employment in Queensland.

When Kemp was appointed Chairman of the Main Roads Board, he came to a State exhibiting many signs of economic stagnation. The London market's embargo on capital loans to Queensland, which had been the goal of pastoral and business interests, proved an effective obstacle to progress on Theodore's expansive promises for the provision of development infrastructure. Unemployment had risen sharply, economic growth had slowed and the financial demands generated by the state's vast size and decentralised settlement pattern were exhausting available funding avenues. According to more than one analysis, the Government failed to address the serious problems in its public finances, which included bigger Consolidated Revenue deficits, increasingly high taxation levels, and lack of access to the cheap loan funds required for any substantial developmental works programme. Development funds had long been committed to railway expansion and, to a lesser extent, to ports and harbours. The concept of a transport network to serve primary industry was expressed in the construction of east-west trunk railways linking ports along the coast with the hinterland.

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Queensland had no roads policy, despite the increasing popularity of motor vehicles for private and commercial use. The Roads and Survey Branch, later the PEI Branch, of the Lands Department constructed some roads in conjunction with closer settlement schemes but overall responsibility for the provision of roads rested with local authorities. As elsewhere in Australia in the late nineteenth century, Road Trusts were formed to advise the Government “on the effective expenditure of road and bridge money.” Roads became the responsibility of local area Divisional Boards established in 1879 which in turn were replaced by the separate municipal and shire councils created under the Local Authority Act 1902. The extent of road construction was largely tied to the local rate base, although Treasury made some funding available through long-term loan subsidies. Larger towns had formed roads but in sparsely settled districts with few ratepayers and where disputes arose about apportioning financial liability, arterial or through roads and those adjacent to shire boundaries often remained no more than bush tracks.

Kemp’s summary of the road situation, as it stood in 1920, emphasized the high cost of boundary disputes, the inefficient allocation of resources caused by the overall lack of infrastructure planning, and the failure to appreciate the scientific basis of road construction. Some local authorities in Queensland, in supporting the establishment of a main roads authority, recognised that it could deliver, in addition to roads and bridges, financial and employment benefits far beyond their own limited


means. By contrast, the Board also had to contend with the view that this was yet another move to curtail the independence of local government and to transfer more decision-making power over local responsibilities to Brisbane. At that time, local authorities were formed by and operated under the provisions of the Local Authorities Act of 1902. Their powers to make by-laws in respect of specified local responsibilities were subject to final approval by the Governor-in-Council. Although rates comprised their principal source of finance, revenue was often inadequate to meet basic requirements. They relied heavily on state government subsidies to carry out public works programs, with the inevitable consequence of increased interference in determining local priorities.

Convincing local representatives that co-operating with the Main Roads Board was to their benefit was one of the major challenges Kemp faced in having the Board accepted as essential for local area development. Years later, Kemp was able to joke that:

The initial movements of the Main Roads Board were viewed with suspicion by the Local Authorities as some sort of political joke and Board members as highwaymen of the Dick Turpin or Ned Kelly variety, rather than as constructors having the development of the country at heart.

Another important issue for Kemp, as a newly appointed official, was the relationship between Labor Ministers and senior public servants, particularly those accorded delegated decision-making power as heads of non-departmental bodies.

30 Robinson, op. cit., p.324.
32 Kemp, op. cit.
Unlike future Main Roads amending legislation, the debate on the 1920 Bill did not touch on Kemp’s appointment or on the adoption of the Board as an administrative instrument. Main Roads fell within the responsibility of the Minister for Lands, but while Gillies, as Minister for Agriculture, was its chief sponsor, it was a semi-independent authority created by statute and standing outside the department’s financial and staffing structures. Such boards were already widely accepted throughout the Australian States as the appropriate administrative form for carrying out development projects, with the need for independence from direct political control frequently cited in support.

This did not inhibit the Opposition from making political mileage out of questioning the extent of ministerial control over their decisions and actions. Section 19 of the Main Roads Bill provided that Board recommendations or decisions were subject to the approval of the Minister and the Governor-in-Council. Debate on this provision covered conventional points such as ensuring parliamentary control, the dangers of political control through the exercise of ministerial responsibility, and the need for freedom from political control to achieve non-partisan, cost efficient results.

However, as too little was seen to be at stake in the configuration and operation of a Main Roads Board, there was no attempt on this occasion to press the Government to any serious extent on these issues.

It is not known whether or not Gillies discussed with Kemp, before his appointment was confirmed, the extent to which the Government was willing to concede decision-making powers to him as head of Main Roads. In other words, was ministerial approval of Board decisions to be simply a formality or would the Government exercise close ministerial, and indeed Cabinet, control, over the Board’s operations?

From the outset, Labor’s relationship with its senior public servants was
characterised by mistrust. Arising from the conviction that the latter were intent on preserving the anti-Labor policies of the previous administration, it resulted in a high degree of ministerial control of the administrative process.\textsuperscript{33} As a Minister, McCormack was said to be unswerving in his view that "sabotage" by senior officials was the cause of many of Labor's administrative problems. According to Murphy, there was "a fundamental disagreement between Ryan and McCormack - and also Theodore to a degree - on the public service. Ryan looked to a public servant's competence and loyalty where McCormack looked to his politics".\textsuperscript{34} Some Ministers attempted to foster public service co-operation by initiating a process of consultation at a Cabinet meeting in September 1917 to which departmental heads had been invited to discuss the then critical budget deficit. After Ryan had asked for their assistance in keeping expenditure within the budget estimates, J. D. Story, who had been the well-respected Under-Secretary of the Department of Education for more than a decade, offered his opinion that much of the deficit problem derived from the propensity of Ministers to make promises "which were difficult of fulfilment".\textsuperscript{35}

Such issues in relations between ministers and administrators under a reformist Labor Government were particularly relevant for Kemp. At the very least, they raised questions about the effective extent of his own administrative independence, the Board's insulation from political interference and its capacity to deliver efficient results. The Board's establishment as a semi-independent roads authority was


\textsuperscript{34} Murphy, 1990, \textit{op. cit.}, p.260.

\textsuperscript{35} Gall, Memo describing meeting of Under-Secretaries with the Premier and the Treasury, where Gall noted "Ryan was roused to fury" by Story's response, 19.9.1917, 43/A/1a, \textit{op. cit.}
possibly little more than a demonstration of government action in response to constituents' demands and its failure may well have been anticipated. It was a view expanded on in a newspaper editorial which observed that, with a first-year budget of £5,000 to cover the salaries of a staff of experts, their travelling expenses and any other outlays, it would be a long time before the Board was in any position to begin constructing roads.\textsuperscript{36} In a public address some years later, Kemp noted rather wryly that Parliament had proceeded “very cautiously” in respect of the new main roads authority. The initial Treasury allocation was a modest £60,000, and funding levels were raised only after the Government “re-assured itself of the good results arising from the works being carried out”\textsuperscript{37} There appeared to be some reluctance to endorse the expenditure of funds on roads if they duplicated established railways. Others believed that, as road construction on the scale envisaged in Queensland was an immensely difficult task, there was no basis for comparison with the operations of Victoria’s Country Roads Board.

Against this background during 1921, Kemp worked with Gillies, and Forgan Smith who was then Minister without Portfolio assisting the Premier, to formulate Board policy. In September, administration of the Act was transferred from Public Works to Public Lands, officially to promote coordination between the work of the Board and that of the department’s Survey and Roads Branch. Despite the limited resources at its disposal, the Board needed to demonstrate its relevance to the Government’s rural development policy and, to do this, Kemp adopted the approach he knew well from his years with the Country Roads Board. This was to undertake a preliminary survey

\textsuperscript{36} Brisbane Courier, 3.1.1921.
\textsuperscript{37} Kemp, Address to Ipswich Rotary, \textit{op. cit.}
of roads to be recommended for gazettal and for future road construction and reconstruction. On his appointment, Kemp had sent all local authorities a questionnaire requesting information on their road systems, population area, road-making plant, number of horse-drawn and motor vehicles, and staff numbers and qualifications. His intention of compiling "a paper picture" of local conditions in preparation for the Board's survey trips was frustrated by the limited response he received, but he could not have anticipated that several shires had never kept such records.

During the year, the three Board members travelled throughout Queensland, gratefully accepting the concession tickets the Railway Commissioner offered them, and completing other stages by boat or on horseback. Kemp met scores of local government, small business and settlers' representatives in the northern, central and southern divisions into which the Government had divided the state for Main Roads purposes. Although many rejected Kemp's attempts to persuade them of the benefits of coming under the main roads scheme, they appreciated the visit by a Brisbane-based official and his genuine interest in their problems. The tenor of their meetings on these and later tours laid the foundation for the respect local authorities accorded him and for his reputation as "a fair-minded man of action".

While not set out in the legislation, policy was determined as the development of roads which would provide "continuity of communication" and assist the transport of local products to a centre of population or to a railhead. Whereas one indicator of autonomy was ministerial approval of the main roads gazettals it recommended on rational-technical grounds, it was soon tested in respect of Board recommendations.

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for roads perceived to be in competition with railways. One highly controversial example was the Brisbane to Ipswich highway. In the early 1920s Kemp successfully defended plans for its construction against concerted attacks by politicians and officials determined to protect the railway monopoly. At its first official meeting in February 1921, the Board made its first recommendations for the declaration of main roads under Section 15 of the Act. They were in Beaudesert Shire and included the recommendation of a road from the border at Mt Lindsay towards Rathdowney. Although, as Kemp reported, the road would serve more than two hundred families and open up the area for further settlement, the route was in competition with the newly-opened tramway constructed by the Beaudesert Shire Council and the proposed standard gauge interstate railway via Rathdowney to Kyogle. Contrary to the provisions of the Act, the Board recommended these roads without first consulting the shire council. It may well have been a declaration by Kemp that he would control the roads gazettal agenda from the outset, recommending roads on the agreed policy basis of providing transport access for closer settlement. To representatives of the Queensland Farmers’ Union who considered it a waste of money to duplicate transport facilities in one area when other areas had neither roads nor railways, Kemp explained that a right of appeal to the Minister was available if a shire council did not agree with the Board’s proposal. Another view put forward by a Main Roads engineer who rose through the ranks to become Mains Roads Commissioner supported such decisions in terms of their rationality:

The Board found in its early enquiries that certain existing trunk routes of intercommunication between cities and towns did in fact pass through country already sufficiently served by railways. In some such cases abandonment of existing routes was considered and attempts were made to

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40 Record of Agenda, 15.11.1921, Item 18.
choose acceptable alternative routes located in country not served by the railway system. Some routes through country already served by railway had to be adopted to provide continuity.41

For the Board to have any guarantee of an effective future was clearly dependent on the expansion of its operations. To borrow from decision-making theory, the Board was a participant in a zero-sum game where such expansion was bound to encroach on the operations of both the Railway Department and the Department of Public Lands. The view quoted above also supports the contention that, from the outset, the Board was aware of the need to appear to be conforming with an established government policy while pursuing its own goals.

The first annual report of the Main Roads Board was finalised in July 1922. Work was commenced on fifteen declared main roads and Kemp’s mission to supply the Board and local authorities with essential plant and equipment was signalled by the expenditure of fifty per cent of available funds for this purpose. Above all, the report was a testimony to the Board’s operational efficiency under difficult conditions. Apart from local roads, it had completed the classification of roads to be recommended for gazettal in all three divisions of the state, and provided provisional estimates of costs and the cost-sharing arrangements with local authorities. A perusal of the minutes of the first year’s meetings gives some idea of the struggle to form a viable organisation, the scope of the Board’s powers and operations, and Kemp’s interaction with political, commercial and farmer interests.

The first Board meeting in February 1921 confirmed Kemp’s priorities as Chairman and also the constraints under which the Board commenced operations. His first task had been to prepare a report suggesting amendments to the Act, including

amendments to the financial provisions. Against the time when the Board began the work of road construction, he instituted the gathering of material on survey instruments, road-making plant and equipment, technical books and information on road construction programmes and methods, obtained mainly from state road authorities in the United States. Although the Act exempted Main Roads staff from the Public Service Act, ministerial and public service approval was required for all staff appointments and salary levels nominated by the Board. In February 1921, for example, ministerial approval was given for the appointment of secretary, J. E. England, while the Public Service Commissioner's approval was needed for the appointment of a temporary typist. Later that year, Story notified the Board that staff earning over £300 per annum were exempt from the provisions of the Industrial Arbitration Act 1916 and these exemptions were later extended. As the Board did not have the funds to employ technical staff, much of the preliminary work on an early project, the construction of the Cairns Range Road, was undertaken by W. Reinhold, an engineer with the Public Lands' PEI Branch.

At the end of February, the Board approved a “Notice of Intention” to be sent to Beaudesert and other councils in relation to major recommendations such as the Brisbane to Warwick road and the Brisbane to Ipswich road. By then, Kemp and Fraser had completed tours of inspection in Cambooya, Esk and Moreton shires, meeting with council representatives to explain the “general financial provisions of the Act and general policy of the Board”. At each meeting, requests for inspections of roads received from shire and municipal councils were recorded, as were similar

requests from local progress and farmers' associations, and from members of parliament. To demonstrate impartiality in responding to these requests, a protocol was developed under which they were first referred to the relevant local council and then a schedule of inspection visits was drawn up. Gillies' support clearly derived from his interest in expanding agricultural settlement in his Cairns and Atherton Tableland electorate and providing settlers with road access to the coast. His recommendation of a number of roads in his electorate for declaration as main roads was responsible for the Board's extensive northern tour in the middle of the year, although each of them was subjected to the Board's protocol for recommending road gazettals. It may be surmised that the ease with which the Board opened a regional office in 1922 and the fact that it was located at Yungaburra on the Atherton Tableland was a measure of his effective support. There was early evidence of Kemp's preference, usually met with a public outcry, for declaring roads that gave access to mountain settlements. Among them were the Cairns Range road (at a time when the Cairns Range railway was being extended to Tolga and Millaa Millaa), the Hervey's Range road, the Townsville to Mount Spec road, the Tamborine Mountain road, and a road to O'Reilly's on the Lamington Plateau. Taking his lead from the Victorian Country Roads Board and state road authorities in the United States, Kemp investigated ways of providing for roads to new or previously inaccessible settlements, such as at Springbrook and Beatrice River, and areas of low ratepayer numbers, ultimately succeeding in having them included in the categories eligible for Main Roads' subsidies.

Other issues raised during 1921 required the Board's role and powers to be defined. The Board was empowered to make regulations for the registration of all motor vehicles and the collection of a wheel tax, directed at commercial vehicles. As they
superseded those operating under the Traffic Act and a hostile reaction to the proposed new tax was already evident, Kemp gathered information from interstate and overseas sources and from local authorities in preparation for formulating them. They addressed the issue of varying the tax according to tyre type and weight of loads, since narrow, solid tyres and heavy, commercial loads were detrimental to the condition of roads and added considerably to road maintenance costs. The Board also refused requests for licensing fee exemptions from community services such as fire and ambulance brigades, as well as ministers of religion, and all three levels of government.

When local authorities exercised their right of appeal against a main road being declared, Kemp usually attempted to resolve the impasse by personally conferring with representatives and extending the period for notification of objection until the shire was in possession of all information that would persuade them of the value of a main road. The problem often arose when the lack of Board staff made delays in the initial investigative survey inevitable, which then delayed the process of supplying estimates of costs and determining the extent of the authority’s liability. The situation was eased after Kemp obtained ministerial approval for shire engineers and surveyors to undertake these surveys although, as many of them were inadequately qualified, the results often fell short of the required standard.43 The fact that objections by local authorities to main roads’ declarations rarely went as far as invoking ministerial intervention owed much to Kemp’s personal approach to resolving the matter. Where a council objected to a proposed route or wanted an alternative route for local reasons, Kemp discussed the matter with councillors and tended to accommodate their requests unless there was some compelling technical

43 England, interview, op. cit., p.5.
reason to retain the original decision. A satisfactory outcome was often achieved as, for example, when Cleveland Shire Council objected to the proposed Cleveland - Redland Bay Road because it wanted the terminus extended to West Cleveland. A similar situation arose regarding the planned construction of roads across shire boundaries to complete a principal (main) connector road. Kemp arranged to bring together representatives of neighbouring shires but, in some instances, had to defuse entrenched local differences before the road proposals and allocation of costs could be negotiated. The results were not always positive and it seemed that the threat of the coercive power vested in the Minister by section 19 of the Act was sometimes the only effective way to ensure a planned connector road was built.

By mid-1921, the methods of dealing with the administration of the Act had been established. Kemp and one other Board member together undertook extensive tours organised around the invitations from various shire councils, although Kemp delegated routine inspections to Fraser and Crawford. Reflecting the early establishment of a functional hierarchy, Crawford compiled and dispatched instructions for surveys, supervised the plant and equipment the Board purchased when more money became available, and was in charge of the Board's road construction operations. Fraser compiled descriptions of the roads recommended for main roads status for the information of the local authority and for the Governor-in-Council's approval. The Board secretary was responsible for the day-to-day administrative work, but referred to the Board all disputed decisions, ministerial requests, licensing fees inquiries and petitions for changes to proposed routes. Later, this process was made more efficient by the establishment of a Main Roads

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44 Record of Agenda, 15.12.1921, Item 3.
administrative committee which determined the matters to be referred to the Commissioner for decision. Cabinet approval was given for the appointment of three clerical staff, largely in recognition of the additional work involved in administering the vehicle registration regulations. Then followed an assistant secretary (who later became Main Roads Commissioner), and seven engineers, three of whom were appointed the first District engineers. By 1923, the foundation had been laid for an administrative and professional organisation which became noted for "devotion to its work, loyalty to its Chief and untiring efforts in the public interest".

Between 1922 and 1926, Main Roads changed its status from a fledgling institution, scarcely acknowledged as part of the mainstream of state development, to a powerful player, and moved from the periphery towards the centre of developmental policy considerations. During these years, budget, staffing and operational facilities expanded steadily, new categories of roads were brought under Main Roads’ provisions, its dependability and efficiency were more widely acknowledged, and a higher degree of administrative and operational autonomy was in evidence. With a growing reputation as an effective administrator, Kemp was appointed sole commissioner in place of the Board. The importance of Main Roads as an instrument of government policy was enhanced by the introduction of Commonwealth road funding subsidies, which propelled Kemp into the role of a leading advisor in this area of Commonwealth-State negotiations. It was also the period during which Kemp claimed a place in state and national professional associations, developed his interest in the science of road-making and pursued the raising of professional engineering standards.

45 See, for example, *ibid,* 4.1.1922 - description of recommended road, Sarina-Hampden; Kerr, *op. cit.,* re similar disputes between Burdekin and Ayr shires.
One of Premier and Treasurer, E. G. Theodore’s public commitments in 1922 was to make loan funds available for a public works programme to relieve unemployment. His speech at Laidley on 21 February 1922 confirmed the formation of co-operative and representative producer bodies, together with government intervention to support to the agriculture industry and provide protection for “the man who tills the soil”. He listed eight “tangible and realisable objectives”, one of which was “Main Roads”. Together with Coyne, the Minister for Public Lands, Theodore had met with Board members in January that year. He asked them to prepare, as a matter of urgency, a road plan for the next financial year, intimating that if it received Cabinet approval, £200,000 of loan funds would be available by September. Although Board minutes do not record any further discussion on the loan, by June Kemp had notified the councils involved in two major road projects, the Tinaroo road on the Atherton Tableland and the Killarney to New South Wales Border road, of loan funding being available to the end of the financial year, with the promise of more to come. The day after his Laidley speech, Theodore was arguing forcefully, if unsuccessfully, at the Premiers’ Conference for Commonwealth funding to assist in developing north Queensland.

In November 1919, shortly after Labor elected him Premier and Treasurer to replace T. J. Ryan, he had responded to aggrieved shire councillors seeking Treasury loans to finance long-neglected works programmes by announcing a Commonwealth proposal to advance funds to the States. They were to finance local authority works

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46 England, Interview, op. cit., p.11.
47 Brisbane Courier 22 February 1922; The Worker, 2 March 1922.
48 Record of Agenda, 11.1.1922, Item 39.
as an unemployment relief scheme with preference to returned servicemen, with roads listed first on the Commonwealth schedule of works regarded as "creators of labour". His announcement foreshadowed by over two years, the Bruce-Page Government’s decision to implement its Federal election promise of a “national” roads subsidy initiative. He appears to have banked on its being realised and therefore determined the instrumental role roads development in general, and Kemp and the Main Roads Board in particular, could play in realising his vision for Queensland’s economic development. In his tours of the northern electorates, where Labor’s popularity was being undermined by high unemployment and a perceived neglect by the Brisbane-based Government, Theodore capitalised on Kemp’s good relations with local representatives and did not hesitate to divert complaints about the lack of public works to him. His public support for a roads policy gave Kemp an influential ally in Cabinet at a time when responsibility for Main Roads was transferred to an indifferent McCormack as Minister for Public Lands.

Federal subsidies for state roads’ construction effectively commenced with an announcement, immediately prior to the State Treasurers’ Conference in August 1922, of the Commonwealth’s intention to grant the states up to £250,000 for the construction of national highways to relieve unemployment. Funds were to be allocated on a per capita basis, required matching state funds and could be used on existing or new road construction, subject to Commonwealth approval. Newspaper reports speculating that Queensland’s expected £35,000 share would be applied to one or two major highway projects, provoked heated public debate on the rightful beneficiaries of such government largesse, with Redcliffe council and the proposed

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50 *Brisbane Courier*, 13.11.1919.
Redcliffe highway being nominated as the favourite. It was reported that, prior to the August conference, Main Roads had submitted to Theodore a list of recommended works which he forwarded to “the Melbourne authorities” for assessment and approval. Eventually, Kemp received ministerial approval for allocations to thirteen road projects, with preference clearly being given to those on which the surveys and local authority agreements had already been finalised.\(^{51}\)

Debates in Parliament on both the 1922 and 1923 Main Roads Amendment Bills provide a further insight into the relationship between Board members, ministers and parliamentary representatives, and the often frustrating process of implementing a main roads policy. Most accounts of Kemp’s years as Chairman tend to convey a personal and professional success story, but the reality of those early years was more complex. In establishing the organisation, with all the tedious work of defining effective administrative and operational procedures, and protecting its place in the policy environment, he had as many failures as successes and considerably more public and political criticism than is usually depicted.

The 1922 legislation was noteworthy for the criticism of the Board during debate on what were presented as simple changes to the Board’s financial provisions. Alongside claims that main roads were being built for Automobile Club members rather than for farmers, was the accusation of a deliberate “go-slow” policy being adopted on main roads jobs.\(^{52}\) No examples were given but it appears to have arisen from local authority complaints about the effect of the Industrial Court granting a new award earlier in the year. The Board had worked under the terms of the Local Authorities Award until the Australian Workers Union applied for a new award to

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\(^{51}\) *Northern Herald*, 30.8.1922; *Brisbane Courier*, 26.9.1922.

\(^{52}\) *Main Roads Act Amendment Bill 1922, Second Reading*, QPD, 1922, 142, p. 2123, p.2125.
cover a range of new classifications relating to main roads construction work. Secretary J. E. England represented the Board during the two-day hearing, the outcome of which was a combined "Local Authorities and Main Roads Award" setting a basic wage and various on-the-job allowances. The changes in financial provisions, based on Board recommendations approved by the Minister, allowed annual funding to be increased using the existing structure, thus allowing greater operational planning flexibility. Whereas all Main Roads Fund money remaining unspent at the end of the financial year was previously returned to the Treasury, it would now "remain the property of the Board" and be carried over to the following financial year. In addition, the process of determining and apportioning annual expenditure in local authority areas was adjusted, with local authority liability for maintenance to be repaid annually instead of over thirty years.

In these early years, inadequate funding hindered Kemp's attempts to implement the Board's goal of an effective road network throughout Queensland. The Board's operations were expected to be largely self-funding, and depended on an annual parliamentary appropriation deemed to be a repayable loan, local authority repayments and revenue from the newly-imposed motor vehicle registration fees. Although Section 22 of the 1920 legislation provided for them to be paid into the Main Roads Fund, there was a considerable lead time for registration and collection of these fees. As compulsory registration was proving difficult to enforce, in December 1921 the Board successfully sought ministerial approval to institute proceedings against defaulters. While the public image of its operations focused on road construction, the regulations accompanying the Act delegated to the Board

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54 Record of Agenda, 15.12.1921, Item 46.
powers over commercial vehicle movements and loads. What was to prove a long-term battle began when representatives, mainly from rural electorates, challenged Board decisions restricting commercial vehicle movement on declared main roads. Kemp’s response was invariably courteous but unwavering: the regulations applied to vehicles using main roads and then only by proclamation in certain areas under certain conditions.\(^5\)

The 1922 legislation represented a small, but encouraging victory for Kemp. The provisions of another amendment Bill debated in Parliament during August 1923 showed the results of Cabinet’s increasing confidence in his professional judgment. Having monitored its successful operation by the Country Roads Board, he argued successfully for main roads funding for a new category of developmental roads, aimed at providing transport access to railheads for sparsely settled or newly opened areas.\(^6\) A continuing source of dissatisfaction for many local authorities was the high cost of main roads, requiring a commitment to repaying fifty per cent of interest, redemption and maintenance over thirty years, when they incurred no capital costs in respect of railway construction. One example was the proposal examined by the Public Works Committee which, in April 1921, was assessing proposed railway extensions, to link the Port Douglas rail terminus with the terminus at the mining centre of Mount Molloy. Despite its initial enthusiasm and an extended consultation period, Port Douglas Shire Council lodged an objection to the declaration of the Cairns-Port Douglas road as a main road on the grounds of lack of finance, leaving the Main Roads Board no option but to express its regret and let the matter lapse.\(^7\)

Many councils were also of the opinion that, in particular instances, the standard of

\(^5\) *Ibid*, 27.3.1922, Item 4.

\(^6\) *Main Roads Act Amendment Bill, 1923, Second Reading, QPD, 1923, 141*, p.778.
road specified by Main Roads was inappropriately high for its predicted use. Less exacting, and therefore cheaper, specifications were envisaged for developmental roads. The amendments provided for the establishment of a Main Roads Developmental Fund, into which were paid vehicle licensing fees and money appropriated by parliament based on estimates submitted by the Main Roads Board. The Board would fund the cost of construction from the Fund, the liability of the benefiting local authorities being to repay half the interest on construction costs over twenty years, and all maintenance costs.

Overall, the legislation demonstrated Cabinet’s agreement with the general thrust of Kemp’s suggestions for change. However, the debate on amendments proposed by the Opposition indicated that, at least in theory, the Board’s operations remained firmly under ministerial control. McCormack ridiculed Country Party deputy-leader, A. E. Moore’s call for parliament to have the opportunity to scrutinise Main Roads expenditure proposals, but reacted angrily to the objection raised by King, the Member for Logan, against the deletion from the Bill of section 15 of the principal Act giving local authorities the right to appeal against Board decisions, declaring: “I take power to compel them even if they do not agree, if I consider it necessary” ^ Having sought advice on the issue, McCormack subsequently agreed to an amendment reinserting section 15. He blamed the Main Roads Board on whose advice it had been intentionally omitted, the Board’s view being that, as the State was paying the total cost of construction, local authorities would have little interest in developmental roads. While he again emphasised his power to have any road built, he mended some political fences by declaring his personal support for consultation

57 Record of Agenda, 27.3.1922, Item 18.
58 Main Roads Act Amendment Bill, 1923, Second Reading, op. cit., p.785.
with local authorities in all circumstances. In debates on the Bill and the Main Roads estimates, numerous speakers used the occasion to criticise or support Kemp and the Board’s work, but it was often no more than an opportunity for them to publicise the need for a low-cost road in their electorates.

The Main Roads Acts Amendment Act 1925 marked the end of what was effectively a probation period for Kemp and the beginning of his recognition as an influential administrator. It provided for the replacement of the Board with the Main Roads Commission and his appointment as sole commissioner with a range of corporate powers and choice of, and control over, commission staff. As McCormack described it, Kemp was appointed “in the executive capacity of controller of main roads construction” D. A. Crawford, who succeeded Kemp as commissioner in 1949, was appointed Chief Engineer, while Fraser occupied the position of his assistant for the few years before his retirement. The Act reduced local authorities’ repayment commitments on main roads and, Queensland having secured permission to apply part of the Commonwealth grant for the purpose, extended the provisions for funding developmental roads. By presenting the Bill to Parliament as mostly a “machinery measure” McCormack tried unsuccessfully to avoid discussion on the issues of a sole commissioner versus a Board, the capacity of the commissioner to deliver a comprehensive and equitable road construction programme, and political interference versus parliamentary control. With the Commonwealth’s entry into state roads funding, politicians were becoming more appreciative of the electoral importance of roads and, as was to occur in debates on any legislation with which Kemp was

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60 Ibid; ibid, p.793.
associated, speakers made a clear distinction between almost universally complimenting the person and questioning the powers delegated to him.

According to Cotterell, the appointment of a sole commissioner was not the outcome of policy considerations or a preference for the sole commissioner in place of the Board form of administration, but the result of Kemp applying for the position of president of the newly-established New South Wales Main Roads Board. Kemp must have proved his administrative value to the Queensland Government, as McCormack received Cabinet approval for the appointment, together with a salary of £1750 which placed Kemp on the same level as the New South Wales Board President and the Queensland Railway Commissioner.62 There were fifteen applications for the president’s position and eighty-seven applications for the two member positions. The Board appointed in January 1925 comprised two engineers, each with over thirty years experience, and the President, J. Garlick, who had been Under-Secretary of the Department of Local Government for twenty years. Garlick was said to have assisted in drafting the Bill during 1924 and, after the proposal to appoint the Minister for Local Government as Chairman was rejected, he was the preferred candidate.63 If Garlick was certain to be appointed President, especially to appease the strong local government lobby, Kemp’s application had no chance of success. His success in extracting a higher salary from Karkaroooc council in 1912 by threatening to resign may have decided him to try the same tactic with the Queensland Government. Whether or not he was offered the presidency of the New South Wales Board was, in the end, not at issue since merely the idea of losing his services was enough for the

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62 Cotterell, op. cit., p.82.
63 Department of Main Roads, New South Wales, op. cit., p.83.
Government to agree to Kemp’s proposals for greater status and power, both for himself and the Main Roads authority.

As significant in these respects was the Commonwealth’s entry into state roads’ funding which commenced in 1922 and was expanded, firstly through the Commonwealth Main Roads Development Act 1923 authorising “the first systematic road grants” to the States, and amendments in 1924 and 1925, the latter providing a £250,000 unmatched grant for the reconstruction of existing main roads. Under the Federal Aid Roads Act 1926, the first specific purpose, or section 96, grants were made to the States on the basis of a co-operative agreement between Commonwealth and participating States. The 1923 legislation provided for close ministerial control of the scheme, with ministerial approval required for works’ proposals which were to be compiled by “a competent state authority”, and include plans, specifications and completion date. The Board submitted a list of appropriate road projects but, owing to the stringent supervisory conditions imposed and the on-going lack of operational funding which impinged on the availability of technical staff, skilled workers, plant and materials, the first two years’ grants were not fully expended. Between 1923 and 1926, there was vigorous debate in the national Parliament on the constitutional legality of the Commonwealth’s action, while the States declared their reluctance to allow the imposition of national priorities and national control on an important State responsibility.

Early in 1925, Kemp and England had accompanied the Minister for Public Works to a conference of the newly-established Federal Aid Roads Board and state road authorities where, after a series of acrimonious exchanges, the Commonwealth
acceded to state demands to modify the original grant conditions. The conference (COSRA) gained the status of a permanent intergovernmental committee, providing an effective avenue for improving federal-state relations in matters of roads policy, and giving Kemp membership of an influential, national technocratic network. As Saunders outlines, the Agreement under the 1926 legislation provided for an annual Commonwealth payment of up to two million pounds for ten years, the amount payable to each state to be determined on the basis of three-fifths population and two-fifths area, and used for the construction and reconstruction of defined “federal aid roads.” The new formula netted Queensland one million pounds more than under the previous per capita scheme, with Kemp taking part in all the Federal-State negotiations preceding that decision, and “the hard fight” to gain agreement from New South Wales and Victoria. The more stringent ministerial control of every aspect of roads programmes, together with the requirement for the States to submit a five year plan broken down into proposals for each financial year, and payment only on satisfactory completion of each project, placed a premium on a professional, administratively efficient state roads authority. The 1925 rail strike notwithstanding, McCormack also went so far as to declare the Government’s intention of framing a State roads policy in recognition of the growing importance of roads to Queensland’s economic development.

In the debate on the 1925 legislation, disquiet was expressed over who controlled the process of allocating the Federal Aid grant funds. It was an important issue to local

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66 Kemp, “Address to Ipswich Rotary”, *op. cit.*, p.4.

authorities as these funds reduced their long-term financial commitment while contributing to the provision of new or upgraded roads. As numerous Opposition speakers were to do in the future, A. E. Moore invoked the spectre of an official being placed above Parliament when he quoted the Minister as stating:

> It was absolutely undesirable that any political interference should be used with regard to the allocation of the Commonwealth grant, and that the idea of the Bill was to provide that the money should be paid to the Main Roads Commissioner, to give him absolute discretion in the allocation of the funds according to the conditions attached to the grant. 68

McCormack was obliged to clarify the Government's position by asserting that, while both Federal and State ministers retained a veto power, there had been no political interference in respect of the allocations recommended by Commonwealth and State engineers. 69 The first challenge to Kemp's autonomy in this regard came from the Brisbane City Council's request, on the basis of its higher vehicle registration revenue, for £100,000 to be allocated from the Main Roads Fund, which included Federal Aid roads funds, specifically for the development of metropolitan roads. As he was to do on numerous other occasions, Kemp offered a rationally-based explanation for the Premier's refusal of the request, observing that it would have meant applying the principle to all other local authorities and thus destroying "a progressive state-wide main roads construction policy". 70

Moreover, the benefits from Federal Aid roads funding were not as great as anticipated due to changes in the financial situation at both Federal and State levels. Although Main Roads was receiving increased annual funds from registration fees and state loan allocations, the State's overall fiscal projections were affected by the Commonwealth decision in 1926 to discontinue per capita payments to the states.

68 Ibid, p.605.
under the *Surplus Revenue Act* 1910 and introduce provisions for state grants. Among the factors influencing these changes to the roads funding base were; lower than anticipated fuel excise receipts which reduced the total amount of Federal Aid roads grants available to the states; the exclusion of the States, on constitutional grounds, from levying this type of taxation; and inability or unwillingness on the part of the Queensland Government to provide the necessary matching funds. Overall, however, the provision of Federal subsidies for state roads supported the concept of forward planning for public works and helped obviate some of the political backlash resulting from the declaration of more main roads than there were funds available for their construction. It is not clear whether the latter was part of Labor's strategy to increase electoral support or a successful outcome of Kemp's campaign to force an expansion in the scope of Main Roads' operations. Whatever the background, it created a reservoir of works which, having been confirmed by the ministerial approval process, could be rapidly activated to relieve unemployment in specific locations. As a result, it contributed to raising the status of roads as a valuable instrument of Queensland economic development policy and highlighted the growing dependence on Kemp and the Main Roads Commission for its efficient, and thus politically effective, application.

During these years, Kemp also took a leading role in civil engineering's professional association. Having been a foundation member of the Institution of Engineers, Australia, (IEAust.) he was elected a member of the Institution’s council from 1924

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71 See, for example, “Minister’s Address” *Minutes* of the Annual Conference of the Local Authorities’ Association of Queensland, 1927, p.9, Local Government Association of Queensland Library.
72 See, for example, “President’s Address”, 1924, *op. cit.*, p.18.
to 1927, Vice-Chairman of the Brisbane division in 1925 and 1926, and Chairman in 1927. Although he had become more of an administrator than a designing engineer, he was a respected authority on the scientific approach to the use of road construction materials and assisted in winning government consent for the establishment in 1929 of the Professional Board of Engineers, the first civil engineering accreditation body in Australia. The citation that accompanied his nomination by the Queensland division in 1928 for the position of IEAust. Vice-President, confirmed McCormack’s earlier description of his role as “executive controller” of all state and local authority main and developmental road works. Moreover, he had “organised a major department and built a road system from nothing”, attracted sound technical staff whom he moulded into an efficient, loyal professional corps and laid down administrative and operational protocols which proved equal to future, changing circumstances. Despite worsening economic conditions exacerbated by successive years of drought, Main Roads’ annual expenditure had risen to over £850,000, of which more than half derived from Commonwealth roads subsidies which had been extended in 1927 for a further ten years. The completion or partial completion of main roads in ninety four local authorities and maintenance work in one hundred and thirteen of them demonstrated the acceptance of the concept of a central roads authority, even among Darling Downs’ stalwarts who had campaigned vigorously against the Brisbane-Ipswich-Toowoomba highway and the Cunningham’s Gap road to Warwick. As outlined in

75 Opening of the Toowoomba Range highway, Brisbane Courier, 30.1.1940; Daily Mail, 10.6.1927, 13.6.1927.
Main Roads' annual report for 1928, Kemp planned to issue a bulletin containing statistical information collected by staff on topics ranging from trends in motor vehicle registration to soil sampling. Together with his long, detailed annual reports with photographs comparing the condition of roads before and after Main Roads works, coverage of Federal-State roads funding arrangements and a separate Chief Engineer's report, it demonstrated his appreciation of the strategic value of publicising the work of the organisation he administered.

By 1930 Kemp had developed Main Roads into an efficient, responsive organisation which delivered important, if basic developmental infrastructure to regional Queensland. Moreover, both through his personal standing and the contribution of Main Roads to local development programmes, he helped State Government representatives to maintain a viable working relationship with local authorities and their representatives. Still replicating the Victorian Country Roads Board model, successive amendments to Main Roads legislation had extended the categories of roads coming under Main Roads provisions to include the free construction of declared state highways, and subsidies for the construction of mining and rural access roads, and tourist development roads. To encourage political support and cooperation with Main Roads on the part of local authorities, more flexibility was introduced in the apportioning of road construction and maintenance costs. In addition, local authorities benefited from amendments to Federal Aid Roads grants' provisions, all of which were in place by July 1931. Rather than direct grants-in-aid, roads subsidies were tied to a percentage of fuel excise receipts. The previous grant conditions were abolished, allowing States a discretionary capacity to extend the

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allocation of Federal Aid funds from new construction to repair and maintenance work.\textsuperscript{77}

From its onset in 1929, the Australia-wide economic depression represented a new set of challenges for Kemp and for Main Roads which, over the following decade, proved to be an effective mechanism for the delivery of unemployment relief measures. Entrenched unemployment was not a new problem for Queensland. Unlike New South Wales and Victoria, its economic base was almost entirely dependent on primary and related industries. Successive years of drought had already been experienced by 1929 but, even with good seasons and stable market prices, seasonal unemployment was always sufficiently high to warrant on-going provision for designated unemployment relief works. Queensland was already suffering the effects of a depressed economy before the 1929 State election. Among other election promises, Labor emphasised its commitment to an extensive regional roadworks programme to combat increasing unemployment but, with the McCormack-led Government unable to overcome voters' perception of economic mismanagement, it was defeated by the Moore County-Nationalist Coalition.

At the national level, the threat of "national default" resulted in a Commonwealth-States Agreement, signed at the June 1930 Premiers' Conference, to implement what was known as the Premiers' Plan.\textsuperscript{78} Formulated by leading economists, the Plan was a severe deflationary measure aimed at reducing the national debt and moving


\textsuperscript{78} For a comprehensive coverage of Commonwealth-State relations in the Depression and an analysis of the Premiers' Plan, see C. B. Schedvin, 1970, \textit{op. cit.}
towards a balanced budget. It called for increases in Commonwealth income and
sales tax and primage duties, the reduction of private and public interest rates, and a
twenty per cent reduction in adjustable Government expenditure. At the Loan
Council meeting held at the same time, Federal Treasurer and Loan Council
Chairman, E. G. Theodore, reported that, despite the well-publicised tightening of
the overseas loan market on which Australia depended for the majority of its
borrowings, the States’ requests for loan funds had increased. To encourage a
reduction in debt levels, he announced that loan expenditure for Commonwealth and
State capital works programmes for 1930-31 would be reduced by fifty per cent on
the previous year. It was not until September 1931, when the effects of the
Premiers’ Plan on national employment levels were acknowledged to be too severe,
that Theodore’s more moderate ideas for dealing with the economic crisis were again
considered. Following the report of a specially convened Loan Council sub-
committee, the Premiers’ Conference supported its recommendations for an increase
in loan expenditure. This change marked the beginning of general political support,
sustained throughout the 1930s, for the view that increased public works’ loan
expenditure was critically important for economic revival.

However, until its defeat by Labor in the June 1932 election, the Moore Government
maintained a policy of total support for the Premiers’ Plan. The Treasurer, W. H.
Barnes, declared after the June 1930 Loan Council meeting, that Queensland should
live within its means. He signalled his Government’s determination to reduce loan

79 Ibid, p.249.
80 Brisbane Courier, 12.6.1930.
81 Report of the Proceedings of the Conference of Commonwealth and State Ministers,
Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers (CPP), 1929-31, 2, pp.392-3. Quoted in Schedvin, 1970,
op. cit, p.275.
expenditure and maintain a balanced budget in order to remove the stigma of financial irresponsibility. Queensland was the only state to implement the full recommended twenty per cent reduction in government spending. Public Service staff numbers were cut and wages and salaries initially reduced by ten per cent, while, in July, the Public Service Commissioner, J. D. Story, successfully argued the Government’s case for a reduction in the basic wage. Even as the Loan Council was implementing the agreed restrictions on expenditure approvals, Theodore announced Loan Council approval for a Commonwealth loan of ten million pounds to be floated on the Australian market. Queensland did not participate in this loan since, it was claimed, unlike the other States which intended to use the loan to pay off outstanding overdrafts, it retained cash balances. As the cash balances were subsequently found to have been overstated, more likely reasons were the difficulty in meeting interest and redemption payments after the sharp drop in revenue receipts for the year, and the fact that Queensland’s heavy loan commitments were at the limit of Loan Council approval.

While loan funding for state works programmes and general revenue funding for government wages and services were severely reduced, the political backlash over the high unemployment levels produced Federal and State funding for unemployment relief projects. The Moore Government made an effort to redirect part of its normal loan-funded public works programme to unemployment relief work and, in mid-1930, two further funding sources were added. The first was a Federal Government grant of one million pounds made available from unexpended balances under a six month extension of the Federal Aid Roads Agreement to December 1930.

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82 Brisbane Courier, 16.6.1930.
83 Ibid, 16.7.1930.
Queensland’s share was £130,000, allocated on a three-fifths population and two-fifths area basis, according to the provisions of the Agreement. The second was the *Income (Unemployment Relief) Tax Act* passed by the Queensland Parliament in July. The responsibility of the Minister for Labour and Industry, its purpose was to provide essential relief works for unemployed workers by co-ordinating the activities of all relevant departments and co-operating with Main Roads and local authorities in making works projects available. The relief works were funded by a flat rate levy, initially of one and one quarter per cent on annual income above £105, but rising to five per cent on incomes above £499 in August 1932.\(^*\)\(^5\) The levy was to be paid into an Unemployment Relief Fund, from which reduced wages were paid to relief workers and rations provided for those men for whom there was no work.

Queensland’s approach to unemployment relief works as a factor in economic revival was similar to, if not directly derived from, measures initiated in other countries in this period. In the United States, legislation introduced under Roosevelt’s “New Deal” made provision for the revival of activity through massive public works programmes, an increase in unemployment relief and a reduction in indebtedness. As later developed in Queensland, the major emphasis was on forestry programmes, such as the afforestation of lands, soil erosion, fire prevention and the construction of tourist tracks. $3,3000 million was allocated by Congress for the purpose but, as Kemp was also to find, the “often complicated negotiations with State and municipal authorities” delayed the planning and implementation of the programmes.\(^*\)\(^6\) New Zealand’s unemployment relief measures were almost identical in form and

\(^{\text{ibid; see also, Wiltshire, “Public Finance”, op. cit., pp.166-68.}}\)

\(^{\text{Ibid, p.169.}}\)

objectives to those introduced in Queensland in 1930. Legislation made provision for an Unemployment Fund and an Unemployment Board which, in co-operation with local authorities, allocated funds to approved relief works projects. Local Authorities provided tools and supervision, while wages were paid out of the Unemployment Fund. In order to protect established employment, projects had to be additional to the ordinary local authority works and at lower wage rates. They were to be reproductive in nature and, in the event, consisted almost entirely of unskilled work, such as road-making and land clearance.87

As the Main Roads Commission under Kemp already had a consistent role in the delivery of unemployment relief works, it was invaluable to the Moore Government in addressing what was a rapidly growing problem. Both the Minister for Labour and Industry, H. E. Sizer, and the Minister for Railways and Roads, Godfrey Morgan, exploited Main Roads’ capacity to respond quickly and reliably to demands for relief projects and to deliver them to numerous local authority areas in a demonstrably non-partisan process. The publication in metropolitan and regional newspapers of the Commissioner’s monthly report to the Minister for Railways and Roads, giving details of numbers employed, projects in hand and the geographical distribution of new and ongoing projects, became an on-going vehicle for political point scoring. Kemp also took steps to emphasise the Commission’s worth in his reports to Cabinet and to Parliament, in speeches at the opening of roads and bridges, during inspection visits to local authorities, and to local government conferences. In April 1930, as Loan Council expenditure approvals were being reduced to fifty per cent of the previous year, Sizer announced a £100,000 advance on the “proposed unemployment levy” for the immediate start of relief works. Kemp made a point of recording that,

87 Ibid, pp.11-12.
by the end of the month, Government-approved road works projects across the State had commenced “at the shortest possible notice and practically without a hitch” 88. He also used unemployment relief funding to enable a start to be made on several of his preferred developmental projects for which funds had previously been unavailable. Some of these were tourist roads, such as the Townsville to Mount Spec, Enoggera Waterworks to Mount Nebo, and the Tambourine Mountain roads, while others, including the Halifax to Lucinda Point road, were intended to assist development of local facilities. 89 In most cases, as Kemp had previously been unable to obtain the necessary financial commitment from the local authorities, the works had subsequently lapsed. The Department of Labour and Industry also acknowledged the essential role Main Roads played in the Department’s capacity to deliver on Government promises, publishing in 1931, for example, a comprehensive list of the results of Main Roads relief works. 90 However, few of these works were completed within one financial year. Year after year, the same projects were referred to by the Government, and in Main Roads’ Annual Reports, as examples of relief work schemes employing significant numbers of men.

At the commencement of the State Unemployment Relief Scheme, Kemp made Main Roads’ organisational resources available to the Department of Labour and Industry. Main Roads thus subsidised the preparation of works plans, the cost of plant hire and the provision of materials for the scheme. After 1931, when the relief scheme was extended to include local authorities, Main Roads staff also controlled and inspected unemployment relief works on other than main roads. This control function was later extended to other types of relief schemes under the direction of the Minister for

Labour and Industry.\footnote{\textit{Annual Report}, Department of Labour & Industry, 1931 p.17, p.23.} Main Roads unemployment relief projects eventually involved eighty-seven main roads in fifty-seven local authorities. They were selected from proposals submitted for inclusion in the state-wide road development plan but which, normally, would not have been commenced for some time. Consequently, in making a positive contribution to infrastructure development, they convincingly demonstrated the much-vaunted benefits of state-sponsored, reproductive works.

By the end of 1930, the Moore Government had resolved the issues of imposing and collecting the levy provided for in its amended Income(Unemployment Relief) Tax legislation. The £800,000 to £900,000 expected from the levy was to be paid into an Unemployment Development Fund and, in February 1931, an Unemployment Relief Administration Board was constituted. The Board was subsequently known as the State Unemployment Council or the State Employment Council. Kemp was appointed Chairman, the other members being the Surveyor-General, the Under-Secretary, Department of Labour and Industry, and the Private Secretary to the Labour and Industry Minister. The Board’s role was to recommend relief work projects within the available resources of the Unemployment Fund. Confirming Kemp’s previous comments on the opportunity the relief projects afforded Main Roads for a co-operative relationship with the Department of Labour and Industry and local authorities, the Board was directed to secure some measure of efficiency by co-ordinating the activities of the various departments and government authorities involved. It was also to co-opt the services of any government official “who by experience and training might be found useful in furthering Unemployment Relief...\footnote{\textit{Ibid}, p.72.}
Schemes" The Government's action had, in part, been prompted by the direct Commonwealth grant payment of £73,000 the previous year to local authorities for Christmas unemployment relief works. The grant was opposed by Kemp who believed it encouraged an inefficient use of funds for local works programmes, and by the Director of Labour because of his department's exclusion from the labour hiring process. In the event, the grant money was used inefficiently and some of it remained unexpended.92

As Chairman, Kemp's position enabled him to maintain the Main Roads Commission's central role in unemployment relief measures while opening up opportunities for extending his influence to areas outside Main Roads. The range of schemes submitted to the Board for further investigation included subsidies to mining prospectors, advances to cotton growers, and support for experimental tobacco growing on the Atherton Tableland. Also included was a controversial provision for loans to private landholders. Labor Opposition leader Forgan Smith labelled it a means of securing cheap labour, but Sizer contended that the money, to be used for ringbarking, scrub clearing and water facilities, would develop the land in addition to generating employment.93

In January 1931, the Moore Government's adherence to the dictates of the Premiers' Plan resulted in a strengthening of the role of railways as an instrument of economic development and a potential setback to Kemp's influence in this policy area. A new Cabinet position of Minister for Transport was created to oversee the co-ordination of state transport, with responsibility for Main Roads being transferred to him from Public Lands, and a State Transport Board was constituted under provisions of the

93 Brisbane Courier, 18.7.1930.
State Transport Co-Ordination Act 1931. Its first meeting convened on 26 January by the Chairman, Railway Commissioner Davidson, was held in the Railway Department’s conference room. Kemp was one of four other Board members, with support for Main Roads' interests being bolstered by the appointment of Main Roads clerk, Leo Feenaghty, as secretary, and the retention of barrister, G. M. Calder, who was also a Main Roads engineer, as legal counsel.\(^4\) One of the first resolutions passed at the meeting, which certainly strengthened Davidson’s position but may also have been a recognition of Kemp’s facility in using the press to advance his own views, was that all public statements were to be made by the Chairman on behalf of the Board. Moreover, it was agreed that, in any subsequent discussions, decisions would be presented as decisions of the Board and not attributed to any one member. The Board’s principal responsibility under section 15 of the enabling legislation was to investigate the state’s transportation problems, the issue of the overlapping of services, and the respective capacities of road and rail transport prior to making recommendations in a report for Cabinet consideration. Kemp exercised an indirect influence on the report’s contents when his absence from early meetings caused decision on some recommendations to be deferred and then abandoned. More directly, he had J. E. England, the Main Roads Commission secretaty, draft a succession of alterations and amendments which were accepted in the final report.\(^5\)

As the Moore Government continued to support the Premiers' Plan in campaigning for the June 1932 Queensland election, the Commonwealth Government used the

\(^4\) Minutes of meeting of State Transport Board, 26.1.1932, R.M.O. 300, Queensland Transport Archives (QTA).

\(^5\) Ibid, 29.2.1932, 8.3.1932, 30.3.1932.
April Premiers’ Conference to announce a Commonwealth-State Winter Relief Loan. Queensland’s share was £310,000, with a fifty per cent matching requirement. In March and April, the State Employment Council had received a range of works proposals from government departments, local authorities, private companies and individuals. An overall unemployment relief works programme assembled from these proposals was presented by Moore to the Premiers’ Conference in anticipation of Commonwealth Government and Loan Council approval. As the loan was being raised on debentures issued by the Commonwealth Bank, the bank attempted to exert control over the loan allocations by requiring the Bank Board’s approval for all proposals. Prime Minister Scullin was quoted as advising Queensland “to make application to the Bank for the money” but as Barnes, the Queensland Treasurer, insisted, “it had definitely been agreed” that approval for loan-funded unemployment relief works rested with the State Employment Council soon to be formed in Queensland. The Council was to include Commonwealth representatives among its members and, if the Council’s decisions were unanimous, the only further step required was their ratification by State Cabinet. The formation of the new Council was announced on 5th May 1932. As Labour and Industry Minister, Sizer was the Council’s Chairman. Other members were; Kemp; J. D. Story; the administrative heads of the Treasury and the Department of Labour and Industry; the Manager of the Agricultural Bank; two private sector representatives and W. L. Payne, Chairman of the Land Administration Board (LAB) which had been permanently established under 1931 amendments to the Lands Acts. Although

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96 See, for example, Conference of Local Progress Associations’ deputation to Minister for Labour and Industry re the plight of cotton growers in Callide, Dawson and Burnett districts, 2.5.1932. 246/2/5, R.M.O. 300, QTA.

97 Brisbane Courier, 20.5.1932.
there was no local government representative, the Council membership was intended to combine representation of the major groups having a direct interest in economic revival and employment creation with the "special knowledge" of experienced government administrators. There were also two Commonwealth Government representatives. At the Council's first meeting on 11 May 1932, Kemp was appointed Chairman of the Industry, Mining and Works Committee and a member of the Rural Development Committee, the Council's two sub-committees. As he had already gathered information on, or personally inspected, most of the proposals in hand, the report he presented at the first meeting made recommendations as to their viability and whether or not they met the criteria of reproductive works laid down by the Commonwealth. At the same time, the state component of the loan allowed the State Government to retain some autonomy in the selection of relief works schemes. The Commonwealth-approved programme listed certain general categories of works, but it was the State Employment Council's responsibility to draw up a detailed schedule of approved works according to funding allocations. The schemes the Council was asked to investigate and recommend to the Commonwealth differed little from those in the previous schedule, except for the provision for loan assistance to private industry. The latter referred directly to two proposals submitted to the Unemployment Council earlier in the year. The first proposal, which was later approved, was from the directors of Mount Morgan for funding to revive its defunct gold mining operations. The second was an unsuccessful request from timber merchant Romeo Lahey for funds to construct a road from Cardwell to access timber reserves in the hinterland. Lahey proposed to float a public company to finance the cutting and milling of the timber and ship it south from a jetty he proposed building
at Cardwell. Kemp recommended the proposal should not be approved since, in his opinion, it lacked the most basic operations’ planning.98

The Council’s meetings during May to finalise the schedule were influenced by the campaign promises for the imminent State election, the competing claims of the works departments and the Brisbane City Council’s demands for State Government support. With Commonwealth approval for the Employment Council’s programme secured, Moore immediately announced the employment of one thousand men “within the week”, to be increased to three times that number “when the programme is in full swing”. Almost £100,000 was transferred from the Main Roads Trust Fund for the purposes of road construction in North Queensland to boost the available relief funds.99 Sizer’s announcements over the following two days dealt with the details of these programmes. Presented as decisions of the Employment Council’s two sub-committees, they were intended to address the high unemployment rates in the metropolitan area and to provide assistance in rural development. As the Rural Development Committee’s Chairman, Payne, the Land Administration Board Chairman, was now in a position to advance some of the important land settlement projects previously affected by the cutbacks in loan works approvals. On 28 May, he made his own public announcement that landholders should make their loan applications to the LAB. He also announced that the PEI Branch would be responsible for road works in respect of the closer settlements recently opened in the Millmerran, Chinchilla, Wondai and Mundubbera districts. His action exacerbated the tension between Kemp and Payne over issues of responsibility for road planning.


99 Brisbane Courier, 27.5.1932.
and construction in Queensland. Kemp had been unimpressed by the PEI Branch’s failure to complete promised access roads to new settlements, particularly in North Queensland, and moved to control this new situation. As Chairman of the Industry, Mining and Works Committee, he secured Sizer’s approval for an agreement with the Land Settlement Committee for the PEI Branch’s works to be restricted to the Millmerran area. Main Roads took over the remaining projects and arranged for them to be carried out by the respective shires under Main Roads supervision.100

Long-standing North Queensland examples of the problems arising from this divided responsibility included the Palmerston lands and the Beatrice River settlement. Since 1922, local settlers and their political representatives had lobbied Main Roads for an access road and bridge101 but, as the proposed road was not designated a main road, its construction had remained the responsibility of the PEI Branch. In May, during a campaign speech in Bowen, the Premier had promised £10,000 for the construction of the long-awaited access road from Millaa Millaa to the Palmerston lands. The money was to be provided through the Forestry Board of the Land Administration Board rather than the unemployment relief loan, and the road constructed by the PEI Branch.102 Kemp first exerted pressure on the Rural Development Committee to agree to the money being provided from the Unemployment Fund, then had the project transferred to the Main Roads’ unemployment works programme. He intended to ensure the construction of an all-weather road rather than the suggested forestry track so as to provide the settlers with essential year-round access to markets. By the end of the year, he had negotiated a £10,000 additional grant from

100 Brisbane Courier, 27.5.1932; 23.5.1932; 28.5.1932, 246/2/5, R.M.O. 300. QTA.
101 Record of Agenda, 6.2.1922, Item 10, 48/1/1; ibid, Item 34, 48/3/1.
the Commonwealth-State loan funds free of interest and redemption payments, as “a straight out subsidy to the Main Roads Fund for building this road for the purpose of land settlement and forestry development.” The McHugh Bridge across the Beatrice River was completed in September 1932, allowing road access to the Beatrice River settlement for the first time. It was constructed largely under a Main Roads relief works scheme on a site chosen several years previously by Kemp and Crawford.

Forgan Smith’s Labor Government was returned to power in June 1932 on a platform of measures for unemployment relief. At the national Labor Party Conference before the election and at the Premiers’ Conference later that year, the incoming Premier affirmed his rejection of the Premiers’ Plan and his commitment to a return to full employment for Queenslanders. His policy proposals aimed to provide direct employment, but also to target indirect opportunities for employment by committing resources to an infrastructure development programme. This would enable more extensive land settlement, with the associated relocation of many unemployed workers to the agricultural sector, and the potential for increased agricultural production and the fostering of industries serving the primary sector. In a radio broadcast a week after Labor was formally returned to government, the Premier disclosed the outcome of a special Cabinet meeting on Labor’s policy “to combat the depression.” Although he foreshadowed the introduction of full award rates and conditions for relief workers, the creation of a “representative” Bureau of Industry to

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102 *Brisbane Courier*, 20.5.1932.


promote full employment, and the prospect of economic revival, there was little of substance in the speech. The only employment-generating scheme to be confirmed was "the immediate commencement of an extensive programme of road works", although no details of the programme were disclosed.

One commentator in the daily press declared the Minister for Transport the most important Cabinet position behind the Premier. In his view, it was the Minister's responsibility to prevent the railways administration from re-creating its "State within a State" which, through its management policies and "scandalous over-staffing", had compromised the orderly administration of the State. Influencing this view were the events of the previous November when the Moore Government instituted draconian legislative measures in what was considered a ill-advised attempt to break a railway strike that began at the Mt Oxide and Dobbyn copper mines. Also not forgotten was the disruption that resulted from the 1927 South Johnstone sugar mill and railway strike and the ensuing battle for dominance between the Australian Railways Union (ARU) and the Australian Workers Union. Allied to the enthusiasm with which the newspapers greeted the prospect of the roadworks' programme providing jobs for large numbers of unemployed workers was an implication that strengthening the position of roads as a significant employment provider would weaken entrenched union dominance of transport services. In the *Brisbane Telegraph* a few days later, another commentator took the new Premier to task for claiming that, as "geniuses have replaced fools in the public administration" under his regime, unemployment relief works policy would

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106 *Brisbane Courier*, 23.6.1932.


henceforth be rationally and efficiently implemented. Expanding on the merits of the established Main Roads administration, he asserted:

The Main Roads Commissioner has been carefully employing all the funds available in this very class of work, and it is a fact that under the wise administration of the Commissioner a remarkably high percentage of efficiency, in all the circumstances has been shown for the expenditure of money specifically according to the conditions of the Moore Government's relief scheme.  

The writer aligned himself with the promotion of roads over railways when he attacked the Premier again in December. On this occasion, he criticised the Premier for urging the public to go back to supporting the railways when the benefits of road transport were now so widely appreciated.  

Although motor vehicle registration in Queensland had quadrupled between 1924 and 1931, Forgan Smith found himself obliged to comply with the nationally-determined policy on transport. The outcome of the Conference of Australian Railways and Transport Authorities Kemp and Davidson had attended in February 1932 was further endorsement of measures to remove the perceived unfair competition road transport represented for railways.  

The Premier acknowledged the realities of the State situation where railways represented a virtually unserviceable debt while accounting for around forty percent of loan expenditure, but returned nearly forty-five per cent of the State's annual revenue and was an important contributor to Labor's support base. Displaying his customary capacity for positive thinking, Kemp noted that the conference report confirmed continuing Federal support for developmental feeder roads giving access.

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109 Brisbane Telegraph, 23.6.1932.  
111 Brigden, Questions put to the Conference, Report on Conference of Railways and Transport Authorities, 15-23 February, 1932, J. B. Brigden, Papers, MS 730, Series 1, Item 22, NLA.  
to railheads, as they embodied the original concept of road networks complementing but secondary to railway development.

Under provisions of The State Transport Act 1932 which repealed the 1931 legislation, the Transport Board was replaced by the State Transport Commission, the members of which were the Commissioner for Railways who was appointed Chairman, the Commissioner of Main Roads, and the Commissioner of Police. The Commission’s principal duties involved administering the registration and movement of heavy vehicles. Kemp balanced the controls implicit in the transport co-ordination arrangements with the increase in registration fees’ revenue paid into the Main Roads Fund and the reduction in road maintenance costs to result from the restrictions imposed on heavy vehicles. His conviction of the centrality of roads, and the engineers who designed and constructed them, to Australia’s economic development, was the dominant theme of his public speeches as President of the Australian Institution of Engineers from 1931 to 1932 and to community and business groups around the State. It was a visionary stance and in the best tradition of professional ideals. That he attached some sense of a noble calling to his profession was illustrated by his highly unusual inclusion of a quotation from an unknown author in the 1933 Main Roads report to Parliament:

Roads rule the world - not kings, nor courts, nor constables; not ships, nor soldiers. The road is the only royal line in a democracy, the only legislature that never changes, the only court that never sleeps, the only army that never quits, the first aid to the redemption of any nation, the exodus from stagnation in any society,... The road is umpire in every way and when the new map is made it simply pushes on its great campaign of help, hope, brotherhood, efficiency, and peace.

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114 J. R. Kemp, Presidential Address to a meeting of the Institution of Engineers (Australia), 8.3.1932, typescript, Canberra: IEAust., 1932.
Under the Labor Government, the State Employment Council was retained, virtually unchanged, to continue its role of investigating and recommending suitable unemployment works proposals under the Commonwealth-State loan arrangements. The "revival loan" Forgan Smith referred to after the election was probably the same Commonwealth-State loan approved in May 1932. However, Cabinet had apparently decided to raise the state component of the loan, since the full £620,000 was once again available to the Council for allocation to suitable works projects. At meetings of the Council's two sub-committees throughout June, the original list of proposals was again brought forward for consideration. As many of the proposals as possible were referred back to the relevant departments for funding under their annual works appropriations or, as with a range of Main Roads works, transferred to the State Unemployment Relief Scheme funded from the unemployment tax.

The previous allocations and arrangements for road works schemes associated with new settlements, as well as advances to cotton growers, were retained and funded from the Rural Development Committee's loan allocation. The Industry, Mining and Works Committee was allocated £293,000 and Kemp's recommendations on a number of proposals for funding allocations received Council approval. These included the revival of gold mining operations at Mount Morgan, the construction of wheat silos by the Public Works Department, and £25,000 for coke ovens at Bowen. Supported by the Premier, this latter proposal was intended to revive part of the Ryan/Theodore plan for a State-owned iron and steel works at Bowen. Kemp hesitated to recommend funding as the viability of the works depended entirely on Mount Isa Mines honouring long-term purchasing contracts and, following a Cabinet decision to hold it in abeyance, the project did not proceed.
Kemp was able to provide the Council with a list of aerodrome improvement projects in Brisbane and eight regional towns after the Commonwealth representatives insisted that some of the Commonwealth loan funding be directed to Commonwealth works priorities. Most of his time, however, was taken up with assessing local authority proposals for public works that covered not only road construction but also the provision of water, drainage, sewerage and electricity systems. The Main Roads Commission had been allocated £200,000 from the Industry, Mining and Works Committee funds to carry out road works “in specially selected areas to aid development of the State and assist in opening up new lands, marketing of produce and transport generally” 116 While Kemp may have exerted some influence over this wording, the absence of a detailed programme appeared to have been contingent on political considerations, as well as the outcome of the Land Administration Board’s continual attempts to influence land settlement funding decisions.

On 22 July, at a meeting of the Industry, Mining and Works Committee, Kemp moved to reassert his influence over road works allocations by stating that he had £290,000 worth of road work “ready for immediate dispatch”. He thought it would be useful in view of the Council’s difficulty in finding suitable schemes to fund. Committee member, J. D. Story, supported Kemp’s proposal, commenting that it was “the best scheme on which money could be expended” as it fulfilled all the formal requirements of unemployment relief schemes.117 In Kemp’s view, road works were particularly valuable in times of high unemployment. Road were cheaper to build than spur (branch) railways and; “It can safely be said that no other occupation finds


117 Meeting of the Industry, Mining and Works Committee, 22.7.1932. R.M.O. 300, QTA.
more employment per £1,000 expended than road construction.” Following its approval by the Council and Cabinet sub-committee, the programme provided a full year’s employment for 640 men.

On 4 August, the Under-Secretary, Department of Labour and Industry, W. H. Austin, wrote to Kemp, advising him of the strict conditions governing the employment of relief workers. Labour was to be drawn from the local labour exchanges, the selection being made by the Director of Labour or his agent. As large a proportion as possible should be selected from the ranks of Intermittent Relief workers, bearing in mind the need to organise efficient gangs of men. Kemp had previously referred to the problem of maintaining road construction standards and achieving efficient results, given that large numbers of the unemployed were unaccustomed to either physical exercise or the living conditions in road camps. As a result, Main Roads was conceded the right to retain gang foremen from its staff and employ sufficient skilled men to ensure projects were completed. Another concession was that workers could be held over for periods of two weeks after the normal rotations to ensure continuity of work, while a later agreement between the Commission and the Director of Labour settled the proportion of relief workers to Main Roads workers for each gang. In a reflection of the change of government and the implementation of Forgan Smith’s promise, it was a condition of employment of labour that relief workers would be paid full award rates and the rotational periods for married and single men strictly observed. These conditions for the employment of relief workers on public works projects were retained and applied to all the major

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118 Annual Report of the Commissioner of Main Roads, 1932, p.10; ibid, 1933, p.5.
119 Austin to Kemp, 4.8.1932, State Employment Council, R.M.O. 300, QTA.
public works subsequently administered by the Bureau of Industry through its Works Committee of which Kemp was Chairman.

The problem arising from the Treasurer's decision to remove local authority access to loan funding was addressed by a suggestion from Austin. Where loan allocations would have been made to local authorities, they would be allocated to the Commissioner of Main Roads and "in his way, whilst still doing good work, expedite the expenditure of the Winter Relief Loan up to the full amount granted" Moreover, any unallocated Rural Development Committee funds could be allocated to the Commissioner for the same purpose.\footnote{120} The Council's endorsement of Austin's suggestion recognised Kemp's special knowledge of local authority conditions and his capacity to secure agreement with them in planning and financing works programmes. It also gave Kemp effective control over Payne and the Land Administration Board in determining road works schemes associated with the opening up of a number of land settlements. Although in subsequent Employment Council meetings Payne attempted to re-establish some independence in this matter,\footnote{121} most of the schemes continued to be subject to an agreement between the Main Roads Commission and the PEI Branch on their respective responsibilities. A meeting of the State Employment Council with the Cabinet sub-committee on 9 March 1933 made further small allocations from the remaining expended loan funds to subsidise mining prospectors and a banana growing project at Nerang. It was

\footnote{120} Austin to Payne, 23.7.1932. R.M.O. 300, QTA.

\footnote{121} See, for example, Secretary, Lands Administration Board. to Under-Secretary, Department of Labour and Industry, re funding for road to Eungella lands, Mackay 2.5.1933. 246/2/12, R.M.O. 300, QTA.
Kemp's last meeting as he did not attend the meeting on 17 July when the Council, having no further purpose, was adjourned "sine die".122

On 5 December 1932, the Bureau of Industry was established under the Bureau of Industry Act. Kemp’s appointments as Chairman of the Roads, Mining and General Works Committee and the Bureau’s Works Boards, have been considered the first significant stage in his rise to the position of unrivalled administrative power which derived from his appointment in 1938 as Co-ordinator General of Public Works.123

However, it has been argued here that the foundation for his later pre-eminent position was laid in his development of Main Roads from a concept that appeared to be programmed for failure to an efficient, politically important organisation. In the process, he exhibited effective organisation and management skills, established cordial relations with public representatives throughout the state and with Federal and State departmental officials and, particularly through his handling of unemployment works programmes, won the confidence of those with political power. Moreover, his responsibilities as a member of the State Employment Council alerted him to the possibility of a planned, co-ordinated approach to the delivery of government public works programmes. In 1937, when the Government began to explore publicly the concept of administrative co-ordination, Story commented:

.... In respect of works which are intended specifically to relieve unemployment, a form of Intra-state co-operation and co-ordination would be advantageous. ... Orderly planning of works-projects for unemployment relief purposes involves a careful marshalling of schemes and a local analysis of them with a view to the selecting of the schemes which will employ most

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122 Minutes of the Meetings of the State Employment Council and the Cabinet sub-committee, 9.3.1933, 17.7.1933, R.M.O. 300, QTA.
man-power as the first objective, and will contain the greatest possibilities of
becoming reproductive. Experience has demonstrated ... that when special
funds have been made available somewhat unexpectedly, for relief work
projects, there has been a much hurried searching for suitable works ... This
unpreparedness too has retarded the restoring of men to full-time employment
when funds have been made available for full-time work.

The idea (of orderly planning and coordination) is not new; rather it is a
suggestion for the continued application of the principles of the old
Employment Council and the extension of some of the features of the present
Bureau of Industry.¹²⁴

¹²⁴ Annual Reports of the Public Service Commissioner, 1931-37, Queensland Parliamentary Papers
(QPP), 1938, 2, p.19.
3.

'BOARDS OF EXPERTS': KEMP AND THE BUREAU OF INDUSTRY

Kemp's membership of the Bureau of Industry during the 1930s represented an important stage in his rise to a position of significant administrative power. In broadening his range of responsibilities, it gave him the opportunity to gain experience in the administration of functional authorities beyond Main Roads, to improve his understanding of public finance issues, and to consolidate his professional status. Kemp's appointment acknowledged his standing as one of a group of senior administrators on which the Forgan Smith Government depended to implement the "economic revival" promises generally credited with returning Labor to office in June 1932. His pivotal role in the commencement of the major works projects underpinning these promises and the long process of their realisation, honed Kemp's skills in managing the effects of political pragmatism, scarce resources and competing departmental ambitions. Overall, his work with the Bureau laid the foundation for his subsequent appointment as Co-Ordinator-General of Public Works (Co-Ordinator-General) and contributed to his influence on the drafting of Forgan Smith's landmark State Development and Public Works Co-ordination Act 1938.

The Bureau of Industry Act, assented to on 5 December 1932, provided for the Bureau's establishment within Forgan Smith's Treasury portfolio. Introducing the enabling Bill to Parliament, the Premier noted that, although the Bureau of Economics and Statistics established by the Moore government was dissolved, many of its functions were transferred to the new bureau. Similarly, the position of Director, to

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1 See, for example, Lack, op. cit., pp. 124-128.
which J. B. Brigden was re-appointed, retained many of its former powers. Forgan Smith defined the Bureau’s function as:

... the preparation and elaboration of schemes for unemployment relief, and promotion of employment and generally to act in an advisory capacity under legislative authority in respect to many matters which have assumed national importance as a natural result of the rationalisation of industry under modern methods of production. 

and its establishment as central to Labor’s plan “to provide a method of organised planning in the internal economy of the State” 2 Forgan Smith, as Treasurer, was President of the Bureau. Kemp, as Main Roads Commissioner, was one of seven ex officio members, the others being Brigden, the Public Service Commissioner, the Chairman of the Land Administration Board (LAB), and the Under-Secretaries of the Departments of Labour and Industry, and Public Works. There was provision for up to eight other members to represent “primary production, commercial and trade union” interests. 3 Three sub-committees were established, the Rural Development Committee, the Administrative, Finance and Industrial Committee, and the Roads, Mining and General Works Committee to which Kemp was appointed Chairman.

One of the Bureau’s statutory responsibilities, the co-ordination of the state’s loan works programme and its funding, was to assume increasing importance during the 1930s. However, beginning with the first meeting in February 1933, members were principally occupied with selecting works proposals that had the capacity to create employment, much as the State Employment Council had done the previous year. Having a extensive knowledge of local conditions, Kemp inspected many of these proposals while consulting with representatives of the government departments and

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3 Ibid.
local authorities which normally sponsored them. On the Bureau's recommendation, Cabinet approved three major capital works projects:

the Kangaroo Point (Story) Bridge, which included river works associated with the bridge's construction, river improvements to facilitate shipping, and the reclamation of riverside land at Hamilton; the Stanley River (Somerset) Dam; and, the relocation of the University of Queensland to St. Lucia.

To administer the projects, the Bridge Board, the Stanley River Works Board and the University Works Board were created under the Roads, Mining and General Works Committee, with Kemp appointed Chairman of all three boards. Successive amendments to the 1932 legislation delegated "the powers and authorities" of the Bureau to the Works Boards, allowing each board to be constituted a constructing authority, to raise its own funds and to have powers of land resumption, but reserving to the Bureau the ownership of the facility constructed. The Works Boards were responsible, through the Bureau of Industry, to the Governor-in-Council. In Parliament, Opposition attacks on the scope of the Bureau's powers and their delegation to the Works Boards were particularly strong in relation to the Bridge Board, which was constituted by Orders-in-Council of December 1933 and September 1934. The absence of validating legislation was condemned as a further example of the Government ignoring the democratic parliamentary process in favour of executive decision-making. Although, as a result, the Stanley River Works Board and the River Improvement Works Board were constituted under amendments to the Bureau of Industry Act in 1933 and 1934, the Opposition identified a further cause
dissatisfaction in Parliament’s exclusion from decisions on the capital expenditure associated with these major infrastructure projects. 4

As Chairman of the Bureau’s Roads, Mining and Works Committee, Kemp’s responsibilities were concerned with roads, through the road development plan for the state drawn up by the Main Roads Commission (Main Roads), and general works, through his chairmanship of the Works Boards. However, in pursuing an active role in the Bureau’s investigative function, he became involved in the assessment of a much wider range of potential development projects, including irrigation and electricity supply schemes, the provision of harbour facilities and agricultural production experiments. This investigative role, much of it involving the evaluation of local authority works priorities and associated financial obligations, expanded the experience he had already gained with Main Roads in compiling and recommending politically acceptable public works budgets. Since the Bureau of Industry had been given responsibility for co-ordinating loan funding for Queensland’s public works program, Kemp’s position as Chairman of the Bureau’s Roads, Mining and Works Committee meant that he was responsible for shaping many of the preliminary recommendations. His appointment as Chairman of the three Works Boards brought him face-to-face with the difficulties of balancing the allocation of loan funding for all approved projects. The Brisbane City Council was a case in point. The Council had been obliged to make a financial commitment to two of the Works Board projects on the basis of their benefit to ratepayers, even though it was having difficulty funding essential works in the metropolitan area. His experience in producing a politically approved, workable outcome from these complex negotiations enhanced Kemp’s status locally, confirmed his reputation for reliability and impartiality, and gave him

4 Bureau of Industry Amendment Bill, 1934, QPD, 1934, 166, pp.1640-41.
standing in the national decision-making agencies dealing with loan funding for state public works programs. This was to prove of assistance in discharging his responsibilities as Queensland's Co-Ordinator-General, as Deputy-Director of the Allied Works Council during World War Two, and in negotiations on post-war reconstruction programs.  

With his appointment to the Works Boards, Kemp was obliged to address the logistics of undertaking a considerably expanded range of duties. In addition to investigations on behalf of the Bureau of Industry and the increased scope of Main Roads' functions, both of which entailed regular inspection tours and personal liaison with local authority representatives, in December 1935 he was appointed Chairman of the Royal Commission on Electricity. The Commission was appointed following allegations of exploitative, monopolistic and unsafe practices on the part of electricity supply companies throughout Queensland. Reflecting Labor's ideological goals of public ownership of utilities, its prime purpose was to inquire into the feasibility of a co-ordinated, publicly-owned electricity supply system for the state. According to Thomis, this encompassed a sub-set of aims, including eliminating waste and duplication, the economic development of the state, planning for rural electrification, and the early implementation of "a cheap, efficient service", especially for Queensland's south-east. Kemp's established relationship with local authority representatives proved invaluable. After visiting towns "from Coolangatta to Cairns" and hearing evidence from dozens of witnesses, the Commissioners demonstrated an enviable efficiency in presenting a comprehensive report within twelve months.  

5 Wheeler, op. cit.  
Except for a secretary appointed to each Board, the Works Boards had none of the usual departmental support structure. Kemp's solution to this problem was to conduct the business of the Boards, and the Royal Commission in its initial phase, using Main Roads as the administrative base and holding the Works Boards' meetings, one after the other, on Friday mornings in his Main Roads office. This regime was extended to the early years of his duties as Co-Ordinator-General when that organisation also lacked a separate administrative structure. While it was common for correspondence on a particular matter to be addressed, for example, to Kemp as Main Roads Commissioner from Kemp as University Works Board Chairman, the meticulous record-keeping process which he had earlier initiated for Main Roads, and which was carried over into each of the other offices he held, ensured that unambiguous lines of responsibility were maintained.

Of undoubted value to Kemp in effectively discharging his Works Boards' responsibilities was the support which derived from the harmonious working relationship he enjoyed with both Brigden and Story. As Director of the Bureau of Industry, Brigden was appointed to all three Boards, as was Story, the Bureau's Vice-President. There did not appear to be an attempt by any one member to dominate proceedings and, with all matters subject to the formal reporting and decision-making processes of Board meetings, Kemp's role as Chairman and official spokesman for the Boards was never undermined. Each respected the others' particular fields of expertise and consulted in confidence before proceeding on a course of action. Brigden respected Kemp's opinion, not only on technical matters but also on the complex aspects of project funding, as was demonstrated in the negotiations over the Australian Mutual Provident Society (AMP) loan to finance construction of the Story
Whether or not Kemp considered Brigden a personal friend is uncertain but, for Brigden, there was certainly a personal element in their relationship, as shown by the concern he expressed in private correspondence about Kemp’s heavy work schedule and the state of his health. The relationship between Kemp and Colin Clark, Brigden’s replacement as Director, was never one of friendship and, on occasions, the normally diplomatic Kemp did not hide his hostility to Clark.

During the 1930s, Story’s influence on Queensland government administration was at its height. In July 1940, at the official opening of the Kangaroo Point Bridge, renamed in Story’s honour, Forgan Smith described him as “one of the greatest statesmen and public servants in the British Empire”

Story had a presence in areas of administration far beyond his official duties as Public Service Commissioner and he had become acquainted with Kemp when both became members in 1932 of the State Employment Council. Clearly impressed with Kemp’s practical approach to the Council’s problem of selecting effective unemployment relief projects from among the many proposed, Story had unequivocally supported Kemp’s plan for providing an immediate, and productive, employment programme through Main Roads’ projects.

As a member of the Works Boards, Story assisted with report writing for, and made representations to Cabinet on behalf of the Boards. Standing in as Chairman when

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8 See correspondence between Brigden and Kemp, September 1935, Records Management Office (R.M.O.) 303, Queensland Transport Archives, (QTA). It should be noted that Main Roads’ material relating to Main Roads, Co-Ordinator-General, Works Boards and Allied Works Council activities has been copied, often on a seemingly random selection basis, on a total of 320 film reels which were held in the Queensland Transport Archives, Fortitude Valley. A hard-copy index to the files represented on each film reel was available initially for my research but later disappeared. File numbers have been included in citations where they were retained on the photographed pages.

9 See, for example, Brigden to Kemp, handwritten letter 10.9.1935, R.M.O. 303, QTA.

10 Courier-Mail, 6.7.1940.
Kemp was absent overseas in 1938, he did not attempt to impose his own priorities on the Boards’ agendas. Rather he continued to maintain his role as part of their management “team” and to pursue the agreed goals. Story was particularly helpful in the painfully petty negotiations that characterised the St. Lucia University project but his most substantial contribution was as the Boards’ industrial relations expert.

Kemp’s priorities in this area were unambiguous in that his chief concerns were to have projects completed within the estimated budget and as quickly and efficiently as possible. While he maintained generally cordial relations with union officials, he created some difficult situations by agreeing, often during his on-site inspection tours, to workers’ requests for better pay and conditions, without reference to the Industrial Court process. In 1937, he petitioned the Premier to allow work gangs on the Somerset Dam to be employed on a five-day week basis. Although in contravention of the conditions laid down for the Intermittent Relief system, Kemp argued, unsuccessfully, that this was the most cost-efficient method of utilising the available labour.

Of the public works projects developed in the 1930s under the authority of the Bureau of Industry, the construction of the Story Bridge and the Somerset Dam held a particular appeal for Kemp. They were an engineering challenge that, if met, represented an opportunity to raise the standard of engineering practice in Queensland and to give Queensland a national, if not international, reputation in the field. The report of the Bureau of Industry’s ‘Special Committee on Water Supply and Flood Prevention’, which recommended construction of Somerset Dam, provided Kemp with tangible proof of Queensland’s capabilities in this field. He had 250 copies printed for distribution, personally forwarding some to appreciative colleagues at the Melbourne
Harbour Trust and the Institution of Engineers. An approach to A. G. Gutteridge, the Melbourne engineer who had prepared a report to the 1928 River Commission, backfired when, in an exchange of letters with Kemp, Gutteridge refused to be swayed from his preference for the Middle Creek dam site.\footnote{Kemp to Gutteridge 3.5.1935, Gutteridge to Kemp, 11.5.1935, 28.5.1935, \textit{ibid}; See Royal Commission of enquiry (on) Brisbane water supply, report, together with appendices, (A. G. Gutteridge) \textit{QPP}, 1928, Vol. 2, pp. 775-854.}

One of the initial problems Kemp faced in maintaining the momentum of political support for the major projects arose from the enthusiasm with which Forgan Smith and other Labor spokesmen embraced the projects as the centrepiece of a publicity campaign to reassure Queenslanders of their economic rationale. Announcements of the high levels of job creation, the boost to allied industries and even completion dates were premature as, at the time, the projects were still at the concept stage. Designs and related costings were not finalised, funding had not been secured, and legal difficulties with land resumptions had not been resolved. With regard to the St. Lucia University, for example, some months before the first formal meeting of the University Works Board was convened, Forgan Smith, having initially refused to allocate any state government funds, without informing either Brigden or Kemp then obtained Cabinet approval for the appointment of his preferred architect and the building plans and fee schedule submitted by him.\footnote{Brigden to Kemp, Confidential Letter. 28.4.1937, File 247/6/2, R.M.O. 310, QTA.} Moreover, Kemp had to contend with influences that established an order of priority which, in turn, affected the rate of progress on the project. In the 1930s, such important influences were the level of political support and the degree to which each project was perceived to give effect to government policy. In these terms, the Story Bridge was accorded the highest priority, leading to its completion in the shortest time of all the projects. Progress on
construction was visible on a daily basis, the project employed large numbers of both skilled and unskilled relief workers, the unions won important award variations for several categories of workers, the consulting engineer, J. J. Bradfield, was the much acclaimed designer of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, while the bridge itself was an important transport link for commercial and defence purposes. Moreover, its cost was entirely recouped from the motor vehicle toll imposed between 1940 and 1948. By contrast, although it was readily regarded as an engineering marvel, and the benefits in terms of water supply and flood mitigation acknowledged, the Somerset Dam did not appear to have a high level of public or political support. Disputes over the design, the project's low employment rate and continuing industrial problems contributed to an image of a very costly scheme, progress on which was too slow to be of use to the Government's publicity campaign. Forgan Smith showed little interest in the Dam's construction, possibly because he saw it as more the concern of the engineering specialists and the two local authorities involved.

Although work did not begin until late 1937, progress on the St. Lucia University was equally delayed by labour disputes, a scarcity of skilled workers and difficulty in obtaining essential plant and materials. Of the two, the University fared better, as the project had the unequivocal support of both Forgan Smith and Colin Clark, and benefited from the not inconsiderable influence of Story, by then the University's Vice-Chancellor. Overall, there was little evidence of the energetic approach Kemp usually took towards his responsibilities, for which a number of reasons could be cited. Among them were the often petty disputes arising from the academic staff's desire to influence almost every aspect of the project, which even Forgan Smith, who
frequently made his own demands, found obstructive. In addition, the strong relationship between Forgan Smith and the architects, and Colin Clark’s attempts to circumvent the Board’s authority, threatened to undermine Kemp’s position. Much of the time, Kemp’s role was confined to mediating between the University staff, the Senate and Cabinet on their respective expectations, and ensuring that, despite ongoing industrial action, work on the project fulfilled its employment-generating function.

However, he was enthusiastic about planning the extensive landscaping envisaged for the University grounds. As with the Somerset Dam, it was indicative of Kemp’s commitment to tree-planting programs to enhance the immediate environment. In 1938, he organised the establishment of a plant nursery on the grounds, utilising the skills of E. W. Bick, the Brisbane City Council Parks superintendent, and the Government Botanist, Dr D. A. Herbert. To avoid wasting more time at inconclusive meetings, Kemp, as Co-Ordinator-General, formed a committee with Board member, D. A. Crawford, to direct the tree-planting when construction commenced again after the war. He then delegated overall responsibility for the program to J. A. Holt, the Bridge Board’s Chief Engineer and also the University project’s Supervising Engineer.

Kemp’s energies were directed most obviously towards advancing the construction of the West End to St. Lucia Bridge, one of the options rejected by the 1926 Cross River Commission, although tentatively approved by Cabinet as a short route to the new university. J. J. Bradfield had submitted a preliminary design for a steel bridge,
estimated to cost approximately £200,000, to be constructed in conjunction with the University buildings. Following Cabinet’s approval of a cost-sharing arrangement negotiated by Kemp and Story with the Brisbane City Council, work on the West End approaches had commenced by December 1939. Given the restrictions the Premier had imposed on funding for the entire project, financing the bridge was always going to be difficult. Although Kemp re-allocated funds from the Somerset Dam works in an attempt to keep the project going, by 1943, it became a casualty of the priority given to defence over civil works and was closed down. It was this change in national works policy, and the associated diversion of funds, materials and manpower to the war effort, that also proved to be the determining factor in delaying the completion of both the Somerset Dam and the University.16

With the national defence plan finally in place by 1941, Commonwealth and State representatives to the Loan Council agreed to abide by the agreement under which State co-ordinators liaised with the Loan Council-appointed Co-Ordinator of Works in compiling a list of approved works of defence value for loan funding. While Kemp had no hesitation in making the decision to close down the University works and hand over the existing buildings for Army occupation, his belief in the importance of the Somerset Dam led him to make a personal appeal to Sir Harry Brown, the National Works Co-Ordinator, to approve further funding as a defence project. After Brown turned him down, Kemp, assisted by Story and the Board’s Chief Engineer, W. H. Nimmo, but opposed by Colin Clark, secured Cabinet approval for an extension of funding.17 This enabled construction to progress to a stage where the Dam provided a

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16 See, for example, State Loan Fund, Reduction in Allocations, 22.4.1941, 247/6/13, R.M.O. 307, QTA.

17 Note of Telephone conversation, Kemp to Board Secretary, 28.5.1942, Under-Secretary, Treasury to Chairman, Stanley River Works Board, 10.9.1942. R.M.O. 303, QTA.
secure water supply for Ipswich and Brisbane, before plant and work teams were transferred to the high priority Cairncross Dock project.

Exerting a further, distinctive influence was Kemp's own approach to Queensland's overall public works planning. While records of the various Works Boards' meetings in the 1930s confirm his on-going responsibility to the management of these projects, his sights were set on achieving a much broader goal. Even prior to his appointment as Queensland's Co-Ordinator-General in January 1939, he had a decisive role in the negotiations with local authorities, Queensland Treasury and the Loan Council to finalise the annual funding allocations for the state-wide works programme. While it remains difficult to assess the part played by personal ambition, Kemp's actions demonstrated a complete dedication to advancing as many major developmental works projects as available resources and his capacity for satisfactorily addressing government policy concerns permitted. It will be seen from his championing, against sustained opposition at both state and national levels, of plans for a new Fitzroy River Bridge, the Tully hydro-electric scheme and the Burdekin Dam and Bridge 18, that his preference was for engineering projects on a grand scale. It is proposed that this particular preference was a function of being a 'technical specialist', an engineer with not only a comprehensive knowledge of the development needs of local areas but also a firm belief in the superiority of technocratic solutions to infrastructure development problems.

18 See pp.292-293, and pp.325-326 for a detailed discussion of his efforts to secure these projects.
THE WORKS BOARDS

The manner in which Kemp carried out his responsibilities as Chairman of the Works Boards, where he was, in effect, the overseer of the three projects until the early 1950s, demonstrated many of the professional and personal attributes that contributed to his achieving a position of extraordinary power in the government administration of the period.

The Story Bridge

In the mid-1920s, the problem of controlling the Brisbane River to alleviate annual disastrous flooding in the Brisbane area and also ensure a reliable water supply during frequent periods of drought had led to investigations and reports on the feasibility of siting a dam in the upper catchment areas of the Brisbane Valley. Investigations and reports were also completed during this period on, a) Brisbane River improvements to upgrade facilities for the port of Brisbane, and, b) the construction of a cross-river bridge to link the north-south road access. Although these proposals were presented largely in terms of employment creation schemes, they were also a response to private industry pressure for transport infrastructure to promote business opportunities. In 1930, Kemp convened a committee to re-examine the 1926 Cross River Commission report on a "cross river facility" for Brisbane. The committee recommended the construction of a high-level bridge at the Kangaroo Point site although Kemp had argued unsuccessfully for a lower-level bridge to Boundary Street and the consequent closing to large ships of the City and South Brisbane wharves. Under his plan, shipping facilities would be relocated to a new site for the port of Brisbane along the reclaimed Hamilton lands and close to the major processing and storage plants.
associated with Brisbane’s export trade. This would achieve lower bridge construction costs and eliminate the necessity for the expensive annual dredging required to keep the river channels open above Kangaroo Point. Nearly fifty years was to elapse before commercial shipping was finally removed from the city reaches and large-scale dredging of the river channels ceased.

In 1931, with little prospect of public funding for the bridge, the Moore Government considered a proposal to award, as payment for construction, a private toll franchise to the firm of Dorman Long which had constructed the Sydney Harbour Bridge on the same terms. In October that year, Parliament passed the *Tolls on Privately Constructed Road Facilities Act* delegating the Commissioner of Main Roads to act on behalf of the Governor-in-Council in assessing proposals, determining costs and setting toll rates. The Commissioner had the final decision on the construction and maintenance aspects of any proposed road facility (Section 10) and, with the approval of the Governor-in-Council, had the power to terminate the franchise owner’s right to levy and collect tolls. (Section 19) Although the Dorman Long proposal did not proceed, it elicited strong public opposition to the notion of a private undertaking controlling access to an important road facility. On its return to power in 1932, Labor did not repeal the 1931 toll legislation, thereby retaining the safeguard embodied in the Commissioner’s control over the granting and operations of toll franchises. Main Roads was asked to prepare a cost estimate for the bridge’s construction as a public utility franchise, paving the way for the 1933 amendments to the Bureau of Industry Act, under which the Bureau was granted a franchise until all interest and redemption

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payments were met.\textsuperscript{20} Through the authority thus delegated to him as Commissioner for Main Roads, Kemp remained in a position to influence the Government's final decision on the means adopted to recoup the cost of the bridge.

Throughout January 1934, J. J. Bradfield, as consulting engineer to the project, had several meetings with Board members to reach agreement in principle on height, width, and clearance levels. Probably because he was the only engineer on the Board, Kemp dominated the negotiations leading to its final recommendations on bridge design and the terms of Bradfield's contract. His insistence on a clear definition of areas of responsibility resulted in Bradfield's being answerable to the Board in all matters except for the right to select his own specialist staff.\textsuperscript{21} Bradfield recommended the appointment of J. A. Holt as design and supervising engineer and, as his assistant, J. E. Kindler, an engineer with the Main Roads' Bridge Branch who had worked with Bradfield on the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Amendments to the Bureau of Industry legislation in 1946, under which matters previously administered by the Works Boards were transferred to the Co-Ordinator-General, Kemp had Holt and Kindler, as well as other Bridge Board engineers, transferred to the Co-Ordinator-General, where they formed the nucleus of the team of technical specialists which he directed in the planning and implementation of major works projects. Kindler was appointed Chief Engineer in 1954 after Holt succeeded Kemp as Co-Ordinator-General. Other engineers, whose requests to be transferred from the Main Roads' Bridge Branch to the bridge works were approved by Kemp, included (Sir) Charles Barton, who was appointed Co-Ordinator-General after Holt. This line of succession from Main Roads

\textsuperscript{20} Co-Ordinator-General, Report to the Premier, "Story Bridge, Revenue: Finance: Toll Rates", 27.10.1939, 41A/220, R.M.O. 303, QTA.

\textsuperscript{21} Forgan Smith to Bradfield, 27.11.1933, J. J. C. Bradfield, Papers, NLA MS 4712, Box 6, Folder 37.
Commissioner to Co-Ordinator-General, first instituted with Kemp’s appointment in 1939, endured until the 1980s, the last such appointment being (Sir) Sydney Schubert.

On 29 June 1934, after several weeks of public debate on height and width provisions, Cabinet adopted the Bridge Board’s recommendations. A short but intensive public campaign by central Brisbane shipping interests led to the adoption of one hundred feet for the bridge height, while Kemp’s recommendation for a much wider roadway of sixty feet, based on projected future traffic growth, was approved. It was expected that Bradfield and the Bridge Board’s design staff would finalise the detailed plans and specifications in time for tenders for construction to be called in November. Despite some political and union pressure for the work to be carried out by day labour, Cabinet agreed to the contract system the Board had recommended on the grounds of greater efficiency, with day labour to be employed by the contractor under conditions to be agreed between the Board and the Director of Labour. The construction contract was subsequently awarded to Evans Deakin-Hornibrook, with the bridge’s steel components being fabricated in the Evans Deakin factory at Rocklea.

On 9 May, 1935, an Order-in-Council constituted a committee of the Bureau of Industry, to be called the Works Board. The Board’s first meeting on 7 June, 1935, at which Kemp was elected Chairman, incorporated in its minutes the operations’ report of the Bridge Board. With the same delegated authority and the same membership for both boards, the two names were often used interchangeably.

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22 R. E. Nixon-Smith, Chairman, Up-River Shipping Interests Committee, Courier-Mail, 2.4.1934, 15.5.1934.
However, the Works Board’s responsibilities extended to carrying out the recommended flood prevention and river improvement works and the re-building of the Petrie Bight wharves necessitated by the bridge’s construction. In July, Brigden and Treasury officials had lengthy discussions on financing the bridge and river works and, specifically, the “loan money requirements” The initial scheme was to raise the required two million pounds in loan money locally, the period of the loan to be twenty-five years. By September, the public loan option, although approved by the Loan Council, had been discarded and Brigden was assessing a loan offer from the AMP. On 10 September, Brigden wrote, in confidence, to Kemp seeking his advice on the proposal he had put to AMP representatives. Assuming Kemp had already left Brisbane on a main roads inspection tour, he had proceeded with the proposal but, as he wrote, if he had known Kemp was still in Brisbane, they could have gone to the AMP meeting together. He apologised for his calculations which, since “both the Premier and the AMP wanted immediate attention” were “absurdly hurried” In his confidential reply, Kemp reassured Brigden that the proposals were as satisfactory as could be hoped for under the circumstances and, more importantly, “will save the Government any serious embarrassment in any particular year” Brigden and Kemp conferred almost daily during September to discuss and refine the AMP offer to a point where it would satisfy the Bureau’s requirements, the AMP, the State Government and the Loan Council. The most pressing issue to be resolved was the funding of loan interest payments and expenditure on the river improvement works, neither of which was covered by the terms of the AMP loan, in a way that did not compromise funding allocations for other works projects.

25 Brigden to Kemp, 10.9.1935, 11.9.1935, R.M.O.306, QTA.

The Bureau of Industry Act 1935 validated the Order-in-Council of 14 October 1935 which had authorised the AMP loan. The Bridge Board then arranged for repayments of Treasury advances for work already commenced to be made from the AMP loan. To cover interest payments and other commitments, the Premier agreed to approve the transfer of £40,000 from the Unemployment Relief Fund to the Bridge Board.  

Brigden again conferred with Kemp to finalise the agenda for a special meeting of the Bureau held mid-December in Forgan Smith's office. As the borrowing authority under the amended Act, the Bureau formally approved the AMP loan at the meeting and resolved to delegate its borrowing powers either to the Bridge Board or the Works Board, thus avoiding the need to obtain the Bureau's approval for any variations to the loan agreement.  

In December, another important issue to be decided was the nomination of a minimum rate for the toll to be imposed under the AMP loan agreement, which required the AMP's consent for any reductions in the initial rate. Brigden accepted Kemp's figure of 6d as the minimum rate per private motor vehicle and varied rates for public transport and commercial vehicles. It was not until May 1939, when Kemp stressed the urgency of the situation, since the bridge was nearing completion and a start on building the toll houses had to be made, that Cabinet considered approving these rates. However, the issue was by no means resolved, with a range of opponents from the business and government sectors arguing for the bridge to be a user-free traffic facility. By this time, Kemp had been appointed Co-Ordinator-General and, in any

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27 Minutes, Bridge Board meeting, 29.11.1935, R.M.O. 306, QTA.

28 Brigden to Kemp, 14.12.1935, R.M.O. 303. QTA.
recommendation he made to Cabinet, his principal aim was to balance immediate policy and funding considerations against maintaining the progress of as many of the major projects as possible. Since, under the 1931 legislation, Main Roads had responsibility for granting toll franchises, Main Roads engineer, D. Garland, prepared a report for Kemp on the many factors to be assessed in deciding the issue. The report’s conclusion supported Kemp’s view that toll revenue represented the only viable means of paying for the bridge. It was already clear that Consolidated Revenue would not be used to fund the bridge, while the Brisbane City Council as the relevant local authority had barely sustainable debt commitments in relation to the Stanley River Dam and the St. Lucia Bridge.

In his customary, meticulous fashion, and utilising the resources and backing of the Main Roads Commission, the Co-Ordinator-General and the Bridge Board, Kemp initiated a more detailed investigation. His conclusions in support of a government-administered toll on the bridge were presented to the Premier in a confidential memo of 5 May, followed in October by a lengthy report suitable for Cabinet discussion. The October report in particular illustrated Kemp’s capacity to deliver an impeccably researched, logically developed and politically aware document to the Premier and Cabinet. It set out recommendations that addressed the relevant issues, were in keeping with Kemp’s preferred outcomes, and against which it was difficult to mount any sustained opposition. To deal with the problem of ownership of the bridge and the Premier’s promise that the franchise would be determined by referendum, Kemp clarified two points; firstly, that, under the *Bureau of Industry Acts 1932-34*, the Bureau was the owner of the bridge and had been granted a public utility franchise under the 1931 toll legislation and, secondly, that the final period of the franchise
would be determined by an Act of Parliament. However, the franchise would remain in force until all repayments were completed, and the Act would be ratified at an election rather than by referendum.  

Against a background of reduced loan funding allocations, he set out the arguments for and against a toll system. He detailed the long-term debt obligations associated with a toll-free bridge and the consequent penalties in the form of higher taxation and curtailment of the State’s employment-generating public works programme. With an eye to material the Premier might use in public announcements, Kemp observed that; “From the public relations point of view, it may be noted that the toll proposed would be akin to a tramway or a bus fare” and, returning to his central theme, emphasised that the price of a toll-free bridge was a severe reduction in future works programs.  

There was further evidence in the report of Kemp’s capacity to look beyond the immediate situation in order to calculate future benefits, which was to become more noticeable in his efforts to secure wartime defence works for Queensland. Expanding his argument in favour of a toll system, he foresaw that, on the debt being fully discharged in 1963, the Government would be in a position to re-assess traffic requirements and proceed with the construction of another cross-river bridge or tunnel, if warranted.  

This type of pronouncement did not sit well with the Bureau’s Director, Colin Clark. His particular economist orientation was not conducive to acknowledging benefits, the economic value of which was not immediately calculable. Thus, it was inevitable that, at the very least, he and Kemp would hold differing

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29 Kemp to Chief Secretary 4.5.39, File 247/6/ - , R.M.O. 303, QTA.
30 Kemp (as Co-Ordinator-General) “Report on the Story Bridge; Revenue: Finance: Toll Rates” 27.10.1939. (41A) 220, R.M.O. 303, QTA.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
viewpoints. This was borne out by Clark's opposition in 1941 to Kemp's attempts to continue the work on the Somerset Dam, and his repeated efforts in the immediate post-war period to dismiss Kemp's enthusiasm for the Burdekin Irrigation scheme as ill-founded, lacking an appreciation of the relationship between public finance and Labor policy goals. Both men had put their respective points of view on the tolls issue to numerous public forums during this period and, on one occasion, Clark queried calculations Kemp had submitted for determining recommended minimum toll rate. Kemp responded by sending him a copy of the 1933 edition of the "Proceedings of the American Toll Bridge Association" but Clark was able to have the last word. In writing to thank Kemp for the publication, he noted that the Association's calculations supported his own. Addressing the question of meeting the deficit on the bridge, Kemp rejected suggestions that Brisbane be declared a betterment area for the purpose of levying special rates, or that the Brisbane City Council be required to make the specified local authority repayments. The Council's debt position was so desperate that no repayment on the existing £100,000 Treasury loan was likely in the current financial year, while the Lord Mayor was seeking further Treasury assistance to complete urgent maintenance work. As any additional Treasury funding would cut departmental allocations, the only other course of action was for Kemp, as Co-Ordinator-General, to agree to re-allocate unexpended money from the State Development tax funds.


34 Clark to Kemp, 14.7.1939, 247/6/13, R.M.O. 303, QTA.

35 Memo. Under-Secretary, Treasury, to Co-Ordinator-General. 25.10.1939, R.M.O. 303, QTA.
Kemp's preferred method of financing the current year deficit of £54,000 was for the amount to be advanced from the State Insurance Commissioner's funds at current rates of interest. He suggested that compensatory revenue to continue local authority works funding could be raised by allowing the Insurance Commissioner a monopoly on third-party insurance. While this proposition had little chance of being adopted at the time, Kemp believed the proposal, originally developed by Main Roads and the "ex-Auditor General", warranted a thorough investigation as it would be well-received by most motor car owners, even if the insurance companies reacted unfavourably.\(^\text{36}\) In the meantime, he recommended a scheme under which pending amendments to the Main Roads Acts 1920-1934 tighten vehicle registration conditions, thereby yielding an extra £30,000 \textit{per annum}, while authorisation for the State Transport Commission to impose a uniform flat rate for drivers licence fees would add another £16,000. By this process, any drop in employment from the curtailment of the Insurance Commissioner's loans for local authority works would be avoided, while interest would be earned on the Insurance Commissioner's advances.\(^\text{37}\)

Discussions on the deficit financing proposals continued through 1940. At meetings between Treasury and the Co-Ordinator-General on the Bureau of Industry's 1940-41 works program, Kemp, as Co-Ordinator-General, recommended that the Bridge Board take up the Co-Ordinator-General's offer of £80,000 from State Development tax funds as the government's contribution to total interest payments on the AMP loan. This action had first been proposed by Brigden in 1932 during preliminary discussions on funding for the bridge works. The final recommendation of Kemp's

\(^{36}\) \textit{Ibid}, p.7

\(^{37}\) \textit{Ibid}, p.11.
October report, that Cabinet approve the immediate construction of toll houses on the bridge at a total cost of £2,000, emphasised one means by which the Government retained control over public works expenditure. The requirement for Cabinet approval of every item of expenditure over £500 was a continuing source of frustration for Kemp and the various Works Boards, as each request for Cabinet approval had to be accompanied by a report justifying the expenditure and confirming the funding source. Although, as Kemp’s range of responsibilities increased, he was increasingly inclined to anticipate Cabinet approval of his actions and furnish a report later, this type of control mechanism illustrated Morrison’s description of the Labor government’s preoccupation with the details of administration. Initially derived from Labor’s distrust of public officials appointed by a non-Labor government, this became a routine aspect of the government-administration relationship and, as Hughes later remarked: “over the years, Ministers came to trust their public servants but still continued to exercise direct control over their department’s work and the Cabinet considered remarkably trivial matters” During the 1930s, Cabinet was obsessed with the smallest details of departmental spending in order to achieve an annual revenue surplus, the maintenance of high cash balances in the various Trust funds, and the maximum exploitation of federal government loan allocations. Kemp’s carefully detailed recommendations to both the Premier and Cabinet were rarely rejected, even if persistence, through repeated, more forcefully and technically couched presentations, was sometimes required to achieve a commitment. The toll issue was a case in point, as there was a further month of communication with associated

38 See, for example, Chief Secretary’s Office to Works Board, Minutes, Works Board meeting, 11.10.1935, 247/6/13, R.M.O. 306, QTA.
40 Hughes, 1980, op. cit., pp.165-166.
departments, Cabinet and the acting Premier, before Cabinet approval was obtained for the toll system and for the construction of the toll collection houses on the bridge. However, it was not until April 1940 that the Premier, in a cable from Fiji, signalled his approval of the nominated schedule of toll rates.\(^4^1\)

The importance the Labor Government attached to the bridge's completion was confirmed by the elaborate official opening ceremony held on 6 June. In his speech, the Premier referred to the project as one of the first "rehabilitative" works it authorised following its return to power in 1932. Its value to everyone in the community was unquestionable, reinforcing his conviction that; "Sound economy did not consist in freezing credit or hiding money in the ground".\(^4^2\) In naming the bridge after J. D. Story, he made much of Story's contribution to government administration, and added his endorsement of the praise given to the work of Dr Bradfield, the supervising engineer, J. A. Holt, the contractors, Evans Deakin, and the members of the Bridge Board. At the end of his list was Kemp, "another official who had done work of inestimable value".\(^4^3\) Kemp's low ranking may have been inadvertent or was redolent of other matters. Perhaps Kemp was not so important an official as he appeared to others, or, in the Premier's view, it may have been that Kemp's standing was already sufficiently secure as to allow other officials to occupy the limelight on this occasion. Alternatively, there is the possibility that the Premier saw Kemp in the

\(^{41}\) Assistant Under-Secretary, Chief Secretary's Office to Kemp, Co-Ordinator-General, 29.11.1939; R.M.O. 303, QTA.; Forgan Smith to Acting Premier, P. Pease, 4.4.1940, R.M.O. 303, QTA.

\(^{42}\) Courier-Mail, 7.6.1940.

\(^{43}\) Ibid.
"instrumental role" of the traditional, albeit specialist bureaucrat, having previously depicted Kemp as one who saw the world "as one big engineering workshop".\(^{44}\)

The Stanley River (Somerset) Dam

Among the many schemes rejected by the State Employment Council in May 1932 was the construction of a dam, in the Brisbane River catchment area for both flood mitigation and water supply purposes. At the time, it seemed unlikely that the project would be approved owing to its massive cost, the long lead time before actual construction work commenced, and its questionable value as an Unemployment Relief Scheme.

In May 1934, a special committee of the Bureau was appointed to investigate the proposal to construct a major dam to provide a secure water supply for Brisbane and to control flooding in the Brisbane Valley.\(^{45}\) Apart from Brigden, the committee Chairman, all the members, W. H. Nimmo, Main Roads Commission design engineer; D. Fison, chief engineer, Department of Harbours and Marine; and L. C. Morris, superintendent, Technical Education, Department of Public Instruction, were engineers. The most controversial issues were the selection of the dam site, the type of dam, and a proposal for hydro-electric power generation, with Morris delivered a dissenting report which criticised the majority recommendations and put forward a case for Middle Creek as the dam site. Kemp was obviously determined to exert as much influence as possible on the final decision as, three months later, he sent a report to the Premier on Morris's report and the Committee's recommendations, making it


\(^{45}\) Brigden to Acting Premier, "Brisbane Water Supply and Flood Prevention: Report of the Special Committee", op. cit.
clear he was committed to ensuring Cabinet approved his preferred site on the Stanley River. Stating that he had felt it his duty to be a member of the Committee “in order, if necessary, to discuss its recommendations to the Bureau and yourself, with a proper knowledge thereof”, he went on to comment that he had delayed writing it so as to study the recommendations and, as was his practice, to secure further specialist advice.\textsuperscript{46} Although he declared himself to be a member of the Committee, his actual status appeared to be somewhat different. According to Brigden’s introductory remarks, Kemp had a watching brief as Chairman of the Bureau’s Roads, Mining and General Works Committee, but his participation was restricted to attending the more important meetings.\textsuperscript{47}

Kemp’s actions were partly explained by the public campaign initiated by Inigo Jones, Government Meteorological Officer and founder of the Crohamhurst weather observatory, in support of Morris’s recommendation for Middle Creek. Making frequent reference to the experience of dam builders in other Australian states, Europe and the U. S. A. to demonstrate the technical basis for the Committee’s recommendations, he proceeded to dismiss Morris’s objections to the proposed gravity-type dam, its unsuitability for hydro-electric power generation, and the questionable effectiveness of the Stanley River site for flood prevention.\textsuperscript{48} Cabinet approved the Committee’s recommendations but preferred that the final implementation decisions should await the outcome of a conference convened on 3 October 1934 by the Bureau of Science and Industry. Chaired by the Home Secretary, E. M. Hanlon, it was attended by members of Cabinet, the Bureau of Industry, and

\textsuperscript{46} Kemp to Chief Secretary, “Report on Bureau of Industry Special Committee Report”, 17.8.1934, R.M.O. 303, QTA.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid; Memo, Brigden to Premier, 29.8.1934, R.M.O. 303, QTA.
Brisbane and Ipswich City Councils. Having outlined the recommendations submitted for Cabinet approval, Brigden led the ensuing discussion towards agreement on the key issues, with Kemp, attending as Chairman of the Bureau's Works Committee, taking the relatively minor role of providing further information as required. The main purpose of the conference was to secure the two Councils' commitment to the project and their support for the Stanley River site. Their agreement paved the way for the 1934 and 1935 amendments to the Bureau of Industry legislation, which provided for the constitution of the Stanley River Works Board, under the Bureau of Industry, as constructing authority for the dam. At the conference, Hanlon pledged government funding for more than fifty per cent of the cost. Since Brisbane and Ipswich ratepayers were to bear the remaining costs, their representatives sought places on the Board. Hanlon rejected this demand, declaring that the Board would not make policy and, as with the Kangaroo Point Bridge Board, would not have political representation. It was to be, he asserted, “a Board of experts” As a compromise measure, F. F. Gilchrist and F. A. Griffiths, engineers to the respective councils, were appointed as their “expert” representatives, joining Story, Brigden and Kemp, as Chairman, on the Board.

As with the Story Bridge project, no time was lost in assembling a specialist engineering team for the design and construction of the dam. Cutbacks in public works across Australia had resulted in high unemployment among engineers, so that Kemp had no difficulty securing men with substantial experience in this field. W. H. Nimmo, appointed Design Engineer and later the Board's Chief Engineer, specialised

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49 Report of the Conference convened by the Bureau of Science and Industry to consider the recommendations of the Bureau in respect to the proposed dam for the purposes of Water Supply and Flood Mitigation, , 3 October 1934, R.M.O. 303, QTA.

50 Ibid.
in hydraulic engineering in Victoria and Tasmania, and had completed the preliminary hydrological survey for Tasmania's Great Lake hydro-electric scheme. After moving to Queensland, he was with Brisbane's Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board before being appointed design engineer with Main Roads in 1927. From the outset, Nimmo demonstrated his total dedication to the success of the project. His technically competent, detailed reports on every aspect of the complex undertakings provided essential support for Kemp's determination to have the dam completed on schedule, notwithstanding on-going engineering and operational problems, and the spoiling tactics consistently employed by the project's detractors. Appointing Nimmo as Design Engineer forestalled a move by the Brisbane City Council to gain more control over the project by having the Council's Works Department develop the design. To defuse the situation, Kemp arranged for C. B. Mott, the Council's Design Engineer, to assist Nimmo while, in a similarly motivated arrangement, B. E. Shaw was transferred from the Department of Irrigation and Water Supply as a second design engineer. Glenister Sheil, who had also worked on Tasmanian dam projects, was appointed Resident Engineer at the site, a position he held until October 1941. To complete the team, Kemp personally recommended to the Premier the appointment of the internationally respected civil engineer, H. H. Dare, having gone to considerable lengths to secure Dare's agreement. A member of the New South Wales Conservation and Irrigation Commission and the Murray River Commission since 1917, Dare had been closely associated with the design and construction of the massive Burrinjuck Dam and also the Wyangala and Hume Dams. Until 1943 when the project was closed down for the duration of the war and his contract terminated, Dare made short

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visits from his Melbourne base to Brisbane and the dam site to confer with Nimmo and approve the technical decisions made in the interim.

It seemed that an important aspect of Dare’s appointment was the legitimacy his international standing conferred on the Board’s decision to construct a gravity-type dam. Early in December 1934, Lars Jorgensen, an American engineer with worldwide experience in hydro-electric dams, had submitted through Nimmo, his Australian agent, a design for a constant arch dam at Silverton, one of the options rejected in favour of the Stanley River site. After this latter site was confirmed, Jorgensen presented a revised design and lobbied the Premier, Bureau of Industry and Board members, as well as Kemp, to appoint him project consultant, with Nimmo attesting to his vast superior expertise in dam construction. Kemp moved quickly to reinforce the Board’s control, instructing Nimmo to cease acting as Jorgensen’s agent and arranging for the latest technical information on both arch and gravity dams available from North America and Europe to be assembled and analysed. However, the outcome was a fait accompli, the deciding factor being Dare’s international reputation as a gravity dam expert. The Board was thus able to demonstrate the rational-technical basis for its decision to reject Jorgensen’s proposal in favour of Dare’s recommendation.

Jorgensen was equally clear about what had occurred. Obviously angry, he wrote to Kemp, through the Board, implying a lack of impartiality in the Board’s decision:

... you are apparently satisfied with a one man decision on such a rather important piece of work. I am not. .... Ordinarily such decisions are left to two or three engineers appointed for the purpose, who are not themselves involved in the particular work.  

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52 Jorgensen to Kemp. 5.12.1934, 11.12.1934, R.M.O. 303, QTA.
53 Nimmo to Kemp. 25.3.1935, R.M.O. 303, QTA.
54 Jorgensen to Works Board, 11.7.1935, p.3, R.M.O. 303, QTA.
Jorgensen's direct appeal to Forgan Smith led the Premier to demand the Board's reassurance on this matter. Sensitive to the threat to the Board's independence, Brigden confirmed Dare's undoubted "professional competence" and the rational basis for deciding on a gravity dam. He went on to clarify that he and Story, rather than the engineers on the Board, took responsibility for the decision which drew heavily on the experience of the Bureau of Reclamation and the Federal Roads Authority, "the two largest public works authorities in the U.S. concerned with concrete works". Along with others experienced in this field, their engineers had already discredited the theoretical principles on which Jorgensen had developed his argument in favour of an arch dam.55 Brigden's report was effective in having dismissed as unfounded Jorgensen's claim that the Board or, more particularly, Kemp, as an engineer and the Board's Chairman had wrongly influenced the final decision on the design. The issue might have lingered on as one of the reasons behind the Premier's decision, in October 1936, to commission an Inquiry into the costing and construction methods of the Stanley River Dam project. Although the Inquiry's Report, delivered in June 1937, was critical of the project's overall management, no fault was found with the dam's design or the construction methods.56

Once the preliminary work began on land clearing and constructing access roads, the gap between the concept of the dam and the reality of its construction became apparent. Although Kemp was in regular contact with dam-building authorities in New South Wales and Victoria, and had the benefit of their collective experience, local conditions tended to produce unique problems. The notion of achieving

55 Brigden, Report to the Premier, 20.8.1935, R.M.O. 303, QTA.
efficiency through forward planning was often compromised, requiring the Board to make the on-site, *ad hoc* decisions that were singled out for criticism in the Inquiry's Report. While the Premier made considerable political capital out of announcing the dam project as a major unemployment relief measure, he failed to clarify that the figure of £1.750 million supplied by the Board was an estimated, rather than an actual cost. Cabinet had given no guarantees as to its funding and, in 1937 for example, previously approved allocations were reduced when other works projects claimed funding priority. In addition, the provision of electricity to the site and arrangements for the sale of electricity generated by the dam became enmeshed in the larger issue of rationalising Queensland's electricity supply industry.

Before planning of the project's major components had been finalised, Cabinet asked Kemp to organise work under the Intermittent Relief Scheme so as to justify its allocation of Unemployment Relief Funds. It was a relatively simple matter to set in train local Main Roads works, but the Board's decision to contract out the land clearing and quarry operations opened the way for the industrial relations' disputes that seriously disrupted progress on construction. From the time the work commenced, the Board was in constant negotiation with union representatives and the Director of Labour over hiring conditions under the Unemployment Relief Scheme. Although it may have been a case of the Australian Workers' Union (AWU) being the symbol of Queensland unionism in this period, the widely varying types of work involved in the major works projects resulted in industrial action being taken by several other unions, including the Transport Workers Union, the Society of

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57 *Ibid*, Brigden, Report to the Under-Secretary, Chief Secretary's Office, 22.6.1937, R.M.O. 304, QTA.

58 See, for example, Brian Carroll, "William Forgan Smith", in Murphy, et al., 1990, *op. cit.*, p.414.
Carpenters and Joiners, the Federated Engine Drivers Association and the Amalgamated Engineering Union. It is debatable whether the on-going industrial action, which generally achieved its aims, resulted from the failure of awards to cover the existing job classifications and conditions, or whether the unions perceived the projects as an opportunity to demonstrate their power.

Throughout 1935, as attempts were made to resolve the crisis, Kemp's principal aim was continuity in the workforce so as to maintain an efficient rate of progress and acceptable work standards. Although hampered by the unions' depiction of the Bureau of Industry as continuing its predecessor's opposition to unionism, Brigden tried to secure the agreement of the Minister for Labour and Industry to changes that would have achieved this. Not surprisingly, political support for such a radical departure from the spirit of the Unemployment Relief Scheme was not forthcoming, with the result that, instead of having any control over worker employment, the Board was forced into an endless process of reaction to, and compromise with, union claims.

Kemp was already experienced in dealing with Main Roads industrial relations where the situation was often complicated by the need to resolve single-instance claims, and had maintained a cordial, if formal relationship with senior union officials. Initially, on notification of worker claims and the possibility of strike action, he and Brigden met with officials to negotiate a resolution but, as the unions successfully pursued a growing log of claims through the Industrial Court, Kemp largely withdrew from an active role. All announcements relating to industrial issues were made by the Board as the controlling authority, rather than by the Chairman or the Bureau of Industry. The establishment of an Industrial Relations branch, modelled on the one Kemp instituted

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59 Brigden to Under-Secretary, Department of Labour and Industry, 2.9.1935, Under-Secretary, Department of Labour and Industry to Brigden, 12.9.1935, R.M.O. 303, QTA.
at Main Roads, brought a degree of professionalism to the situation, with the Board being represented by its industrial officers at Industrial Court hearings. Story's standing and experience in this field proved invaluable. He was able to clarify the options available to the Board on particular claims and, on the few occasions when the award variations the unions sought were actively opposed, he was delegated to argue the Board's case in the Industrial Court.

Industrial relations' issues were among the reasons for the serious challenge to the Board's authority in 1936. The Premier's decision in October to commission an Inquiry into the project's management was partly a response to complaints by union officials over labour practices instituted both by the Board's contractors and by Main Roads in relation to work on access roads. Other reasons for the Inquiry were allegations of unfair dismissal of workers on the grounds of their union activity, the resident engineer's pecuniary interest in the haulage contract for the quarry, and irregularities in the cost accounting and stores' purchasing system. The latter was discussed, apparently to the Board's satisfaction, with the Deputy Auditor-General in March 1936 but, taken with the other complaints, it raised concerns in Cabinet about the Board's overall management capabilities. In a decision that both astonished and angered Kemp, the Premier initially nominated a Mr Forbes of Concrete Constructions Pty. Ltd., Sydney, to conduct the Inquiry. Having established through his colleague, H. H. Newell, the New South Wales Main Roads Commissioner, that Forbes was not a qualified engineer and was therefore unlikely to be accepted as an authority, Kemp succeeded in blocking his appointment. However, if Board members had hoped to divert the Premier from the idea of an Inquiry, they were disappointed.
In December 1936, Forgan Smith announced a new Inquiry, this time to be conducted by more appropriately qualified investigators, N. J. Amos, the Railway Department's Chief Engineer, and C. E. Parkinson, Engineer in Chief, Department of Irrigation and Water Supply. Their appointment did nothing to appease Board members who, after Jorgensen's allegations, still reacted strongly to any criticism of its operations. Having invited Forgan Smith to make a personal inspection of work in progress, Brigden remonstrated with him:

The Board is not aware of the reasons for this action. The implication is that some criticisms or allegations have been made reflecting on the efficiency or thoroughness of the Board's control. If any such charges have been made the Board would appreciate your confidence to the extent of acquainting it of the circumstances.\(^{60}\)

The Inquiry was far more comprehensive than the Board anticipated. Amos and Parkinson investigated every aspect of the project's organisation and operations, including the controversial issue of the dam township. Nimmo prepared a detailed report setting out the information they requested and, while instructing staff to give their full co-operation, the Board continued to object to the secrecy surrounding the Premier's action. The Inquiry's findings, reported in June 1937, might have endorsed the Board's "most important decisions and policies"\(^{61}\) but, according to Brigden's official response, the political interference in its supposedly independent authority was resented. Brigden emphasised the unique technical character of operational decisions in rejecting the report's "minor" criticisms of the costing system. Recommended by the Main Roads Commission and the Brisbane City Council, the system delivered the day-to-day, practical information engineers required. Minor discrepancies did not

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\(^{60}\) Brigden to Forgan Smith, 5.12.1936, R.M.O. 304, QTA.

\(^{61}\) Amos and Parkinson, Report of Committee of Inquiry, 4.6.1937, R.M.O. 304, QTA.
mean, as the report suggested, that costings were inaccurate. Rather, he said, they represented:

difference of opinion such as may be expected among technical men and do not call for the lengthy statements that would be necessary to explain the actual choice made by the Board or its engineers when decisions had to be made.  

The report endorsed the township concept as an efficient means of providing on-site workers’ accommodation, while not wholly accepting it as a proper expenditure of unemployment relief tax funds. Although such townships later became an unremarkable adjunct to development projects, Somerset Dam, as it was officially named in October 1935, was Queensland’s first purpose-built project town. For Kemp, it was essential to maintaining a viable workforce. Under the conditions of the Unemployment Relief scheme, the Board was required to hire local labour but, from the outset, numbers had to be supplemented from Labour Exchanges as far away as Brisbane. Many of these workers had no experience of construction camp living in a relatively inaccessible area, while married men were unwilling, and could not afford, to live apart from their families on the long-term basis the project necessitated. With Kemp’s enthusiastic backing, the township concept which began as an exercise in corporate paternalism evolved into a practical demonstration of the ideals of community co-operatives.

As with other aspects of the project, the main criticism of the township arose from its cost, more specifically the unwarranted cost of building what was widely perceived to be a “model” town, with a level of services and facilities not provided in other towns.

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62 Brigden to Under-Secretary, Chief Secretary’s Office, 22.6.1937, R.M.O. 304, QTA
63 Brigden to Kemp, 7.10.1935, R.M.O. 304, QTA.
64 Memo re visit of Dugdale, industrial correspondent, Telegraph newspaper to site, 16.9.1935, R.M.O. 303, QTA.
Board members rejected this criticism, while acknowledging that, at first sight, the facilities might appear generous for what was to be a temporary settlement. At the same time, they were obviously proud of the generally co-operative relationship between management and workers that the town represented, and its usefulness both in reducing the turnover of workers and the potential for industrial action. Always mindful of the value of publicity, Kemp arranged for tours of the dam works, which he hosted as often as his work schedule allowed, to include a visit to the town. That he enjoyed the success of the township concept was evident in his relationship with the Residents' Committee. In September 1937, Kemp stood in for Forgan Smith who had declined the Committee's invitation to open the Somerset Dam Golf Course. Accompanied by Mrs Kemp, Professor and Mrs Brigden, and Mr and Mrs Nimmo, he "drove off the first ball" to mark the official opening, afterwards being presented with the golf ball as a memento of the occasion.\(^65\)

In mid-1938, construction commenced on the dam proper. Anticipating an expansion of the on-site workforce, the Board made further allocations to improve town services and recreational facilities. After 1941, the defence priorities imposed on works projects and manpower by the declaration of war in the Pacific slowed the rate of progress and, in 1943, forced a total shut-down for the duration of the war. At the Post-War Reconstruction Conference held in November 1943 to formulate the Bureau of Industry's post-war program, Kemp, as Co-Ordinator-General, succeeded in placing the dam on the first list to be submitted to the National Works Council for approval.\(^66\) In 1946, when work resumed on a limited scale, Colin Clark found an

\(^{65}\) Brigden to Kemp, 7.9.1937 and 13.9.1937, 247/7/1, R.M.O. 304, QTA.

\(^{66}\) Notes of Post-War Reconstruction Conference No. 9, Bureau of Industry in connection with formulation of the Bureau's post-war programme for submission to the National Works Council held on 17 11.1943, 22.11.1943, pp.1-2, R.M.O. 303, QTA.
economically rational basis for the continuation of a permanent town at Somerset Dam, thus reversing his long-standing opposition to the project. Another reason for Clark's changed approach to the town's future was his recognition of its value as an already established accommodation and recreation centre for the tourist resort that had long been suggested for the area. In January 1940, Clark had attempted to give the dam project a measure of popular appeal by declaring that the lake formed behind the dam wall would be developed as “a pleasure resort” for the public. In outlining plans for boating, fishing, camping and hiking facilities, he was secure in the knowledge that they involved little cost to the Board and, given the funding constraints in operation, were unlikely to be approved in the near future.

Even in the preliminary planning, Kemp sought to make provision for preserving and enhancing the site’s natural environment. In this, he demonstrated once again his appreciation of tourism as a viable industry for Queensland and the benefit of utilising infrastructure works projects to assist its development. He arranged for Main Roads to plant jacaranda trees along the access roads to the dam and, in 1939, having acquired thousands of “Queensland Nut” trees, obtained the Board's approval to use them as the foundation for an extensive landscaping program around the town and lake. Another proposed scheme, to stock the lake with fish and set up a fish-breeding program, had undoubted public appeal, judging by the coverage it received in the daily newspapers. Kemp took the matter seriously, consulting with Fisheries' officials and investigating similar schemes associated with major dams in the southern states. Public interest gathered momentum and, after receiving equally enthusiastic

67 Clark to Board. “Rents at Somerset Dam”, 3.6.1946, p.1, R.M.O. 305, QTA.
68 Clark Interview, Courier-Mail, 4.1.1940.
69 Kemp to Nimmo, 23.2.1939, Sect., MRC, to Board Sect., 23.3.1939, R.M.O. 305, QTA.
support in Parliament, the proposal looked set to turn into a major, high-cost project. Having to extricate the Board from any immediate obligation, Kemp put an end to the matter by advising that lack of funds prevented him commissioning the professional assistance the scheme needed to become established. The tree-planting projects, together with intermittent clearing and fencing work, were made possible by Kemp arranging for them to be financed from the unemployment relief funds allocated to Main Roads and the Forestry Department. The projects were also useful as a source of jobs for dam workers who might otherwise have been stood down during temporary works closures.

The shortage of materials and skilled workers delayed the resumption of construction work until 1948. Although he authorised plant to be returned from Cairncross Dock, Kemp was not prepared to transfer prematurely the engineering staff who were working on other important projects for the Co-Ordinator-General, including designing the Fitzroy Bridge and a range of private sector commitments. The specialist engineering team he had built up within the Co-Ordinator-General had become a major factor in his campaign to control the planning and construction of major infrastructure works. He was intent on extending the use of their professional experience to areas previously the responsibility of other construction authorities, while also remaining alert for any proposals that might threaten to disperse the team. Somerset Dam was completed in 1954, in time to prove its effectiveness in flood mitigation during the major flood the following year. Responsibility for the township

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70 Minutes of Board meeting, 1.11.1945, R.M.O. 303, QTA; Kemp to Board Secretary, 14.11.1946, R.M.O. 305, QTA.
was transferred to the Esk Shire Council, the Stanley River Works Board was
dissolved and the Dam's operations were handed over to the Brisbane City Council.¹¹

University Works Board

On 6th March 1937, Forgan Smith laid the foundation stone for the University of
Queensland's buildings on the new St. Lucia site. His determination to see the
buildings completed and occupied as soon as possible was not backed by either the
necessary finance or any final agreement on design plans. Prior to the first full meeting
of the University Works Board on 30 April 1937, Brigden had written to Kemp
outlining the unsatisfactory basis of the Premier's enthusiasm. Although the Bureau
had responsibility for the project, Brigden was unaware of any written directions
being issued until he discovered that, the previous August, Cabinet had confirmed F.
Hennessey as architect and approved his design plans and suggested scale of fees.
However, apart from £10,000 in the current loan estimates, no funding had been
allocated to the project. To counter pressure from Forgan Smith for the Bureau to
borrow the money required, Brigden hoped to utilise the University's funds and have
the Department of Public Works appointed as constructing agent for the Bureau.
While the unemployment relief component of the project was easily accommodated by
an extensive roadworks and landscaping program, it was another matter to achieve
consensus among the various interests as to the form, size and functions of the
proposed buildings. Hennessey had won the Premier's approval and a qualified
acceptance by the University Senate with a model of a university in the grand, neo­
classical style, designed for fifty years in the future. To overcome a foreseeable

¹¹ See also, Powell., op. cit., p.97. Powell describes further extensions to the dam completed in
impasse, with the Bureau ranged against the architect, the Senate, and the Premier, Brigden suggested that the Public Works Department conduct negotiations with Hennessey and the Senate on final planning decisions. 72

It thus fell to Kemp, Story and Brigden, as the University Works Board, to devise the means of tempering the grand vision to a more realistic scale while drawing up a realistic construction schedule acceptable to all interests. For Kemp, the project was not so much an issue of technical expertise as one of managing the expectations of the Premier and the widely varying groups involved. This was borne out in Brigden’s notes, forwarded for Kemp’s comments, on a Senate deputation to the Premier on 6 October, and Brigden’s subsequent request for Kemp’s advice on the recommendations he should make to the Premier on the Bureau’s behalf. 73 In Brigden’s view, the Senate’s plan to allocate £500,000 over twelve years was unworkable. The architect’s plans were unsuitable for staged construction, and demands by the University departments for five times the space they currently occupied, required a far greater expenditure than envisaged. Offering in the meantime a scaled-down plan prepared by Works Board staff, Brigden recommended an in-depth investigation of the project, similar to those the Board had carried out for its other major projects. Professor A. C. V Melbourne, the University staff spokesman, was highly critical of Brigden’s remarks, while Forgan Smith defended his own position in claiming that “he could change his mind if necessary” 74 Refusing to amend the ceiling of £500,000 over ten years for construction of the buildings and the St.

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72 Brigden to Kemp. Confidential Report to Chairman, Works Board, 28.4.1937, 247/6/2., R.M.O. 308, QTA.

73 Brigden to Kemp. 7.10.1937, 13.10.1937, 247/7/1, R.M.O. 308, QTA.

74 Ibid.
Lucía Bridge, the Premier produced a new Public Works Department plan which varied Hennessy's design by reducing the length of the main building, omitting the Great Hall, but retaining the original “semi-circle” principle for the location of departmental buildings. Demanding to know what was wrong with his suggestion of a brick building with stone facings instead of sandstone as a means of reducing costs, he added that, if the architect objected, he would cancel the entire contract. After the Premier agreed to consider alternative plans, Brigden asked Kemp, in his capacity as Main Roads Commissioner, to provide them by the end of the month when the Premier returned from his northern tour. The plan eventually approved by Forgan Smith allowed for staged construction, in sandstone, of the central building, library, student union and departmental buildings, but omitted the Great Hall. Ground works, to include access roads, sport facilities and landscaping, were to be carried out by intermittent relief labour paid out of the Unemployment Relief Fund.

The St. Lucia Bridge was one of twelve options considered by the Cross River Commission in 1926. Although it was conceded that a bridge from West End to the St. Lucia Road would relieve traffic congestion on the River Road (Coronation Drive), the proposal was not given serious consideration as the area had a low population density and there was then no plan to relocate the University to St. Lucia.

Having obtained the Premier's approval for the bridge, Kemp chaired a meeting, on 12 November 1937, of a special Bureau of Industry Committee on access and transport to St. Lucia. Other members were Dr. Bradfield, who had already submitted a preliminary design for a steel bridge, G. R. Steer, head of the Brisbane City Council's Transport Department, who required a decision on the projected transport usage in order to assess the extent of the Council's commitment, and C. B. Mott, the

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75 Ibid.
Council's Engineer. In a joint report to the Premier the following April, Story and Kemp submitted their recommendations on the bridge, the most important of which were the estimated cost of £160,000 and the options for apportioning payment between the State Government and the Council, which ranged from the Government meeting the total cost to the Council making annual repayments according to the established local authority works scale. Two years later, the Premier accepted Kemp's recommendation that the Council's liability be limited to £2600 a year. Although the reason cited was the small area to benefit directly from the bridge, Kemp was concerned that any higher figure would be meaningless, given the difficulty the Council was already having in meeting existing debt obligations. In an attempt to overcome the threat lack of finance posed to the bridge, Kemp and Clark had Bradfield design a timber bridge at half the cost of the steel bridge, but tests by Holt showed the substitution was not cost effective.

In the early months of 1938, prior to Kemp's departure to attend the International Road conference at The Hague, almost every aspect of the University project was the subject of prolonged disputes. In March, intermittent relief workers stopped work until it was determined if excavating building foundations came within the meaning of builders labourers' work and should be done on full time and at award rates.

Reiterating his concern for maintaining efficiency in public works, whether or not they were carried out under the Intermittent Relief Scheme, Kemp asked the Minister for Labour and Industry to grant the men a five day week at award rates. This was

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76 Rogers, Co-Ordinator-General's Office, Memo "St. Lucia Bridge Approaches", 30.1.1940, 247/7/14, R.M.O. 310, QTA.
77 J. J. Bradfield, "Brisbane River Bridge: Timber Bridge at St. Lucia", typescript, 29.11.1940, J. J. C. Bradfield, Papers Box 7, Folder 39, MS 4712, NLA.
78 Brisbane Telegraph, 22.3.1938.
refused on the grounds that it would establish an expensive precedent for all intermittent relief projects.  Six months later, the Government introduced the State Development and Public Works Organisation Bill which established the Co-ordinator-General. The Bill also provided for the Intermittent Relief Scheme to be abolished. Relief workers were to be transferred gradually to full-time employment, at award rates, on the proposed accelerated public works programme to be co-ordinated by Kemp in his role as Co-Ordinator-General. University staff members actively participated in discussions on every aspect of the University’s planning and construction. That each head of department wanted his exact requirements met without fully appreciating the difficulties the overall lack of finance for the project created was understandable, but it also meant a long, tedious process of consultation on the smallest matters. Even the landscape design and choice of trees for the grounds were subject to this process, with each staff member submitting a list of preferred specimens. While Kemp encouraged the development of an extensive tree planting scheme, he was impatient with the associated staff disputes and was relieved to be able to act on Brigden’s suggestion to hand over these internal planning concerns to dedicated University staff committees.

During Kemp’s absence overseas at the end of 1938, Colin Clark replaced Brigden as Director of the Bureau of Industry and J. D. Story was appointed the University’s Vice-Chancellor. Story was acting Chairman of all the Works Boards for this period and, on securing the appointment he had long desired, was determined to achieve

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79 F. Walsh, Under-Secretary, Department Labour & Industry, to Secretary MRC, 2.3.1938, 247/7/17, R.M.O. 310, QTA.

80 Minutes of meeting of special tree planting committee. Members were MRC engineer, G. Calder, Government Botanist Dr. D. A. Herbert, and staff representative Professor A. C. V. Melbourne, 10.9.1938, 247/7/16, R.M.O. 310, QTA.
some progress on the University's construction. Whether or not he was instrumental in the decision being made is unclear but, in September 1938, the University Works Board was made a constructing authority, as with the other Works Boards, and took over construction from the Department of Public Works. Early in 1939, after Kemp had returned to Queensland and accepted the appointment as Co-Ordinator-General, he was again obliged to intervene directly in operational matters after the Master Builders Association registered a complaint concerning the tender process for the supply of stone. As there were potentially serious political ramifications, Kemp felt it necessary to authorise an investigation through the Board. In his subsequent report to the Premier, he was able to redirect responsibility from the Board back to architects, Hennessey and Hennessey, for whom, it seemed, he had little time. 81 Despite the restructuring Story had organised, and Kemp's increased standing as Co-Ordinator-General, the management of the University project remained troublesome. Unlike other Works projects where he had successfully delegated the day-to-day responsibilities, he found he was still having to resolve problems associated with road layouts, soil analysis, drainage, electrical plant and the location of sports facilities. However, he took a special interest in all technical matters relating to the construction of the buildings. Although his responsibilities had greatly increased, especially with the commencement of national defence works' planning, Kemp was not prepared to accept the interference that had characterised most other aspects of the project.

His stance led to a direct confrontation with Clark early in 1940. Story had written Kemp a private letter reporting on "the rather delicate situation" which had arisen when Clark independently sought the advice of the Government Analyst on non-porite

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81 Kemp to Forgan Smith, 11.4.1939, 247/7/20, R.M.O. 310, QTA.
waterproofing for the buildings. Clark had then ordered the architects to discontinue
its use, even after Hennessey and Hennessey reported in its favour. In a letter to Story
on 5 March, Clark claimed that, having discussed the matter with Kemp, they had
agreed to defer any decision until later. Acting for the Co-Ordinator-General, Story
then virtually warned Clark against interfering in technical matters by informing him
that any action regarding the use of non-porite “is the function of the Co-Ordinator-
General as Chairman of the Board”. 82 The matter did not end there. In August, Clark
wrote to the Auditor-General, with a copy to Kemp, stating that purchases of non-
porite in July were “a clear, and possibly dishonest, waste of public money” He added
that he had recommended its use be discontinued but was overruled by the Board on
the advice of the architects. 83 Having received advice on the matter from Nimmo and
from Cummings, the project’s consulting architect, Kemp made a personal inspection
of the University buildings before compiling a detailed reply to the Auditor-General.
Uncharacteristically, he attacked Clark’s allegations, making no attempt at diplomacy:

The Director is setting himself up as the Authority to decide whether a
specified material is or is not worthless ... The concluding remarks of Mr
Clark in his letter to you ... are unwarranted and highly objectionable. No
member of the Board is entitled to interfere with the construction under
approved plans and specifications except under the authority of the Board. 84

On Kemp’s instructions, the matter was brought up for discussion at the next
University Works Board meeting. The Board endorsed his report to the Auditor-
General and authorised the continued use of non-porite. Having expressed his regret
that the phrases he used “might be liable to misinterpretation” and proposing to advise
the Auditor-General accordingly, Clark wrote separately to Kemp to clarify; “that no

82 Neil Smith, Memo “University Works, St Lucia”, 6.3.1940.,247/6/1, R.M.O. 310, QTA.
83 Clark to J. D. Ross, Auditor-General, 23.8.1940, R.M.O. 310, QTA.
84 Kemp to Ross, 28.8.1940, 247/7/19, R.M.O. 310, QTA.
imputation was intended against the Board or any Member thereof." Kemp acknowledged the letter but made no comment on Clark's apology, reinforcing his stated view that Clark did not have the right to interfere in matters outside his field of professional competence.

Work resumed on the University buildings in 1946. By this time, an unprecedented level of enrolments, together with ongoing funding and materials shortages, precipitated an accommodation crisis. This necessitated the provision of temporary buildings, even though, as Kemp noted at the time, the main administrative and arts building was not in use, owing principally to "transport problems." It was a reference to his unsuccessful attempts to have the West End to St. Lucia Bridge reinstated on the post-war works programme. His subsequent reports on progress at St. Lucia included the bridge, construction of which he continued to assert was delayed by the steel and cement shortages. However, neither the State Government nor the Brisbane City Council saw sufficient benefits accruing from its construction to divert the necessary funds from more urgent works.

In 1946, under the provisions of the Labour and Industry Act repealing certain sections of the *Bureau of Industry Acts 1932 to 1943*, the University Works Board ceased to exist and control of all matters previously administered by the Board was transferred to the Co-Ordinator-General. Following the transfer, Holt, the capable Chief Engineer of the Bridge Branch, was appointed supervising engineer, and with further funding guaranteed, relatively rapid progress was made on the faculty buildings. Under these circumstances, Kemp regained his enthusiasm for the project.

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85 Minutes of Board meeting, 29.8.1940; Clark to Kemp, 30.8.1940, Kemp to Clark, 2.9.1940, 247/7/19, R.M.O. 310, QTA.


and, as each new building was completed, it was given extensive coverage in the Co-
Ordinator-General’s annual reports. Kemp was pleased to refer to the University as a
sound example of both the government’s policy of economic development through
public works and its attention to the future of higher education in Queensland. The
new University also provided an opportunity for the Government to demonstrate the
beneficial application of funds derived from the State Development Tax. Although
Forgan Smith’s relationship with the University Senate had deteriorated, Kemp took
an increasingly active role in the development of the Engineering faculty. His
relationship with Roger Hawken, Professor of Engineering, went back to the early
years of Main Roads when Hawken was retained to carry out soil analyses on a
number of roadworks projects. Hawken consulted Kemp on a range of matters, from
the design of the new Engineering building at St. Lucia, to the appointment process
for faculty members and job placements for graduates. Moreover, in Hawken, Kemp
found acknowledgement of his strong views on engineering training, shaped by his
own experience and his often expressed support for improved professional
engineering standards in Queensland.** His interest in the progress of the University’s
construction program continued after he retired as Co-Ordinator-General. A week
before his death in February 1955, he attended the opening of two University
residential colleges, for which he had helped to arrange funding subsidies some years
previously.**

During the 1930s, dominated as it was by Depression economics, Kemp extended the
scope of his statutory responsibilities and gained much of the administrative
experience that equipped him “to be the right man in the right place at the right time”

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** See, for example, Kemp to Hawken, 18.6.1946, R.M.O. 310, QTA.
** Courier-Mail, 1.3.1955.
The examination of Kemp's activities during this period, particularly in relation to his role in the Bureau of Industry, helps to illustrate much about his working methods. It also reveals aspects of his personal and professional value orientation, which may assist in assessing why the government of the day, as well as many associated authorities and agencies, were comfortable with such an extraordinary range of powers and responsibilities being delegated to him. It may be said that Kemp was the administrative centrepiece around which the majority of the Queensland Government's development plans after 1938 revolved.
THE CO-ORDINATOR-GENERAL OF PUBLIC WORKS: ISSUES OF ROLE AND INFLUENCE

In the years from 1938 to the immediate post-war period, Kemp achieved the position in which he was later described as “Chief Advisor to the Government with more power than anyone else in Queensland except for the Premier”. The principal factors contributing to the consolidation of Kemp’s position were the changes in the Government’s approach to unemployment, a renewed emphasis on state development, and the adoption of the concept of co-ordination of public works, all of which combined to locate public works as the centrepiece of government economic revival policy. Equally important was Queensland’s forward defence role for the Allied Forces after 1941, the consequent effect of this on Federal-State relations, and the priority given to public works in national post-war reconstruction planning. In all of these events, Kemp had the enabling, administrative role.

Changes to the Government’s unemployment relief policy during 1938 were of direct consequence to Kemp. Unemployment had been the central issue of the election campaign preceding Labor again winning government that year and, with the prospect of much reduced unemployment tax receipts, the Government had indicated its inability to continue supporting the Intermittent Relief Scheme. The scheme had proved to be inefficient in meeting public works goals, while local authorities had soon learnt the advantages of substituting relief works for regular works.

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1 Richard, 1988, op. cit.
programmes. In presenting the Government's decision for its abolition, T. A. Foley, Minister for Labour and Industry, stated that it was never more than a stop-gap measure as the Government always intended to replace it with "some form of full-time employment which could be used satisfactorily for the development of this State."

The expanded public works programme put into effect in the United States under Roosevelt's "Second New Deal" provided a useful model for this initiative but, in Queensland, the Labor Government found it difficult to gain the approval of even its traditional supporters. The Labor Party and the trade unions endorsed the change as advancing the principle of universal access to full award wages, but remained unconvinced of the Government's capacity to generate sufficient full-time jobs. Even the proposal to effect the transfer over a period of twelve months, in conjunction with a special accelerated public works programme, appeared to set unachievable employment goals. A survey of workers registered under the relief scheme carried out in July by Colin Clark, Director of the Bureau of Industry, gave some intimation of the huge increase in public works required. With over seventeen thousand workers to be transferred from the scheme, the proven capacity of the Main Roads Commission under Kemp's direction to have approved works available for immediate commencement became of critical importance in maintaining the credibility of the Government's plans.

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The legislative measures proposed by the Government in August began the process which resulted in Kemp’s elevation to a position of administrative control over the State’s public works programme. At the opening of the new session of Parliament on 10 August, the Governor outlined the Government’s intention to abolish intermittent relief and to introduce what was described at the time as “the most ambitious step the Premier … and his party have taken since they assumed office in 1932”6. This was a policy of orderly, forward planning and a co-ordinated approach to public works to deliver efficiency in employment generation and state development. During the session, the Government presented three enabling measures which were passed by Parliament after lengthy and often aggressive debate. The *Income (State Development) Tax Act*, passed in November, provided for the continuation of the Income (Unemployment Relief) Tax at the reduced rate and a higher exemption threshold promised during the State election but with the name changed to reflect the emphasis on state development. The *Rural Development Co-ordination of Advances Act*, passed in September, abolished the Agricultural Bank, created a Bureau of Rural Development to co-ordinate the allocation of loans and grants to assist primary production, and gave the Bureau power to raise loans in the private sector. The *State Development and Public Works Organisation Act*, passed early in September, set out the provisions for the co-ordination of public works, through a newly-created non-departmental authority, the Co-ordinator-General of Public Works By appointing him Co-Ordinator-General, the Government placed Kemp in a dominant administrative role and effectively delegated to him responsibility for implementing its public works-led plans for economic revival.

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6 *Courier-Mail*, 11.8.1938.
There are a number of views on the genesis of the office of Co-ordinator-General.

The generally accepted view, put forward by Cotterell, that it "pioneered, in Australia at least, the principles adopted at the 1937 International Labour Organisation Conference at Geneva", carries an implication, sometimes adopted as fact, that Queensland's initiative took its form from these principles. The resolution passed at the Conference stated:

In the absence of advanced planning, expenditure on public works tends to increase with prosperity and diminish during depression, thus aggravating the effect on the labour market of fluctuations in private employment. Hence it is desirable to time public works to reduce as far as possible industrial fluctuations, and this involves co-ordination of the methods applied by various authorities.\(^7\)

As such, its influence on the co-ordination structure introduced in Queensland was limited. It was more likely to have had a political use in bestowing an ideological legitimacy on the change in policy direction. The need to organise works programmes to allow for seasonal employment fluctuations, particularly in North Queensland, was already recognised well before the Geneva Conference, so that the various references made to the Co-Ordinator-General's responsibility in this area during the debate on the 1938 legislation simply reinforced the long-standing provisions made under the Main Roads works programme. Moreover, examples of co-ordinating mechanisms in Queensland government administration had been evident for over a decade. The Premier himself referred to an interdepartmental committee he convened in the late 1920s as Secretary for Agriculture and Stock, the members of which were the Main Roads Commissioner, the Railway Commissioner, the Under-Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Stock, and the Under-Secretary,

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\(^7\) Cotterell, in Murphy et al., 1980, *op. cit.*, p.89.

\(^8\) *Annual Report of the Co-ordinator-General*, 1940, p.1, quoted in Minnery, "Coordination and the Coordinator-General", *op. cit.*, pp.70-71.
Department of Public Lands. The Committee's work in preparing developmental projects for progressive implementation showed the benefits of co-ordination as, he reported, "seven-tenths of them had been given effect to over the years, with very material advantage to the State." Subsequently, the Moore Government's State Employment Council appointed in 1930 co-ordinated the assessment of unemployment relief projects for funding allocation, while the *State Transport Co-ordination Act* 1931 initiated an on-going series of government efforts to control competition between railways and main roads. In the period between its return to power in 1932 and the 1938 co-ordination legislation, Labor introduced four major changes in the machinery of administration, identified as "involving co-ordination", with the aim of creating employment and advancing state development. Moreover, since 1931, when he advocated an increase in loan works expenditure rather than the reductions demanded under the Premiers' Plan, Forgan Smith's support for achieving efficiency in public works administration through co-ordinated planning was well-known. The *State Development and Public Works Organisation Act* provided for the establishment of the Co-ordinator-General as a central authority to co-ordinate the works programmes of local authorities and government authorities engaged in construction work. The provision for the Co-Ordinator-General to gather information on actual and proposed works projects throughout the State, assess their suitability in terms of employment and state development goals and, accordingly, recommend a co-ordinated works programme for government funding allocations was, according

10 Cotterell, *op. cit.*, p.87.
to later analysts, the principal overt purpose for its creation.\textsuperscript{12} The recommendations were subject to the approval of the Governor-in-Council through the relevant Minister. The Co-Ordinator-General had comprehensive powers to co-opt officials from government departments and semi-government or local authorities, and to initiate investigations himself, or at the minister’s request, “into any Act, matter or thing, including any projected works which may be deemed necessary or desirable for the purposes of the Act.”\textsuperscript{13} The Act was to operate for seven years in the first instance, while the Co-Ordinator-General was appointed by the Governor-in-Council but could only be removed from office by a vote of Parliament.

Opposition to the provisions of the Bill was notable for the level of hostility displayed in the ensuing debate. There were two main aspects on which it was focused. The first was the overall threat to the sovereignty of parliament posed by the creation of a public works co-ordinating authority responsible to the Governor-in-Council rather than to the Parliament. This was a long-standing, legitimate concern in the face of the propensity of governments to use semi-government authorities outside the control of Parliament for particular purposes, and the debate followed the traditional course. In this instance, non-government members objecting to the Premier’s insistence that it was not intended, nor was it possible, “to establish a tyranny through the Executive Council”,\textsuperscript{14} supported their argument with several examples, including the lack of Parliamentary funding approval for the Story Bridge project. In their view, the Bill affirmed the Labor Government’s continuing preference for Executive over Parliamentary government, carrying with it the implication that Labor’s decisions, particularly in the area of works funding

\textsuperscript{12} See Minnery, “Coordination and the Coordinator-General”, \textit{op. cit.}, p.68.

\textsuperscript{13} Section 16, S. D. P. W. O. Bill, 1938, \textit{QPD}, 172, p.252.
allocations, would not stand up to parliamentary scrutiny. Recent commentators have given some weight to the suggestion that the Co-Ordinator-General was to be used to reduce the corruption underlying decisions regarding the allocation of works projects. Although competition remained inevitable, the application of objective criteria associated in this case with the appointment of a technical specialist, was a recognised mechanism for containing political influence in the distribution of local authority works grants. However, as both the Premier and Opposition MLAs had, for different reasons, already established, the executive council retained the power of final approval. Moreover, the effectiveness of the measure rested on the capacity of the Co-Ordinator-General to influence the process to the extent of having his recommendations adopted.

The potential power of the Co-Ordinator-General to influence decisions was recognised in the second aspect on which debate focused, the scope of powers delegated to the Co-Ordinator-General. The ramifications of the Co-Ordinator-General’s potential control of employment distribution were not addressed. Despite Kemp’s representations on the inefficiencies of the Labour Exchange system, the Director of Labour, supported by an effective union bloc, had already won the battle with Kemp for control of relief work at Main Roads and major works sites, so that political intervention to change the system was unlikely. A half-hearted attempt was made to have the entire Bill discarded on the grounds that existing legislation already provided for works co-ordinating mechanisms, but the principal point of attack was the detrimental effect of the Co-Ordinator-General’s powers on local government. Opposing arguments presented in terms of the destruction of local government

\[14 \text{ Ibid, p.194.}\]

\[15 \text{ Minnery, op. cit., p.69.}\]
independence did not obscure the prime concern of all members of Parliament. This was to protect the mutually dependent relationship with their constituents which relied for success on the economic benefits of works projects. They had no wish to relinquish such an important lever of local influence or to suffer the electoral consequences of works allocation decisions over which they had no control.

R. H. Robinson, previously the Auditor-General, who had then followed Charles Chuter as Under-Secretary of the Department of Health and Home Affairs, and whose responsibility extended to the sub-department of Local Government during this period, summed up these concerns in his scathing commentary on the co-ordination measures:

This new form of central government control of the local governments virtually destroyed the initiative and drive of the representatives of the people in the local authorities. In the central governments of both tiers the result was much the same, even the Executive Governments losing their grip on public works policy and leaving their hob to the logrollers much like in previous generations ....

Two provisions of the Bill were identified as threatening the existing distribution of power in these areas. The first was section 16, the so-called “dragnet clause”, which, in providing for the Co-Ordinator-General to investigate any works defined by the Co-Ordinator-General as “works for the purposes of the Act”, failed to define any limits to the exercise of the Co-Ordinator-Generals powers. The second was section 20, whereby the Co-Ordinator-General had power to recommend to the Minister that a local authority be ordered to undertake certain works. If the local authority refused to do so, the Co-Ordinator-General as directed by the Minister had the power to carry

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out the works, the costs of which would be borne under the usual conditions by the local authority. The Premier was sufficiently annoyed at the Opposition's deliberate trivialisation of what he saw as constructive initiatives to declare: "there is no intention on the part of the Government to interfere under this Bill in a pettifogging, captious or querulous way with any local authority." He went on to repeat his conviction that the use of section 20 would be necessary only when one local authority refused to participate in a major joint developmental project. Despite his assurances, the two provisions together were interpreted as conferring coercive, absolute powers on the Co-Ordinator-General. They precipitated the widely-publicised attacks in which the Government was accused of adopting "principles of Fascism" and employing the "autocratic" methods of Nazi Germany. It was a popular ploy at a time when Europe stood on the brink of war. It also played on the rather dubious assertion, since it related, among other things, to a government minister rather than an official, that Germany had in Herman Goering the first known Co-ordinator of Public Works. The epithets of "czar" and "dictator" which were applied with considerable effect, if confusingly, to both the Minister and the Co-ordinator-General, were not new to parliamentary debate. They were used in other instances where appointments were perceived to concentrate excessive power in a single official, as with the appointment in 1916 of the State Insurance Commissioner, in 1920 when J. D. Story was appointed sole Public Service Commissioner in place of the Public Service Board, and similarly in 1947 when A. J. Anderson was appointed State Transport Commissioner.

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19 S. D. P. W. O. Bill, 1938, Second Reading, p.239.
Kemp's name first entered the debate on 30th August when the Premier announced that he had been offered the appointment of Co-Ordinator-General. Explaining Kemp's selection, he said that Queensland was "fortunate" to have available for the position;

... not only a man with a very complete engineering knowledge, but one who has administrative capacity, an understanding of finance, and all the other qualities necessary for such an appointment.^^

While non-government members continued to oppose the concept of a co-ordinator general armed with "dictatorial" powers, Kemp's nomination was generally well-received. The apparently contradictory stance, which continued unchanged until well into the post-war period, stemmed from a recognition of the position and its incumbent as distinct entities. Most Parliamentary representatives were already acquainted with Kemp and had no difficulty endorsing the qualities the Premier identified. Over the years, Ministers had found it politically beneficial to accompany him on regional inspection tours, while backbenchers regularly visited his office to present delegations and to confer with him on local works projects. They were agreed on the fairness of his decisions, his record, only limited by the funds available, of "getting things done", and an almost obsessive dedication to his responsibilities. He was also known to local authority representatives, farmers and businessmen throughout the state as a result of his frequent tours, not only as Main Roads Commissioner but also as a member of the State Employment Council, the Bureau of Industry, the State Transport Board and several Commissions of Inquiry. There was little doubt about Kemp's political value, both as the Brisbane-based Government's principal link with its regional constituents and as a buffer against

21 Ibid, p.281; Courier-Mail, 31.8.1938.
their continual demands for increased works allocations. Kemp had a long experience of being cast in this role. In the first years of the Main Roads Board, Premier E. G. Theodore met with numerous deputations of local representatives, disgruntled over the Government’s failure to build the promised access railways for new settlements. It was his practice to refer them to Kemp to provide a roads-based solution to the problem, although he knew that the tight controls over the Board’s operations, instituted to protect the railways, precluded any such outcome.23

As Leader of the Opposition, J. Maher, conceded:

Mr. Kemp has been dealing with local authorities ever since he assumed the important responsibilities of his present office. Looking round the wide range of the public service, I suppose there is no one who would have the same measure of confidence amongst local governing bodies in the discharge of this important office as Mr. Kemp.24

The Local Authorities Association welcomed Kemp’s appointment. The Association’s executive did not anticipate any abuse of the Co-Ordinator-General’s powers and assured him of members’ co-operation. However, it regretted that the Government felt the need to use the threat of compulsion when local authorities had always been willing to co-operate on all “legitimate” unemployment relief schemes.25

To make the best of a losing argument, Maher then raised the issue of Kemp being overworked. As the Co-Ordinator-General was so important to the Government’s economic revival plans, he wanted Kemp to be relieved of all other responsibilities to enable him “to bring his splendid powers of mind and directive energy to bear upon

23 See, for example, Eacham Shire delegation, Daily Mail, 16.5.1922; South Coast local authorities delegation, Daily Mail, 3.6.1922.
this paramount problem of State development.”

Maher was probably being ironic on this occasion but the issue received serious support from other speakers, including W. L. Dart, a member of the newly formed United Australia Party, who coined the often-quoted phrase, “he will have to be a superman” in reference to Kemp’s workload. Before the end of the year, Kemp was relieved of one of the responsibilities they had targeted. Implementing the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Transport, of which Kemp had been a member, the State Transport Act 1938 replaced the Board appointed by the Moore government in 1932 with a three-member State Transport Commission. Main Roads Commission secretary, J. E. England, who had been Registrar of Vehicles since 1932 and had deputised for Kemp on the Board during 1938, was appointed Chairman of the Commission. With England taking the place of Kemp under the new arrangement, Main Roads continued to have an influential position in transport policy deliberations, allowing Kemp to maintain a presence while relinquishing the formal responsibility. It was still insignificant when weighed against his other areas of responsibility, so that the Opposition continued to raise the issue whenever the opportunity presented itself. Planting the seed of doubt about one man’s competence to discharge so many administrative responsibilities was the only way the Opposition found to attack Kemp personally, and it finally bore fruit in the post-war period.

In his criticism of public works co-ordination, R. H. Robinson also argued that the policy compounded the State’s loss of independence in its relations with the Federal Government. However, Forgan Smith’s stance at Premiers’ Conferences and Loan

27 Ibid, pp.252-53.
29 Robinson, op. cit., p.324
Council meetings had already demonstrated his refusal to concede State control in exchange for increased Federal funding. During the debate on the State Development and Public Works Organisation Bill, the Premier arranged to have published two emotionally charged newspaper articles ostensibly reinforcing his arguments in favour of public works co-ordination. Their real intent was to leave no doubt that effective state action against unemployment depended on a Federal Government commitment to increased funding support for this initiative, but on a "partnership" basis that did not compromise state independence. Kemp was an important weapon in Queensland’s on-going quest for increased Federal subsidies and Loan Council allocations for state public works. This was especially pertinent to expansionist plans for linking employment to major infrastructure development projects in water, sewerage and electricity supply and in the increasingly popular areas of water conservation and irrigation. The experiences of both Forgan Smith and Kemp showed that convincing the Loan Council to approve borrowings for state works programmes on the scale envisaged required soundly conceived and costed projects. Also, as demonstrated with the grants made principally for road works under the Federal Aid Roads Agreement and for unemployment relief, the Commonwealth had to be satisfied about the State’s capacity to complete approved projects.

Against this background, the creation of a co-ordinating works authority was intended to bring a greater level of efficiency to the loan works application process, but the success of the strategy was still entirely dependent on the capabilities of the person appointed as co-ordinator. Kemp’s appointment took advantage of his already established reputation in the Federal sphere. Federal authorities held him in high regard on the basis of his comprehensive grasp of public works at local and state

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30 *Courier-Mail*, 26 and 27 August 1938
levels, his national standing as an acknowledged road works specialist, and his
grown reliability in completing Commonwealth-subsidised projects to the set
standards and within budget limits. For fifteen years, he had been the Government’s
adviser at national roads policy conferences and, in collaboration with engineer
colleagues who headed other state road authorities, was influential in securing
beneficial changes to the Federal Aid Roads Agreement. Moreover, as Chairman of
the Bureau of Industry’s Roads, Mining and Works Committee and subsidiary
Works’ Boards, Kemp’s part in the process of accommodating competing demands
for works’ allocations extended well beyond road works considerations.

Due in no small part to the assistance of J. B. Brigden, Kemp developed an expertise
in public finance which assured him of a consultative role in deliberations on the
State’s overall works programme and the means of its funding. His position gave him
a legitimate base for expanding the scope of his dealings with Federal authorities and
exposed him to a much wider range of influential contacts in Federal Government
circles. That he made full use of these contacts was demonstrated by his tireless
lobbying for national recognition as a lever to gain Federal funding for works
projects such as the Somerset Dam and the Burdekin River development scheme. It
was therefore evident that, over a number of years prior to his appointment as Co-
Ordinator-General, Kemp had been assuming more of a central, co-ordinating role in
the decisions associated with the annual state works programme. During this period,
the Government also developed a greater reliance on his advice, in step with the
increasing importance of state-wide capital works projects in the implementation of

31 For example; in 1929, the Prime Minister convened a conference of Premiers and Ministers
responsible for roads. Kemp and J. H. Stanley, Under-Secretary, Treasury, accompanied the
Treasurer, W. H. Barnes, and the Minister for Railways and Main Roads, Godfrey Morgan. Annual
economic development policy. The Government’s reliance on Kemp in the area of Federal-State financial relations was confirmed when, two years later, Forgan Smith referred to public works co-ordination under Kemp’s direction as maximising Queensland’s bid for Loan Council defence works allocations.32

There is little documentary evidence to confirm that the legislation was drafted with Kemp in mind or that he was directly involved in its drafting. Robinson claimed that Kemp “had no particular desire for such a position.”33 Rather, it was “the prince of bureaucrats” who influenced Forgan Smith “to set up a new form of approval and control of central and local government loan expenditure by the appointment of a Coordinator-General.”34 The two possible candidates for the title at that time were Colin Clark and J. D. Story. As a newcomer, appointed for his expertise as a statistician, Clark is unlikely to have exerted a determining influence on the legislation. It was not until the post-war period that he reached the height of his influence as Labor’s chief economic adviser. In contrast to that period, his preference in 1938 was for government assistance to secondary industries to boost economic growth in general and employment in particular. Heeding Brigden’s advice that “Industries Assistance may have some problems”,35 he put his energies into the Industries Assistance Board which had been revived in July with the passing of the Industries Assistance Act and the transfer of its administration from the Premier’s Department to Treasury.

Although he was publicly critical of any Federal decision to reduce overall loan works funding because of the detrimental effect on employment,36 Clark did not

32 S. D. P. W O. Act Amendment Bill, 1940, p.268; see also Minnery, op. cit., p.68.
33 Robinson, op. cit., p.324.
34 Ibid.
35 Brigden to Clark, 8.4.1938, Colin Clark Papers UQFL 87, Box 21A, University of Queensland.
36 D. B. Copland to Clark, 12.7.1940, Colin Clark Papers, op. cit.
endorse Forgan Smith's high level of reliance on the major public works projects Kemp supported.

The Premier may have become as concerned as the Opposition about the ramifications of the loose legislative definition of the Co-Ordinator-General's investigative powers. Stirred by the suggestion that section 16, the "dragnet" clause, allowed the Co-Ordinator-General to investigate state taxation issues, he nevertheless rejected Maher's proposed amendment seeking to limit its scope to employment-related areas. The amendment raised the possibility of competing jurisdictions and even of the Co-Ordinator-General's dominance of the Bureau of Industry, as it had the capacity to transfer to the Co-Ordinator-General "the supreme authority" granted to the Bureau's Director under the Bureau of Industry Act 1932. In moving to protect the Bureau's authority, and, consequently, Clark's interests, Forgan Smith was adamant that, "The director of this Bureau will not be an officer of the Co-Ordinator-General and not subject in any way to the control of this (the Co-Ordinator-General's) department" 37 The issue of competing jurisdictions remained unsolved. There was already tension in the relationship between Clark and Kemp over the administration of the Bureau's Works Boards. Ignoring Brigden's implicit warning not to interfere, 38 he immediately began applying his own, economist approach to technical specialist matters while challenging the balancing act Kemp had carefully developed to maintain funding coverage for all the works projects. Under legislative amendments in 1940, the Co-Ordinator-General became a constructing authority and a "corporation sole", largely for Commonwealth defence works requirements. These changes enabled Kemp to move works' construction planning out from under the

38 Brigden to Clark, op. cit.
Bureau's legal umbrella, minimise Clark's formal control and proceed towards finally achieving a long-desired goal. In 1946, when the Works Boards were abolished and their responsibilities transferred to the Co-Ordinator-General, Kemp, as Co-Ordinator-General, gained formal administrative control over the planning and implementation of the state's infrastructure development and public work programmes.

"The prince of bureaucrats" almost certainly referred to Story whose intervention, over the years, in departmental matters outside his formal responsibilities had not endeared him to many departmental heads. As a member of the Moore Government's State Employment Council, Vice-President of the Bureau of Industry and member of the Bureau's Works Boards, he had first-hand experience of the inefficiencies in the existing works allocations process. He was probably a member of the "cabal of reformist professionals in Brisbane with connections to Forgan Smith and the Cabinet" referred to by Minnery, whose views on the need for planning in government works' programmes were articulated in the Bureau of Industry's 1934 annual report. In the 1937 Public Service Commissioner's annual report, Story disclosed his support for "Intra-state co-operation and co-ordination", and outlined the benefits of orderly, forward planning of works projects for unemployment relief. In his view, co-ordination in public works was simply a continuation of "the principles of the old State Employment Council and an extension of some of the features of the present Bureau of Industry". Not surprisingly, he nominated the Bureau of Industry as the appropriate authority to undertake investigations and to analyse the potential employment capacity of major works. Given the date the report

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39 Minnery, op. cit., p.70.
40 Annual Reports of the Public Service Commissioner, 1931-1937, p.19.
was published, it tends to confirm Story as the person who influenced Forgan Smith
to set up a co-ordinating authority, while suggesting that Story’s plan was to locate it
within the Bureau’ existing structure. This arrangement would have provided a direct
line of control over public works through the Bureau to Treasury, leaving
undisturbed Treasury’s loan subsidy scheme for local works, that had proved so
popular with local authorities and their Parliamentary representatives. In line with
Story’s preference for the departmental mode of administration, the end result would
have been to keep the decisive role in shaping a co-ordinated public works
programme within the financial, generalist arm of administration. The technical,
professional specialists, while essential to the integrity of the programme, would
have been relegated to a peripheral, consultative role.

Story’s views clearly influenced Cotterell’s assertion that the Co-Ordinator-General,
far from being “the most radical change” in Queensland’s administrative history, was
little more than an extension of the Bureau’s Roads, Mining and Works Committee.'
This would have been sustainable if Story’s proposal had been adopted. However,
two factors militated against it. Following Labor’s win in the April 1938 State
election, Treasury was detached from the chief secretary’s portfolio and Frank
Cooper, as the new Treasurer, took over responsibility for the Bureau of Industry.
However, as the political architect of the co-ordinated works plan, Forgan Smith
had no intention of ceding its control to Treasury. By choosing the option of
establishing a new co-ordinating authority responsible to him as Premier, he
guaranteed for himself, the approval safeguards notwithstanding, a direct line of
control over the public works’ policy he had worked so determinedly to initiate. The

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41 Cotterell, *op. cit.*, p.89.
legislative provisions enabling the Co-Ordinator-General to co-opt departmental officials and to conduct investigations into any potential areas for developmental works, indicated that the Premier envisaged a much more extensive range of operations for the Co-Ordinator-General than would have applied under the committee structure.

Once the Bureau of Industry option had been rejected, there was every indication that Story was in favour of Kemp's appointment. Since they had first worked together on the State Employment Council, Story had openly supported Kemp's attempt to introduce efficiency into the administration of unemployment relief works. As a member of the Bureau of Industry's Works Boards, he had made representations to Cabinet to assist Kemp's plans and had actively opposed Colin Clark's interference in Kemp's sphere of administration at the University of Queensland. Moreover, Story's time as Queensland's most influential bureaucrat was gradually coming to an end. He was due to retire as Public Service Commissioner, after several extensions to his term of office, although he remained a member of the Bureau of Industry and the Works Boards. In August, during the debate on the State Development and Public Works Organisation Bill, he was appointed the University of Queensland's Vice-Chancellor, a position which promised the opportunity to pursue his vision for tertiary education in Queensland.

As to the choice of Kemp as Co-Ordinator-General, in the confined circles of Queensland Government and administration, Kemp's professional relationship with the Premier and the Cabinet was inevitably close and of long standing. Forgan Smith did not hesitate to confirm this, claiming it had been his responsibility, as Secretary for Public Works in 1920, to appoint the Main Roads Board and to determine the
Board's operational policy. Later, he told Parliament: "The Co-Ordinator-General and I get on very well: we listen to each other with a great deal of interest" Kemp may not have had the unanimous support of Cabinet, but his political usefulness and sound record in public works' administration were not disputed. There would have been few, if any, candidates with a similar breadth of experience in the relevant areas of administration. However, as writers analysing Weberian constructs of the political-administrative relationship have identified, the most important consideration influencing the choice of Kemp as Co-Ordinator-General was the affinity between his views and those of the Premier on the primacy of state development. Throughout the 1930s, Kemp had taken an increasingly prominent role in the works planning that formed the basis of Forgan Smith's determined push for an escalation in major development projects. While Ministerial supporters may have been impressed by the mystique of specialist engineering expertise that he embodied, Kemp's views on planning for the State's future had a much broader orientation. As his reports, public speeches and radio talks during the 1930s demonstrated, a comprehensive understanding of the needs of people living in regional Queensland State and engaged in a range of occupations informed his conviction that continuing infrastructure development would deliver both economic growth and social stability. While Kemp's later actions lent support to the view that he saw in the Co-Ordinator-General the opportunity to retain and build on the engineering expertise developed through the various Works Boards, it is a limited view. More to the point

44 Ibid, p.269.
45 See, for example, Page, op. cit., p.30, p.133.
46 For a selection of Kemp's speeches and radio talks, see J. R. Kemp Papers., OM 79 - 58/1, John Oxley Library.
were the different contexts in which Forgan Smith and Kemp operated. Even as their affinity was established, Forgan Smith would have assigned Kemp the traditional, instrumental role of a government official in achieving his aims. It was a measure of Kemp’s capacity for working with the prevailing political will that he succeeded in achieving the majority of his own aims.

Robinson’s claim, also shared by some MLAs at the time, that Kemp did not want the position as Co-Ordinator-General, was almost certainly based on Kemp’s typically modest public persona. It is difficult to credit that he did not welcome the appointment, with its potentially open-ended powers and higher administrative status, as the means of taking charge of public works planning, while elevating Queensland engineering projects to national, if not international standing. As it happened, the critically important role of defence works in World War Two, together with the responsibility of delivering a massive works programme in what was considered to be an impossibly short time, tested both the effectiveness of co-ordination and Kemp’s capabilities. His success in the complex field of public works under wartime conditions enhanced his reputation as an administrator and ensured what was a virtually unchallenged control over the planning and co-ordination of the State’s public works.

If Kemp had a decisive influence on the concept of the Co-Ordinator-General, the question remains whether or not his influence extended to framing the legislative provisions. The answer lies in the evidence that particular powers granted to the Co-Ordinator-General reflected long-standing frustrations Kemp had experienced, and went some way towards resolving them. In some instances, the legislative provisions opened the way for Kemp to press successfully for further changes or extensions to the scope of the Co-Ordinator-General’s powers. The “coercive” powers of section
20 were intended to address a situation Kemp had faced since the early years of Main Roads. The refusal of local authorities, usually concerned about the cost of proposed works, to co-operate in approving a main road for gazettal and construction, resulted in long delays while the Main Roads Board negotiated a compromise. If negotiations were unsuccessful, work did not proceed. Although the Minister had the power under the Main Roads Act to order works to be carried out, it was rarely invoked and even more rarely exercised. Through the co-ordinated programme, the aim was to begin planning for a new phase of developmental works to cover irrigation, water supply and electricity schemes, many of which required the co-operation of several local authorities. The lesson learned from Kemp's experience of the narrow focus of local authority concerns, dominated as they were by financial considerations, was articulated by Forgan Smith in his reference to the need to prevent "internecine strife" interfering with works planning.

Another reason for establishing a process of planning and co-ordination among works departments and authorities was the evidence of duplication in works projects which, as was widely known, was particularly evident in road works. Forgan Smith later claimed that an investigation he had ordered in 1937 disclosed that the PEI Branch of the LAB was "undertaking a class of road it was not my intention, at least, that it should undertake when the Main Roads Commission was established." Whatever his recollection of past events, it had been clear at the time that the PEI was the dominant participant in any clash between the LAB and Main Roads over the

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47 For example, objection to proposed route Innisfail to Millaa Millaa, Main Roads Board, Record of Agenda, 12.5.1922, Item 24 (48/1/1); Opposition to road, Warwick to Killarney, Main Roads Board, Record of Agenda, 13.6.1922, Item 8, (56/7/1).
provision of access roads to new settlements. Responding to delegations from the
settlements, Kemp campaigned to bring access roads under Main Roads provisions
but, in 1927, the LAB's dominance was confirmed when the five departments
involved in land settlement were placed under the Secretary for Public Lands. The
intention was, among other things, to co-ordinate roads construction for the
settlements. Again, protection for railway expansion plans, in conjunction with the
LAB’s control over all closer settlement issues, dictated restrictions on Main Roads
operations in this area, with the result that Kemp lost out to the LAB Chairman,
William Labbat Payne. In 1938, Payne retired from the LAB to take up an
appointment on the Land Court. The removal of his main opponent at a time when
settlers’ complaints about the Board’s failure to construct access roads were
receiving considerable publicity, placed Kemp in an advantageous position.
In 1939, following Cabinet approval of his recommendation on the matter, 50 an
amendment to the Main Roads legislation brought the construction of access roads,
under certain conditions, under the Main Roads Act. Applications from local
authorities for access roads required the approval of the Co-Ordinator-General who
could then recommend that road construction be carried out, either by the local
authority, the PEI Branch, or Main Roads. Subsequently, the 1940 amendment to the
State Development and Public Works Organisation Act added the Co-Ordinator-
General to the list of state construction authorities. Under the banner of co-

50 Main Roads Acts Amendment Bill, QPD, 1939, 175, p.1564; Under the 1939 amendments,
Section 19 of the Main Roads Acts, 1920-1935, was repealed and replaced. The new section
provided that “local authorities or Crown instrumentalities may apply to the Minister for the
construction of access roads to new settlements to be opened up for development or of subsidiary
roads in settlements still being developed. Such applications will be referred to the Co-ordinator-
General of Public Works...” Hon H. A. Bruce, Secretary for Public Lands, Second Reading
Speech, op. cit, 1939, p.1552.
ordination, Kemp gained control of all State road works planning and construction. As he reported with obvious satisfaction, “This will bring about the co-ordination of State road policy on sound lines, financial and otherwise, and will prevent overlapping”. Hinting at the dubious basis for past decisions concerning access roads, he added that, “It will also ensure that funds are used upon works in the relative order of importance.”

Another area in which legislative provisions addressed difficulties Kemp had previously experienced was the resumption of land for public works. Particularly with the rebuilding of the Petrie Bight wharves and the resumptions required for the Story Bridge approaches, lengthy disputes over compensation had compromised budget provisions and interfered with construction schedules. The 1940 amendments made the Co-Ordinator-General a “corporation sole” with power to buy, sell and hold land, while alterations to the existing conditions gave the Co-Ordinator-General “enormously increased” powers over resumptions. The steady stream of disputed Main Roads compensation decisions still being referred to the Land Court, and the perceived threat the new provisions posed to land owners’ rights, provoked strenuous protest against the amendment. However, as far as Kemp was concerned, it resolved another of the long-standing frustrations of works’ administration. The new resumption conditions brought improved efficiency and security to public works planning while reducing the risk of compensation disputes jeopardising construction schedules as they had done in the past.

Despite Cabinet endorsement of the frequent recommendations he made on the subject, Kemp had less success in trying to influence the process of Treasury loan-subsidies to local authorities. It had been a source of continual frustration for him as,

for years, his efforts to convince local authorities to invest in soundly-constructed roads under the Main Roads provisions had been thwarted by the councils’ ready access to Treasury funding. The availability of cash subsidies for unemployment relief works introduced in 1932, together with long-term loans for infrastructure works, enabled them to follow their own programmes. At a time when lack of funds often meant Kemp had to refuse local authority requests for main roads works, he found it galling to see money wasted on non-reproductive or uncompleted works. Treasury loans were over thirty years at low interest rates and, with little pressure for eventual repayment, provided a cheap and politically popular alternative to the costs involved in Main Roads compliance. As, under these circumstances, it was difficult to carry out the staged construction of main roads, Kemp tried unsuccessfully to have Treasury notify him of any loan funds granted for road works.

Speaking on the State Development and Public Works Organisation Bill in 1938, the Premier acknowledged the unsatisfactory aspects of the scheme as a prelude to making the Co-Ordinator-General responsible for ensuring a maximum return on the government’s outlay. ⁵² He confirmed that section 15 of the Bill, embodying the spirit of co-ordination which the Co-Ordinator-General represented, was based on Kemp’s recommendations. It enabled the Co-Ordinator-General to request all local authorities to provide comprehensive information, including all financial transactions, on their works programmes. The information was essential to the preparation of a State-wide, co-ordinated works programme but its disclosure threatened to reveal specific shortcomings and abuses of the loan-subsidy scheme. Several speakers had little hesitation in recounting to Parliament instances known to them of local authority manipulation of the scheme. However, they were careful to

⁵² S. D. P. W. O. Bill, 1938, p.125, p.239.
present the Co-Ordinator-General’s power as another intrusion on local authority independence, since the ease with which Treasury loans for local works could be obtained, remained an effective means of ensuring constituency support. The principal opposition came from a few Brisbane-based representatives. On behalf of the Brisbane City Council, they objected to the Co-Ordinator-General’s interference in areas of Council responsibility when the Council’s charter of independent was clearly set out in the Greater Brisbane legislation.

The Council’s poor record of administration was a sensitive issue. In 1938, following a “highly critical” report from the inquiry undertaken by John McCracken and E. H. George, R. H. Robinson, then the Auditor-General, was seconded to the Council to re-organise its affairs, as an alternative to dissolution and the appointment of an administrator. There were the inevitable political consequences and those with a vested interest in stabilising the Council’s administration to protect it from State Government intervention. They believed the Co-Ordinator-General’s power to compel information, taken with the power to compel the undertaking of works, gave him the means of intervention. Kemp had no sympathy with the Council’s position. Its over-ambitious works programme, coupled with general financial mismanagement, had affected funding provisions for the Story Bridge and preliminary work on the West End to St. Lucia Bridge, obliging him to compromise on funding for other Works Boards’ projects.

It was as much to close off the more obvious opportunities for abuse as the stated reason of reducing cash outlays on unemployment relief that, in November 1938, cash subsidies for local authority works were converted to subsidies on loan interest and redemption rates. By March 1939, when Kemp was in the process of preparing

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his first co-ordinated works programme, Treasury loans for local authority works were still being granted without reference to him. Despite legislative authority and an extensive publicity campaign stressing the benefits of co-operation,\textsuperscript{54} he was still a long way from obtaining the comprehensive information he required for a soundly-based co-ordinated programme. During 1939, talks between Kemp and Treasury officials resulted in Treasury agreeing to consult with the Co-Ordinator-General on loan approvals, although specific information on each approval remained elusive.\textsuperscript{55}

The Commonwealth's decision, early in 1940, to amalgamate State and Defence Loan Works programmes for loan works approval purposes, lent some urgency to the need for Queensland to present a comprehensive, rationally-developed co-ordinated works plan. Amendments to the \textit{State Development and Public Works Organisation Act} in September 1940, introduced increased powers for the Co-Ordinator-General as necessary for defence purposes. Kemp's repeated representations to the Premier were finally rewarded in spite of the Opposition's argument that the proposed provisions would make the Co-Ordinator-General more powerful than Treasury.\textsuperscript{56} Under the amendments, Treasury was required not only to advise the Co-Ordinator-General of loan approvals but also to submit any further loan proposals for approval by the Co-Ordinator-General before he recommended their inclusion in the co-ordinated plan.

Addressing the need for local authority co-operation to maximise access to Commonwealth loan funding, H. A. Bruce, Minister for Public Works, and one of Kemp's foremost supporters, attempted a conciliatory approach to opponents of the Co-Ordinator-General's power to supervise and approve all local authority works. He

\textsuperscript{54} See, for example, \textit{Courier-Mail}, 8.3.1939.

\textsuperscript{55} For a comprehensive coverage of Treasury loan-subsidies, see Wheeler, \textit{op. cit.}, pp.37-42.
said that, as Queensland was now moving to the stage of providing major infrastructure works in rural areas, many of the projects, such as the Barron Falls hydro-electricity scheme, had proved to be beyond local engineering expertise and funding capacity. Abandoning conciliation, Forgan Smith demanded local authority compliance in providing information on works programmes and their full co-operation with the Co-Ordinator-General in preparing the co-ordinated plan. He made no bones about the Co-Ordinator-General’s supervisory role being intended to rectify the mistakes of the past and, by delivering a more cost-efficient result, improve Queensland’s standing in Loan Council deliberations.

His forcefulness may be traced back to the embarrassment the Premier experienced at the Conference of Commonwealth and State Ministers in mid-1938. The Conference was convened by the Commonwealth to seek state support for a Commonwealth-State co-operative funding plan for “defence and public development”. A unanimous vote of approval opened the way for the plan to proceed, but Forgan Smith found that Queensland had “no scheme of co-operation available to put before the … conference.” Kemp had assisted Forgan Smith in putting together a works programme built around major road and railway construction projects, but the bulk of it was rejected on the grounds that it failed to provide a reliably comprehensive overview of state public works. Proposals for Commonwealth defence works allocations in 1938 which initially all but by-passed Queensland, convinced him of the need to control local authority programmes in order to achieve the efficiency required in works submissions. This experience

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56 S. D. P. W. O. Act Amendment Bill, 1940, p.279.
58 Ibid, p.266.
59 Income (State Development) Tax Bill, 1938, p.1600.
reinforced the Premier’s determination to impose co-ordination on the administration of public works and to give the responsibility to the official with proven technical and administrative skills, whose aims were in step with his own.

By 1940, most of the changes Kemp advocated had Ministerial and legislative endorsement. Even if he had not wanted to take on a position that had become the focus of such intense public debate, it nevertheless consolidated his administrative standing and his capacity to influence the political process towards his professional public works’ orientation. The suggestion that the Co-Ordinator-General’s powers allowed Kemp to make policy decisions, usually the prerogative of the Executive, was as easy to confirm as was its inevitability. The Premier had stated early in the debate on the Co-Ordinator-General’s powers that the Government had absolute trust in the official appointed to implement the policy of public works co-ordination.60 If the implication was that, by changing the conditions for local authority works and Treasury loan approvals,61 Kemp had become “political” or had politicised the process, this was to misread Cabinet’s intention. The policy direction towards infrastructure development works and the means of its implementation had already been approved by Cabinet. In Parliament, Forgan Smith conveyed the impression that, while in some instances it might “modify or even enlarge upon” specific proposals,62 the Government usually accepted Kemp’s advice. H. A. Bruce was more forthcoming about Kemp’s status. In November 1939, he disclosed that Kemp had recommended the proposed amendment to the Main Roads legislation regarding obstructions on roads. As Minister, he then felt it wiser to include the requirement for the Governor-in-Council’s approval so as to avoid any accusation that Kemp as

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60 S. D. P. W. O. Bill, 1938, p.195.
61 See Wheeler, op. cit., p.15.
Commissioner of Main Roads would arbitrarily use these powers. In a sense, the Government had little choice but to concur in the expansion of Kemp's influence. The situation was inevitably exacerbated by wartime conditions, but the end result for Kemp was a control of Queensland's public works that went far beyond any passive reading of the administrative role of Government officials.

The likelihood that the concept of the Co-Ordinator-General, the extent of his powers and his appointment to the position had, at least in principle, been agreed early in 1938, was supported by Kemp's departure in April on an extended overseas tour. As he did not return to Brisbane until December that year, he was effectively quarantined from the controversy over the extensive powers delegated to the Co-Ordinator-General and the change they signalled in Kemp's relations with State and local authority representatives. The principal reason for Kemp's trip was his selection as the Commonwealth's official representative to the Eighth Congress of the Permanent International Association of Road Congresses held in June at The Hague. His selection confirmed the esteem in which he was held by his Australian road engineering colleagues and, although it was his first overseas visit, he was far from being overawed by the splendour of the conference setting and the prestigious assembly of international delegates. Finding his right to a seat on the official platform taken over by the head of the British delegation, who had decided that he represented Britain's "Dominions and Colonies", Kemp rallied support for a challenge. In their report, the British engineers paid little heed to "Empire-wide problems", in particular the relationship between laboratory testing of subsoil foundations and the design of pavement thickness. As Kemp pointed out, errors in

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62 S. D. P. W. O. Act Amendment Bill, 1940, p.293.
63 Main Roads Acts Amendment Bill, 1939, p.1564.

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testing had proved expensive for Australia in planning road construction and, to address the problem, one of his first actions as Main Roads Board Chairman was to establish testing facilities in conjunction with the University of Queensland. After consultation with Indian and other Empire representatives, he drew up a motion recommending further investigation of soil testing facilities that, through improvements in road design and selection of materials, would deliver major cost savings for road construction authorities. Kemp's stance obviously struck a chord with an influential group of delegates. The motion made its way up through the various sections of the Congress, was then supported by several European delegates, and finally presented to the general session, where its adoption was carried unanimously. The success of the motion gave the British delegates cause to rethink their assumptions about the Empire countries, while Kemp had left his own, and Australia's imprint on the congress. Kemp fully appreciated the opportunity to discuss advances and experiences in road construction techniques with other road authority professionals. He found he was not at a disadvantage in the discussions as, he later reported, he learnt that practices in Australia, and Queensland in particular, measured up well to other, so-called, more advanced countries.

At the invitation of colleagues representing various national roads authorities, many of whom were attending the Congress, he visited Britain, Scandinavia, Germany, Canada and the United States. In relation to some aspects of roads and transport management in Britain, he decided he had nothing to learn, as Queensland already had appropriate provisions in place. He enjoyed the incomparable scenery of the famous Skyline Drive in Kentucky's Blue Ridge Mountains but, not missing an

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64 Kemp, 1939, op. cit.
65 See, for example, Annual Report of the Commissioner of Main Roads, 1939, p.13.
opportunity to canvass support for the troubled Mount Spec road to the west of
Townsville, reported that; “except for the autumn colouring .... we have equally
beautiful drives in our own State. Mount Spec is equal to any” 67 Other financial and
road construction initiatives impressed him so much that he determined to introduce
them in Queensland. Some of them formed the basis of projects he was able to have
commenced but did not live to see completed. The construction design and operating
systems that made Rotterdam the premier port of Europe shaped his
recommendations for the development of Brisbane’s new port facilities on the
reclaimed Hamilton lands. He also found confirmation in England’s green landscape
for his plans for municipal and Main Roads tree-planting projects, which were
incorporated in subsequent Main Roads legislation. The beauty of the Lakes District
reinforced his intention to develop a tourist resort at Somerset Dam where, he
believed, “the scenery will equal any of the Lake scenery...” 68

However, his inspection of the giant engineering projects in Scandinavia and North
America represented the high point of his tour. He was able to see, at first-hand, what
it was possible to achieve by pursuing a grand vision for engineering, to provide
social and economic benefits for the community as much as to raise professional
standards. New York’s Tri-borough Bridge and the Golden Gate Bridge in San
Francisco captured Kemp’s interest, not only for the bold approach they represented
to traffic management problems, but also for their innovative bridge design which
demonstrated, for their time, the peak of engineering expertise. The effective
alleviation of traffic problems also provided by the Mersey, Rotterdam and Hamburg
tunnels in Europe, and the Lincoln and Holland tunnels in New York, led him to

67 Kemp, 1939, op. cit., p.196.
recommend an under-river tunnel as an alternative to a bridge for an additional river crossing. In one of the few examples where Kemp failed to have his recommendations adopted, the proposal was rejected. The concept was too revolutionary for Brisbane in the 1940s and, despite his argument that it was a sound investment for the future, the cost was considered to be too high.

The most memorable part of his American visit came with his visits to the United States’ massive irrigation and hydro-electricity schemes, notably the Bonneville Dam in Oregon, the Grand Coulee Dam on the Columbia River, and the Boulder Dam on the Colorado River. Based as he was in a small, conservative public works environment, Kemp found their size, and their impact on the region’s industry, community and environment, almost beyond comprehension. The Grand Coulee Dam, for example, was to provide irrigation for one and a quarter million acres and from 20,000 to 40,000 farming families, while generating cheap electricity for towns and industries over the vast catchment area. The project was expected to be “self-liquidating” on the basis of power sales and payments by farmers for their water supply”. Its popularity as a national tourist attraction was a welcome confirmation of Kemp’s often criticised advocacy of public works planning to assist Queensland’s tourism industry. Even if on a different scale, the parallels between the United States and Queensland, in the conditions under which an expanded public works programme came into being, were not lost on Kemp. There were similarities in the decision to undertake major works to counter high unemployment, in the political support for small-scale, reproductive works in roads, soil conservation and irrigation, but opposition to proposals for expensive major projects located in a few selected

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68 Ibid, p.65.
69 Ibid., pp.237-252.
regions. In the United States, enabling legislation passed in 1933 provided for an independent administrative authority headed by an engineer, charged with implementing a range of works to be allocated across all regions. Moreover, the administration of the high level of appropriations the programme required, together with decisions on project approvals and locations, were marked by political and bureaucratic in-fighting. Local authorities were not unanimous in their support for the programme. Some of them, as with the City of New York over the Tri-borough Bridge, and the local authorities affected by the siting of the Boulder Dam works, were hostile to the idea of national intervention in their statutory areas of responsibility. 

In his inaugural lecture in 1935 as head of the Engineering faculty at the University of Queensland, Roger Hawken had criticised Australian engineers in government service for being ground down into mediocrity. The Story Bridge and the Somerset Dam had been a response to that criticism and had succeeded in raising the status of Queensland engineering. However, their approval had been hard-won. The decision to tie up scarce funding resources in expensive capital works, the benefits of which were confined to the metropolitan area, had caused a bitter political debate which was still raging in the early 1940s. Against this background, and with the uncertainty attached to Commonwealth loan funding approvals, the Government’s commitment to an ambitious programme of development works, giving priority to major hydro-electricity and irrigation schemes, remained tentative. In Tasmania, the partnership

72 See, for example, Courier-Mail 8.3.1939: “Premier has asked the Co-Ordinator-General to explore the possibilities of minor water conservation and irrigation schemes in Queensland.”
of the Premier, Eric Reece, and head of the Hydro-Electricity Commission, Alan Knight, had successfully implemented plans for economic revival through hydro-electricity generation schemes. In Queensland, the sheer size of the state, its population spread, entrenched primary industry base and related economic difficulties, militated against any whole-hearted political support for capital works investment on a similar scale. The trend was to address the problem of water conservation by approving small schemes, such as the successful, staged construction of the Lockyer River weirs, the Border Rivers project, which Kemp had long supported, together with the revival of the Upper Burnett and Callide irrigation settlements which had proved to be an expensive failure under the Irrigation and Water Supply sub-department of the LAB.

The achievements in public works Kemp had seen in the United States motivated him to renew even more determinedly his efforts to initiated world-class engineering projects for Queensland's development. Their effect on him influenced the course of Kemp's public life and, consequently, the course of Queensland's infrastructure development. When the Commonwealth Government launched its plans in 1943 for a national programme of post-war reconstruction with the promise of substantial funding for North Queensland development, projects similar in concept to those that had so impressed Kemp became the centre-piece of the States' public works projections. In the post-war period, Kemp came to devote all his energies to overcoming the many obstacles, political and otherwise, to the realisation of what appeared to many to be his obsession with grand engineering works. On the one hand, he was recognised as the most powerful official in the state, but on the other hand, the desk-thumping, overbearing sense of rightness and manipulation of government policy that characterised his behaviour during this period, earned him
the enmity of other senior officials and many of his former political supporters. In a scarcely disguised attack on Kemp, Robinson later referred to “the extraordinary growth and influence, even dictation to the central governments, of the engineering profession” resulting in individual requirements being “subject to the whims and fancies of the engineer and his glorification ….” 73 It was a reflection of the enduring view that Kemp’s judgment became clouded by the desire to erect monuments to engineering that had more to do with his own personal and professional goals than their contribution to state development.

During the September debate on the State Development and Public Works Organisation Bill, the Opposition had the opportunity for some fun at the Premier’s expense. Having talked at length about Kemp’s suitability for the position of Co-Ordinator-General, he was then obliged to admit that Kemp, still in Britain, had not yet accepted the offer. 74 Soon after his return to Brisbane in December, Kemp formally accepted the appointment as Co-Ordinator-General for five years from 1 January, 1939. Any delight he might have felt in achieving this career milestone was concealed in the appropriately modest comment: “I desire again to express to the Government my appreciation of this expression of confidence”. 75 His combined salary as Main Roads Commissioner and Co-Ordinator-General placed him at the highest level of the public service. As Kemp lacked any interest in accumulating personal wealth, the salary level represented for him an important confirmation of his status vis-à-vis other senior administrators. It also confirmed that, in negotiating the

73 Robinson, op. cit., p.375.
74 S. D. P. W. O. Bill, 1938, p.244.
75 Ninth Annual Report of the Under-Secretary, Department of Labour and Industry, 1939, p.49; Annual Report of the Commissioner of Main Roads, 1939, p.5
terms and conditions of his appointment, the Government was willing to put a high
value on securing his skills.

Kemp returned from his overseas tour to find the Main Roads Commission in the
middle of the busiest year it had ever experienced. The accelerated works
programme, of which Main Roads projects were the cornerstone, involved staff in
the added responsibilities of training inexperienced, former relief workers and
supervising a markedly increased number of local authority works. Main Roads
now provided the administrative base for the Co-Ordinator-General, as well as for
Kemp’s duties as Chairman of the Bureau of Industry’s Works Boards. Changes to
the method of approving local authority works for inclusion in the co-ordinated
works plan meant a much heavier workload for Main Roads engineers, since the Co-
Ordinator-General had only a small administrative staff. There was an immediate
need to streamline and co-ordinate administrative processes across the three main
areas of Kemp’s responsibilities. W. L. Rogers, Kemp’s private secretary in Main
Roads, was given a second appointment as Secretary to the Co-Ordinator-General
and, when Kemp was appointed Deputy-Director of the Allied Works Council
(AWC) in March 1942, Rogers’ third concurrent appointment was as his secretary
and also Administrative Liaison Office to the AWC. Neil Smith, as assistant
secretary to the Co-Ordinator-General, had the job of liaising with local authorities
over the works applications and approvals process, while E. Coulter continued as
secretary to each of the Works Boards. Most notably in Rogers’ case, their
unwavering personal loyalty and dedication to their responsibilities constituted a
critical factor in Kemp’s capacity to manage the increasingly complex functions
under his control. Through the system of close and often informal communication
Kemp developed with them, they helped him keep abreast of the daunting list of matters that daily required his attention. He was still able to maintain his schedule of receiving deputations from politicians and their constituents, monitoring developments in other government departments, and responding quickly and effectively when his opinion was sought, or when it was advantageous for him to offer it.

Kemp's involvement with the administration of Main Roads' operations was largely confined to making decisions on matters that were unclear or were in dispute. The Administrative Committee convened by Main Roads Secretary, J. E. England, which Kemp had established in the mid-1920s, attended to routine administrative matters, with much of the communication with divisional offices, other departments and local authorities handled by England. David Crawford, Main Roads' Chief Engineer, proved to be a competent deputy during Kemp's absence overseas at a critical time for Main Roads operations. As with many of the engineers on the Main Roads and Works Boards' staff, Crawford did not have Kemp's administrative flair or ambition to move beyond the professional engineering sphere. As Kemp's time was increasingly taken up with other responsibilities, Crawford's administrative role expanded to the extent that, during the war years, he was effectively the Commissioner of Main Roads.

Main Roads' divisional offices headed by experienced engineers functioned within an hierarchical, career-oriented structure closely controlled by the Brisbane office. Over years of supervising local road works programmes, staff had built up a detailed knowledge of their particular locality, while operating procedures were standardised and worked as efficiently as distance and scarce resources allowed. As such, Main Roads was an established presence in regional Queensland and, for local authorities,
a comfortable, often personal link with the central government’s works administration. Kemp had done much to foster this informal relationship by his approachability and his fairness in dealing with road works’ problems during his frequent tours of inspection around the State. As a result, it was a relatively simple matter for Main Roads procedures for works’ applications and approvals to be extended to cover the requirements of the co-ordinated programme. The obligation on local authorities to submit all works’ plans for the Co-Ordinator-General’s approval enabled Kemp to promote one of his favourite causes, the appointment of qualified engineers, preferably Main Roads’ trained, to improve local authority engineering standards. It was possible to see his influence at work when members of parliament needed no urging to detail the expensive failures of the consultant engineers employed by local councils. For once, there was no opposition to an expansion of the Co-Ordinator-General’s powers if, as was proposed, the outcome was more cost-efficient works of a higher standard at the local level. The combination of the Main Roads organisation and the network of supportive administrative and professional staff he had fostered, helped Kemp to deliver the results expected of him. Together with his almost legendary capacity for work, it provided an effective response to critics who doubted his ability to do justice to such a heavy load of responsibilities.

In the months leading up to the complete abolition of unemployment relief by 30 June 1939, to be followed by the presentation of Kemp’s first co-ordinated plan of public works, consistently high unemployment figures reflected the Government’s

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77 S. D. P. W. O. Act Amendment Bill, 1940, p.286.
79 Geoffrey Cossins, engineer, who worked on the Somerset Dam and Cairncross Dock projects during World War Two. Personal communication, April 1999.
failure to honour the promises it made the previous year regarding full-time employment. Meeting the stated target of offering employment to one-third of the eighteen thousand registered relief workers fell far short of the concerted action the situation demanded. Labor was now faced with convincing its constituents and the electorate at large of the efficacy of a policy of employment generation and rural development to be delivered by the co-ordination of public works. Responsibility for the success of its appeal was quite openly placed in Kemp’s hands and, once again, he was cast as the buffer between politicians’ promises and the obligation to implement them. In the lead-up to the finalisation of the plan, the Premier, together with ministers with works-related portfolios, made a succession of public declarations about projects the Co-Ordinator-General was investigating for possible inclusion in the plan. The major projects highlighted in this way covered the essence of the representations made in Parliament over the years for local infrastructure works. They included an expanded road works programme for towns and isolated districts, the promotion of cotton growing, the provision of electricity and water supply systems to regional towns, water conservation and irrigation schemes, and measures to combat soil erosion. Opportunities for “pork-barreling” were enthusiastically exploited, even with minor works. Minister for Labour and Industry, T. A. Foley, when approached by members of the Spring Hill Playground and Recreation Association about the continuation of work on their playgrounds, referred them to Kemp whom, he said, “might have the work completed on a full-time basis.” In this context, the Co-Ordinator-General’s power of investigation became a useful political tool. While it was the means by which Kemp extended his influence

92 *Ninth Annual Report of the Under-Secretary, Department of Labour and Industry, 1939*, p.51
93 *Courier-Mail*, 24.6.1939.
beyond his primary responsibilities, it was now used as a process behind which the Government could hide from the consequences of heightened expectations.

Announcing the Government’s support for the long-discussed Border Rivers water conservation scheme, Forgan Smith confirmed that the Government had accepted Kemp’s recommendations for an investigation, but warned that “actual developmental and construction work would depend mainly upon the results of investigations and the availability of funds.” The political considerations influencing the selection of water supply schemes from the hundreds hopefully submitted for inclusion in the programme threatened to undermine the perception of Kemp’s impartiality. To protect himself, he made his own public announcements in which he emphasised his limited role in decisions affecting the programme. That this attempt was less than successful was apparent in his announcement, three months before its formal presentation, that water supply schemes for Townsville and the South Coast were “definitely included” in the programme. The South Coast scheme, proposed by the three shire councils located in a traditionally non-Labor area, was clearly of political importance as, a week later, Kemp was delegated to represent the Government at a conference convened by the Councils. While he was sympathetic to their situation, to ensure his position was not compromised, he adopted the Ministerial tactic of using the investigative process to delay making any binding commitment.

In relation to other components of the co-ordinated plan, the normal annual votes for departments engaged in building construction remained largely unaffected. Railways presented no problem as there had been no new construction approvals since the

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82 Ibid, 4.7.1939.
83 Ibid.
early 1930s, while maintenance costs were held to previous levels. The Brisbane City Council was another matter, as a number of urgent works had been discontinued owing to the Council's difficult financial position. Treasury promised "to see the council through" by granting a "straight" loan, even though there was no prospect of repaying another recent loan in the current financial year. During these months, the publicity given to the employment value of Main Roads' expanded works schedule helped to deflect criticism of the Government's performance. However, the readjustments required as a result of this type of unilateral departmental decision, the uncertainty over the imposition of a toll on the Story Bridge, and the effect on funding availability for other capital works in progress of the unexpectedly high rate of expenditure on the University works, meant that Kemp was still negotiating the final programme approvals early in 1940. The Premier had made much of the value of departmental co-operation and the use of interdepartmental committees in securing a balanced range of projects selected on merit. In assembling his first co-ordinated programme, Kemp found co-operation to be noticeably lacking although he had a generally productive relationship with Treasury officials. As for the interdepartmental committees he had the power to convene, while they later became a notable feature of Kemp's administration, initially they were a politically useful, if largely nominal, component of promised project investigations.

Kemp's first year as Co-Ordinator-General demonstrated the tentative nature of his control over the widely disparate elements that made up the co-ordination process. Any question of abuse of powers lay in the political sphere rather than with Kemp,

84 Ibid, 14.7.1939
85 Kerr, op. cit., pp.224-25; Rogers, Memo to Kemp, 25.10.1939, R.M.O. 307, QTA.
who was fully occupied testing the viability of his delegated powers. However, of all the factors affecting the administration of his responsibilities, Government reaction to the threat of war in Europe, leading to a re-assessment of Federal-state financial relations and tentative moves towards planning for Australia’s defence, proved to be the most significant.

86 Kemp, Report to the Chief Secretary, 13.2.1940, R.M.O. 307, QTA.
During World War Two and the post-war reconstruction period, the key goals and features of state public works administration were co-ordination, planning and Commonwealth subsidies. Under wartime conditions, civil works programmes were deferred indefinitely in favour of defence works. Co-ordination and planning of public works on a state-wide basis were essential to securing Commonwealth funding assistance for construction projects that not only served military purposes but also made some contribution to the State's infrastructure development. To achieve these goals required control of information and decision-making on public works, technical, financial and managerial skills, capacity for forward planning and determining priorities, and effective communication with political, bureaucratic and private sector representatives. It was also vital to plan for the post-war revival of public works activity in a way that would maximise the opportunity for instituting new goals and controlling the direction of post-war development policy. The most important factor, however, proved to be the capacity for implementing the approved works programmes. In Queensland at that time, Kemp was the one senior official who came closest to demonstrating these requirements. Moreover, he had the confidence of the Premier and senior Ministers, was respected by all groups with a stake in public works, and headed an efficient construction authority which had an established regional structure, operational links with Commonwealth works officials, and regulatory control over the registration and movement of all transport vehicles within the State.
During the first half of 1939, Kemp was coming to grips with the problems associated with preparing Queensland’s first co-ordinated plan of works. They included a lack of essential information on local authority works programmes, the generally unco-operative attitude adopted by departmental officials and making politically acceptable provision for unemployment relief and regional assistance claims. At that stage, as both the idea of forward, co-ordinated planning for State works programmes and the delegation of wide-ranging, potentially coercive powers to one official had failed to achieve a viable measure of acceptance, the concept of the Co-Ordinator-General was possibly set to fail.

On 3 September, 1939, Britain declared war on Germany and, two days later, the Australian Prime Minister, R. G. Menzies, announced that, as a result, Australia was also at war. Although there was no immediate increase in military activity, the nation was now on a war footing and this necessitated a more serious commitment to defence planning than had previously been evident.¹

As early as 1937, the Lyons Federal Government had reacted to Britain’s possible involvement in countering Nazi Germany’s expansionist plans by launching the idea of Federal-State co-operation in preparing Australia for the eventuality of another world war. While there was overall support for the proposal to institute a programme of defence works of a developmental nature throughout Australia, the means of funding it became another controversial issue in Federal-State financial relations. Forgan Smith who, as a delegate to the International Sugar Conference in London in 1937, was aware of the seriousness of the threat of war in Europe, lost no time in submitting to the Prime Minister suggestions for “developmental works of defence

value in Queensland.” Among them were an inland road from Goondiwindi to Rockhampton and the Queensland section of what was essentially a transcontinental railway from Bourke to Darwin, through Camooweal. The Commonwealth’s response in March 1938 that it had under consideration a list of projects, including roads, railways and aerodromes that, “if taken in hand by the Queensland Government, would contribute to the defence of the country” avoided making any preliminary commitment of Federal funding. This did nothing to dissuade State interests from reviving the transcontinental railway “dream” first mooted in the 1870s of connecting southern ports with northern Australia. E. G. Theodore had actively promoted the scheme as the means of achieving the maximum development of Australia’s primary resources. At the Premiers Conference in 1925, he unsuccessfully sought support for his grand vision of a national railway loop running parallel with, but inland from the coast and supporting feeder railway lines to major ports along the route. As before, the political benefits of the scheme were attractive to State governments but no one, least of all the Commonwealth, was willing to address the massive financial and logistical problems.

Queensland still had the historic problem of providing development infrastructure to service the potentially rich mining and pastoral industries of the northern and western regions without any guarantee of future returns on a major state capital investment. There were so few settlers in the north-west that even the Railway Guarantee system was not applicable. In 1930, Kemp had secured the gazettal of the Mount Isa to Camooweal road as a main road, partly to fulfil the legislative requirement for an equitable allocation of Main Roads Commission works among the three divisions of the State, but also to pursue his own goal of anticipating or pre-empting any

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proposed railway construction in a particular area. Further road works funds were allocated in 1935 but, since maintenance of the 130 mile-long road was beyond the resources of the local authorities, it had degenerated into scarcely more than a track.

The results of two conferences of the Commonwealth with State Premiers, late in 1938, to discuss defence works planning on the basis of a co-operative, cost-sharing agreement, were inconclusive. The Premiers found that the Commonwealth was totally unprepared for war and had no plan on which to structure national defence works planning. At the October 1938 Loan Council meeting, the Federal Government announced that there would be no increase in loan funding to cover proposed defence works which were to be undertaken on a priority basis within normal state public works loan programmes. Not surprisingly, the States vigorously opposed any threat to the scope of their works programmes which represented the principal means of addressing continuing high unemployment levels. Moreover, always alert to any threat of Commonwealth intervention in areas of State responsibility, their Premiers were united in rejecting the Commonwealth’s proposal to establish a national committee for defence planning to “determine the priority of works in the States” \(^3\) Belated efforts by the Department of the Interior to introduce a national plan revealed a concentration of defence works in the southern states which, Forgan Smith declared, left Australia’s north undefended. The Premier’s attack was dismissed as “party politics”, with the Federal Defence Minister arguing that the north was indefensible. He likened the idea of defending the region to “mounting a defence system for the continent of Europe against invasion”, suggesting that the best option for Australia’s defence was to take the battle as far from Australian shores as

\(^3\) *Courier-Mail*, 24.10.1938.
possible. There was some justification for Forgan Smith’s claim as Queensland received £30,000 of a total £1.342 million allocated under the Federal-State co-operation plan announced in May 1939, although the State received some compensation in increased loan expenditure approvals. With the State’s developmental works programme about to be compromised by national defence priorities, the Premier had little option but to maintain an aggressive public stance in the hope of securing a greater share, not only of defence works projects but also of the proposed decentralisation of defence industries.

Despite the Commonwealth’s decision to restrict new railway construction under the defence works plan to Victoria and New South Wales, support for the transcontinental railway concept remained buoyant across several states. When a proposal to complete the north-south railway between Adelaide and Darwin for military purposes also received some consideration at the Federal level, Forgan Smith committed his Government to funding a connecting rail link from Camooweal, which had already been recommended in the report of the 1936 Royal Commission. In July, he reported that the Commonwealth had turned down his proposal for joint Queensland-Commonwealth funding for both the railway and the inland road but added that he would discuss the matter with the Co-Ordinator General, Mr. Kemp.

A few months later, the Commonwealth made available £100,000 under the Commonwealth-State co-operative agreement towards repairs and reconstruction, for defence and unemployment relief purposes, of an inland road running from Ipswich.
to Charters Towers. Kemp's subsequent comment that the road had been "the subject of very considerable discussion with the Commonwealth" typically understated what must have been an intense bargaining process. From the Commonwealth's point of view, it represented a concession to Queensland's unemployment problems and a limited commitment to improving an existing road, while securing a possible future defence asset. The condition that the money was to be expended within the financial year posed few problems as the various sections of the road were already incorporated in the Main Roads' forward planning regime of projects awaiting funding. The deciding factor was almost certainly Queensland's offer of a matching contribution while, in his role as Co-ordinator General, Kemp had it added to the 1939-40 Main Roads allocations as an unemployment relief measure. Although Forgan Smith continued pressing for the Camooweal railway, the Commonwealth's endorsement of the inland road placed Kemp in a strong position to advocate road projects as likely to attract further defence funding.

During his tour of Great Britain and Europe in 1938, Kemp had observed signs of preparation for war. He noted that, while relief of unemployment constituted the outstanding problem in all the countries he visited, some of them had opted to provide a temporary solution through "feverish armament programmes". However, it was in Germany that he encountered the most advanced preparations for war, with the build-up of airports and factories in the north, extensive autobahn construction and, he was informed, more than two million troops under arms. Discussion at the International Roads Conference at The Hague, where Kemp was the Australian delegate, tended to water down alarmist reactions with the conclusion that "the

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8 Annual Report of the Commissioner of Main Roads 1940, p.5.
9 Kemp, 1939, op. cit., p.ix.
necessities of military strategy frequently coincide in their demands with the normal transport demands”.

However, Kemp persisted in his opinion that the country’s autobahn construction programme went far beyond any peacetime requirements. Within the year, events justified his stance. The success of Germany’s Blitzkreig strategy rested on the autobahn’s capacity to move mechanised forces to border invasion points too rapidly to allow for any effective opposition. On his return early in 1939, Kemp set out in a report to Parliament the evidence to support his conviction of Germany’s commitment to a war in Europe and the implications for Australia.

Against this background, he gave Forgan Smith considerable practical assistance in the Premier’s efforts to raise the level of Queensland’s importance in the Commonwealth’s defence planning. In the wrangling over defence works allocations, all the participants were aware that the States hoped to use the issue of Australia’s defence to advance their industry and transport infrastructure projects on the back of Commonwealth funding. Consequently, the designation of projects as of defence value, and thus likely to be implemented in the short term, became an important function at both Commonwealth and State levels, with a corresponding importance accruing to the person controlling the state works programme. In March 1939, publicity was given to the preparation by Kemp in his role as Co-ordinator-General of Queensland’s first co-ordinated works plan. Two months later in Brisbane, R. G. Menzies, the newly-elected conservative Prime Minister, rejected any suggestion of Queensland’s defences being neglected, as demonstrated by the government’s commitment under his predecessor, Joseph Lyons, to “a northward move in its

10 Ibid, p.150.
defence policy. 11 For the 1939-40 financial year, the Federal-State co-operative defence works plan yielded £300,000 of Commonwealth funding for Queensland, to be paid to Main Roads for allocation on projects covering major aerodromes, military camps, parade grounds and rifle ranges to be constructed or upgraded throughout the State. 12 The projects were designated on-going relief works to be distributed among numerous local authorities through Main Roads, while the organisation’s reputation for efficiency, already familiar to the Commonwealth Department of Works through the Federal Aid Roads Agreement, ensured minimal interference on the part of the Commonwealth. That these funds were controlled by Main Roads reinforced both its critical role in implementing Commonwealth-subsidised works and its value to Kemp in consolidating his influence on state works planning.

In 1940, the Commonwealth made progress on its national defence plans, both in terms of construction and financial provisions. To provide for a projected escalation in defence works’ expenditure, the States’ co-operation was needed for a changeover from unemployment relief to defence works and a reduction in loan works expenditure applications. 13 Both were predicated on the States’ providing information on specific works’ proposals, the extent and availability of the labour force, and the capability of state construction authorities to undertake defence projects on the Commonwealth’s behalf. Queensland was the only State to have in place a central co-ordinating authority, as one official, and the mechanism for compiling a co-ordinated works plan. In May 1940, the Loan Council appointed engineer (Sir) Harry Brown as Co-Ordinator of Works to compile a list of public

11 Courier-Mail, 13.5.1939.
12 Annual Report of the Commissioner of Main Roads, 1940, p.5.
works projects from all States to present for Loan Council consideration. To gain the States' co-operation, the Council made important concessions in the matter of controlling their works' programmes within the constraints of the national works plan. At the end of six months, Brown reported on similar problems to those Kemp had faced, if on a smaller scale, in initiating the co-ordination process. Despite dedicated efforts on his part, Brown did not obtain the detailed works proposals he needed to compile a comprehensive, and thus meaningful, co-ordinated plan. As with Kemp, Brown had the power to compel the provision of this information but also opted to use it judiciously, in acknowledging how unprepared most States were to fulfil the compliance provisions. Some lead time was required for the system to operate efficiently, the situation improving when the other States, realising the benefits of state-based works coordination in securing loan funding approvals, appointed their own co-ordinators.

In September 1940, Premier Forgan Smith opened the debate on amendments to the State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1938 by reinforcing the benefits being derived from Queensland's foresight in implementing the concept of the Co-Ordinator-General. They included planning local authority and departmental works programmes to achieve efficiency in the allocation of resources, making provision for unemployment relief, particularly for seasonal workers, and consolidating the already co-operative relationship the Co-Ordinator-General had with the Loan Council Co-Ordinator. The main purpose of the Bill was to constitute the Co-Ordinator-General a construction authority in order to undertake defence works, giving him the same statutory powers of land resumption and acquisition as

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the Main Roads Commissioner, and also compelling local authorities to notify him of
any large loan works proposals.\(^{15}\) The Opposition’s stance was that the Co-
Ordinator-General was being given greater dictatorial powers under the guise of
facilitating the war effort, a protest against the expansion of bureaucratic control
under the guise of emergency legislation that was to become more familiar during the
course of the war.\(^{16}\) Forgan Smith stressed the necessity for Queensland to be
efficient in its loan works applications to the Federal authorities to ensure the
maximum possible approval level. As this also required the work of the State’s
numerous construction authorities to be co-ordinated, the Co-Ordinator-General was
delegated the power to undertake construction works or to authorise other authorities
to undertake works on its behalf. Thus, the Co-Ordinator-General’s controversial
“coercion” power was reinforced in order to achieve a higher level of compliance
among local and State officials than had been obtained under the previous co-
operative approach. Provision for closer supervision of local authority works,
delegated by the Co-Ordinator-General to Main Roads, again extended Kemp’s
statutory control over Queensland works programmes while highlighting the vital
role Main Roads played in making it possible.\(^{17}\)

During 1940 and 1941, allocations from the Main Roads Fund which received
payments from the State Development Fund, State loan funds, vehicle registration
fees, Federal Aid Roads grants and Commonwealth defence works subsidies were
made to numerous local authority areas for defence works and for the continuation of

\(^{16}\) See, for example, R. Else-Mitchell, “Delegated and Sub-Delegated Legislation”, *Public
Administration (Sydney)*, 4, 7, September 1943, pp.298-308.
\(^{17}\) S. D. P. W. O. Act Amendment Bill, 1940, pp.266-67.
previously commenced road and bridge projects. Undertaken either by Main Roads directly or by local contractors under Main Roads’ supervision, these works were promoted and funded largely in terms of unemployment relief. In July 1940, an increase in military activity as Australia prepared to participate in the European military campaign changed a largely static situation and presented a new challenge for Kemp’s organisation and management skills. Having received approval for the provision of an alternative transport route from the southern states to northern Australia, the Department of the Army requested that Main Roads join other State road authorities to construct sections of the Alice Springs-Birdum road to link the Darwin railway to the Adelaide-Alice Springs railway. Accompanied by Deputy Main Roads Commissioner Crawford, Kemp personally surveyed the proposed route and proceeded to direct the re-organisation of Main Roads to accommodate the new project. Although a logistical and operational nightmare, the efficiency and technical expertise of Main Roads’ divisional engineering staff, together with well-established administrative routines and a co-operative relationship with Army supply personnel, enabled Main Roads to complete its work on schedule in December 1940. By this time, the Premier had abandoned the idea of a rail extension from Mount Isa to link up with the Darwin railway. Prompted by Kemp, he revived his efforts to obtain Commonwealth defence funds to commence grading a Mount Isa to Camooweal road along a route Kemp had surveyed some months previously. These surveys were undertaken during Kemp’s 5,000 mile tour of Queensland on which he was accompanied by Main Roads Chief Engineer, A. R. Williams, who was being given the opportunity to familiarise himself with the responsibilities Kemp would soon delegate to him. On the tour, Kemp also inspected a new Main Roads-constructed bridge in the Theodore irrigation area, and travelled some of the inland road he had
successfully proposed to be declared a defence road and thus eligible for Commonwealth subsidy. Forgan Smith’s proposal for the Mount Isa road, as prepared by Kemp, was backed by an appeal for the efficient use of scarce resources, as the extensive plant and machinery, together with Main Roads staff and construction crews then virtually marooned at Tennant Creek for lack of transport, could be transferred immediately to construction of the link road to Queensland. Although the Main Roads crews returned home after the defence works authorities rejected the proposal, Kemp secured interim State funding of £20,000 for the commencement of preliminary survey and clearing work.

By 1941, Queensland had secured other defence projects worth seven million pounds, the first of which was the construction and operation of the Rocklea munitions factory. The second was the development of a major shipbuilding facility in Brisbane, a high priority for Kemp in fostering Queensland industrial development. He had previously supported the Brisbane City Council leasing Moar’s shipyard at Kangaroo Point to Evans Deakin, as a forerunner to a Brisbane-based industry capable of profiting from increased wartime shipping demand. Early in the year, Kemp was obliged to reduce projected allocations under the 1941 co-ordinated plan to the State Advances Corporation and the Rural Development Bureau, in addition to all Bureau of Industry works projects, in order to proceed with the previously approved Main Roads defence works allocation. The reduction in Queensland’s Loan Council allocation announced in April 1941 had been part of an overall reduction recommended by Brown who, frustrated by the States’ failure to reduce their loan expenditure applications, had threatened to resign his position.

18 Tour of the Main Roads Commissioner, J. R. Kemp, and A. R. Williams, MRC job file 10.5.3., C/D No. 1342, QTA.
Brown withdrew his resignation following promises by State premiers of a more co-operative approach to works co-ordination in return for greater flexibility in the scheme, allowing the States to vary projects within the overall co-ordination programme prepared by Brown and approved by the Loan Council. While the inland defence road terminating at Charters Towers had been given funding priority, with total expenditure to date of over £450,000, Cabinet approved further small loan allocations for the Queensland section of the Mount Isa-Tennant Creek road, following Army approval of the project. These State allocations kept the project from closing down and, with Main Roads survey and construction crews already working at sections along the surveyed route, Kemp arranged to have it declared a state highway, later named the Barkly Highway, to avoid having to negotiate funding contributions and approvals with the impoverished local authorities. Although the project’s future was secured in February 1942 when the Department of the Army made available £80,000 and a full range of support services to the Main Roads camps, the available funding was only sufficient to allow the construction of a basic, single-lane gravel road and temporary bridges.

The turning point in Queensland’s participation in the war effort came after the bombing of Pearl Harbour in December 1941 brought the United States into the war. General McArthur subsequently retreated from the Pacific islands, and U. S. military forces established its bases for the Pacific war in Australia while Australia, having

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19 Main Roads Commission, 1949, *op. cit.*, Chapters 2 and 3; *Courier-Mail*, 9.11.1940, 5.12.1940.
20 Memo, Co-Ordinator-General, re State Loan Fund, 22.4.1941, 247/6/13, original on 83/1/8A, R.M.O. 307, QTA.
21 Questions, "Inland Strategic Road", *QPD*, 1941, 177, p.49.
22 Kemp memo, re decision on recommendation to Governor-in-Council for works on Barkly Highway, No. 48 under the *Main Roads Act*, 1920-1939, 2.12.1941, MRC job file, 10.5.3, QTA.
also declared war on Japan, faced the threat of invasion from the north. The country was put on a war footing, with the formation of a War Cabinet and a more effective organisation of military and defence operations. After the U. S. military command signalled its intention of establishing forward bases in the state, Queensland dominated all defence works considerations. In order to establish direct liaison with U. S. representatives on Australia’s defence works provisions, the Allied Works Council, (AWC) with E. G. Theodore as Director, was constituted in February 1942. Kemp was appointed Deputy-Director of Allied Works (Queensland.) and, as the Co-Ordinator-General, was responsible for all AWC construction work which his statutory powers enabled him to delegate to the appropriate state construction authority.

With convoy traffic already using the Mount Isa-Tennant Creek road, Kemp held discussions with Army representatives in Queensland and in Melbourne to have the road widened and upgraded to all-weather condition, as well as permanent bridges constructed for all river crossings. His position was strengthened by the urgent need for an alternative to shipping and coastal transport routes, especially as the single north-south railway was too close to the coast, vulnerable to flooding and also unequal to the anticipated volume of heavy military traffic. After AWC regulations apparently prevented Theodore from allocating a higher priority to upgrading the road, Kemp renewed his negotiations with both Australian and U. S. Army officials. His views on the urgency of completing the road’s upgrading in view of the increasingly heavy convoy use were persuasive, with approval forthcoming for the

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23 Drake-Brockman, Director, Engineer Services, Department of the Army, to Main Roads Commissioner, 17.1.1942, MRC job file 10.5.3, QTA; Main Roads Commission, op. cit., p.9.

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recommendations by Allied Forces' engineers for guaranteed staged funding and logistical support.\textsuperscript{24}

After inspecting the road several months later, Kemp decided to have work commenced on bitumen-sealing the entire length of road as, with up to fifty convoys a day on a tight turn-around schedule from Mount Isa, it had proved impossible to maintain the gravel surface. Despite further official protests concerning the added cost, as well as personnel and supply difficulties, Theodore lent his support in January 1943, giving the Queensland section and the Tennant Creek extension equal priority for bitumen supplies with the main north-south road in the Northern Territory.\textsuperscript{25} The project completed early in 1944 comprised four hundred miles of bitumen-sealed road, one-quarter of which was in Queensland,\textsuperscript{26} with the State gaining a first-class access road to the remote, rich grazing lands of the Barkly Tableland. As its military use declined in 1945, Kemp urged that road maintenance allocations be continued. Recommending that it should be a matter of national policy to extend the road through Cloncurry, Winton, Longreach, Blackall, and Charleville to link up with other roads and the main trunk railways, he was, in effect, suggesting this project as a cost-effective replacement for a transcontinental railway. He believed that such a road network would be of vital assistance in transporting stock,

\textsuperscript{24} Kemp, Co-Ordinator-General, to Colonel Drake-Brockman, 20.1.1942, MRC File 10.5.3. (Original on file 232/1/2A); Report, A. D. E. Services, Southern Command, to Drake-Brockman, January 1942, MRC File 10.5.3; Dept, of the Army to Dept of the Interior, Director-General of Works, Melbourne, re Australian-American projects, priority 11a, Mount Isa-Tennant Creek road, 4.2.1942, MRC file 10.5.3/523, QTA.

\textsuperscript{25} Kemp to Theodore, Theodore to Kemp, Inter-Office memos re bitumen surfacing; No. 259, January 1943, No. 290, 24.3.1943, No. 31, 27.3.1944, AWC BP1/2, Australian Archives.

\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Annual Report of the Commissioner of Main Roads}, 1944, p.3; Main Roads Commission, 1949, \textit{op. cit.} For a comprehensive account of the powers, and responsibilities of Theodore as Director-
particularly during drought periods and that, if maintained to a high standard, would also serve to provide the road access to foster an inland tourist industry.\textsuperscript{27}

The commitment of Main Roads’ resources to defence works programmes, which commenced under the initial Federal-State cost-sharing agreement, had expanded, initially as the State transport authority with the information and administrative base, as well as construction capability, to provide Allied Forces transport requirements.

With the formation of the Civil Constructional Corps (CCC) and, subsequently the Civil Alien Corps, the problem of labour shortages on hundreds of defence projects, including the construction of airstrips, harbour and port facilities, hospitals, military camps and storage depots, was alleviated.\textsuperscript{28} At the same time as staff members were enlisting in the Armed Forces, Kemp made available all the Main Roads’ administrative, technical and construction resources for AWC projects, necessitating a major restructuring of the organisation and provision for rapid training of new staff in all areas. The administrative staff were responsible for the payment of all wages and salaries on the major roads projects, including the thousands of CCC workers, without whom the major defence roads and airstrip projects in northern and western Queensland would not have been completed.

That there were few financial problems,\textsuperscript{29} despite the massively increased responsibilities, was a testament to the durability of Main Roads’ administrative processes. Moreover, as numerous official and personal accounts attest, the wartime


\textsuperscript{28} Annual Report of the Commissioner of Main Roads, 1944, p.3; Main Roads Commission, 1949, op. cit. For a comprehensive account of the powers, and responsibilities of Theodore as Director-General, AWC, and the political and operational difficulties of the appointment, see Fitzgerald, 1994, op. cit., pp.388-96.
record of the Main Roads’ engineering and technical staff demonstrated the depth of
the organisation’s *esprit de corps* and exemplified the professional ideal of service in
the public interest.\(^\text{30}\) Justifiably proud of his organisation and individual staff
members, Kemp included in his annual reports for the information of Parliament, the
admiration and gratitude expressed by U. S. military officials working in conjunction
with Main Roads on the major defence projects, while taking the opportunity to
record publicly and by name, the organisation's war casualties. The value to Kemp of
his long-standing, harmonious relationship with H. A. Bruce, the Minister for Public
Works, who had been responsible for Main Roads for over a decade, was evident in
the public tribute he paid to Bruce to mark the transfer of Main Roads from Public
Works to the Treasurer’s portfolio in May 1944.\(^\text{31}\)

Perhaps the most striking example of Kemp’s standing with, and management of, the
organisations under his administration was the construction of the Brisbane Graving
(Daimcross) Dock late in 1942. Amid open scepticism among construction
authorities in the southern states that Queensland’s engineers had the expertise to
undertake the project, Kemp appointed a supervisory board of technical experts. He
delegated the dock's construction to Main Roads and the Department of Harbours
and Marine, and arranged for the Stanley River Works’ Board’s technical staff,
directed by Nimmo, to be seconded to the project. The Co-Ordinator-General was
officially represented by G. Watson, the Deputy Co-Ordinator-General.\(^\text{32}\)

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\(^{30}\) For Main Roads staff working on AWC projects, see, for example, Kay Cohen, 1995, *op. cit.*

\(^{31}\) *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Main Roads*, 1944, p.4, p.7; *ibid,* 1945, p.8.

\(^{32}\) Main Roads Commission, 1949, *op. cit.,* Chapter 8.
technical innovations and the quality of construction, together with a record completion time of twenty-two months, represented a triumph of efficient administration and technical excellence, adding to Kemp's stature as an administrator and also providing the material for engineering legends.

Once the urgency of defence works to the war effort abated, Theodore and Kemp resigned from the AWC in late 1944. Dr L. F. Loder, former chairman of the Victorian Country Roads Board was appointed to the Director-General's position, prior to his appointment in February 1945 to the position of Director-General of Public Works in the newly-created Commonwealth Department of Public Works.

Assistant AWC Director-General, C. A. Hoy, was appointed assistant Co-Ordinator-General to Sir Harry Brown who reported to the National Works Council after its establishment in 1943. By the end of 1943, defence works' expenditure had escalated to the extent that Commonwealth funds allocated to Queensland had risen to over nine million pounds from the 1940 cost-sharing figure of just under £300,000 while, between July 1942 and February 1945, the AWC's total expenditure in Queensland was reported to be spent thirty-eight million pounds.34

Post-War Reconstruction

In the post-war period, there was an overall public expectation that governments would act on their promises to improve economic conditions, as much through reconstruction and economic development programmes as through better living and working conditions. In Queensland, district representatives from both public and

34 Annual Report of the Commissioner for Main Roads, 1940, p. 1; ibid, 1944, p. 3.
private sectors, who were vying for works allocations on which local economic viability depended, maintained a direct, relentless pressure on the Government for action. As Co-Ordinator-General and the Government's senior technical adviser, Kemp was responsible for devising stratagems to demonstrate that the Government was responding constructively to their demands. Annual departmental reports in this period presented an impressively wide range of projects as being undertaken. In reality, funding for them was thinly-spread and relatively little progress was made either on the huge backlog of basic construction and maintenance or on new developmental works. It was not difficult to conclude that the State funds available were totally inadequate for the amount of work required even to restore or provide basic services such as roads and water supply to towns and rural communities, let alone embark on an ambitious major development programme. Despite the windfall increase in railway revenue during the war years, the situation was exacerbated by continuing high levels of taxation, the diversion of funds to various Trust Funds, particularly the Post-War Reconstruction Fund, the Loan Council's tight rein over borrowing approvals and Commonwealth control over state public works programmes through the National Works Council. Moreover, the allocation of funds did not always guarantee a result. The on-going shortages of plant, materials and labour, together with increasingly aggressive industrial action, caused frequent delays or postponement of works schedules.

Whether out of confidence or necessity, the Queensland Government continued through these years to present almost the entire co-ordinated works plan to the Commonwealth for funding consideration. As with all the States, Queensland benefited from the national policy goal of full employment and Commonwealth subsidies and borrowing approvals in areas such as housing, roads, reafforestation,
hospitals and some health programmes. Seeking to move the Commonwealth from consideration to commitment on major development projects, Hanlon, who as Treasurer in 1944 and Premier from 1946, kept up the pressure at Premiers' Conferences, in frequent public announcements and in equally frequent personal correspondence with the Prime Minister. He relied on Kemp not only to determine the substance of his discussions with the Commonwealth but also to draft the appropriate letters to the Prime Minister, members of State Parliament and the various local lobby groups. Kemp also drafted relevant enabling legislation, negotiated with Federal funding agencies and made well-reasoned recommendations for the allocation of state funding resources to keep projects moving forward. That Hanlon fulfilled the political role and Kemp the traditional advisory and instrumental role of the public official was apparent. For as long as Hanlon remained in control and convinced of the political efficacy of development-based policy for Queensland's future, Kemp was his most influential adviser.

However, Kemp had a substantial influence on planning and implementing state development policy which derived in large part from his statutory powers, his position as head of efficient construction authorities and the recognition by politicians and private sector representatives that he had the Premier's confidence. He was dedicated to major infrastructure development as the key to achieving stability through economic growth. His optimistic, although widely criticised,

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35 See in particular, lobbying re the Burdekin scheme, statement from the Premier sent to relevant Ministers, north Queensland members of parliament, North Queensland Chambers of Commerce, City and town Councils, Shire Councils and A. L. P. branches, 22.3.1950 (typed copy), SRS 1043-1-381, QSA. (It should be noted that, when QSA computerised its data access system in 2000, this new file numbering system replaced the previous Batch numbers and A/series systems); Petersen, Co-Ordinator-General secretary to Under-Secretary, Chief Secretary 5.7.1950, enclosing draft
projections of what could be achieved by development planning on a grand scale,
represented an attractive confirmation of Hanlon’s own, long-standing views.
Refusing to allow the Commonwealth to withdraw from its post-war commitment to
northern Australian development, they used every means available to sell
Queensland projects as national projects. They repeatedly invoked the defence,
transport, communications, increased population and industry development issues
that the Commonwealth had highlighted so enthusiastically in the closing years of
World War Two. Although as Butlin and Schedvin have observed, for various
reasons, few of these post-war reconstruction plans on a national, co-ordinated scale
survived the end of the war and a change in the national government, Queensland did
persist with the concept of co-ordinated works plans in submitting its post-war
reconstruction programmes to the National Works Council and to other national
bodies, such as the Rural Reconstruction Commission and the Northern Development
Committee. In seeking to maximise Commonwealth input, Queensland included in
the definition of northern Australian development, the central Queensland coalfields,
railways and ports, together with the entire Burdekin scheme until, in 1948, the
Prime Minister insisted they be excluded. Colin Clark was highly critical of these
manoeuvres. After reading the draft of Kemp’s initial report to the Northern
Australian Development Committee (NADC) in 1946, he objected to several of its
recommendations. He found it “ludicrous” and potentially damaging to the
possibility of Commonwealth aid to the sparsely populated north to extend the
boundary south of Rockhampton. Moreover, he believed it to be “entirely wrong in

proclamation bringing the Burdekin River Authority Act 1949 into force, and press statement for
consideration of the Premier, 5362/50, SRS 1043-1-381, QSA.
36 NADC Meeting, 17-19 February 1948, p.3, SRS1043-1-377 QSA.
principle” for the Queensland Government to seek Commonwealth funding for what he considered to be normal components of any state works programme.\(^37\)

However, it seemed that the policy options for securing the anticipated level of post-war economic growth were limited. The characterisation of Labor policy as “agrarian socialism”, with its populist overtones, was derived almost entirely from an emphasis on the government-sponsored, co-operative approach to agricultural production and marketing located in the state’s regions. The corollary has been that Queensland failed to develop a secondary industry capacity due to the primacy of “ruralism” \(^38\)

This type of analysis correctly identifies one strand of Queensland’s policy orientation but it tends to ignore the political and economic realities of the 1940s and 1950s. During World War Two, in his roles as Co-ordinator-General and Deputy-Director of the AWC, Kemp led other senior Government officials in pursuing opportunities for secondary industries associated with wartime production to remain viable in the post-war period. The Rocklea munitions factory, which was briefly considered for conversion to civilian production, and the continued use of shipbuilding and repair facilities were cases in point. In the immediate post-war period, Kemp stated his belief in the importance of secondary industries to the State, warning that it was “very dangerous to assert that we must plan to expand rural industries without due regard to manufacturing industries and markets” \(^39\) He also assisted the Government’s attempts to link the two sectors by encouraging joint

\(^{37}\) Clark, Memo, to Rogers, Secretary, Co-Ordinator-General, 25.11.1946, 10786/46, pp.2-3, SRS1043-1-838, QSA.


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ventures with outside investors to finance new projects, such as coal-derivative industries, in regional locations.

To facilitate the role of secondary industry expansion in its national development plans, the Commonwealth appointed a Secondary Industries Commission in 1943, an initiative that was taken up by the States. Kemp chaired a special committee of the State Employment Council appointed to investigate employment-generating projects to be used in future discussions with the National Works Council. On this occasion, it had a further purpose in fostering secondary industries in northern Queensland, which was linked with the popularly accepted view that, for defence reasons, it was essential to increase the population of the region. The committee was replaced in 1943 by a similarly-oriented Secondary Industries Division headed by Colin Clark and located within the re-organised department of Labour and Industry. However, the traditional protection of heavy industry based in the southern states and the southern monopoly on building materials was again asserted during the late 1940s, even as crippling shortages of steel and cement continued to retard construction and development plans throughout Australia. This protection was extended to the coal industry, as demonstrated by the Commonwealth’s rejection of Callide coal supplies as the solution to the coal crisis of the late 1940s in New South Wales and Victoria. There was some validity in the claims by Brisbane-based businessmen that industry growth was hindered by a punitive tax regime and unwarranted government intervention in traditionally private sector activities, even if the ambitions of this sector were largely focused on the metropolitan and south-east Queensland areas.


As had become evident over the long period of Labor Government in Queensland, the State’s economic future lay in the development and successful marketing of its rich primary resources. Australia’s industrial states shared with Britain the view, shaped in the colonial era, of Queensland solely as the provider of raw materials for industry. Their view was further entrenched as secondary industries geared up again in the post-war years, and Queensland was found to lack the necessary political power at the national level to change the status quo. Its most promising opportunities for industrial development lay with enterprises associated with primary production and the exploitation of mineral resources. Even before the first of the State post-war reconstruction conferences in 1943, Kemp had been active in the dissemination of the concept, advocated chiefly by Forgan Smith, of public investment in long-term infrastructure development plans as essential to economic growth. Achievement of Labor’s policy goals of closer settlement, increased population, and regional stability through the expansion of primary resources’ production, was dependent on the provision of an appropriate infrastructure capacity. In the post-war period, gains had been made, with Commonwealth assistance, in rehabilitating existing facilities or providing new, basic services. The provision of large-scale infrastructure for economic development purposes was required to move the economy forward. For example, where Queensland had signed long-term agreements with Britain for sugar and meat in the late 1940s, there were doubts about Queensland’s capacity to fill the orders. They arose from the lack of infrastructure such as industrial water and electricity supplies, and transport access to ports and port facilities, together with
shortages in everything from construction materials and wire netting to fertiliser, as Queensland remained dependent on interstate suppliers.

There was general political acceptance of the policy of regional development, but the particular means by which it was to be accomplished gave rise to the sustained opposition with which Hanlon's plans were met during this period. Some of the most aggressive opposition arose from the intense competition generated among the State's towns and regions for works allocations, while not only Labor stalwarts were critical of the Government's plans to involve the private sector. In his statement of public works policy in 1945, Kemp gave private employers the major role as employment providers, stressing that "full co-operation with private enterprise is essential" to achieve full employment and economic growth. The role assigned to public works was "to take up the slack when and where it develops". Not the least of the opposition came from the industrial movement which believed, as it had on numerous previous occasions, that the Government gave preference to supporting the small, agricultural producer over improving workers' conditions. In the strike-dominated post-war years, Kemp's view of labour conditions was governed by the demands of completing a project. With Main Roads works, the Somerset Dam, Story Bridge and the University of Queensland projects, he had been confronted with union demands for increased pay and conditions. On some of the projects, he had tried to pre-empt industrial unrest by providing improved working conditions and recognising specialist skills with pay loading. In general, he had a mutually respectful relationship with senior union officials but it was necessarily influenced by his priorities of retaining his skilled workforce and removing obstacles to the completion of the project.

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\textsuperscript{42} Annual Report of the Co-Ordinator-General, 1945, p.6.
Kemp’s responsibility in these years was to chart the most effective course towards achieving regional development, to explore every avenue that might yield a development opportunity and to co-ordinate the range of resources necessary to bring it to fruition. With the establishment in 1943 of the National Works Council as the filter for Commonwealth and Loan Council approvals for state-based public works, he was concerned to encourage all state and local authorities to submit works proposals for funding consideration. In 1945, he placed renewed emphasis on the original planning and co-ordinating function of the Co-Ordinator-General to link, in surprisingly human terms, public works planning with the Government’s political objectives. As he outlined it, the aim was:

... to ensure for the people of this State, where they may reside, and for those who will be coming home from the war, and transferring from defence industries, full employment with maximum standards of education, health, comfort, and general well-being. These are standards of the social service state which must be available to all at equally high levels before people can be induced to remain, and industries to arise, in areas remote from large centres of population.43

Within the overall public works planning structure, Kemp ensured that the campaign for major works projects remained to the fore. With a confidence almost certainly derived from his achievements in completing major defence works during World War Two, Kemp advanced his vision of infrastructure planning on a scale scarcely entertained previously in Queensland. Whether Hanlon had envisaged development projects on such a scale in his quest for the realisation of Queensland’s economic potential was unclear, but he gave unequivocal, public support to Kemp’s projections. Out of this partnership were initiated most of the major regional

development schemes that came to maturity over the following decades under the
Liberal-Country Party Coalition Government. 44

Planning for post-war reconstruction in Australia began as early as 1941. That year, a
national post-war planning and reconstruction conference heard J. J. Bradfield
outline his view of essential developmental works in a speech which was notable for
its introduction of his scheme to divert the coastal rivers of northern Queensland to
“water the inland” and provide hydro-electric power for northern industries. He
proposed the construction of dams on the Tully, Flinders, Herbert and Burdekin
Rivers, claiming that the Burdekin scheme would generate sufficient power for the
electrification of Queensland’s main line railways. In addition, he presented a list of
general objectives already articulated in Queensland Parliament and in Kemp’s
annual reports as Main Roads Commissioner and Co-Ordinator-General. His
advocacy of developmental roads and a standard gauge railway to link western New
South Wales to Darwin through western Queensland was less to do with post-war
planning than with attempting to influence defence works decisions on these
projects. Projects to counter soil erosion and to finance a national reafforestation
programme were considered to be long-term prospects, 45 although they were soon
taken up by Kemp as appropriate projects for the Bureau of Investigation of Land
and Water Resources, to which he was appointed chairman in 1943. They were
subsequently continued in conjunction with the various river trusts established in the
early 1940s and the Co-ordinator-General’s schedule of regional surveys. The

44 For another viewpoint, which assigns all credit to Under-Treasurer (Sir) Leo Hielscher, see
Humphrey McQueen. Gone Tomorrow; Australian in the 80s, Sydney, 1982, p.15.
45 J. J. Bradfield, “Better Distribution of Population and Repopulation” in Hon Athol Richardson,
Report of Addresses delivered before the combined bodies on “Post-war Planning and
Reconstruction”, 5.9.1941, “Northern Development”, SRS1043-1-838, QSA.
concept of "Northern Australia" as a development zone was identified at the 1941
conference as a post-war reconstruction issue.

While the rationale for development was said to lie principally with defence
considerations, it necessarily encompassed factors such as increased population and
associated employment, new industries and markets, and the power, water, transport
and communications facilities they required. At the conference, Bradfield had been
speaking to a prepared agenda, as Queensland was already investigating plans for
developing northern Queensland. Early in 1940, the "Story report" was submitted to
the Premier. It was the outcome of investigations carried out by a committee, chaired
by Colin Clark and with J. D. Story and Kemp among its members, into project
proposals for possible inclusion in the state-wide, co-ordinated development plan.
Although, at Kemp’s suggestion, no further publicity was given to the investigations,
the committee's recommendations formed the basis of Queensland’s post-war
development plan. They covered the institution of an interlocking system of sub-
committees, each of which was to be responsible for a defined district of Queensland
to come within the ambit of the overall plan. A committee comprised of Kemp as
chairman, Story, the Surveyor-General, and the LAB’s chairman, defined and
mapped the district of north Queensland which was extended to include Northern
Territory as a forerunner to the concept of "Northern Australia".

The momentum of popular approval for post-war development planning was carried
through to a debate in Parliament in September 1941 when the "wish-lists" of
regional representatives were given a comprehensive airing. The Government’s

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46 Neil Smith, Acting Secretary, Co-Ordinator-General, to Under-Secretary, Chief Secretary,
01497/40, SRS1043 - 3 - . QSA.

47 Address in Reply, Debate on Post-War Planning, 9.9.1941, QPD 1941, Vol.177, p.221; ibid,
p.365, p.371.
policy was given formal standing with the passing of the Post-War Reconstruction and Development Act 1943. Its primary purpose was to reserve funds through the operation of a trust fund under Treasury control to allow immediate implementation of post-war reconstruction programmes once the war had ended. In keeping with the concept of state-wide planning and co-ordination of public works, the legislation was to be read and construed with the State Development and Public Works Organisation Act, which was designated the principal Act. Understandably, the Bill excited considerable adverse comments among the Opposition. Country Party MLA, Frank Nicklin, led off with two points, the first questioning the decision to divert over five million pounds to the Post-War Reconstruction Fund when an unfunded debit balance of three and a half million pounds remained on the Consolidated Revenue account. He went on to argue that, since railway receipts had supplied the bulk of the revenue to be diverted, the Railway Department should be entitled to a commensurate allocation from the Trust Fund. His point allowed Muller, the Member for Fassifern in the Brisbane Valley, who had a vested interest in securing allocations for irrigation projects in his electorate, to reiterate the theme of government corruption. In his view, the new Trust Fund would be used for political purposes in the same way as the defunct Unemployment Relief Fund. Proposing an independent tribunal, “a body similar to the Main Roads Commission”, to investigate and report to the Government on how the money should be spent, he supported the concept of the Trust Fund but only if recommendations for allocations were made on an impartial, technical basis, “away from party politics and the questions of securing

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Stephen Theodore, MLA for the northern seat of Herbert, who was then establishing himself as an effective lobbyist for northern interests, gave his view of post-war reconstruction policy goals. In doing so, he set out the enduring elements of the Government’s post-war development plan for central and northern Queensland:

A searching investigation should be made into development schemes that will be of national importance and value ... The Commonwealth Government has developed a policy of centralisation, whereas it is a policy of decentralisation that the country needs. I can imagine no more important work of development than the thorough investigation of our northern rivers and the great coal deposits of the State with a view to their utilisation of the production of cheap electric power. ... A policy of irrigation on a large scale is equally important and it is one that cannot much longer be neglected.

In 1943, E. J. Walsh, the Minister for Public Lands, introduced legislation to extend the principle of co-ordination to the management and development of the State’s land and water resources. The Land and Water Resources Development Bill provided for the establishment of a Bureau of Investigation with the power to co-opt specialist advisers, and to undertake extensive investigations on which planning for development projects would be based. Kemp was appointed the Bureau’s chairman, a surprise appointment, according to Powell, since LAB chairman, W. L. Payne, was the more logical appointment and had a vested interest in maintaining the traditional link between lands, and irrigation and water supply functions. Apart from his influential position and his considerable administrative experience, which Walsh clearly valued, Kemp had been associated with irrigation and water conservation measures for some years. He assisted the advancement of the Border Rivers water

49 Ibid, p.1841.
50 Ibid, pp.1842-43.
conservation project, and had contributed to the drafting of the *Burdekin River Trust Act* 1940, the provisions of which were also utilised in the Herbert River Trust legislation in 1942. Under the Trust legislation, the powers of the Co-Ordinator-General were delegated to the Main Roads Commissioner and the relevant shire councils to undertake erosion prevention works. These works attracted the Treasury subsidies introduced for payment to local authorities for works submitted to, and approved by the Co-Ordinator-General. The same year, Kemp had sought the Public Service Commissioner’s approval for Bridge Board staff, supervised by Chief Engineer, J. A. Holt, to undertake design works and, in association with the then Irrigation Commissioner, C. Parkinson, prepare plans and estimates for a number of water conservation projects. Moreover, Kemp’s views on the need for a comprehensive approach to planning and developing the State’s irrigation and water conservation projects in north Queensland along the lines initially proposed by Bradfield, were presented virtually as a statement of intent in a series of newspaper articles he wrote in late 1944.

In 1946, the Irrigation sub-department of the LAB was reconstituted as a semi-independent authority, the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission, headed by a sole Commissioner, hydraulic engineer, Tom Lang. Lang’s avowed intention was to introduce a new approach to irrigation, water supply and conservation, which involved a new direction in development projects and a complete organisational restructuring. His appointment was a direct challenge to Kemp’s dominant influence and, Kemp came under attack in the following months from those opposed to the

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53 Memo, chairman, Bridge Board, 17.11.1941, 247.6.10, R.M.O. 307, QTA.
54 *Courier-Mail*, 11-14 December, 1944..
excessive concentration of administrative power in one official which, they perceived, blocked more progressive measures in this area.

During the 1947 debate on the Estimates for the Co-ordinator-General, the Premier was placed on the defensive, as the Opposition began a sustained attack on the Government’s public works spending priorities. In one sense, it was the usual airing by their parliamentary representatives of constituents’ complaints concerning lack of development progress in their area. In another sense, it was a direct attack on the Co-Ordinator-General as the mechanism for delivering the Government’s works policy. There were two related complaints, the first being that, because works were said to be allocated on a population basis, the allocations were overwhelmingly weighted in favour of the Brisbane area. The second was that the Co-Ordinator-General’s control over the process meant that many sound local authority works projects were rejected on his recommendation. It was claimed that the Government’s intention was to create, through the Co-Ordinator-General, a dictatorship in local government matters. Most Opposition speakers began by commending Kemp for his work, some claiming him as a personal friend, but went on to condemn the Co-Ordinator-General’s control over the co-ordinated works plan as undermining local government autonomy. In reply, Hanlon rejected the Opposition’s argument that the Burdekin scheme was unfair because it would bring benefits to one region above others. He went on to explain:

The supervision exercised by the Co-Ordinator-General over local authority work is not merely an arbitrary supervision to give a sense of power to the Co-Ordinator-General. It is essential today that there should be some control of all main Government and local authority work. It is important that no more work should be started than there is labour and material available to carry to a successful conclusion.

For the first time, Kemp’s integrity appeared to be questioned. Tom Aikens, the Independent Member for Mundingburra, claimed that Hanlon’s decision in April, 1944, was a clear example of “pork-barrelling” to win back dissatisfied Labor voters in northern electorates. Aikens went on to allege a link between votes for Labor and the Co-Ordinator-General’s funding allocation decisions. It was the closest any speaker had come to suggesting that the Co-Ordinator-General and the co-ordination of works process were open to political influence. Aikens later denied making any such statement, claiming he had said; “when seeking votes, the Labour Party indulges in political blackmail”, not that “the COG was indulging in political blackmail”.

Despite other government speakers rising to Kemp’s defence, the Opposition developed what was to become a constant theme of attacks on Kemp over the following years. Sparkes (Aubigny), developed the theme of excessive centralisation of control as represented by Kemp. He agreed that overlapping responsibilities made it more efficient to have one official as Main Roads Commissioner and Co-Ordinator-General but then expounded on the consequences of human frailty. He said that Kemp was overworked, arguing that, as a result, he made mistakes in his decisions and was more vulnerable to political influence. Moreover, where powers are delegated to such a degree, it opened the way for decisions to be influenced by “the official’s aims, whether personal or professional”.

A final, effective ploy was to praise Kemp for his outstanding record of work during World War Two, only to

57 Ibid, p.1271.
59 Ibid, p.1276
dismiss it as belonging in the past. The judgment was that Kemp was in poor health, and too overworked either to discharge his responsibilities impartially or to respond constructively to new challenges. What was needed to resolve the situation was to appoint progressive technical specialists, “better men … to accept the responsibility of developing the State” 60 Hannlon’s defence of Kemp was equivocal. He painted a picture of a totally dedicated official predisposed to working at high pressure to discharge his responsibilities while at the same time intimating that the Government shared at least some of the Opposition’s concerns:

I do not view with any degree of pleasure the amount of work that is imposed on Mr Kemp and the amount of responsibility he is carrying. As the Government’s chief technical adviser he gets a great many things given to him for advice that normally would not be before him at all. Today we have so many problems on our hands that all technical advisers are overworked. 61

The responsibility for co-ordinating the planning and implementation of Queensland’s entire post-war public works and infrastructure development rested with Kemp. More than that, however, he was still determinedly seeking Commonwealth funding support for a growing number of major projects, effecting investigations into the feasibility of expanding the scope of many of them, and giving enthusiastic consideration to proposals for private capital investment in Queensland development. His capacity to administer the responsibilities the Government continued to load on him while decrying the need to do so, was directly related to the operation of the committee system which was used extensively in post-war reconstruction and development planning and decision-making processes at both intergovernmental and interdepartmental levels.

60 Ibid, p.1235, p.1293.
61 Ibid, p.1299.
During the war and post-war years, proposals to transfer state responsibilities to the Commonwealth, followed by their failure to be given effect through changes to the Australian Constitution, resulted in the negotiation of Federal-State power-sharing agreements in areas previously the exclusive responsibility of the States. The agreements extended to matters relating to post-war reconstruction and development planning and involved a more comprehensive role for Commonwealth funding grants to the States. Analysts of intergovernmental relations have argued for the characterisation of this period as coercive federalism to signify the Federal Government's capacity to achieve state compliance through financial dominance but, in the administrative context, a defining characteristic was the large number of advisory and enabling committees which underpinned any formal arrangements. As Wiltshire has outlined, such committees were established to achieve uniformity of administration and to prevent administrative duplication and overlapping in a shared functional area although, in the case of post-war reconstruction planning, they tended to be used as a filtering or delaying mechanism on the part of the Commonwealth. In addition to the committees of officials which were attached, for example, to the Premiers' Conferences and the Commonwealth-State grants arrangements, Kemp was the Queensland representative, together with I. W. Morley, the State Mining Engineer, of the Officers' Committee of the Commonwealth's Northern Australian Development Committee, through which Queensland pursued its

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63 Wiltshire, *ibid*, p.5.
goal of gaining Commonwealth funding support for regional infrastructure development projects.

Undertaking a comprehensive overview of British machinery-of-government committees up to the post-war period, Wheare noted how prolific they were, citing Churchill’s reluctance to establish yet more of them since, as he observed in exasperation; “We are overrun by them, like the Australians were by the rabbits”, and acknowledged the difficulties of producing a clear analysis of their myriad forms, functions and outcomes. In Australia, interdepartmental committees have remained largely unresearched, with the work by Painter and Carey being confined to those relating to Commonwealth departments and functions. Interestingly, one criterion they identify for this form of committee is that they represent “the meeting of nominal equals” where departments with their own areas of responsibility find themselves with overlapping functions, so that “co-ordination becomes a problem of mutual agreement rather than central control by command”. Kemp was either chairman or a member of nearly every Queensland Government “advisory” committee on post-war public works and infrastructure development matters, but co-option under the Co-Ordinator-General’s statutory powers was usually the basis of their establishment and operation. Wheeler notes that, since Treasury did not regard the Co-Ordinator-General’s powers as threatening its own status, the relationship between the two departments was generally co-operative, allowing Kemp to manage his spread of responsibilities within a smoothly and effectively run administrative system.

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65 Martin Painter & Bernard Carey, Politics Between Departments, St. Lucia: UQP, 1979, p.3.
Inevitably, as with the heads of the new department of Local Government and the SEC, there was some resentment of Kemp’s co-ordinating role and the control over their own organisational goals it conferred on him. Wheeler argues that Kemp took the path of avoiding confrontation in these situations because “he was in a weaker position than he admitted”, presumably in relation to his powers of compulsion. It is more likely that, given his broad experience of dealing with bureaucrats and political representatives over issues of works co-ordination, he viewed compulsion itself as a weak basis for interdepartmental relationships, preferring to advance as far as possible towards satisfactory outcomes through negotiation and compromise.

The function of the majority of the advisory and investigative committees under Kemp’s direction was to gather and analyse relevant information on the State’s proposed and actual developmental projects. The fact that the committees were established was used to reassure community interests of the Government’s intention to fulfil its on-going commitment to development, particularly in regional Queensland. The specialist input of their members provided the technical base for planning and developing specific projects as well as the rational base on which Queensland built its case for funding its overall post-war reconstruction plan as a national development undertaking.

In 1947, Colin Clark visited England on the Queensland Government’s behalf, with a brief to seek out and encourage potential investors in development projects in Queensland. Apart from some speculative response, such as the investigation by

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66 Wheeler, *op. cit.*, p.94, relates how Charles Chuter, the Acting Director of Local Authority Affairs “went over the head of the Co-Ordinator-General” during the 1942 defence crisis to obtain Cabinet approval for local sewerage works projects. Thomis, *op. cit.*, p.10.

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British textile firm, Courtauld's, into establishing a rayon factory in Brisbane, the outcome devolved onto two major projects, development of the Blair Athol coalfield and the Queensland-British Food Corporation scheme to grow food for Britain at Peak Downs in the Central Highlands. The British Government had an important role in both of them, while the development of Blair Athol was intertwined with Commonwealth-State funding negotiations and the re-development of Queensland's port and harbour facilities.

With the Blair Athol coalfield, Kemp had a highly visible role in promoting its development, taking an active part in the complex negotiations for funding support, and initiating and co-ordinating an extensive technical information base on its future prospects. However, his enthusiastic assessment of its value and his consequent plan for large-scale development as part of the new era for central Queensland, was strongly criticised as over-optimistic and unrealistic. Blair Athol, near the central Queensland town of Clermont, had been important during World War Two as a reliable source of coal supplies for the railways. Official interest commenced in 1946 when Kemp chaired a committee to investigate the extension and future development of its coal resources. The report produced from detailed investigations carried out by the Co-Ordinator-General and the Director of the Bureau of Industry under the committee's direction, was referred to the Northern Development Committee. With that Committee's endorsement of Blair Athol's potential contribution to northern development, Kemp pursued discussions between State and Commonwealth Governments for Commonwealth assistance with large-scale, fully mechanised development of the field and the provision of transport access. The discussions were

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based on the belief that, with the ready access to coal deposits the recent changeover to open-cut mining provided, Blair Athol represented the quickest means of increasing coal supplies to alleviate Australia-wide shortages.\textsuperscript{69} As Kemp concluded in 1946, open-cut mining at Blair Athol delivered a higher tonnage of coal more quickly than traditional mining methods and offered a source of cheap power for central Queensland. However, development of the field to its full potential was dependent not only on large-scale mechanisation but also on the availability of transport to ports, and adequate storage and loading facilities at these ports,\textsuperscript{70} all of which required substantial capital investment. To maintain the open-cut production while negotiations for funding support continued, the Queensland Government placed a large order for coal. The immediate problem of obtaining plant was solved by Thiess (Qld) Ltd, one of a handful of private firms with access to the necessary heavy equipment. Convinced it was a viable commercial opportunity, the firm contracted with the Blair Athol lessees to remove the overburden and extract the coal, beginning an association with the field which was to last for a decade\textsuperscript{71} and which, within a few years, was extended to the Callide field. The difficulties of increasing production to the levels envisaged were evident even then, as it was two years before the order was filled.

While its terms of reference specified that projects investigated and approved by NADC were to be wholly financed by the States, this did not deter the States from lobbying for Commonwealth funding on the basis of the Committee's approval.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{69} Kerry Killin, \textit{Drovers, Diggers and Draglines: A History of Blair Athol and Clermont}, Pacific Coal Pty. Ltd., 1984, p.60.
\item \textsuperscript{69} \textit{Annual Report of the Co-Ordinator-General}, 1946, p.10.
\item \textsuperscript{70} \textit{Ibid}, p.11.
\item \textsuperscript{71} Joan Priest, \textit{The Thiess Story}, Brisbane: Boolarong, 1981, pp.59-61.
\end{itemize}
Kemp and Morley were the Queensland representatives on the Officers’ Committee, chaired by H. C. Coombs, then Director-General of the Department of Post-War Reconstruction. The Coombs Committee reported to a policy sub-committee of the principal Committee, the members of which were the Prime Minister, the Minister for the Interior, and the Premiers of Western Australia and Queensland. Although there were benefits to be derived from bringing project proposals to the attention of the Commonwealth under the umbrella of northern development, it was soon confirmed that the Committee was little more than a political exercise or, at best, a policy “think-tank”. As Kemp commented, after it took a series of meetings in Canberra and Melbourne throughout 1946 for the Officers Committee to produce its first report: “(the report) should enable the Policy Committee to lay down a general policy on which a continuous and long-term programme for development can be based” 72 The Committee’s role was one of policy definition and any initiatives for action were to remain in the States’ hands. Coombs later conceded the doubts that always existed about Commonwealth involvement in grand plans for northern development with no provision for Commonwealth funding. NADC had been established by Curtin who believed it necessary to demonstrate Australia’s capacity to populate and develop its northern regions for defence purposes. Coombs was one of a number of senior officials who argued that the adverse climatic conditions and isolation from the rest of the country necessitated unjustifiably high levels of capital investment to realise the grand schemes so enthusiastically promoted in the post-war period. He confirmed that, as early as 1948, Commonwealth support for northern development had declined to a position of influencing economic priorities in State project planning. A proposal to hand over its functions to a full-time agency with

executive powers was rejected and the Committee was subsequently disbanded.\textsuperscript{73} The traditional emphasis on development in the New South Wales-Victorian axis was reasserted.

It was against this background that Queensland, encouraged by British interest in investment in resources development, investigated joint-venture opportunities for central Queensland coal and for Blair Athol in particular. Negotiations initiated in Britain by Sam Cochran, Queensland Electricity Commissioner, and continued by Hanlon, led to the Queensland Parliament assenting to the \textit{Electric Supply Corporation (Overseas) Ltd Agreement Act} 1947. Under the provisions of the Act, the British-based Electric Supply Corporation (ESC) was granted a franchise for the development of the field, with responsibility for field surveys, construction of a township, and railway to a central Queensland port, as well as the provision of harbour facilities. A report produced under Kemp’s direction outlining Blair Athol’s potential production capacity and plans for an extensive export trade was the major factor in the Corporation’s decision to proceed with the project.

Morley and Kemp had succeeded in having Blair Athol listed with NADC as a project warranting specific development action.\textsuperscript{74} On this basis, talks between Queensland and Commonwealth representatives continued, with hopes for Commonwealth support being kept alive by the formation of a joint Commonwealth-State Technology Committee to examine the problems identified and prepare estimates of development costs. Kemp was very much the force behind this Committee. He directed its investigations, gathering information from both

\textsuperscript{73} Coombs, \textit{op. cit.}, pp.70-71.

Commonwealth and State sources, and arranging for Queensland officials to tour southern coal mining areas. The development of Blair Athol was the immediate goal, possibly as it was already in operation. The joint Committee concluded that, despite the already well-documented barriers to increased production, there were “no mechanical or transport difficulties that could not be overcome.” While this conclusion may have been acceptable as a long-term goal, the Committee’s report, of which Kemp was considered to be the author, went on to outline extraordinarily optimistic projections of Blair Athol’s future. He forecast annual production figures of 1.3 million tons after the complete mechanisation of the field and set out plans for a bunkering and export trade supported by a dedicated collier fleet to ship one million tons of coal per annum to the southern states. Expansion of trade into South-East Asia would be dependent on production levels reaching three million tons per annum and the active involvement of the Commonwealth Government in securing these markets.

As the Peak Downs scheme also demonstrated, Kemp was excited about any opportunities to introduce large-scale mechanisation for resources development. For him, open-cut mining meant greater efficiency as it could be undertaken by a small group of skilled plant operators rather than a large workforce of strike-prone miners. Moreover, the new technology had already proved to be cost-efficient under more difficult conditions in both Britain and the United States. It is not clear whether the report was influenced by his attraction to these technological advances or whether it was just one of a range of tactics employed to move the central Queensland development agenda along. What is certain is that Kemp’s vision for the future might

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76 Ibid.
have been unrealistic at the time but all his projections in terms of mechanisation, transport and port infrastructure, and the extent of the export trade based on central Queensland coal resources, were subsequently realised.

As open-cut operations had commenced on a small, but promising scale at the Callide field, the Queensland Government also engaged British mining consultants, Powell Duffryn Pty. Ltd., in 1947 to investigate Queensland’s coal resources with a view to planning their overall development. Their comprehensive survey and a report on their recommendations, submitted to Parliament in September 1949, appeared to have little impact on the prevailing direction of development activity. Other events occurring during that period had a more determining influence. Despite private coal interests objecting to an extension of government control of the industry, the Coal Industry (Control) Act 1948 provided for a Queensland Coal Board to bring the efficiency of centralised administration to coal production and marketing. The granting of the Blair Athol franchise had already raised concerns about the Government’s right to enter into agreements with private developers without proper assurances as to their financial stability. When there had been no further work undertaken on the field by the end of 1949, the ESC’s capacity to raise the twelve million pounds required to fulfil the terms of the agreement was widely questioned.\(^7\)

The Blair Athol project was further undermined by the adverse report in November 1949 of German mining experts retained by the Commonwealth Government which concluded that, on a cost-efficiency basis, there were other, more promising, coal

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\(^7\) Ibid, 1946, p.11.

\(^8\) For a comment on opposition to the Blair Athol scheme, see Lack, op. cit., p.342.

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development options. Kemp remained confident, having already explained that considerable time was required for preliminary investigations and tests before any construction work commenced. He produced a revised plan for a staged development, in line with reduced production and marketing targets. While subsequently demonstrated to be feasible, it was not enough to save the grand scheme when the ESC withdrew, conceding that the capital investment required was beyond the corporation's resources.

The experience of Blair Athol had demonstrated that co-ordinating transport facilities to provide cheap carriage of goods to coastal ports was essential to the successful development of the coalfields. Measures were in place to improve road and rail access but, as the problem of coal stockpiling and lack of storage on the wharf at Gladstone showed, port facilities along the coast were totally inadequate to handle the export trade on which, as Kemp had outlined in his earlier report, the central Queensland development plan depended. Government intervention was, consequently, extended to the operations of locally-constituted Harbour Boards which administered the major coastal ports on a part-time basis. Obliged to raise their own debenture loan funding, the Boards had been badly disadvantaged since the Depression years, and most of them were in arrears with debt repayments. The only work of any significance undertaken during that period was the construction of the Mackay Outer Harbour, an initiative of the then Premier, Forgan Smith, to assist the district's sugar industry. Although facilities were installed at some ports for defence purposes, the high level of use and lack of maintenance funding during war-time had, as with all transport infrastructure, left them in poor condition. The ports

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79 *Courier-Mail*, 6.11.1949.

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under the control of Treasury, through the Department of Harbours and Marine, had fared no better.

According to Glen Lewis, the lack of political interest in port development was offset by the "administrative initiative" spearheaded by Kemp as a component of post-war reconstruction planning. 82 In 1944, Kemp chaired the Ports Inquiry Commission appointed to assess the financial position of harbour boards and ports and to recommend a long-term development programme. Clearly influenced by the Boards' seemingly intractable financial difficulties and the intimation of inefficient local administration, the Commission's report presented two years later made a strong recommendation for the establishment of a central authority to administer the development programme, together with government representation on the Boards. It also recommended the creation of a Queensland Harbour Trust to administer the port of Brisbane and those ports under Treasury control. 83 As Kemp pointed out, the recommendations were not new, being similar to those made by the 1937 Royal Commission on Transport. They represented a logical step towards dealing with the dauntingly expensive and complex re-structuring requirements but they were defeated at the time by opposition to centralised government control being imposed over local authority functions.

In the immediate post-war period, Kemp's priority was to consolidate the gains made during the war in relation to Brisbane's port facilities and ship-building industry. The completion of the Brisbane Graving Dock under extremely difficult conditions had been a personal triumph for him. Determined to keep it and the South Brisbane Dry Dock in use, he conducted an aggressive, but unsuccessful, public campaign to divert

a share of the Australian Navy's ship-repair work away from southern ports. He was more successful with the plan for the expansion of port facilities at Hamilton, including provision for coal storage and handling facilities allied to expansion of the central Queensland coalfields, and the development of industrial sites on adjacent reclaimed land. To implement the ambitious plan to develop an industrial, port and aviation complex in one riverside location required a high degree of co-ordination among departments and this was achieved under Kemp's chairmanship of the Hamilton Lands Committee formed in July 1949. Progress in establishing the modern port complex envisaged by Kemp was disappointingly slow and it was eventually overshadowed by the relocation of port facilities to the mouth of the river. However, in Lewis' view, the Co-Ordinator-General's initiative in producing the soundly-formulated 1944 plan, together with the benefits of private investment in port facilities demonstrated by the Hamilton Lands Committee's initiatives, paved the way for the re-development of Queensland's ports and harbours during the 1950s.84

In 1948, Kemp was appointed Deputy Chairman of the Queensland-British Food Corporation. The Corporation was formed to develop what was generally referred to as the “Peak Downs” scheme, named after the pastoral property in Queensland's Central Highlands. The scheme grew from a broad agreement between the Queensland and British Governments for the production of food to help alleviate Britain's severe post-war food shortage. Previously, Britain's Overseas Food Corporation (OFC) had sought access to land in non-dollar, preferably

84 Lewis, op. cit., p.266.
Commonwealth, countries for the production of ground-nut oil as a high-energy food source and, to this end, had already invested in an ultimately disastrous giant, East African groundnuts scheme. A Corporation Mission visited Queensland early in 1948 to investigate the possibility of establishing a similar scheme, following Colin Clark's representations to the Ministry of Food in London the previous year. The Mission was led by the OFC's Chairman, (Sir) Leslie Plummer, and included officials from the British Treasury and the Ministry of Food. Under Kemp's direction, the Bureau of Investigation had surveyed the Peak Downs district some years before and found its badly neglected grazing lands suitable for rehabilitation and future agricultural development. Co-opting an appropriate group of departmental officials to accompany them, he personally conducted the visitors on a tour of the Central Highlands.

As Plummer reported soon afterwards to the British Minister of Food, the Hon. John Strachey, Australia was unsuitable for ground nut production, but Queensland offered a promising opportunity for "grain and pig meat production and sunflowers for the oil". Impressed by the vast acres of degraded pasture land lying undeveloped, because local graziers believed it was beneath them to convert to farming, he noted the unwillingness of the Queensland Government to be associated with, "any work of agricultural rehabilitation that can be described as state enterprises ..." This was clearly a reference to the need for the Corporation to be seen as the instigator of the scheme in the aftermath of the expensive failure of Labor's venture into State-owned business enterprises. Premier Hanlon had been an active proponent of the food production scheme since Clark's initial approach to the

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85 Plummer to Hon. John Strachey, Minister of Food, 17.3.1948, Queensland-British Food Corporation, (QBFC) A/19968, QSA.

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British Government. Despite criticism that, in endorsing “corporate as against family farming”\(^\text{87}\) it went against established Labor policy, he welcomed the prospect of a British Government investment of almost two million pounds in Queensland agriculture. It promised a new era of opportunities for the State Government to share the burden of infrastructure funding, while auguring well for the State’s export trade relationship with Britain on the eve of Hanlon negotiating favorable new sugar and meat supply agreements.

Kemp supported the Premier in his enthusiasm for rural development projects, but was also attracted by the opportunity to test what was, for Queensland, an innovative, technically-based approach to increasing agricultural production. Late in February 1948, Hanlon and Plummer met to decide on the provisions for a formal agreement between the Queensland and British Governments to establish the Queensland-British Food Corporation (QBFC). Plummer, representing the seventy-five per cent investment of the British Government, was appointed Chairman, while Kemp, as the Queensland Government’s representative, was to be Vice-Chairman.\(^\text{88}\) At the meeting, it became clear that, with his capacity for co-ordination, his access to the Co-Ordinator-General’s statutory powers and his knowledge of, and relationship with, other departments, Kemp’s participation was essential to the scheme’s viability. The Corporation’s dominant British membership was responsible for major policy decisions but delegated the scheme’s management to Kemp.

\(^{86}\) Ibid.

\(^{87}\) Murphy, “Agriculture”, op. cit., p.216.

\(^{88}\) Copy of confidential document from meeting between Plummer and Hanlon, 25.2.1948, QBFC, A/19968, QSA.
Before returning to Britain, Plummer stressed the necessity for an immediate start in order to meet production requirements. Having consulted with British Treasury officials, Kemp drafted the enabling legislation which Hanlon presented to the Queensland Parliament in March. The Queensland-British Food Corporation Act 1948 provided for the establishment of the Corporation to operate the proposed scheme. The Queensland Government agreed to supply one-quarter of the required capital to a maximum of £500,000, with the balance to be provided by the British Government or by Corporation borrowings from other sources. The appointments of Plummer as Chairman and Kemp as Deputy-Chairman were confirmed, and they were joined on the Corporation’s Board by Treasury Under-Secretary, E. A. Crosser. On his resignation from Treasury in 1948, Crosser was replaced by the new Under-Secretary, R. L. Murray. Labour and Industry’s interests were represented by the appointment, as assistant Administration Manager, of Colin Clark’s protégé, economist H. Herbert. Kemp arranged for W. A. Rogers, his secretary at the Co-Ordinator-General, to be seconded to the Corporation as Administration Officer, and placed the resources of the Co-Ordinator-General at its disposal until such time as a separate administration was established. Kemp also took on the responsibility of negotiating property resumptions. After the LAB failed to negotiate the outright purchase of selected properties, he was authorised to utilise the State Development and Public Works Organisation legislation to resume them, after which they were leased to the Corporation at a nominal rent. In an attempt to cut off opposition to the extensive, and sometimes vaguely defined powers ceded to the Corporation, the Premier made much of the duty of Australians as “Christian, civilised people” to assist less fortunate countries.

89 Report of the Co-ordinator-General, 1948, p.27.
Since, in the normal course of events, the LAB had responsibility for new agricultural settlement projects, the involvement of the Co-Ordinator-General in the Peak Downs scheme represented an unusual addition to the already extensive range of development activities with which Kemp was associated. The reasons for his involvement appeared to be directly related to the usefulness of the Co-Ordinator-General’s status and statutory powers at that time and also the appeal to Kemp of a scientific approach to agricultural resource development. In the end, it provided the means by which he was able to extend his term as Co-Ordinator-General beyond even the statutory retirement age of seventy years for officials appointed by Parliament.
THE FINAL YEARS

In October 1949, at the age of sixty-six, Kemp was re-appointed Co-Ordinator-General for a further three-year term. The same month, doctors unsuccessfully urged him to take three months rest from his public duties after he suffered another heart attack. By this time, Hanlon was also ill, and his health continued to deteriorate until his death in January 1952. But for these two sick men, both in the final stage of their long public careers, the late 1940s and early 1950s were years of intense activity. As Labor struggled to hold on to office in a climate of increasing dissatisfaction with its policies and actions, Hanlon came to depend even more on Kemp to make good his election promise of economic growth through state-wide development. That this dependence was no secret was supported by a leading Brisbane journalist’s description of Kemp at that time as the Government’s senior adviser on “general affairs” who was “behind most of the Government moves in the last years for the advancement of Queensland” ¹

In the period from 1949 to 1954, several projects with which Kemp had a long involvement were completed. While others remained in the limbo of investigations and funding negotiations, he continued to pursue the goals of post-war reconstruction relating to central and north Queensland development. Although he officially relinquished his position as Main Roads Commissioner in June 1949, any vacuum that

¹ H. J. Summers, “Sir John Kemp”, Courier-Mail, 7.6.1951; Memo on Tour of the Main Roads Commissioner, J. R. Kemp, and A. R. Williams, MRC job file 10.5.3., C/D No. 1342, QTA.
might have been created was immediately filled by new responsibilities and an expanded role for both the Co-Ordinator-General and the Bureau of Investigation. Critics of the Government’s enthusiasm for projects that were invariably under Kemp’s control still argued that the consequence of over-dependence on one official was inefficiency.

However, as he had done in the past, Kemp met the challenge by utilising his existing organisational network to accommodate any new functions. He kept the Main Roads building as his operational centre and Main Roads as his overall support base to maintain the short lines of administrative control which had always served him so well.

Until late 1951, the offices of the Co-Ordinator-General were located in the Main Roads building. From there, he also carried out his duties as Chairman of the Queensland-British Food Corporation, the Bureau of Investigation, the Burdekin River Bridge Board and the Burdekin River Authority. The appointment of a secretary to each of them preserved their separate identities, although the boundaries remained flexible and there were interchanges of personnel and duties as the need arose. The small clerical establishment attached to the Co-Ordinator-General provided the liaison among his various functional responsibilities and, with input from Main Roads’ clerical and technical staff on a state-wide basis, freed him from involvement in routine matters. While he no longer had the previous formal control over Main Roads, he still had input into its operations, since it remained one of his most valuable assets when it came to demonstrating that progress was being made, especially in relation to politically

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2 See, for example, letter and margin notes, G. W. Watson, for Chairman of the Burdekin Bridge Board, to D. A. Crawford, Main Roads Commission, 23.1.1946, R.M.O. 315, QTA.
sensitive projects. As well as its own construction work, Main Roads undertook design and supervisory work on projects for other departments and local authorities, as well as preliminary surveys on a range of major projects in collaboration with the Co-Ordinator-General and the Bureau of Investigation. More than once, Kemp virtually borrowed from Main Roads’ funds to finance the early stages of a project when no other funding was available. Technical staff were seconded to projects, and Kemp relied almost entirely on Main Roads staff to provide the instant administrative structure required to establish the Peak Downs scheme. Meetings of the committees and authorities of which he was Chairman were usually held in the Co-Ordinator-General’s office. The composition of these bodies streamlined what might have become an unwieldy planning and consultation process for him. Their members included senior Main Roads and Co-Ordinator-General engineering staff and some of the small group of senior departmental officials and technical experts with whom he had worked for many years.

By this time, Kemp took little part in the routine of compiling the annual co-ordinated plan of works covering governmental and local authority works programmes. He was already well-acquainted with most of the programmes as they had required his approval before submission to the National Works Council for inclusion in the national reservoir of works. Within the framework of post-war reconstruction priorities and the borrowing limits determined by the Loan Council, public works’ allocations had become set in a predictable pattern. The routine processes were handled by the Deputy Co-Ordinator-General, G. W. Watson, assisted by the Co-Ordinator-General’s Chief Engineer, James Holt. When the Premier directed that, on Watson’s retirement, his duties should be shared among other staff members, Kemp received Gair’s approval for Holt to be responsible for finalising the co-ordinated plan and to liaise with Treasury on the
approved loan plan. Kemp's statutory responsibility was to "fine-tune" the overall works programme, and its associated expenditure from various funding sources, before recommending it for submission for Loan Council approval. Each year, he reported in detail to Parliament on the factors influencing the framing of the co-ordinated plan. Post-war shortages and an urgent need for housing, highlighted in 1949, gave way in subsequent years to rebuilding transport infrastructure, constructing hospitals, and providing for electricity and water supply schemes, although the changing priorities remained within established National Works Council parameters.

The discussions Kemp had in Canberra with the National Works Council co-ordinator, Loan Council officials and his counterparts from other states, had always been important in the process of shaping Queensland's works programme. They ensured that the programme's components were both acceptable to the Loan Council and reflected the State Government's own priorities. In the 1950 and 1951 co-ordinated plans, he recommended for cabinet approval provision for anticipated expenditure on the major north Queensland irrigation and hydro-electricity schemes, at a time when the decision to proceed with the schemes was still being contested. Whether or not his recommendations were predominantly influenced by rational planning, political considerations or his own preferences, he was treading a fine line in terms of public acceptance of his official neutrality. Acknowledged as the Government's most influential adviser whose recommendations Cabinet rarely rejected, he was as much a target as the Premier and the "development" Ministers for attacks on the credibility of

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3 Kemp to Chief Secretary, 6.1.1953, Minute, 5737/53, SRS1043-1-3121, QSA.

4 See, for example Annual Report of the Co-Ordinator-General, 1950, pp.1-3.

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The Government’s policy which seemed to be promoting “airy-fairy schemes” it was clearly unable to deliver. The difficulties of his position were exacerbated when, as Co-Ordinator-General, Kemp was obliged to announce the deferral of some of the approved works. It was a consequence of the Loan Council’s decision to cut the overall loan programme, following the disclosure that some of the funds previously allocated under the co-ordinated plan remained unspent. Kemp’s response to his critics was to emphasise that decisions concerning the development of the State had to be the outcome of a rational planning process. Given the circumstances under which the decision was made, he considered it necessary to reappraise that process:

... to probe much more deeply into the reservoir of works with the view to the avoidance of haphazard planning but, on the other hand ensuring that the proper priority is allotted to the various projects. This policy is being adopted in the preparation of the State programme of works.6

In the same context, he defended the controversial decision to proceed with the North Queensland irrigation and hydro-electricity projects, stating that it would not mean the exclusion from the co-ordinated plan of the smaller irrigation schemes for which there was strong popular support. It was Kemp’s way of acknowledging the substance of the public debate while re-stating his conviction that the major development projects, to which Hanlon had committed the Government, were essential to Queensland’s economic and social advancement. Kemp had been the driving force behind NADC’s acceptance and forwarding on for Commonwealth funding consideration, the five projects around which the controversy centred; the Blair Athol-Callide coalfields, the Tully Falls hydro-electricity scheme, the Mareeba-Dimbulah tobacco irrigation scheme, the Burdekin

irrigation and hydro-electricity scheme, and the south-west Queensland “Channel Country” development project. During his final years, it was largely to the advancement of these projects, and more especially their advancement under his control, that Kemp devoted his not inconsiderable personal and administrative skills.

In November 1949, Kemp won a major victory in the bureaucratic battle for control of water resources development when the Irrigation Commissioner, Tom Lang, resigned to take up an appointment as Assistant Commissioner with the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electricity Authority. W R. Nimmo, then sixty-one years old, was appointed to the position for a term of three years. Previously Chief Engineer of the Stanley River Works Board, and Kemp’s friend as well as trusted colleague, he would have been Kemp’s original choice for the position. The victory was consolidated by the passing of the Burdekin River Authority Act establishing a Burdekin River Authority with responsibility for directing investigations and developing plans to implement the Burdekin scheme. A separate trust fund was established and the Authority given power to borrow or to lend money. Kemp was named Chairman, the other members being Nimmo and Queensland Electricity Commissioner, Neil Smith. Smith was another potential ally for Kemp since, before his appointment as the first sole Commissioner under the provisions of the State Electricity Commission Acts Amendment Act 1948, he had been acting secretary to the Co-Ordinator-General. Kemp’s victory represented a severe setback to his detractors and the numerous opponents of the Government’s development policy. They had seen Lang’s appointment to head the newly-independent

Irrigation and Water Supply Commission in 1947 as the means of breaking Kemp’s seemingly comprehensive control over water resources development. Under the leadership of the young, highly ambitious Lang, the Commission was expected to be established as the co-ordinating and controlling authority in this field. However, several months before his resignation, it became evident that he was no match for the experienced partnership of Kemp and Nimmo.

Lang had planned to overhaul the Commission’s administrative structure, chiefly through a big increase in engineering staff, in preparation for assuming total responsibility for the State’s water conservation programme. He supported a gradual approach to construction, with a preference for a programme of small weirs and dams that accorded with Colin Clark’s plan for decentralised development based on a network of small rural centres. According to Powell, Lang was particularly critical of what he saw as the ad hoc nature of previous decisions made to benefit a particular area or town. This was clearly a reference to the Somerset Dam and other local water conservation and supply projects associated with Kemp, as well as the new major projects being proposed. However, Kemp was ahead of Lang in terms of a comprehensive plan for water conservation measures. Relying on Nimmo to deliver a consistently high level of technical analysis, he had been collating information obtained from the series of specialist investigative committees he had directed since 1941. His position strengthened by his appointment in 1943 as Chairman of the Bureau of Investigation, Kemp had extended the collection of technical data to an increasing number of regional projects.

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which were to comprise the state-wide plan. Against this background of long-term collaboration among relevant Government bodies and technical experts under Kemp's control, another aspect of Lang's reorganisation, which was to build a new structure of "close liaison with other resource management agencies", was ill-advised and bound to fail.

Critics of the Government joined forces with supporters of the Irrigation Commission to undermine Kemp's position. They portrayed the Bureau as exemplifying the Government's "hydra-headed approach" to water resources management, but were convincingly challenged by the Premier who, drawing on notes Kemp had prepared in response to the attacks, rejected their argument that "co-ordination means disorganisation". During this period, there were unsubstantiated references to clashes between Lang and Kemp and allegations that, with higher salaries and more positions approved, the Co-Ordinator-General had effectively commandeered all the available engineers. At the Closer Settlement Conference for senior Lands Department officials in April, Lang had been confident that, with more senior engineers on his staff, he could open up at least 1,000 more farms within five years but, over the following months, claimed to have been thwarted in his recruitment efforts. Obliged once again to defend Kemp, Hanlon diverted attention away from the crucial issue of senior engineer appointments, where the Co-Ordinator-General predominated, by producing figures to demonstrate that the Irrigation Commission was well ahead in overall engineering staff.”

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9 Ibid.
10 See, for example, T. Hiley, quoted in Courier-Mail, 18.10.1949, and Tucker et al., op. cit., pp.26-27.
11 Kemp to Hanlon, 16.1.1950, 539/50, SRS 1043-1-381, QSA.
12 Courier-Mail, 23.4.1949.
numbers. Amendments to the *Irrigation and Water Supply Commission Act* passed soon after Nimmo’s appointment gave Nimmo an advantage denied to Lang in delegating to the Commissioner the same power of directly appointing senior officials for specific projects as the Main Roads Commissioner and Co-ordinator-General had exercised for many years. However, Opposition Leader, Frank Nicklin, refused to let the issue of Lang’s resignation die. Claiming that the public was fed up with years of “investigations, plans and blueprints” but no action, he portrayed Lang as the man who would have cut through the prevailing bureaucratic inertia and achieved results. He said Lang had been “broken-hearted” and had resigned not, as Lands Minister Tom Foley announced, to take up a better paid position with the Snowy Mountains Scheme but because he was prevented from taking full control of water resources planning and construction. The inference that Kemp and certain pro-development ministers had colluded to oust Lang was clear, but Lang and his supporters had underestimated the strength of Kemp’s position. They failed to acknowledge the difficulty of challenging the bureaucratic *status quo* and indeed, Hanlon’s commitment to a particular development strategy which reinforced it. In the end, Lang had neither the ability nor the political and administrative backing necessary to replace Kemp’s influence with his own.

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15 F. Nicklin, quoted in *Courier-Mail*, 17.11.1949.
On 1 October 1949, the renewed Meat Supply Agreement between Britain and Queensland came into effect. The following month the Commonwealth Parliament passed the *State Grants (Encouragement of Meat Production) Act* under which a generous subsidy was made available for infrastructure measures aimed at increasing beef production in the south-west “Channel Country.” Chifley had held off making any commitment until the Agreement was signed but subsequently supported the plan submitted to NADC to upgrade roads and provide watering and loading facilities on selected western stock routes. Commonweliith approval vindicated Kemp’s long-held stance that improving roads and stock facilities was the most efficient approach to development of the area. In December 1947, he had presented to the Lands Minister a report on the Channel Country compiled over eighteen months by the Bureau of Investigation, the recommendations of which were used to make the case through NADC for Commonwealth assistance. The investigation followed a new campaign by the Queensland, Northern Territory and New South Wales Governments for an inland strategic railway linking Bourke to Darwin, with connections to existing western Queensland railheads. At first glance, Kemp appeared to have departed from his customary advocacy of roads to recommend the railway’s construction as essential to the Channel Country’s development. However, further reading revealed that, within an overall endorsement of the need for adequate transport facilities, his real theme focused on the obstacles he believed put the proposal in doubt. Among them were engineering difficulties preventing the railway being constructed close to the major cattle fattening

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properties, the unavailability of the huge quantity of steel and rolling stock required and, most importantly, its economic feasibility. Giving a realistic assessment of the latter, he concluded; “the standing charges on the railway cost alone might well be greater than the total wealth produced” 18 Another section of the report presented the results of an investigation into a complex proposal for artificial flooding of the Cooper’s Creek catchment area. Lang was a member of the Bureau of Investigation at that time and subsequently argued that the proposal was one for which the Irrigation Commission should have responsibility. The report went to some lengths to show that the construction of permanent storage facilities on the major rivers and an estimated two to three hundred dams on their tributaries was not economically viable, requiring a capital investment of twenty-five million pounds which was unlikely to be recouped. 19

Although couched in terms of technical and feasibility assessments, the report’s conclusions left little doubt about the complete irrationality of the project. Nevertheless, Lang continued to endorse it as part of his state-wide water resources development plan, giving it prominence in his 1949 Report as Irrigation Commissioner 20 published shortly after his resignation.

In discussions throughout 1948 on northern Australia development, Chifley had refused to consider any further proposals for a trans-continental railway. Kemp’s 1947 report was brought forward as the basis for negotiations on some form of immediate Commonwealth funding assistance for the beef industry. As railway construction was not an option for some years to come, the way was clear for Commonwealth approval of

18 Bureau of Investigation, 1947, p.16.
19 Ibid, p.12.
20 Courier-Mail, 25.11.1949.
Kemp’s stock routes development plan. Evan Adermann, the Federal Country Party member representing south-west Queensland, was among the critics who claimed the three selected routes were badly chosen and a poor substitute for a railway but, by 1950, the first commercial road trains operating to the area proved the worth of the road plan. The railway lobby in Queensland was far from defeated and, in 1953, Kemp was asked to chair a committee to report to the Commonwealth Government on a proposed extension of the Great Northern Railway to assist the northern Australian cattle industry. On the basis that it must be a national project, the report recommended that the Commonwealth bear the cost of construction from Dajarra, then the major cattle trucking centre for the Gulf country and the Barkly Tableland, to Newcastle Waters in the Northern Territory. Queensland would build the line and provide rolling stock and on-going maintenance. At a time when the Commonwealth had all but lost interest in major investment in northern development, the report’s conclusion that the line would almost certainly lose money ensured the project’s defeat. On the other hand, the cost effectiveness of the developmental road plan was favourably assessed by Canberra during the 1950s and, in 1961, the Commonwealth Government approved a £200 million “Beef Cattle Roads” scheme. With its implementation, Kemp’s vision of contributing to the economic growth of remote regions by providing the cattle industry with adequate road transport infrastructure finally came to be realised.

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22 Courier-Mail, 26.10.1949.
There were other satisfying aspects to Kemp’s final years of public life, among them the completion of long-term projects for which he had the principal responsibility, and the conferring of a particularly significant honour. In May 1949, a visibly frail Premier presided over the opening ceremony of the University of Queensland’s St. Lucia campus. In the presence of such public figures associated with the St. Lucia project as the Chancellor and former Premier of Queensland, William Forgan Smith, and the Vice-Chancellor, J. D. Story, together with a protocol-conscious Senate, Kemp’s role in the proceedings was a minor one. Accorded a speech as Chairman of the Senate’s Building and Grounds Committee, his account of the origin of the St. Lucia site and the progress of the University’s construction was factual and dull. It lacked the usual flourish of visions of the future and scarcely reflected the initial battles fought on several fronts before construction began, or the scope of his responsibilities during nearly fifteen years as Chairman of the University Works Board. Nevertheless, the occasion became memorable when the student, whom circumstances had prevented from completing an engineering degree almost fifty years before, was admitted *honoris causa* to the degree of Master of Engineering.

At the same time, two University projects of particular importance to Kemp failed to proceed. By the early 1950s, it became clear that, despite persistent efforts to influence the relevant decision-makers and re-organise loan fund allocations, the case for construction of a new Engineering building at St. Lucia and the St. Lucia to West End Bridge lacked the necessary support. Before his death in 1945, Engineering faculty
head, Professor Roger Hawken, consulted with him on engineering requirements at St. Lucia, no doubt hoping that Kemp's influence would be productive. They also discussed curriculum changes to encourage Government departments and private sector organisations to provide training and employment for engineering students. However, the Science and Arts faculties continued to be given precedence, with the result that Engineering faculty offices and student facilities remained for many years at the George St. campus. Before Kemp resigned as Commissioner in 1949, Main Roads offered the first engineering cadetships, the conditions of which tended to reflect Kemp's own experience. Although some restrictions were later applied, trainees in the early 1950s were granted time off for lectures and some attended University full-time for the final two years of the course, in return for a period of bonded employment.²⁷

Kemp clung on to the idea of the St. Lucia Bridge, even though the lack of political support evident in difficulties with funding made its completion unlikely. The Senate's plan for the St. Lucia site had always specified construction of a bridge, for which Kemp had asked J. J. Bradfield to submit the original design. Although the bridge was excluded from overall funding provisions after Forgan Smith imposed a £500,000 ceiling on funding for the University and the Loan Council failed to approve loan allocations for the project, Kemp saw this as a minor setback. From the late 1930s, he proceeded to re-allocate small amounts from other Bureau of Industry projects for preliminary approach works at West End, which he arranged to be carried out in conjunction with approved works projects for both Breakfast Creek and Bowen Bridge.


²⁷ Personal interview, Sir Sydney Schubert, 17.5.2000.
Roads. Early in 1940, he was encouraged by Cabinet's approving his recommendation for funding the bridge's construction. This was based on an agreement he negotiated with Brisbane's Lord Mayor for the City Council to contribute one-fifth of the estimated cost of £225,000. By 1948, Kemp had to concede that the post-war shortage of materials would delay the bridge's construction for several years, but he did secure provision in the loan programme for work to commence the following year. In 1952, he reported in an optimistic vein on the design being finalised and the progress of negotiations with the Brisbane City Council regarding cost-sharing. As, by then, the estimated cost had tripled, it was not surprising that, given the Council's substantial works-related debt, the number of capital works projects vying for reduced loan funds, as well as Kemp's uncertain status with the Gair Government, support for the bridge evaporated. Kemp was obliged to admit defeat and made no further reference to the project in the Co-Ordinator-General's annual reports.

Somerset Dam, the first of the major dams built in Queensland, was completed in 1954. Kemp had been unable to avoid the site being closed down for the duration of the war and work did not start again until 1948. Then it became a matter of negotiating a way through the obstacles of post-war construction conditions to see the project through to completion virtually on budget. He also won important victories in relation to the Fitzroy and Burdekin River Bridges. As a result of specific local problems, compounded by the pressure of wartime traffic, both were in urgent need of replacement but had been

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28 Memo re St. Lucia Bridge, R.M.O. 310, QTA. (undated but margin note signed W. J. R. (Rogers) and dated 3.7.1946)
refused an A-1 priority rating by the National Works Council, as directed by the Department of the Army. Against this background, their completion was a tribute to Kemp's co-ordinating skills and his perseverance in the face of national political and bureaucratic opposition. In the case of the Fitzroy River Bridge at Rockhampton, the Treasurer, James Larcombe, who was MLA for Rockhampton, lent essential political support, but it was Kemp who negotiated the public finance avenues to secure Loan Council approval for the necessary debenture loan on which the granting of a Treasury subsidy depended. Even before the project had final State Government approval, he directed funds from Main Roads allocations\textsuperscript{31} for the commencement of preliminary work and, in what became standard practice, the Co-Ordinator-General's Bridge Branch acted on behalf of Main Roads to design and supervise the entire project.

In a move dictated largely by the shortage of engineers in both Main Roads and the Co-Ordinator-General department, but which also had the benefit of boosting local input, the Rockhampton City Council engineer was made responsible for the bridge's construction under overall Main Roads supervision,\textsuperscript{32} with the option of using day labour or contracting out the construction work. The struggle to secure construction materials finally won, the bridge was completed and officially opened on 27 September 1952. Kemp and Larcombe were among the guests who attended the official luncheon where the Mayor, declaring that "the Government was fortunate in having as its adviser on engineering projects so eminent an engineer as Sir John Kemp ..."\textsuperscript{33} acknowledged

\textsuperscript{31} See Memo, with Kemp's margin notes, Chief Accountant to Secretary, MRC, 23.4.1947, 253/2/6, R. M. O. 312, QTA; Larcombe to W. C. Ingram, MLA, 8.10.1948, 253/2/2, R.M.O. 312, QTA.


\textsuperscript{33} Opening of the Fitzroy Bridge, 27.9.1952, V. C. Gair, Papers, MS 6909, Folder 69, NLA.
Kemp's seven-year campaign for the bridge's construction. It was a particularly satisfying moment for Kemp at a time when his wife was seriously ill and when other project responsibilities were proving to be increasingly stressful.

Development of the central Queensland coalfields proved to be increasingly vulnerable to external influences. As strikes by southern coal miners escalated, the supply position in New South Wales and Victoria reached a crisis. The success of the Thiess brothers in securing Victorian interest in supplies of Callide coal spurred a renewal of Commonwealth interest in developing the coalfields. Discussions between Hanlon and the Prime Minister resulted in an inspection tour by R. G. Casey, then Minister for Northern Development, while further negotiations were undertaken through a joint Commonwealth-State Committee chaired by Kemp. By the time the ESC, through its nominee company, had abandoned the Blair Athol venture, the focus of immediate development had switched to the Callide field. To support the plan to supply the coal-starved southern States, Kemp had already secured extra Main Roads funding for improved road access to the port of Gladstone and had consulted with the Commissioner for Railways on the Premier’s preferred option of improving the Biloela-Rockhampton railway.\(^{34}\) However, progress on the plan was compromised by events on the national political stage. The Menzies-led Liberal-Country Party Government was in power, the miners’ strikes had become a struggle against the spread of communist influence, and the high cost of Callide coal could not compete with the Commonwealth arrangement to subsidise imported coal to deliver cheap supplies. Still confident that, once the

\[^{34}\textit{Ibid}, 1949, \text{p.17.}\]
communist influence on the mining industry was removed, coal requirements would again be met by the mines in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, the Commonwealth agreed to subsidise road and rail improvements to the more-easily accessible port of Gladstone in return for a small, annual tonnage of Callide coal.\(^{35}\)

Although the Blair Athol plan had failed and the Callide development seemed to have an uncertain future, Kemp proceeded to make full use of the Powell Duffryn consultants before their agreement with the Queensland Government expired in September 1950. Proposals on which they worked with the aim of enhancing the value of central Queensland’s coal resources were the establishment of a fertiliser industry, particularly to assist the expanding sugar industry, with Rockhampton nominated as the preferred site for a factory,\(^{36}\) and the production of oil from coal. Confirming Kemp’s own views, Powell Duffryn reported that production of liquid fuel was technically possible and recommended that an ammonium sulphate plant be established in conjunction with an “oil-from-coal” plant for the production of motor spirit. The report was referred to the Commonwealth Government for funding consideration as a defence measure,\(^{37}\) although the primary purpose was for the State to move towards self-sufficiency in this area. When the Commonwealth did not respond with any show of interest, the proposal lapsed, since Queensland was not prepared to proceed on its own.

\(^{35}\) Ibid, 1951, pp.15-16.


Attention to the central and north Queensland ports at this time derived from the need to provide facilities, not only for the promised expansion of traffic from the coalfields but also to handle the anticipated increase in sugar and meat exports to Britain. It was a situation in which natural resources development was contingent on adequate port facilities, while the projected export growth was used to bolster the case for increased port development funding. Hanlon had highlighted the significant role of ports in the overall plan for northern development he announced in May 1949 but with industrial unrest dominating waterfront activities, Harbour Boards remaining independent of central government control and the Commonwealth disinterested in subsidy proposals on a defence basis, much of the forward planning outlined was little more than wishful thinking. Although its recommendations for structural re-organisation were rejected at the time, Kemp's report represented the first practical attempt to address the outstanding problems of an area that, despite consensus on its importance, remained low on the State's list of works' priorities. Having bluntly told the Premier that the only alternative was to close the ports to shipping, he secured Cabinet approval to pay off the debt arrears for Bowen and Rockhampton, and for the Treasury loan subsidy scheme to be extended to the major Harbour Boards. By 1950, provision for State and debenture loan funding had more than trebled, with borrowing limits for the Harbour Boards raised for the first time since 1934. As the same list of scheduled works were repeated year after year with no appreciable progress, these gains still fell far short of what was required for viable port operations. Other factors were the backlog of post-war restoration and maintenance work to be addressed ahead of any new construction, plant

38 Kemp to Chief Secretary, 9.8.1945, Serial No. 925, p.3, SRS1158-1-4706, QSA.
and material shortages and, as an obviously frustrated Kemp complained, to the lack of technical staff and construction capacity which was also compromising his plans in other development areas.

Central and northern Harbour Boards were increasingly caught up in the competition against each other for the vital road and rail access to their hinterland districts. With its debts written off, the port of Rockhampton had been given another boost with the proposed fertiliser factory and link with further coalfields development. Gladstone had also been nominated as the transport outlet for the central coalfields and, after complaining about the preference given to Rockhampton, the Harbour Board was eventually granted a £100,000 loan subsidy for the construction of coal handling facilities. Meeting with Kemp to finalise design plans, Board representatives disclosed that they had been unable to find a firm willing to undertake the work. In a demonstration of the strength of his private sector business contacts, Kemp made one phone call which effectively resolved the matter. Bowen had a long history of being by-passed in the provision of major east-west transport links, although situated on a fine natural harbour. Reduced output from the State Coke Works, following the closure of the Chillagoe Smelters at the outbreak of war, had precipitated the financial crisis which led the Harbour Board to seek government assistance in 1945.

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39 Order-in-Council, 15.12.1949, SRS1158-1-4706, QSA.
41 Memo on matters the COG discussed with the Chairman and Secretary, Gladstone Harbour Board, 6.9.1950, SRS1158-1-4708, 7460/50, QSA.
42 Bowen Harbour Board to Co-Ordinator-General, enclosing Board’s Thirty-First Annual Report, 30.4.1945, and Bowen Chamber of Commerce to Co-Ordinator-General, 4.12.1945, SRS1158-1-4706, QSA.
coke output was one of the subjects listed for discussion at the August 1950 Brisbane conference between Hanlon and Casey, as Minister for Supply and National Development. Casey indicated Commonwealth interest in the Coke Works being developed using Collinsville coal, as one of two areas "that seem to have promise" in redressing the critical shortage of metallurgical coke throughout Australia. Kemp maintained the momentum by organising the appointment of a joint Commonwealth-State committee of experts in 1951 to study the proposal. Although the attempt to present Queensland's mineral production as a factor in resolving the national fuel crisis failed to secure a Commonwealth subsidy, Cabinet approved the committee's recommendations for improved working conditions and plant modifications. These proved successful to the extent that production was increased but the resulting stockpiles of coke failed to find a market. To reduce these stockpiles by using them to produce pig iron was behind a subsequent revival of the concept of a steelworks at Bowen. It had first been vigorously but unsuccessfully promoted as a State Enterprise in 1916 by the Ryan Government and, in the post-war period, was enthusiastically supported by Bowen business and union representatives. Approached by engineering firm, Hewson and Partners, which was seeking government approval to establish a private steel works, Kemp obtained Gair's consent to convene a small, interdepartmental committee to investigate the proposal. Seeing it as an opportunity for Queensland to gain even a small steel producing plant, the committee endorsed the proposal, contingent on iron ore

supplies being readily accessible.\textsuperscript{46} However, the iron ore deposits surveyed at Iron Range to the north were of poor quality and no other suitable deposits were located. It was the same problem that caused the Ryan Government in 1916 to propose shipping ore at enormous cost from Yampi Sound in Western Australia. Although the Bowen project was abandoned at the time, Kemp reported in 1953 that investigations were continuing. It was a popular Labor issue and remained on the State’s development agenda for the next four decades. Plans for port development at Bowen came to nothing and any expectation of future economic growth rested entirely on the Burdekin scheme going ahead.

In relation to north Queensland projects, the construction of the Burdekin River Bridge proved to be another complex undertaking but one that eventually had a successful outcome. First proposed in 1939, the project to replace the existing bridge with a new high-level structure to protect the north-south transport link from disruptive floods was finally completed in 1957. The first barrier to its construction was the negative assessment of its defence value by the Department of Defence which preferred the construction of an inland railway.\textsuperscript{47} Other factors contributing to the long delays included concerted political opposition to the overall Burdekin Irrigation Scheme, problems with finance relating to the Commonwealth’s refusal to subsidise the projects, and on-going industrial action encouraged largely by the scarcity of skilled workers. In his 1949 pre-election campaign, Hanlon emphasised the bridge’s importance to the

\textsuperscript{45} Memo, Kemp to Premier and Chief Secretary’s Department, 10.4.1952, and, 21.4.1952, Minute, Kemp to Chief Secretary, 3638/52, SRS1043-1-3028, QSA.

\textsuperscript{46} Minute, Kemp to Chief Secretary, 15.6.1953, Serial No. 3103, 4763/50, p.2, SRS1043-1-3028, QSA.
Government's overall plan for north Queensland development, with Cabinet support demonstrated by approval for the increasingly large project allocations Kemp recommended in the annual co-ordinated plan of works. While construction of the substructure proceeded under the competent supervision of Main Roads' Chief Engineer, D. J. Garland, Kemp's time was spent trying to resolve a range of management problems. From the commencement of the actual construction work in late 1947, there were frequent stand-offs between resident engineering staff and union representatives as the latter threatened stoppages to gain variations in the award rates. Demarcation disputes and allegations of communist infiltration of the site also had to be addressed as well as the problem of giving preference to unskilled returned servicemen in a district where there was already high unemployment. As with the Somerset Dam and Story Bridge projects, the shortage of skilled plant operators and the need to maintain permanent work gangs left Kemp with no alternative but to approve union representations for differential wage rates and increased allowances, to avoid the delays associated with contesting the claims. 48

When the Government's opponents declared the lack of progress to be tantamount to a broken election promise, Cabinet was sufficiently concerned to support Kemp against local business groups and the Federal Government in making good his threats to arrange for supplies of steel and cement from overseas. Official post-war policy at both Federal and State levels was to encourage secondary industry by restricting imports, while

47 For an overview of the role of the military authorities, see Kerr, op. cit., p.228.
48 See, for example, G. F. Parker, AWU organiser to T. B. Ryan, AWU District Secretary, 15.1.1947 (copy), R.M.O. 323, QTA; Kemp Memo re "Dispute between A. W. U. and Resident Engineer,
Brisbane firms, although lacking the capacity to meet the demand, had been awarded contracts to supply steel and cement for the major developmental projects. Moreover, interstate deliveries were reduced to a trickle, owing to the prolonged coal industry strikes, Federal control of allocations giving preference to southern states, and lack of shipping. There was no public outcry when, during 1950, an English firm was awarded the contract to supply the steel for fabrication of the bridge spans. In a politically adept move, the Government linked its approval for the importation of steel and cement for the bridge and other major projects with the importation of building materials to meet urgent housing, hospitals and local authorities' requirements. Whether or not this was Kemp's initiative is unclear since, while it helped to alleviate the supply crisis, it carried a high financial risk. As he reported:

It was necessary to exercise keen judgment in endeavouring to cope with the rise and fall of overseas markets, which, at times were subject to remarkable vicissitudes, resulting in the possibility of a gain or loss of thousands of pounds in one particular consignment.

His confidence in the technical skills of his engineers was rewarded when their innovative approach to a structural problem resulted in the first use in Australia of high-tensile bolts in fabricated steel structures. In the end, it proved impossible to make up the time lost on construction and the bridge was not completed until three years after Kemp retired in 1954.

Burdekin River Bridge”, 25.8.1949, Kemp to R. L. Murray, Under-Secretary, Treasury, August and September 1949, 254/6/4, R.M.O. 323, QTA.


Ibid.
In 1953, Kemp was given the responsibility of winding up the QBFC food production scheme at Peak Downs, although it was not until after his death in 1955 that the disposition of assets was finalised and the project formally terminated. Although Kemp was not personally singled out for criticism, inefficient, "top-heavy" administration was identified as a major factor in its failure.

From the first, the Opposition had reacted with hostility to the Peak Downs scheme. Under the enabling legislation, the powers of the QBFC included, in addition to conventional corporate provisions relating to land and contracts, the authority to borrow and lend money, and, "to do anything and to enter into any transaction ... which in their opinion, is calculated to facilitate the proper discharge of their functions or is incidental or conducive thereto" What was perceived to be an extraordinary generosity with delegated powers and an ill-considered investment of public funds provoked attacks by the scheme's many opponents both inside and outside Parliament. They played on prevailing public fears by characterising the scheme as "Communism in embryo - collective farming, which was a feature of the Soviet system" While there was no substance to the collectivist argument, it appeared that Labor was abandoning the small farmer in favour of a government corporation. Hanlon moved to distance himself and the Government from the Corporation's administration by emphasising its autonomy, with

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52 Penelope Rogers, "The 'Failure' of the Peak Downs Scheme", AJPH, 10, 1964, pp.74-75.
53 Queensland-British Food Production Act 1948, Section 12 (3).
54 Lack, op.cit., p.364.
the Deputy-Chairman clearly made responsible for advising the Government on internal management matters.\textsuperscript{55}

One aspect of the Co-Ordinator-General’s role that fuelled these criticisms was his responsibility for obtaining the building materials and agricultural machinery necessary to meet the stipulated production targets. As part of the initial negotiations, Plummer had obtained the Commonwealth Government’s guarantee of the required supplies being made available but, given the import shortfalls and competition with other States for Australian plant and machinery, making good the guarantee rested on Kemp’s negotiations with Federal regulatory bodies.\textsuperscript{56} While little in the way of building material was needed, the delivery of tractors and headers to Peak Downs was essential to begin cultivation. Hostile producer groups had derided Hanlon’s assurance that the Corporation’s orders for tractors would not compromise those already placed for Queensland farmers. Deciding to adopt a factual approach to the issue, Kemp told the president of the Queensland Grain Growers’ Association that just twenty-nine out of the six thousand tractors landed in Queensland in the previous four years were for the Corporation. Probably frustrated by what he believed to be unjustified criticism, he urged farmers to show some initiative in addressing the problem by following the Corporation’s lead and using the contract system.\textsuperscript{57} It was an impractical suggestion, but the whole issue was, in fact, a sore point with Kemp, since the Corporation’s tractors were not delivered in time to start the first season’s ploughing. In view of the shortages,

\textsuperscript{55} Hanlon to Maher, \textit{QPD}, 1948, 193, p.20.
\textsuperscript{56} Plummer to Strachey, \textit{op. cit.} See also, for example, \textit{Reports of the Co-ordinator-General}, 1948, p.12, 1951, p.6.
\textsuperscript{57} \textit{Townsville Daily Bulletin}, 10.5.1949.
he was fortunate to be able to contract out the work to Thiess Brothers, with whom he was then having discussions about the development of the nearby Blair Athol coalfield. Although their initial contact in relation to AWC projects had been less than cordial, Les Thiess was impressed by Kemp's diplomacy in acknowledging the difficulties Thiess faced as a contractor, and they had subsequently developed a mutually beneficial relationship.  

In January 1949, after the Premier returned from a convalescent holiday in New Zealand, Kemp arranged a meeting with Hanlon to report on the project "so dear to your heart." Despite the planting and harvesting failures of the first year, Kemp appeared to be buoyant about the scheme's future. Although there was resentment in other departments at his "poaching" of senior officers, Kemp proceeded to arrange their secondment to the Corporation, being particularly pleased at his success in securing, as general field manager at Capella, Charles MeKeon, the highly respected Director of Agriculture. There being virtually no improvements on the resumed properties, as Co-Ordinator-General, Kemp was authorised to utilise the resources of several departments, including Railways, Agriculture and Stock, and the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission, to address the problem of providing basic infrastructure and services within a very short timeframe. He relied heavily on the assistance of Main Roads' staff in areas that had nothing to do with roads, to the extent, it was said, that Main Roads virtually "ran the place." While making a point of commending the high level of departmental and staff co-operation, his observation to Hanlon that "... the managerial

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59 Kemp to Hanlon, 27.1.1949, QBFC, A/19968, QSA.
60 Don Young, Personal Interview, 28.3.2000.
team selected by me ... has worked together in magnificent fashion emulating the spirit of wartime\textsuperscript{61}, gave some indication of the intensive efforts required to achieve these gains. As had been his practice with major projects, Kemp commissioned studies by experts in a number of relevant fields, then followed them up by co-ordinating the establishment of a Scientific Committee, under his chairmanship, to plan on-going, experimental and research work. At this stage, Kemp appeared to accept the initial setbacks as to be expected with such a scheme. He remained confident that, before the end of the statutory seven year period, it would pass beyond the experimental stage to make a substantial contribution to agricultural practice, as well as closer settlement development in other marginal areas.

The project was already under way when the Corporation invited fresh controversy with the claim that it made commercial sense to graze cattle on the undeveloped properties and fatten them on sorghum stubble. The QBFC thus signalled its intention to move beyond the original intent of the Peak Downs scheme and establish a potentially more profitable cattle-fattening industry. To fund this move, Plummer chose not to ask Kemp to make a formal approach to the Premier. Instead he used a progress report he forwarded to Hanlon in March 1950 to propose an increase of £125,000 in the Government’s capital investment, to be matched by a proportionate increase in OFC funding.\textsuperscript{62} The Government’s agreement to the proposal was formalised in amending legislation brought before Parliament in November. It was an opportunity for the Opposition, led by Country Party leader and successful farmer, Frank Nicklin, to expand on the widely-held view that the unsound farming principles, on which the scheme was

\textsuperscript{61} Kemp to Hanlon, \textit{op.cit.}, p.2.
proceeding, guaranteed its failure. Making use of the familiar theme of socialistic enterprises, Nicklin set out the details of its shortcomings to date. No pig-meat or sorghum had been exported to Britain, crop production had not risen despite a good season and, while some cattle had been sold on the local market, no breeding programme had been established. He rejected the argument that the Corporation’s move into the cattle fattening industry, for which the extra funding was required, was based on a sound commercial decision. If, he concluded, the scheme was paying its way, it should be able to fund any expansion of its activities. Although praising the quality of the crops grown, other speakers questioned the need for such a high level of capital investment to test whether the Central Highlands was suitable for growing sorghum. They were in agreement that some of the initial, ill-conceived decisions were responses to the pressure to produce quick results, but went on to predict that the legacy of these decisions would be a continuation of unacceptably high production costs.

A second amendment provided for the Corporation to recover the value of its improvements or fixed assets in the event of the land being sold. Although its logic was not disputed, it opened the way for speculation that the British Government was preparing to withdraw from the scheme. Despite Hanlon’s denial at the time, subsequent developments affecting the OFC gave this view increasing credibility. Earlier in the year, Strachey was transferred from the Ministry of Food, Plummer resigned in June and was replaced as Chairman of both the OFC and QBFC by Sir

62 Plummer to Hanlon, 10.3.1950, QBFC, A/19968, QSA.
64 Ibid, p.1238.
Donald Perrott, at that time a deputy secretary in the Ministry. During 1951, after the Conservative Party was returned to government in Britain, support for OFC projects diminished, especially after the full extent of the failure of the East African scheme became known. The OFC was dissolved and its partnership with the Queensland Government transferred to the Ministry of Food. Debate on the necessary amending legislation in the British Parliament included complimentary references to the work of Kemp and his staff in managing the Queensland property. A similar amending bill was passed without debate in the Queensland Parliament.\(^5\)

In August, the scheme lost another of its early supporters after Hanlon became seriously ill and Treasurer, V. C. Gair, was named Acting Premier. Gair had endorsed the Government's investment in the scheme but, in the broader sense, he never matched Hanlon's dedication to the advancement of regional, agricultural development.\(^6\) It was not surprising that the Board's Annual Report published in September 1951 announced a reconsideration of the Corporation's aims. Even prior to the 1950-51 season, the Board had recognised that the all-out effort to meet production targets had weakened the Corporation's financial structure. It had not been possible to grow sorghum at an economical price, nor was the scheme likely to fulfil the aim of increasing food supplies. In the circumstances, the Board decided it would be prudent to abandon the original targets and give priority to securing the financial viability of the scheme.\(^7\) The Board appointed an Advisory Committee with an independent chairman to review the Corporation's operations. At a meeting held soon after Hanlon's death in January 1952,

\(^5\) Ibid, p.2132.
\(^7\) Memorandum from Sir Donald Perrott, 4.8.1952, QBFC, A/19968, QSA.
a memorandum presented by Kemp and Perrott was considered along with the results of the review. Although recommendations for changes with a view to the scheme’s continuation were favourably received, it appeared that the British members of the Board had already decided to terminate Britain’s involvement. Justification was couched in terms of the Corporation’s aims. The Board referred to its “mandate under the Act” to ensure that the Corporation operated within its means and declared it was not authorised to engage in “an experimental and developmental project”. Thus, to avoid further losses accruing to British and Queensland taxpayers, it recommended that the Corporation be liquidated.⁶⁸

The Queensland Government appointed its own committee of experts to examine the Board’s recommendations. Backing the suggestions for changes put forward by his managers, Kemp argued that the scheme’s capacity to recover from the initial setbacks had not been fully tested. Despite his opinion that, in the light of its many positive aspects, the scheme should be allowed to continue for the full seven years,⁶⁹ the Government agreed with the Board’s decision. As a result, R. L. Murray, former Board member and Under-Secretary of the Queensland Treasury met with his British counterpart in London to negotiate with Ministry of Food officials over the terms of liquidation. Under the “Heads Of Agreement” reached between the two Governments in January 1953, the Corporation was to be wound up as from 30 September 1952 and the British Government, on relinquishing all rights to the Corporation, was to be paid an

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⁶⁸ Overview of the activities of the QBFC, p.7, QBFC, A/19968, QSA. No date but probably compiled in preparation for the QBFC (Winding Up) Bill, December 1953.

⁶⁹ Rogers, op. cit., p.79.
agreed share of the value of the Corporation’s fixed assets. A schedule of repayments, the last of which was due in 1957, was also drawn up.

With the powers and functions already held by him as Co-Ordinator-General under the State Development and Public Works Organisation legislation, Kemp was the logical choice of the British Board members to manage and control the Corporation’s affairs during the winding-up period. It was, however, not an automatic choice for the Queensland Government as Kemp was approaching his seventieth birthday. His appointment as Co-Ordinator-General had been renewed on a three-year basis since January 1946 and, in September 1951, he had written to Gair, then Acting Premier, asking for some indication of the Government’s intentions regarding the re-appointment of himself and G. W Watson, the Deputy Co-Ordinator-General. Both were then past the official sixty-five year retirement age. Apparently uncertain of his standing with Gair, he declared his willingness “to continue in office if so desired”, and felt the need to add: “I would also like to remind you that I am also Deputy Chairman of the QBFC.”

Cabinet decided he would be subject to the same rules as judges and set his retirement date for 6 October 1953, his seventieth birthday. During these months, there was the further uncertainty of being detached from his comfortable organisational base in the Main Roads building in Albert Street. Following Hanlon’s request that the Co-Ordinator-General move to offices near him, Kemp’s administrative headquarters were moved to the Executive Building into rooms previously occupied by the Irrigation and

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70 “Heads of Agreement Reached During Negotiations between Officials of the United Kingdom and Queensland governments”, 8.1.1953, QBFC, A/19968, QSA.

71 Kemp to Gair, 6.9.1951, 8309/SRS-1-1043/1 B305, QSA.
Water Supply Commission.\textsuperscript{72} After Watson retired in December 1952, Gair refused to approve a replacement and directed that his duties be shared among other senior officials. Cabinet approval of Kemp’s suggestion that the Co-Ordinator-General’s Chief Engineer, James Holt, take over responsibility at this point for the co-ordinated plan of works\textsuperscript{73}, paved the way for Holt’s subsequent appointment as Co-Ordinator-General.

The Queensland Government’s priority during these years remained the securing of Commonwealth financial backing for the ambitious regional development projects on which so much of Hanlon’s 1949 election platform had been based. Labor was returned to government but the victory was tainted by a questionable electoral re-distribution\textsuperscript{74} and allegations of “pork-barrelling” in the allocation of high-cost projects. The election campaign had emphasised the co-operation between the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments in “pursuing a co-ordinated plan” for northern development under which priority was given to the provision of “adequate water, efficient transport and ample electric power”\textsuperscript{75} Hanlon’s claim that the Prime Minister had pledged his support for the north Queensland irrigation projects was met with a high degree of scepticism. In Parliament, his most vocal critics were the Brisbane-based Liberal Party representatives, who were pressuring the Government to give priority to secondary industry development, and Country Party representatives from the Darling Downs and Maranoa who wanted priority to be given to their districts’ small irrigation projects. They were

\textsuperscript{72} Minute from Public Service Commissioner to Secretary, Department of Public Works and Housing, 13.7.1951, 6215/SRS-1-1043/1, QSA.
\textsuperscript{73} Minute from Kemp to Chief Secretary, 6.1.1953. 275/ SRS-1-1043/1, QSA.
\textsuperscript{74} See Hughes, \textit{The Government of Queensland}, \textit{op. cit.}, pp.88-90; Knight, \textit{op. cit.}, pp.445-46.
\textsuperscript{75} \textit{Townsville Daily Bulletin}, 30.5.1949.
not diverted by Chifley’s subsequent confirmation of his assurances to Hanlon in 1948
and 1949 that, subject to a favorable report from Commonwealth investigating experts,
he would recommend a fifty per cent subsidy to his Cabinet,\(^\text{76}\) especially as the 1949
talks were held on the eve of the Federal election. In their view, providing for
Commonwealth representation on the newly-created Burdekin River Authority was
meaningless and, when Hanlon took the debate a step further by declaring his
Government’s commitment to carry out the projects, with or without Commonwealth
funding, they saw it as further evidence that the Government had lost its grip on
economic realities.

Queensland’s on-going efforts to enlist Commonwealth support suffered a severe
setback after the Liberal-Country Party coalition under the leadership of Robert Menzies
won government in December 1949. Chifley’s commitment to northern Australian
development had clearly waned since the immediate post-war years, but Menzies had no
interest at all in the concept of Commonwealth Government intervention in the region.
At his first Cabinet meeting on 20 December, he went ahead with Chifley’s plan to wind
up the Department of Post-War Reconstruction and combined two of its divisions in a
new Ministry of National Development. His appointment of R. G. Casey to this outer
Ministry gave some credence, according to Menzies’ biographer, A. W. Martin, to the
persistent rumours of leadership rivalry between the two men.\(^\text{77}\) Casey’s lack of
enthusiasm for his portfolio was offset by the “very able think-tank” he had inherited

\(^{76}\) Hanlon to Menzies, 5.4.1950, (copy, no top number) SRS-1-381, QSA; *Brisbane Telegraph*,
18.4.1950.

1999, p.130.
from the Labor administration, but the appointment of an Australian-born official
seconded from the British Treasury as head of the department clarified its policy
position. The interests of British investors were considered paramount. In view of the
warning issued by the United Kingdom High Commissioner in Canberra that
"developmental programmes were putting a strain on the Australia economy and
contributing to acute inflation"\(^{78}\), its function was to reject or, at the least, contain these
programmes.

By the early 1950s, as Martin points out Menzies was convinced that the threat of
international communism would escalate into a third world war. Australia would again
need to prepare its defences, and he made a promise to carry out the necessary measures
to place the country "on a semi-war footing"\(^{79}\). Queensland had persisted in presenting
its northern development projects to the Commonwealth in terms of their national
defence value but, if the Government had hoped for a favorable outcome from Menzies' views, it was to be disappointed. During the debate on the Tully Falls Hydro-Electricity
Project Bill in November 1950, Nicklin made the point that if Hanlon was serious in his
efforts to gain Commonwealth assistance, his continual public abuse of the Menzies
Government was inexplicable. In response, Hanlon revealed what he saw as the anti-
States stance of Menzies and Arthur Fadden, the newly-appointed Federal Treasurer,
who had now reneged on his pre-election support for north Queensland development. At
the Premiers Conference in August 1950, he said, the Prime Minister and Fadden tried to

\(^{78}\) Quoted in Martin, *ibid*, p.153.

stop the States from going ahead with development projects on the basis that all the money available on the loan market was needed for defence purposes.80

During this period, Hanlon had to contend not only with Commonwealth rejection and local political opposition to his state development plans but also with the unrelenting campaign by central and northern regional groups for the speedy implementation of the promised projects. Kemp was the official on whom he was increasingly dependent to chart a path through the political and technical obstacles towards the realisation of his aims. It may well have been that it was Kemp who convinced him that it could be done.

By this time, Kemp had survived the threat posed by Lang and his supporters, while Colin Clark’s influence as the Government’s principal economic adviser had waned. After Clark resigned as Director-General of the Department of Labour and Industry in 1952 and left Queensland, Kemp had no challengers for the position of the Government’s most influential adviser. For his part, Kemp’s looming retirement added to his determination to remain in control of carrying through the ambitiously planned engineering projects, the scope of which surpassed the earlier achievements of the Story Bridge and Somerset Dam. It was at this stage that the stories grew of Kemp dominating planning meetings with violent outbursts to get his own way, leading to later assessments that his use of the Co-Ordinator-General’s powers had become unduly coercive.81

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80 Tully Fall Hydro-Electricity Project Bill, Second Reading, 1950, QPD, 1950, 199, p.1516.

Signing it as both the Co-Ordinator-General and the Chairman of the Bureau of Investigation, Kemp submitted a report to the Premier on the Burdekin Irrigation, Hydro-Electricity and Flood Mitigation Project in August 1949. The report set out the Bureau’s investigations into the separate aspects of the scheme, the plans for its staged development and the predicted outcomes, and concluded with a recommendation that it be referred to the Commonwealth for funding consideration. It provided the basis for the talks between Chifley and Hanlon conducted outside the Premiers Conference in August which resulted in Hanlon’s claims of the Prime Minister’s support for the project. The immediate outcome was the appointment of a Commonwealth departmental committee to conduct further investigations and report on the feasibility of the project. It included representatives from the Treasury, the Regional Planning Division of the Department of Post-War Reconstruction and the Bureau of Agriculture and Economics and was headed by Dr. L. F. Loder, whom Kemp knew well. He had been Chairman of the Victorian Country Roads Board before taking over from E. G. Theodore as Director-General of the AWC in the last year of the war. He was then appointed Director-General of the new Department of Works and Housing and later assumed the responsibilities of the National Works Council Co-Ordinator.

Kemp was occupied not only with managing the Premier’s approaches to the Commonwealth but also with devising responses to allay the fears of the northern interest groups that the planned projects would come to nothing. Under the direction of Stephen Tully, MLA for Tully, local business, community, union and Labor Party

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branch representatives had written directly to Chifley to enlist his support, while maintaining the pressure on Hanlon to keep them informed about any progress in the Commonwealth-State negotiations.\textsuperscript{83} The Premier’s publicly expressed hopes for a positive outcome were not sufficient reassurance and, in March 1950, Kemp prepared a further statement accompanied by explanatory plans for Hanlon to distribute to all the north Queensland organisations. The message was positive, again emphasising the value of the Burdekin project in bringing new industries and increased population to the region. It also addressed the issue of continual delays by referring to the necessity of thorough preliminary investigations in view of the high costs involved,\textsuperscript{84} but also blaming the delays on the intransigence of the Menzies Government and, in particular, the negative role of Treasurer Arthur Fadden, then the Member for the Federal electorate of Herbert. As Hanlon wrote in a letter circulated to the northern groups, the Commonwealth Committee’s report completed in November 1949 was apparently only tabled in Federal Parliament in April 1950, “under pressure as to the attitude of the Federal Treasurer (Mr Fadden) and others towards the scheme”\textsuperscript{85} It was evident that representatives of both the Chifley and Menzies Governments used delaying tactics to avoid making any binding commitment to the Burdekin scheme while telling Hanlon that they were actively working towards an early decision.

In Opposition, Chifley stated that, after the Committee’s preliminary report had estimated the cost of the scheme at twenty-nine million pounds, he had asked Hanlon to have his engineers and technical officers prepare a detailed report on the proposals for

\textsuperscript{83} See, for example, S. Theodore to Hanlon, 6.7.1949, (copy, no top number) SRS1043-1-3012, QSA.

\textsuperscript{84} Kemp, draft statement for the Premier, 22.3.1950, (copy, no top number) SRS 1043-1-381, QSA.
further investigation by Commonwealth experts. According to newspaper articles at the
time, that report had not been received until twelve months later owing to the Co-
ordinator-General being occupied with the QBFC scheme. While Kemp was certainly
involved in establishing the scheme at that time, discrepancies in the scenario blaming
him for hindering the Commonwealth’s intention to proceed with a serious evaluation of
the Burdekin project raise doubts about the validity of the accusation. Kemp’s first
report, which Hanlon took to Canberra in August 1949, is ignored, while there is no
mention of the difficulty the Queensland Government experienced in obtaining copies of
the Commonwealth investigative committee’s report as well as subsequent notations
made by its members. In May, 1950, Kemp drafted a letter for the Premier to forward to
Menzies requesting copies of the report in order to evaluate the Commonwealth
Committee’s conclusions before he finalised an updated Queensland report for
publication. Even if he was attempting to retrieve a situation brought about by his
overloaded work schedule, it was still well short of twelve months since his first report
and the Commonwealth Committee’s report were completed. Menzies responded
politely to Hanlon’s aggressive representations during these months but refused to give
any undertaking of Commonwealth support. In July 1950, the Queensland Government
refused to wait any longer for his decision and decided on a commitment to the Burdekin

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85 Premier’s Department circular, signed by Hanlon, 13.6.1950, SRS 1043-1-381, QSA.
86 Brisbane Telegraph 18.4.1950; Courier-Mail, 19.4.1950.
87 Kemp to Under-Secretary, Chief Secretary’s Office, 11.5.1950, Serial Minute No. 2131, 3713/50,
SRS1043-1-381, QSA.

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project by announcing the proclamation of the *Burdekin River Development Act* 1949, Kemp having drafted a press statement to accompany the announcement.

In the same period, regional groups in the Cairns area were also exerting pressure on the Government to proceed with the promised Tully Falls Hydro-Electricity project. Kemp presented the project as the first stage in the development of a State electricity grid, to link up with the proposed Herbert River hydro-electricity facility, the Townsville steam-powered station and then to similar facilities in south-east Queensland. He retained overall control of the process of developing the project but was less involved on a day-to-day basis than he was with the Burdekin project. The SEC under Commissioner Neil Smith, in association with the Cairns Regional Electricity Board, was in overall charge of the project, while the detailed investigative and preliminary construction work was in the hands of Watson, the Deputy Co-ordinator-General, and James Holt, as acting Deputy Co-Ordinator-General. The investigative powers of the Co-Ordinator-General were delegated to a committee chaired by Nimmo which produced a report on the "Utilisation of Water Resources from the Tully River to the Herbert River." The report, submitted in November 1949 to Acting Premier Vince Gair, was signed by Kemp. It concluded with his recommendation for Cabinet approval of the project and for its administration to be delegated to a new authority, the Tully Falls Hydro-Electricity Board, to include representatives of the SEC, the Cairns Regional Electricity Board and the Co-Ordinator-General. As with the Burdekin report, Kemp’s advice was to make the

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88 Secretary, Co-Ordinator-General to Under-Secretary, Chief Secretary’s Office, 5.7.1950, 5362/50, SRS1043-1-381, QSA.

report widely available so as to ensure not only that all interested organisations were kept fully informed but also to substantiate the Government’s commitment to implementing the project. The following day, the SEC’s report on the Tully scheme, which made similar recommendations, was submitted to Gair. It was accompanied by a letter from W. Moore, Minister for Mines and Immigration, urging the Acting Premier to pass on the report immediately to the Co-Ordinator-General for his advice in order to expedite Cabinet approval.

Despite the backlash experienced over the Story Bridge financing and construction arrangements, the Government did not initially present the Tully project for Parliamentary approval. The project went ahead on the basis of an Order-in-Council giving effect to Cabinet’s approval of the appointment of the Tully Falls Hydro-Electricity Board and confirming the Co-Ordinator-General as the designated construction authority. However, separate legislation was necessary to provide a sound legal base for the delegation of this authority and to give the Co-Ordinator-General appropriate loan-raising powers, as discussions Kemp and Watson had with Treasury officials identified the importance of debenture financing for the project. With Cabinet eager to answer Townsville MLA Tom Aiken’s point that the hopes of “thousands of

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90 See Watson to Acting Chief Secretary, 14.12.1949, Serial Minute No. 2022, 10276/49, SRS 1043-1-2995, QSA.
91 W. Moore, Minister for Mines and Immigration, to Acting Premier Gair, 24.11.1949, 09882/49, SRS 1043-1-2995, QSA.
92 Petersen, Secretary, Co-Ordinator-General, to Commissioner N. Smith, 17.1.1950, 591/50, SRS 1043-1-2995, QSA.
93 Kemp to Chief Secretary, 20.2.1950, 01397/50, SRS 1043-1-2995, QSA; Kemp, Minute to Chief Secretary reporting on the First Meeting of the Tully Falls Hydro-Electricity Board on 27.3.1950, 17.4.1950, 2831/50, SRS1043-1-2995, QSA.
farmers of north Queensland" for the long-promised electricity supply rested on the
Tully hydro-electricity scheme, Kemp was able to consolidate the Co-Ordinator-
General's control over the project. At the same time, the organisation's technical
dominance was strengthened by the appointment of Nimmo, the acknowledged
hydrology expert, as professional consultant. Kemp himself made the public
announcement of the Government's decision to commence work on the first of the
project's seven stages, estimated to cost over seven and a half million pounds. Having
confirmed the imminent removal of plant, equipment and staff to Tully from the nearly-
completed Somerset Dam, he gained Cabinet approval for interim Treasury advances of
up to £200,000.

The planning of strategies to obtain a Commonwealth subsidy continued throughout this
period. Kemp had initially advised that each project should be presented separately to
the Commonwealth as being more effective than an overall, non-specific approach. He
gave priority to the presentation of the Burdekin project to the Commonwealth but, in
February 1950, admitted in a letter to the Premier that no useful purpose would be
served in waiting any longer for the Commonwealth's decision on the project. Hanlon
acted immediately on Kemp's suggestion that he now approach the Prime Minister
requesting a Commonwealth subsidy of one-third of the cost of the Tully Falls Hydro-
Electricity project, but Canberra failed to respond to any of his letters. With the next
Premiers Conference due in August, the Premier again asked Kemp to advise on the list

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95 Kemp, Minute to Chief Secretary, 17.4.1950, op. cit.; Tully Falls Hydro-Electricity Project Bill,
Second Reading, 1950, op. cit., p.1510.
96 Kemp to Chief Secretary, 1.2.1950, 00702/50, SRS1043-1-2995, QSA.
of development proposals to be placed on the conference agenda, although he
subsequently decided Queensland's interests would be better served by having private
discussions with the Prime Minister.

This course of action was pre-empted by Casey's arrival in Brisbane, accompanied by a
group of senior Commonwealth officials headed by Loder, now Director-General of the
Commonwealth Department of Works, for a conference with Hanlon and his senior
officials on 14 August. The conference was a watershed for Queensland's hopes of
Commonwealth financial participation in the designated projects. With only twenty-four
hours scheduled for the visit, however, Casey was in control of the outcome from the
start. While he acknowledged Queensland's wealth of "exploitable natural resources",
he set the terms of the discussion within a competitive framework by pointing out that
all six states had a programme of development projects for which they wanted
Commonwealth assistance. He deflected Hanlon's aggressive attempts to talk up the
national value of the projects by constantly referring back to his officials and their
doubts on the issue of economic viability. Although there was some support for the
Tully project, the overall message of the conference was the Commonwealth's concern
over the lack of firm data on anticipated returns, given the high level of capital
investment required, particularly for the Tully and Burdekin projects. Supported by
Nimmo's unchallenged technical expertise, Kemp spoke at length on the issue to reject
the inference that the projects were overly ambitious and unsoundly based, and also to
reinforce the need to view them as a whole. He referred to his experience as Chairman of
the 1936 Royal Commission on Electricity Supply in New Zealand to point out that the
hydro-electricity scheme there was considered "hopelessly over-capitalised" at the time
but the size of the market for cheap power had subsequently vindicated the initial
outlays. He pressed home the need to integrate irrigation with hydro-electricity
generation to avoid water “running to waste” and stressed that his plan to “get power as
we go”, so that “as we lift the dam we are continually making more land, more water
and more electric power available” would produce an economically feasible result.\textsuperscript{97}
While Kemp was able to counter Casey’s attempts to force some concessions in relation
to the Callide coal railway and Mareeba-Dimbulah schemes, the only positive aspect of
the conference was the Minister’s approval of the proposed beef roads scheme for south-
west Queensland.

Neither Casey’s visit nor the pressure Hanlon maintained in the following months
yielded any commitment on the Commonwealth’s behalf. The Tully Falls project, for
example, remained “under consideration” well into 1953, with Gair keeping up the flow
of direct correspondence with Menzies which Hanlon had initiated. In an urgent
telegram to Casey on 28 November 1950, Hanlon had explained that he wanted the
Commonwealth’s decision in order to make an announcement before his trip to London
to finalise the sugar agreement. Casey took a month to reply, expressing his regret that
he was still not in a position to give a decision. He was hopeful that reports on the
projects on which Loder and Kemp had been working would be presented to Cabinet in
the near future, but concluded that consideration of the Tully project would have to wait
on a decision on the Burdekin project. The proposal on the Bowen coke ovens was
shelved, although he held out some expectation of Commonwealth support for the

\textsuperscript{97} Report of Proceedings at Conference on Burdekin, Mareeba-Dimbulah, Tully, Coal Production and
Western Queensland roads, 14.8.1950, SRS1043-1-2995 (also on SRS1043-1-2996), QSA.

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Mareeba-Dimbulah irrigation project, consequent on the findings of an imminent report by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics on Tobacco Production.\(^98\)

In this way, the Menzies Government did not reject the major projects out of hand. It kept the Queensland Government's hopes alive throughout this period by persisting with the stance that Commonwealth officials were still assessing the proposals. Loder made several visits to Queensland to confer with Kemp on the Burdekin project and to persuade him to refine the data he was assembling to meet the Commonwealth's specific requirements. However, Kemp persisted in supplying a mass of detailed technical information in a determined effort to keep his original grand plan intact. He contended that, with Commonwealth backing and the employment of "overseas construction resources", a reduced section dam, together with a township, local roads, amenities and power, could be completed by 1955. To maximise the hydro-electric potential of the scheme, he considered the dam should be taken to the originally planned height of seventy-five feet by the end of 1957.\(^99\) While Loder was supportive, his colleague on the technical committee, J. G. Crawford, Director of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, favored irrigation works to expand local tobacco production while rejecting as uneconomic any Commonwealth investment on the Burdekin main dam. With this verdict, he ensured that "the dam scheme was dead"\(^100\). Although its future was decidedly uncertain, Kemp used the reports generated through the Burdekin River Authority to keep the project on the public works, and thus the political agenda. The Co-Ordinator-General effectively subsidised the on-going investigations and preliminary

\(^98\) Casey to Hanlon, Telegram 29.12.1950, 10603/50, SRS1043-1-381, QSA.

\(^99\) Kemp to Loder, 14.12.1950, (copy, no top number), SRS1043-1-381, QSA.

\(^100\) Kerr, \textit{op. cit.}, p.232.
work, with the expenditure allocated under the Co-Ordinated Plan of Works reaching just over two and a half million pounds in 1953. Armed with the Co-Ordinator-General’s statutory powers as a construction authority, he directed Hydraulic Branch staff to proceed to the preliminary design stage for the hydro-electricity and flood mitigation components, going so far as to have them prepare plans and specifications in readiness for tenders to be called for the construction of the controversial Burdekin Falls main dam.

Problems with the viability of the Clare Irrigation scheme did little to reassure the Commonwealth on the subject of the Burdekin project. A Soldier Settlement scheme, providing initially for forty-four irrigated farms for the production of tobacco, was a joint proposal between the Commonwealth and State War Service Land Settlement authorities, and implemented by Lang in his final months as Irrigation Commissioner. The LAB and the Co-Ordinator-General approved the scheme as an experimental or first stage within the overall Burdekin Valley irrigation development. Intent on expansion, the Lands Minister, Tom Foley, ignored the warning given by Kemp in his capacity as Chairman of the Burdekin River Authority only to receive the same advice when he consulted Nimmo. As Nimmo confirmed, it was unsafe to undertake expansion of the Clare area without providing more water storage and, even then, the cost of water for farming would be abnormally high. He then referred the Minister back to Kemp who, as Co-Ordinator-General, was negotiating with the Commonwealth War Service Land Settlement authority for funding support to commence work on a temporary storage dam

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which was eventually planned to be absorbed by the Burdekin dam. The Clare scheme was unusual in that settlers were given some training in farming and, before they took up the blocks, the Main Roads Commission built cottages and much of the tobacco processing plant. However, as with most other soldier settlement schemes throughout Australia, a range of factors contributed to poor production results at Clare and, by 1953, many of the settlers had abandoned their farms. There was public pressure for relief measures to be instituted and, in response to a request for advice from the Premier, Kemp recommended financial support provisions to be made available through the Agricultural Bank. Kemp used the lessons of the Clare scheme to shape his recommendations, which Cabinet approved, so that they were applicable not only to relieving the plight of the Clare settlers but also to avoiding similar difficulties in planning any new irrigation settlements in north Queensland. Cabinet was, by then, committed to allocating State-generated funds for the Clare, Burdekin and Tully projects, as well as a future commitment to the revised Mareeba-Dimbulah irrigation scheme, without receiving any confirmation of Commonwealth assistance.

Having waited in vain for a favorable decision from Casey, Hanlon had introduced the Tully Falls Hydro-Electricity Project Bill to Parliament on 24 November 1950. Kemp was responsible for drafting the enabling legislation, the purpose of which was to place the arrangements made under the previous Order-in-Council on a legal basis. Constraints on the Co-Ordinator-General acting as a construction authority included a requirement

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103 Nimmo to Foley, Report on Clare Irrigation Area, dated 28.2.1951, received 21.5.1951, 4256/51, SRS1043-1-2863, QSA.

104 For a detailed coverage of the Clare Irrigation Scheme, see Kerr, op. cit., pp.235-38.
for Cabinet approval for all tenders and major purchases and, somewhat ironically, given the accusations previously levelled at Kemp of commandeering all the available engineering expertise, for all senior engineer appointments. The Premier’s insistence that Queensland was capable of funding the project attracted immediate condemnation from Opposition members. Although some northern MLAs referred to the Barron Falls Hydro-Electricity scheme which, despite being commenced under a similar financial cloud, had been paid off within twenty years, Opposition leader, Frank Nicklin, rejected the Premier’s “heroic statements” concerning the State’s capacity to fund these massive development outlays solely through State-raised debenture loans.  

Once again, Kemp was placed under considerable pressure as the Government depended on him to retrieve its public standing by orchestrating some visible action on the much-vaunted projects. In some respects, there was nothing new in the scope of his responsibility as the major projects of the 1930s and the all-out defence construction programme during World War Two demonstrated. However, this time the scale of works was massive as was the capital investment required and, in contrast to World War Two, there was no Commonwealth financial backing. Finally, as the senior Government adviser and the principal enthusiast for a programme of development works unprecedented in Queensland history, he had the primary responsibility for its implementation. With the Tully project, Kemp could confidently leave the day-to-day operations administration to his own senior staff who were assisted by their counterparts in Main Roads. In contrast, realisation of the Burdekin scheme became his obsession.

105 Kemp, Chairman Burdekin River Authority, to Chief Secretary, 23.2.1953, Serial Minute No. B. R. A. 55 re “Finance and Development of Farms, Burdekin Area”, SRS1043 -1-2863 QSA.


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Kemp, Nimmo and Smith collaborated with senior technical officers in several departments to compile the comprehensive "Kemp" report on the Burdekin required by the Commonwealth, which was presented to Acting Premier Gair in December 1951.\textsuperscript{107} He forwarded copies of the report to any Federal politicians and officials he thought might support the project and sought them out for discussions whenever his work took him to Melbourne or Canberra.

One of those to whom he appealed was Sir Frederic Eggleston who had been an enthusiastic Minister for State Development in Victoria when the Country Roads Board and other semi-governmental authorities were first established. By this time, however, Eggleston had been badly bruised by his encounters with Sir John Monash in relation to the operations of Victoria's SEC. He now argued for these authorities to be brought back under central departmental control and viewed large-scale, high-cost public works projects as anathema to the business of government.\textsuperscript{108} Beginning with a complaint that the report "was so voluminous and so weighty that, being a sufferer from arthritis, I cannot handle it very well", he went on to dismiss Kemp's position on the Burdekin and forcefully reiterated the negative view of his projected figures for returns on the capital investment already recorded by Crawford and the other members of the Commonwealth technical committee.\textsuperscript{109} Kemp ably defended the report in his reply to Eggleston:

The Burdekin project is planned for implementation stage by stage. It will be developed so as to become revenue producing at the earliest possible date and to give production at all times commensurate with expenditure. Our estimates are based on a 30-year developmental programme but that can be accelerated or

\textsuperscript{107} J. R. Kemp, Report on the Burdekin River Irrigation, Hydro-Electric and Flood Mitigation Project, Burdekin River Authority, 19 December 1951.

\textsuperscript{108} Serle, \textit{op. cit.}, pp.450-51, p.509.

\textsuperscript{109} Eggleston to Kemp, 22.4.1953, Sir Frederic Eggleston, \textit{Papers}, Series 1, MS423/127a, pp.1-2, NLA.
retarded as necessary, according to the resources available and the demand for water for irrigation and for power.\textsuperscript{110}

His efforts at the national level were to no avail, particularly as the Menzies Government was still struggling with the threat of rising unemployment and inflation while attempting to maintain its commitment to increasing the defence budget. The Co-Ordinator-General's Annual Report for 1953 gave a very positive coverage of work in progress on both projects, recording a total of nearly two million pounds spent to date on the Tully works centred around construction of the Koombooloomba Dam.\textsuperscript{111} It glossed over the real situation, in which plans for the main Burdekin Dam were shelved indefinitely and the Tully project closed down through lack of funds to pay workers. The workers' angry reaction was widely reported and, in response, Kemp drafted a press release for Duggan, the central theme of which the Deputy-Premier expanded on in a letter to the Tully workers. Following the lead set by Forgan Smith and Hanlon, he cited the projected reduction in available loan funds as behind the prospect of the project being permanently closed down, while attacking the Commonwealth Government's failure to provide assistance "to keep men at work in this state."\textsuperscript{112} Despite the apparently irretrievable financial position, Kemp secured approval for an even higher loan allocation under the co-ordinated plan in 1954 for the Tully and Burdekin projects, thereby enabling work to continue on both of them. His involvement with the major development projects wound down towards the end of 1953 as the date of his official retirement drew closer.

\textsuperscript{110} Kemp to Eggleston, 15.6.1953, \textit{ibid}, p.2.

\textsuperscript{111} Annual Report of the Co-Ordinator-General, 1953, pp.10-17.
On 17 March 1953, the members of the QBFC Board resigned. Kemp’s appointment as liquidator of the Peak Downs scheme was acceptable to all Board members but, by early October, the matter was still not officially resolved. Kemp wrote to Gair that day ostensibly to mark his retirement, but actually to put the case for Cabinet confirmation of his appointment. It was almost a matter of him being reduced to begging, as he felt obliged to set out his many achievements during more than thirty years of public service in Queensland before asserting: “I am still in good health and feel my mental powers have not declined”.\(^\text{113}\) Almost as an afterthought, he raised the matter of the QBFC being without a manager after his retirement and indicated he was prepared to continue if the Government wanted him to do so.\(^\text{114}\) In the end, it was expediency that settled the matter, as it would have been too complex to establish alternative administrative arrangements for inclusion in the pending winding-up legislation. Kemp’s term as manager of the QBFC was extended for three months to the end of 1953. Following the passage of the Queensland-British Food Corporation (Winding Up) Bill through Parliament in December, the Government appointed him to constitute the corporation sole to be known as the Queensland Government Central Queensland Estates, which controlled the former Corporation’s assets. James Holt was appointed Acting Coordinator-General at the same time.\(^\text{115}\)

\(^\text{112}\) Duggan to A. J. Clausen, Hon. Secretary, Camp Committee, Tully Falls project, (copy, no top number) SRS1043-1-2996, QSA.

\(^\text{113}\) Kemp to Gair, 5.10.1953, 8136/ SRS1043/1, QSA.

\(^\text{114}\) Ibid.

The "winding up" legislation also outlined the plan adopted for the disposal of its assets, at the centre of which was the subdivision of the agricultural land into blocks of 4000 to 6000 acres to be held under closer settlement leases, the subdivision of the grazing land into grazing farms, and the sale at auction of all stock and improvements. The debate on the Bill covered much the same ground as in previous debates while confirming the validity of many of the objections raised in 1950. As Treasurer, Larcombe undertook an emotional defence of the scheme, but it was too simplistic of him to claim that the demand by Winston Churchill's anti-Labor Government for the scheme to be closed down, prevented failure being turned into success.\(^{116}\) For his part, Gair acknowledged the dedication of Kemp, Murray and other senior officials in carrying out a difficult undertaking. Bringing an often stormy debate to its conclusion, he offered the rather mild observation that:

\[\ldots\text{the objective was not entirely achieved and there were factors that contributed towards its non-success but the motive was an excellent one and the experience gained was very good.}\]\(^{117}\)

As liquidator, Kemp achieved a very satisfactory outcome for the Government. During 1953, he chaired a "Committee of Advice" of relevant departmental heads which met several times to ensure that production programmes were maintained, land titles and valuations confirmed, and the disposal of assets planned for the maximum possible return. Through the well-judged disposal programme that was established, the Government had all debts associated with the scheme cleared.

The criticisms made by H. W. Herbert in an article published in January 1954\(^{118}\) were, consequently, difficult for Kemp to accept. Perhaps as a reflection of his uncertain relationship with the Premier, he addressed his complaints to Foley, rather than to Gair.

In one of the few instances where he gave vent on paper to his well-known temper, he described Herbert’s claims as “malicious”, disloyal, and ill-informed, while declaring that:

If Mr Herbert, publishing information he acquired as an officer of the Corporation is trusting to his memory, he might be excused but as an officer of the Corporation, he indicates a hostility which, if it existed during his period of employment, would not have assisted in efficient direction of such matters as he was required to attend to ... ...

He ended this highly personal attack with the view that:

The slur cast on the Board by an ex-officer who, whilst he had many excellent qualifications, had not succeeded in his own effort at practical farming, can only be described as presumptuous.\(^{119}\)

Herbert’s analysis of the reasons behind the scheme’s failure was, with few exceptions, uncritically adopted by later commentators. He placed considerable emphasis on deficiencies in management, among which were a “top-heavy”, costly management structure, centralised decision-making and lack of expert input into management decisions.\(^{120}\) Kemp rightly rejected some of these claims as misrepresenting the management situation. However, there was some justification for Herbert’s opinion that

\(^{117}\) Ibid, p.1712.


\(^{119}\) Kemp to Foley, “Notes for the Minister’s information, 21.1.1954, QBFC, A/19973, QSA.

\(^{120}\) Herbert, *op. cit.*
the organisational structure, which had for many years delivered results for Kemp across a range of works projects, was inappropriate and, as such, a contributing factor to the scheme's failure. Whether the management problem was the result of external pressures and Kemp's pre-occupation with the many other development projects then being negotiated, or whether, although Herbert did not name him directly, the fault lay with Kemp's particular administrative style, remained at issue.

There was little doubt that, faced with the urgency of commencing the Peak Downs scheme as well as keeping up with his other project responsibilities, Kemp relied on the organisational system, tested over the years with Main Roads and used increasingly in the work of the Co-Ordinator-General. He also had confidence in his team of managers and the experts, well-established in their specialist fields, whom he arranged to have seconded to the Corporation. Dissatisfaction among the staff became apparent after the initial period of intense activity, when they began to settle into routine yet had to deal with the scheme's emerging problems. The highly-centralised, decision-making structure, under which all decisions were referred through Rogers to Kemp, did not allow the flexibility required to respond quickly and effectively to situations at the local level. At the same time, most of the staff continued to work in the dedicated way that drew so many public tributes. Herbert's resentment may have stemmed from a lack of administrative authority. He was responsible for preparing the valuations for property acquisitions and, although expecting a senior management position, he remained as an assistant manager under Rogers. G. W. Calder was another manager who was publicly critical of the scheme's management. A civil engineer and barrister who had been on the MRC staff, Calder was appointed field manager at Capella in November 1949. The first manager, W. J. Young, died of a heart attack after being warned by doctors not to return.
to Peak Downs as the situation had become too stressful for him. He had been with Main Roads since the 1920s, served as the AWC’s Engineer Liaison Officer with the military authorities in Queensland and, following his appointment as Queensland’s first Housing Commissioner after the war, was seconded to Peak Downs. Calder was also seconded from his position as Chief Engineer, Department of Harbours and Marine.\textsuperscript{121} Twelve months later, as the first indications appeared that the scheme might not proceed, he cited “top heavy management” as his reason for resigning to become the new general manager for Thiess Brothers.\textsuperscript{122} The managers and agricultural advisers who stayed on chose to air their concerns in consultation with Kemp. After nearly two years’ experience, they were better-equipped to assess what changes were needed. The delegation of decision-making powers to the Corporation’s regional and local offices and simplified accounting procedures\textsuperscript{123} were among their recommendations which Kemp presented to the Board’s review committee. Some of them were already in operation when the decision was made to terminate the scheme.

The 1952 report of the Board’s Advisory Committee effectively absolved the Queensland management from any blame for the scheme’s difficulties. It concluded that they arose from the Board having to address two problems simultaneously. The first was to grow a new type of crop in a marginal rainfall area previously untested for agricultural development, while the second was to establish a farming system on a scale never before attempted in Australia. In the Committee’s view, the initial targets were never achievable. The efforts to meet them not only meant a “heavy load” for the

\textsuperscript{121} Fourth Report of the QBFC, 1950-51, QBFC, A/19973, QSA; North Queensland Register, 10.9.1949.

\textsuperscript{122} Priest, op. cit., p.110.

\textsuperscript{123} Rogers, op. cit., p.78.
Corporation's senior executives but no time for the process of trial and error required to
develop "an economic model of production". What may have been implied but
remained unstated was the adverse effect of the requirement to refer all operational
decisions to the British Board members for approval. Although, under the initial 1948
intergovernmental agreement, they determined policy matters while delegating authority
over the scheme's operations to Kemp, in reality he was obliged to wait on their consent
to every operational proposal. When Kemp was negotiating with owners over property
acquisitions during 1949, there were expensive delays, with daily telegrams going back
and forth, before Kemp finally persuaded the Chairman to approve his proposals.

Herbert had taken to London a "very candid report" on the scheme's viability in the
wake of the first season's disastrous production figures and Kemp was under constant
pressure during those months to demonstrate the positive results needed to reassure the

In October 1949, the announcement that, owing to his deteriorating health, doctors had
ordered Kemp to take three months rest, went on to confirm that he was not only
continuing as head of the Corporation but also maintaining a full work load. Two
months later, he retired as Main Roads Commissioner in order to devote his energies to
his other public responsibilities. Kemp's health problems, which had first become
serious in 1947, raise questions about his capacity to maintain the administrative
dominance and consequent effectiveness to which everyone had become accustomed.

125 See, for example, Correspondence during June and July 1949, Kemp to W. J. Seawright, owner of
Bramber Downs, QBFC, A/19973, QSA.
126 Kemp to Rosa, OFC, Weekly telephone report, 19.7.1949, A/19973, QSA.
They may have provided an explanation for his reliance on a familiar yet, in this instance, inappropriate management structure. If his position of absolute organisational authority was weakened, it would have affected the system of delegation dependent on his legendary short lines of control and contributed to the unusual situation of managers going public with their complaints. His personal attack on Herbert displayed an uncharacteristic lapse in judgement when he contrasted Herbert’s failure as a farmer with his own success as a grain grower in Victoria. This reference to the Mallee wheat farm he worked with his father before 1920, and another reference to his contribution in 1932 to the expansion of wheat growing on the western Darling Downs, were inappropriate attempts to establish himself as a grain production expert.128

In the crucial period when the scheme was being reviewed to determine its future, Kemp may well have lost the forceful edge that had carried him successfully through many similar situations. By then he was becoming “yesterday’s man”, a senior official who had commanded considerable power but who was now reaching the end of his public career. As political power passed to new leaders, he no longer enjoyed the same level of confidence or even respect as had been evident when Hanlon was Premier. At his prime, when it came to a decision on the future of the Peak Downs scheme, Kemp would have persuaded the Queensland Government with a strong case for its continuation for the full, seven-year term. In its 1952 report, the Advisory Committee proposed a simple explanation for the perceived failure. It stated that, in hindsight, the Board’s mistake was to proceed with the original plan as approved by the British and Queensland

127 *Courier-Mail*, 4.10.1949.
128 Kemp to Foley, 21.1.1954, p.3., A/19973, QSA.
Governments. At the time, Kemp was unlikely to have had doubts about proceeding with the scheme or, indeed, about his organisation’s capacity to carry out the OFC’s plan, and would have advised Hanlon accordingly. He was accustomed to working on projects with high initial costs, establishment problems and long lead times before they started to show some return in terms of public benefit. As he had said in a public address at the time, early setbacks were to be expected and the scheme’s potential benefit to agricultural development in Queensland warranted a substantial capital investment. It was ironic that, despite its apparent failure and the general endorsement of Herbert’s criticisms, all costs were recovered. Private sector stalwarts such as the Thiess brothers and future Coalition Government Treasurer, Liberal Leader Thomas Hiley, regarded the Peak Downs scheme as worthwhile and, in the long term, successful in opening up the Central Highlands for private enterprise.

Kemp’s belief in the benefits the scheme represented for the district never wavered as evident from a report he submitted to the Premier just prior to his death in February 1955. After outlining his efforts to obtain the best sale price for the Corporation’s cattle, he was still looking to the future in noting that, “with the wonderful rains recently received, our pasture and water position has been strengthened” Rogers has suggested that without the British Government’s financial involvement the scheme would not have gone ahead. While this is largely self-evident, with the size of the British investment ensuring the adoption of the OFC’s plan, there was a wider background to the

130 J. R. Kemp, Address to United Services at Victoria Barracks, op. cit., QSA.
131 Priest, op. cit., p.110; see also Killin, op. cit., p.65.
132 Kemp to Gair, 24.2.1955, QBFC, A/19968, QSA.
Queensland Government's decision to proceed with what was always going to be an experiment. While it was outside the terms of reference of the NADC, the Peak Downs scheme embodied the Queensland Government’s commitment, backed by development-oriented departments such as the Co-Ordinator-General, to investigating and utilising all likely avenues for financing natural resources development. There has been equally compelling evidence that, without his administrative skills, technocratic orientation and obsessive dedication to the realisation of his own vision, the groundwork for Queensland’s escalated rate of economic development over the succeeding decades would not have been laid.

That the working relationship forged between Hanlon and Kemp was based on achieving shared goals was illustrated in the foreword Kemp wrote to the report on the Burdekin project which he presented to Acting Premier Gair in December 1951.

The unwavering faith of the Hon. The Premier, Mr E. M. Hanlon, M. L. A., in this and other highly developmental projects in Queensland has made possible the essential work of investigation and research in regard to both the engineering and production problems.\(^{133}\)

Kemp’s tribute was also to be a farewell as Hanlon, who had virtually retired from politics, died two months later. When the Premier became seriously ill early in 1951, he had encouraged Cabinet to put aside Labor’s traditional aversion to imperial honours and nominate Kemp for a knighthood. In the Queensland Honours List published in June that year, Kemp took his place alongside Federal Treasurer Arthur Fadden as the only Queenslanders on the list.\(^{134}\) Shortly afterwards, he was accepted as a member of the conservative Queensland Club. By the end of 1952, however, he had suffered serious

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\(^{133}\) Kemp, Report on the Burdekin project, *op. cit.*, Foreword.

\(^{134}\) *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, 7.5.1951.

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setbacks in both his personal and professional lives. He did not enjoy the confidence of Gair, the new Premier, while a clearly ambitious Foley, with Irrigation added to his ministerial responsibilities, preferred to consult directly with Irrigation Commissioner Nimmo.

In October, after the death of Iva, his wife of forty years, Kemp’s health broke down and it was several months before he was fully recovered. While he had retained his position as Co-Ordinator-General throughout 1954 solely for the purposes of the Peak Downs scheme, Cabinet lost little time in approving measures aimed at undermining the Co-Ordinator-General’s administrative independence. In October 1954, when he was in Melbourne for his marriage to Annie Tullock, his former secretary, Gair piloted an amending Bill through Parliament to give permanent operation to the *State Development and Public Works Organisation Acts* in place of the previous, seven-year, renewable periods. The legislation also took the first step towards bringing the Co-Ordinator-General under the operations of the Public Service Board by deleting the provision whereby both the Co-Ordinator-General and the Deputy Co-Ordinator-General held office at the pleasure of Parliament. To broaden control over the co-ordination of public works, the State Development and Public Works Organisation Council was established, comprising the Premier, the Deputy Premier, the Treasurer, and the Minister for Lands and Irrigation. The Council was supported by an Advisory Committee of senior officials, chaired by the Co-Ordinator-General. Other members were the Public Service Commissioner, the Irrigation and Water Supply Commissioner, Electricity Supply Commissioner and the Under-Secretaries of the Departments of Treasury, and
Given Kemp's long-standing competition with the Railways Commissioner and the Lands Administration Board Chairman to influence decisions on the direction of developmental planning, it was perhaps surprising that they were not members of the committee.

Kemp died in February 1955. As the honours they awarded him confirmed, he had won the respect of his professional peers, while, in Queensland, he was characterised as "the state's busiest man", the beneficent public official who had worked tirelessly, and at great personal cost, in the public interest. It was a friendly journalist, sketching the elements of his personality, who probably came closest to identifying the attributes that made Kemp so successful in persuading people to endorse his views:

Sir John Kemp is a shy man who says little, and says it softly but firmly. He sucks his pipe and thinks a lot. But when he gets on to some of his favourite schemes, such as the Peak Downs food project or the development of Central Queensland, as "the Ruhr of Queensland", he can be more than eloquent.\(^{137}\)

\(^{135}\) Sultzer, Winterthur & Cie, Switzerland, to Kemp, handwritten letter, 11.11.1952, SRS1158-1-56, QSA.


\(^{137}\) Summers, "Sir John Kemp", op. cit.
CONCLUSION

If any confirmation is needed of the extent of Kemp's administrative power and the bi-partisan fear that, in him, Labor had indeed created an administrative dictator, it lies in the speed with which the government of the day moved in 1949 and again in 1954 to bring the Main Roads Commission and the Co-Ordinator-General under parliamentary control. It is a moot point whether or not these moves would have succeeded if attempted several years earlier, before age and ill-health blunted his competitive edge. At the time they occurred, they were inevitable, reflecting the reality of Kemp's situation, as well as changes in the political climate and in popular perceptions of his effectiveness. In short, Kemp had had his day, and circumstances dictated new participants, as well as new conflicts and alliances, in the decision-making process to take advantage of the prospect of a redistribution of administrative power.

There were certainly politicians and officials who, backed by their respective client interest groups, had been competing to expand their influence in Queensland's developmental policy process. Over more than twenty years, Kemp had led the competition, progressively outmanoeuvring both entrenched and new challengers, to become the administrative gateway to decision-making on the overall direction and selection of public works and infrastructure development projects. Moreover, his vision of rationally-planned public works development programs that delivered economic and social benefits was adopted and realised by later governments, with the principal organisations he had founded and consolidated retaining a decisive role in the current developmental policy process. Even after the exercise of ministerial responsibility was ostensibly strengthened and a change of government in 1957
promised a change in ideological focus, the empire of organisation-based influence Kemp had built was not broken up, nor has the range of statutory powers delegated to the heads of the organisations been revoked. During the Bjelke-Petersen government’s years in office, the Co-Ordinator-General remained an important instrument for the delivery of the large-scale infrastructure projects which characterised the Government’s development orientation. The majority of them were initiated under previous Labor governments and, as they represented the central pillar of Kemp’s vision for the State’s economic development, he battled against considerable opposition to have work on them commenced and their funding continued.

After the subsequent fragmentation of its design and construction expertise, the Co-Ordinator-General’s department survived the trend towards replacing the technical specialist with the managerial specialist through the recruitment of senior officials with credentials in both streams. The promotion ceiling imposed on professionals in the Queensland public service had obliged many of them to gain generalist/managerial qualifications in order for them to move across to the administrative division and thus be eligible for the most senior appointments. In apparent confirmation of Taylor’s contention of seventy years ago that engineers epitomised the value of scientific management in the advancement of industrial (and post-industrial) societies, engineers more than other professionals have been appointed to managerial positions in a variety of functional areas. With a flatter administrative structure and a functional emphasis on investigation, assessment and co-ordination, the Co-Ordinator-General as a bureaucratic organisation was revived as a ministerial power base and, as the Department of State Development, has a
central, enabling role in the current Labor Government’s new round of public works and resources-based development plans.

As for Main Roads, Kemp’s other organisational base, in the late 1990s, a generalist administrator replaced an engineer as head of the department for the first time since its establishment in 1920. However, after short-lived attempts to subsume its semi-independent status within broader departmental groupings, Main Roads retains the dominant role in the administration of the state’s roads policy and continues its involvement in Co-Ordinator-General projects. Although railways and air services are important components of the state’s transport network, they remain secondary to roads and road transport, while the political importance of roads’ policies has been reinforced by the perceived influence of community opposition to policy decisions on recent state election outcomes.

Roads were Kemp’s entry into Queensland developmental issues. He was given the responsibility of bringing order to the chaos that characterised Queensland’s roads administration in 1920 by implementing the Country Roads Board model with which he was familiar. He had the political support necessary to secure legislative backing, as well as support from the many primary producers for whom the railways had failed to provide the transport services they were promised. However, the decisive plan of action he espoused, which passed rationally but lightly over a formidable range of obstacles, was greeted with scepticism and, indeed, its failure was widely anticipated. In the circumstances, the newcomer to Queensland, clearly ignorant of the barriers in the way of its development, might have been dismissed as irrelevant but the path of development Kemp represented provoked opposition from both politicians and officials. What was crucial to his future was his ability to demonstrate official neutrality and to manage the political opposition arising from competing
ministerial interests, constituency demands, entrenched developmental policy which
cfavoured the railways and agricultural and mining expansion, and the Labor
Government's symbiotic relationship with the labour movement. The opposition
from career officials derived from the necessity to support the policy status quo in
order to protect themselves and the organisations they headed from any threatened
redistribution of administrative influence.

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, Kemp expanded his vision to encompass planning
for Queensland's overall economic development, refining the details of its
implementation and presenting it in every public forum available to him. His
prominent role in the massive wartime works program, the completion of which
confounded critics in the Melbourne-based defence works planning authorities and
stirred Queensland's nationalistic pride, made Kemp an unusual local hero. The
number of his detractors increased in the heady climate of post-war reconstruction,
with his large-scale regional developmental proposals considered to be financially
unsustainable and discriminatory in their application, while giving him an
unprecedented level of power without responsibility. He was an easy target for
accusations that he was suffering from "gigantomania", or excluding all other
considerations to build monuments to engineering excellence, although the success
of an engineer's career has always been judged by the calibre of the construction
projects with which he has been associated.

There is no doubt Kemp was impressed by the large-scale infrastructure projects he
saw in operation on his 1938 overseas tour. In the Scandinavian countries he visited,
with similarly daunting demographic and geo-physical problems as Australia faced,
the goal of economic development was being successfully addressed through a high
level of government investment in transport infrastructure and major, hydro-
electricity projects. As with the projects he inspected in Canada and the United States, he saw them as proof that technical innovation and engineering excellence delivered public benefits on a national scale. The regional development programs in the United States had the most obvious and lasting influence on him. The plan he favoured for north Queensland development might have been inspired by J. J. Bradfield’s revolutionary “inland rivers” scheme, but the detailed proposals for construction of the Burdekin Dam and associated development of the Burdekin catchment area were modelled on the United States’ regional development programs facilitated by the construction of massive, environment-altering dams. These programs were commenced as unemployment relief works, adding to Kemp’s conviction that the outcomes of large-scale, government-sponsored developmental planning made a crucial contribution to the public interest. He had an unshakeable confidence in Queensland’s engineers, never doubting their capacity to undertake the similarly vast construction projects on which the realisation of his proposals depended. While his approach gave civil engineers and technocratic organisations the critical role in the enabling process, it departed from the accepted stereotype of the engineer’s “mechanistic” approach to problem solving in demonstrating a comprehensive appreciation of the State’s socio-economic circumstances.

In accounting for Kemp’s rise to administrative power, some significance can be attached to his personal attributes and the effect of their application to his professional responsibilities. As with so many of the opportunists before and after him, Kemp came to Queensland to further his personal and professional ambitions. From the first, his career path lay in public service, not in private industry and, although he readily absorbed the technical training and ethos of his profession, he
was never going to be anything more than a journeyman engineer. In accepting an appointment as shire engineer in a marginal farming area, he conceded the reality of employment options for young engineers who did not have the backing of university qualifications, business connections or outstanding design skills. However, the personal skills that contributed to his achieving a position of administrative influence in Queensland were already being demonstrated and, even when exercised in the context of a small rural shire, conformed to the theoretical model of professional-technocratic characteristics. At Karkarooc, he evinced a self-confidence that enabled him to expand his shire activities into areas that were beyond his technical competence and experience. He revealed a talent for organisation and management, had effective communication skills, and was highly motivated to achieve operational goals which might or might not have been set by his employers. Moreover, when trying to obtain State Government co-operation on shire works proposals, he learnt the value of direct consultation supported by well-researched technical data. Impatient with inefficiency and inaction, he held to the conviction that engineering and technological innovation held the solutions to the shire’s economic problems. However, his obvious ambition to take on more exacting responsibilities did not sit well with the Karkarooc councillors but he found absorbing new challenges in his position with the Country Roads Board where wartime staff shortages meant a rapid promotion to senior engineer. Although he appeared to be risking his career prospects in Victoria by moving to Queensland, Kemp was realistic enough to know that further promotion would be slow in coming, given the competition he faced from more highly qualified and experienced roads engineers in Victoria’s relatively closed professional circles. It is a matter for conjecture whether the Queensland Government representatives wanted what they thought was a relatively unimportant,
and thus malleable engineer, for the appointment, or whether they preferred a man whose self-confidence and enthusiasm for new challenges made him more likely to succeed in what, by any measure, was a daunting undertaking.

The attributes and influential life events that shaped Kemp's "administrative style" largely predated his arrival in Queensland. Since they were essentially similar to those commonly associated with powerful businessmen or bureaucrats, "administrative style" on its own does not explain why, as an individual, he acquired and exercised administrative power. Kemp can be identified with the theoretical model of a technocrat exercising technobureaucratic power. He was a member of a professional elite which was distinguished by a particular professional ideology and which commanded social status and respect by virtue of controlling information and skills considered indispensable to society. His career also confirmed organisation and organisational position as sources of technobureaucratic power. Technocratic values and goals were synonymous with organisational goals and, since the organisations were established for specific technical purposes, their administration was dominated by technical specialists. In addition, the delegation of discretionary powers was predicated on superior expertise, together with the impartiality conferred by professional values and a rational-technical basis for decision-making. These factors also allowed the organisations and Kemp, as their administrative head, to institute a coercive authority based on dependence over other participants in the particular functional area.

What has been undervalued is the importance of Main Roads in establishing Kemp's right to a place in Queensland's developmental decision-making process and enabling him to discharge his ambitious range of administrative responsibilities. Main Roads
was his administrative and operational base. Effectively self-funded, its operations demonstrated Kemp's capacity to plan and implement works programs in the face of unforeseen circumstances, while fulfilling public expectations of political independence. The organisation was his entrée to a mutually beneficial relationship with local authority representatives. Its regional operations and liaison network provided the structural base on which the continuation of Federal roads funding was dependent and gave Kemp his first important role in Federal-State financial relations.

In all his areas of responsibility, Main Roads provided administrative support services and, in addition to construction and supervisory work, the highly-skilled technical staff was used to undertake preliminary investigative studies on major infrastructure projects. The organisation provided a professional training ground for engineers and a consequent dissemination of professional standards and values, particularly at the local government level. Moreover, by the 1940s, the Main Roads Commissioner's statutory powers were surprisingly comprehensive and, although their application was confined to a specific functional area, they included regulatory, investigative, coercive and co-ordinating powers. The ultimate proof of its value to Kemp was its record of achievements in relation to Queensland's wartime defence works since, without the organisation, his successful implementation of the works program would have been impossible.

The Bureau of Industry clearly represented a source of power for Kemp as it enabled him to move beyond the relatively narrow field of transport administration. It provided lasting monuments to his technocratic skills, as did the Allied Council's Queensland operations, while consolidating his status in political and professional circles. However, if Main Roads has been under-valued as a source of administrative power, the Co-Ordinator-General has been relatively over-valued. Theoretically, the
position carried delegated powers that represented an unprecedented concentration of administrative power in one official but the reality of their application produced a lesser outcome. The essence of the concept of the Co-Ordinator-General was the efficiency of centralised, forward planning of the public works and developmental programs which Forgan Smith and Hanlon endorsed as the key to productive economic development. It is not surprising that the concept failed to win popular support. Its implementation threatened the independence of local government, compromised the expectation of immediate, and thus politically important gains and, given the convention of three-year terms of office, demanded a commitment of executive government confidence. The powers of co-ordination formally delegated to Kemp should have enabled him to control the planning activities of all government agencies and local authorities but compliance and co-operation levels remained problematical, with his goals often competing with the goals of other statutory authorities also headed by influential professional specialists.

As the experience of technocrats in other states had shown, the most beneficial arrangement for the exercise of technocratic power was a partnership with the head of Treasury. Kemp established a working relationship with Treasury officials but their own organisational power goals precluded an acceptance of shared goals. They dismissed any attempt to use co-ordination as a means of subordinating Treasury to the Co-Ordinator-General since, with the requirement for Treasury to approve the co-ordinated plan of works, they were confident they retained the superior co-ordinating role. Finally, it was as Co-Ordinator-General that Kemp was subjected to sustained attacks on his professional and personal integrity. Although public officials were often named in parliamentary debates, the intensity of the attacks conducted under parliamentary privilege was virtually unprecedented. Although, as with Kemp, the
State Insurance Commissioner was attacked for possessing a level of power perceived to place him beyond democratic control, the references to him did not extend to questioning his personal integrity.

One issue that arises from Kemp’s technocratic power is the legitimacy of his authority. It appears that the threat his control over Queensland’s public works posed to those with a stake in the distribution of decision-making power was the potential capacity it gave him to exert power beyond legally-determined limits. Informal authority is a well-recognised outcome of the effectiveness of personal skills and technical superiority in an area of political disinterest. Kemp usually succeeded in having his proposals to extend his authority legitimised through his skill in building an influential support base and persuading the Premier of the day to have them converted into formal legislative provisions. Since leadership is often cited as both a source and a demonstration of technocratic power, there is also the issue of identifying Kemp as a leader. As with other senior officials, the cultural acceptance of authoritarianism and the traditional hierarchical control structure of public bureaucracies meant that organisational position gave him leadership status. However, it was through his professional ethos that he displayed the authority that is said to characterise a leader, securing the loyalty and respect of staff and colleagues by the example of hard work, dedication and unwavering belief in professional values. In the public arena, he did not exhibit the traditional charismatic leadership derived from the dominance of personality. It may have been a case of “the iron fist in the velvet glove”, but the image of him as a modest, professional man, preoccupied with the progress of his engineering projects, was less threatening and more conducive to co-operative relationships than one of an aggressive, power-seeking, public service mandarin.
Most commentators on the subject have concluded that technocratic power is maximised where there a “pro-development” political climate and strong executive government. This was an apt description of Queensland in this period, made more so by the abolition of its second parliamentary chamber or “House of Review” From this perspective, Kemp’s position of administrative power was simply an outcome of the political environment, with perhaps a contribution from the Machiavellian concept of good fortune. However, the particular environment that fostered this situation produced some variations to this conventional view, one of which was the compact “world” of state government administration and its comparatively few participants. Within the state, he did not have to contend with the level of competition for influence evident in New South Wales and Victoria, and also, for example, deliberately created in regional development administration in the United States. It was a potential source of control over the developmental policy process, with the small numbers making up the state’s political and administrative elites giving Kemp opportunities for influential access on both a personal and an official basis. It also enabled him to dominate the advisory committee system which, through the application of his co-ordination and co-option powers, had achieved an unprecedented importance in developmental policy deliberations. That it was a function of the state environment was illustrated by Kemp’s efforts at the national level where, despite his respected status in the area of roads’ policy, he failed to influence the course of Federal government decision-making in respect of Queensland’s development goals.

Another variation relates to the characterisation of Queensland populism as “the politics of development”, and the reality of Queensland’s development status. Some
theorists have moved on from development to under-development to explain the Queensland brand of populism but, to an extent, this approach ignores the simple logic of the process of societies developing from pioneer to modern status.

Development policy issues have dominated the politics of all Australian states but, unlike Queensland during this period, some of them had the industrial capacity to advance from total dependence on primary production for economic growth. Since the State consistently failed to attract substantial private sector capital investment in secondary industry development, its economic survival depended on the small producer producing, while political survival depended on facilitating the conditions to maximise production and marketing. A State-generated development orientation was perpetuated by the susceptibility of Queensland’s economy to often unpredictable external influences and a continuing “grass-roots” concern with economic instability.

Kemp’s particular administrative role challenges the proposition that government bureaucrats represent an obstruction to the reciprocal benefits of direct communication between politicians and constituents, or leaders and supporters, from which popular power is said to derive. He was accepted by both groups as an important channel of communication and an official with a reliable capacity for decisive action, even as ministers found it expedient to characterise him as the obstructive bureaucrat as a means of explaining delays in delivering election promises. Government promises for economic development became constituents’ demands for increased government intervention but, judging from the number of schemes proposed years before but never proceeded with, the administration had lacked the necessary expertise to bring them into operation. It is not strictly accurate to portray Kemp as a technocrat who owed his powerful position to a pro-
development environment. Rather, by demonstrating that developmental schemes could be achieved, with significant political benefits, he bolstered the confidence of political leaders of the era in the efficacy of promoting large-scale development as the cornerstone of economic growth. While there is no doubt he benefited from an increasingly pro-development political environment, he played a major role in making it happen.

Since publicity was one of the principal mechanisms by which Kemp reinforced his standing in this environment, its potential as a source of administrative power is one aspect of this era of Queensland developmental politics that would repay further study. Although heads of semi-government authorities were permitted to comment publicly on their respective areas of responsibility, few could match the media coverage of Kemp’s activities and views. With the possible exception of J. D. Story and Colin Clark, no public official had such a high public profile. In the days before television and information technology, community access to information was principally through an extensive local radio and newspaper network, which tended to report on government policy announcements and activities in the context of their effect on local issues. From the beginning, Kemp had recognised its value, becoming as adept as most politicians in establishing a working relationship with journalists and using the media as an effective tool of communication and influence.

One can only speculate on the reasons for Kemp being largely unknown today, despite this high public profile, acknowledged position of administrative power and demonstrated input into the planning and implementation of major infrastructure projects in Queensland. Analysts may still dismiss a technocrat such as Kemp as occupying the instrumental, advisory role associated with the conventional,
'Westminster' concept of a government official. Or, put in another way, he represents a part of the machinery of government whose function is assumed and who, despite the evidence presented here, is ultimately subject to the dictates of a democratically elected 'master'. The obvious corollary to this approach is to focus on the political arena as the locus of decision-making power.

The adoption of a broader analytical approach which acknowledges the significant role of technocrats and other specialist officials in the policy process would enhance the understanding of their administrative power and contribute to a more realistic assessment of both Labor and developmental politics of this period.
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Hielscher (Sir) Leo, former Under-Secretary, Treasury, 6.5.2000.

Russo, Ben, design engineer, Stanley River Works Board, Design Branch, Co-
Ordinator-General's Department, 31.3.2000.
Schubert, (Sir) Sydney, engineer (retired), Main Roads Commission; Co-Ordinator-General of Public Works and Director-General, Premier's Department, 17.5.2000.


Young, Don, engineer (retired), Divisional Engineer, Main Roads Commission; Regional Co-Ordinator, Southern, Co-Ordinator-General's Department, 12.5.2000.

THESES


