

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Assembly**

**THURSDAY, 10 MAY 1866**

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

*Thursday, 10 May, 1866.*

Crown Lands Sale Bill.

## CROWN LANDS SALE BILL.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS AND WORKS moved the second reading of "a Bill to repeal the laws now in force respecting the disposal and alienation of Crown Lands, and to make other provisions in lieu thereof," and in doing so said: In moving the second reading of this Bill, I will begin by observing that there can be no subject of greater importance for the people of this colony to consider than the alienation of the public lands, and there is no subject which has in any of the Australian colonies been more canvassed in the press—has elicited more varied opinions, or created a greater amount of warmth in the public mind. It was, on a former evening, observed by an honorable member of this House, that whatever question was introduced here in reference to the alienation of land should be a final one. Now it would be a matter of great convenience if, after all the discussion we have heard of in the neighboring colonies, we could deal with this question in a manner that could be regarded as final. But I am not prepared to deal with it as a measure of finality. Nor am I prepared to deal with it in such way, because, if the House was compelled to deal with it in that way, it might be by a mode that would not be pleasing to all parties. The character which the legislation of this colony with regard to the public lands may be said to bear is, that of affording the means of settlement to all parties who desire to cultivate the soil, without interfering, except to the slightest extent, with any other interest in the colony. While in New South Wales free selection is permitted to roam over the country at large, and while in Victoria the leases of whole districts have been swept away, and the lands committed to the charge of those who are best able and

best prepared to cultivate and pay for them, we have not hitherto attained such a description of finality. As I have already stated, the great object of our land laws has been to provide settlement—to provide settlement to a limited extent, without interfering with the pastoral interests of the colony. Our legislation has been of a conservative character. We have been desirous of conserving our lands, and of affording every accommodation to the pastoral tenants consistent with what must be regarded as the ultimate object in dealing with those lands. To that circumstance do I attribute the existence and the putting forth of certain propositions on a recent occasion by some honorable members of this House on the subject of the land laws—propositions which appear in an official form in the hands of the Government, and to which it is my intention very briefly to refer. In order that I may more clearly be understood, and in order that I may distinctly put before the House the question of the alienation of the Crown lands, as it has been proposed by certain honorable members of this House, who have adopted the principles to which I refer, and who have bound themselves down to see that those principles are made law, I shall take the opportunity of referring to one or two of them. I find that the third proposition is as follows:—

“That the said reserves for each successive year shall be submitted for approval to both Houses of the Legislature during each session of Parliament previous to such reservation being proclaimed in the *Government Gazette* ;”

And the fourth is—

“That all Crown lands not so reserved shall be put up to public auction, on the application of the lessee thereof only, who shall have power to apply for any portion of his run to be so put up in blocks of not less than six hundred and forty acres.”

The seventh is as follows:—

“That the whole of the Crown lands of the colony shall be put up to public auction at an upset price, to be decided upon by a joint committee of both Houses of the Legislature, to be selected by ballot; but which upset price shall in no case exceed five shillings per acre, excepting town and suburban lands, and shall be knocked down to the highest bidder, who shall also pay the fees of survey thereof.”

Of course, by this last clause the land might be put up at two shillings and sixpence, or even one shilling an acre. Now, I would simply observe that a measure embodying those principles might be recognised as a final one. There is no doubt that it would be justly entitled to that designation; but it would be a final measure of confiscation and injustice. I have stated that it would be quite possible to embody those principles in a Bill, but if they were embodied in any measure passing through this House I should like to know how long such a measure would hold good? Would such a measure meet with the approbation of the electors of this

colony? Would not the public mind and opinion of thinking men stand forth and demand, through their representatives, an alteration of such a law before it was in existence a month? There is no principle more clearly recognised than this, that all unjust and one-sided laws must ultimately cause a re-action, the strength of which would at least be equal to the injustice inflicted. I do not wish to occupy the time of the House by going at length into those principles, but at the same time I feel that I cannot do justice to the subject that is now occupying the attention of the House, nor can I do justice to my own position in connection with this Bill, unless I make a few observations on this subject. It is worthy of observation, that those principles do not include, and are not intended to include, either town or suburban lands. The Government are to be at perfect liberty to deal with the thousands, and to take from their pockets even to the last sixpence; and for town and country lands, to take from the purchaser even to an extent that may preclude him, from the actual absence of means, from purchasing country lands at all. The first part in those principles, to which I would desire to call the attention of the House, is that portion of them where it is distinctly laid down that no portion of any run is to be interfered with, or sold, without the consent of the lessee. Now, as this principle actually goes to the root of the whole system of reserves, I must be pardoned for occupying the time of the House for a few moments in dealing with that part of the question. I find, in looking at the Orders in Council under which the pastoral lands of the colony were originally leased, that those lands were leased simply for grazing purposes, and for no other; and not only under those Orders in Council was the Governor of New South Wales authorised to make reserves,—and not only did he make reserves, to which many could testify—but under the ninth clause of the second chapter, he was authorised to enter on the runs, and to make grants of land for about twenty different purposes mentioned in the clause; and to make grants otherwise for facilitating the improvement and settlement of the colony. Now, I would observe that I do think the leaseholders are not very much complimented by the clause to which I have referred. I should certainly not have said that their occupation of the lands was not calculated to facilitate the settlement of the country; but it is clear that the clause to which I have alluded did not recognise their occupation at all as conducing to the settlement of the country. It was by the Lands Alienation Act of 1860 that the Governor, with the advice and consent of his Executive Council, was fully empowered to make reserves. I remember very well some honorable members who supported the measure to which I refer, and who are now in the

House, announcing to the House and to the country that they were well aware that as the progress of settlement proceeded they must be prepared to go out. (Cheers). I am exceedingly glad to hear those cheers, and I hope honorable members will be able to repeat them when I have finished. Now I find that under the Agricultural Reserves Act, passed in 1863, it is declared in the second clause that—

“ It shall be lawful for the Governor with the advice of the Executive Council by proclamation published from time in the *Government Gazette* to define and set apart for agricultural occupation such lands as may be deemed expedient and the said lands shall be denominated agricultural reserves.”

I think, in the face of these Acts, it is scarcely to be argued for a moment, that the power which the Government have hitherto exercised has not been a power of a legal character; and it can scarcely be pretended that it is not a power that has existed from the origin of the occupation of the runs. But while it has been a power that has been frequently exercised, it seems to me an extraordinary circumstance that those honorable members who, in 1863, supported the clauses of the Agricultural Reserves Act, to which I have just referred, should now form a portion of the party who have agreed to the principles in the resolutions I have read. It seems to me that, in agreeing to the Act of 1863, those honorable members either were sincere in intending to afford to the cultivators of the soil a share of the lands or they were not. Either their support of the measure was given disinterestedly, or was meant as a cover under which they might be enabled at a future date to get possession of those areas altogether. Now, the arrangement that took place in 1863 I have always regarded as an arrangement in substitution of free selection, for it is useless to conceal the fact, and it is useless to think that, under any selfish or class arrangement, it either could, or can now, be possible to stem the current of the public demand for the occupation of the land by settlers for the cultivation of the soil. The system of agricultural reserves, as it had been worked in this colony, had also received the commendation of other colonies. In New South Wales we have no less an authority than Mr. John Hay, whom, I have no doubt, all honorable members will recognise as an authority on the subject, in holding forth our system of agricultural reserves as a model system—as one worthy of being imitated by that colony. The agricultural reserves in the Darling Downs District had given rise to some comments. As many honorable members were aware, those reserves contained some of the best land in the district; and it was land which, at the last land sale, was sold to the last lot. The Agricultural Reserves Selector's report has, I believe, also given umbrage to some parties. I can-

not help that; but I think the country will agree with me in saying that that officer is deserving the thanks of the country for giving the Government information that will enable them to put their hands at any time on good lands for agricultural settlement, in suitable positions. When I recollect that, from the time when leases were first granted under the Orders in Council up to the present moment, those lands have only been held for grazing purposes, I am induced to ask under what principle of right it is contended that the proprietors of the soil should not be permitted to enter on the land and to sell it as the circumstances of the country demand? The proposition that would preclude the Government from doing as they have hitherto done, in proclaiming agricultural areas where they ought to exist, would be an outrage, it appears to me, on the lowest intelligence; and if it were passed into law to-morrow, it would not hold good for a month. But we are told that no reserves are to be made until those reserves have been approved of by both Houses of Parliament. Now, the latter part of this sentence is the much more important one of the two. It strikes at the root of responsible Government; for if the members of the Government who are responsible to this House are not capable of determining upon the reports of qualified officers where reserves should be, then they are not competent to discharge much higher and more important functions, and have therefore no business to be in office. But what, after all, is the substitute that is proposed—what is proposed to be substituted for a responsible Ministry? There can be no doubt that the author of this clause would be a great admirer of the nominee or irresponsible system of government. I want the House to know what is the substitute proposed. It is this—that the powers exercised by the Ministry of the day are to be transferred, and are to be vested, not in this House, but in the Legislative Council; because it would be in vain for this House to assent to agricultural areas if the Legislative Council were to say “nay.” It seems to me that the position to which we should be reduced would be this—that all responsible authority would be transferred to a body of nominees who are responsible to no one. I have considered the whole policy, both of the Government and of this House, with regard to the agricultural areas, in every phase, and to my mind it appears we have but one course to pursue—either we must support the present system of agricultural areas, and keep before the country a sufficient quantity of good land for occupation, or be compelled to adopt free selection throughout the colony. I prefer the former, and in doing so I have no hesitation in declaring that the public mind will not be satisfied unless the administration of those lands is conducted through a body responsible to this House.

Mr. DALRYMPLE: You have mis-quoted the resolutions.

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS: I have done nothing of the kind. But I will read it—

“That the said reserves for each successive year shall be submitted for approval to both Houses of the Legislature during each session of Parliament previous to such reservation being proclaimed in the *Government Gazette*.”

Mr. PRING: That is not the last, and you approve of it.

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS: I am not aware that I approve of any of those I have read. Now I will assume for a moment that a joint committee of both Houses, selected by ballot, has declared that the price of land shall be two shillings and sixpence an acre, and that the Executive authorities are to be precluded from going on any man's run, to sell any portion of his lease during the currency of the lease, unless the lessee wish it; and I want to know if, during a depression, say, a commercial depression, or a depression of the money market,—if the lessee called upon the Government at such a time to sell a portion of his lease, what benefit the Government or the country would obtain by the sale? We are told that the squatters are in great difficulties, and are not able, in many instances, to pay their rents. Now, if they are not able to pay their rents, I want to know how they are to pay half-a-crown an acre, or even the interest of it? I do not believe that one acre would be purchased. I believe that, to reduce the price to two shillings and sixpence an acre, would, as in every place where land has been reduced to a low figure, give rise to what exists too much already—a love of speculation. We should have puffing advertisements, to the effect that stations were for sale with the right of purchase at half-a-crown an acre. I do not believe in any system that would have such an effect. I believe that, to adopt such a course, would be a gross injustice to those who have already bought land. I believe it would simply have the effect of encouraging a parcel of speculators in the public lands. I believe it would be ruinous to our financial prospects, as well as injurious to all the other interests of the colony. Now, as that was not the object which I had in view when the Bill was prepared, I shall endeavor, as shortly as I can, to state to the House the leading features of the Bill, and the objects which I wish to obtain by it. I propose, in the first place, by this Bill, to condense in one Act, and present to the public in the simplest form, the mode by which land is to be alienated and purchased in this colony. I propose, in the second place, to secure to the immigrant holding a land order that which induced him to leave his mother country. I propose, also, to offer guarantees to the public that the best land will be secured, in positions suitable

to the demands. I propose, also, to afford an opportunity of dealing equitably with those selectors, who by untoward circumstances may not be able exactly to fulfil all the conditions on which they have obtained land. I propose, in the fifth place, to afford to the inhabitants of towns and elsewhere those commonage rights which have always been subjects of dispute; and I propose, also, by the Bill, to afford assistance, by grants of land, for those purposes which have never hitherto had anything to sustain them but a resolution of both branches of the Legislature. Those are some of the purposes of the measure; and in dealing with the Bill I have divided it into nine divisions. The first is the interpretation clause, to which it is unnecessary to allude. The second division is introductory, and contains several provisions, one of which provides that no land in agricultural areas shall be offered for selection or for sale as Crown lands until full and sufficient maps shall have been deposited as public maps with the Surveyor-General, while another provides that lithographed copies of such maps shall be prepared and kept for sale at reasonable prices at the office of the Surveyor-General, and at the offices of the land agents through whom the land is to be selected or sold, as the case may be. The third division relates to the appointment of land agents, their duties and responsibilities. These have been so fully particularised in the Bill, that I felt it unnecessary to introduce a clause in it to make rules and regulations. The fourth division of the Bill deals with the Crown lands not reserved or dedicated to particular purposes; and one of the clauses in this division provides that all Crown lands within a distance of two miles of any surveyed line of railway shall, subject to such temporary or permanent reservation as the Government may from time to time deem necessary, be deemed specially intended for sale by auction, and shall not be included in any agricultural area, except such lands as may form unsold portions of agricultural reserves existing at the commencement of this Act. This division also contains a clause providing for the sale by selection of lands unsold at auction, and of lands on which the deposit shall have been forfeited; and another clause in the same division provides for the closing of roads not necessary for public use or convenience, on the application of the owner of adjacent lands. The fifth division refers to agricultural areas, their survey, proclamation, and mode of selection. As I have already considered the matter of those areas, I shall not now further allude to them. Honorable members, however, will find that this division contains one of the most important provisions of the Bill. The sixth division refers to the grants of lands, reservations, &c. The seventh division is an important one, and deals with the question of commons. Under this division every provision has been made to meet the

necessities of persons requiring the use of such commons; and also for the election of managers of commons. The eighth division provides for novel industries, and proposes, by leases and grants of land, to encourage the development of the resources of the colony by the growth of such tropical products as the colony is capable of producing. The ninth division relates to mining leases and grants. As honorable members I have no doubt have read the Bill, it is unnecessary for me to refer to all its clauses. I may state that the Bill does not go so far as I intended at one time it should go; but I hope we will have an opportunity of considering the points to which I have called attention. I may say I have always felt that along railway lines, and the banks of rivers and creeks, we might afford to establish farms that would combine grazing with agriculture; and I believe it will be unnecessary to confine our operations within the limits to which I have referred. I believe that within the Range, in the district within East and West Moreton we might have such farms. The Bill does not go so far, but I have clauses that refer to lands situated on the banks of rivers and creeks, and if the House thinks favorably of the suggestion I have now thrown out, I shall be prepared to have those clauses printed and submitted to honorable members when the House is in committee on the Bill. I think I have now fully stated the purposes of the Bill. I do not regard it as a final measure, but I believe it is a Bill in the right direction, and is one which I trust will be found to meet the public wants.

Mr. PRING: It is now nearly six years ago since the Parliament of Queensland was called upon to discuss the question of the disposal of the waste lands of the colony, and I think, after that lapse of time, it is well that we should again discuss the question, because I agree to a certain extent with what has fallen from the honorable the Minister for Lands and Works, that the question of the disposal of the waste lands of the colony is not likely to be finally settled for a long time to come; but, I think measures may be passed that will be conducive to the interests of all classes of the community, at such distinct periods as the circumstances of the colony may require that there should be a revision of the land laws. Such is the question which I think should be discussed by the House; and not the disposal of the waste lands of the colony in a certain mode as proposed by this Bill. I may as well state, at the outset, that I object to this Bill—not to the Bill so far as it regards the alienation of the waste lands of the colony, but because it does not provide for the alienation of the waste lands of the colony in such a manner as will be best for the interest of every class of the community; because it is only a half-and-half measure, and because it does not

deal so comprehensively with the question as the Parliament, after a lapse of seven years, should be called upon to deal with it. I am not to be led away with the clap-trap cries of the electors of the towns, or any threat of dissolution which has been held over us *in terrorem* by the honorable the Minister for Lands and Works, because I think I shall be able to shew the honorable gentleman, before I sit down, that the propositions that have been put forward from this side of the House are equally fair, and better for all classes of the community, than the proposition he has put forward; and put forward, to some extent, no doubt, in the hope of securing his re-election in the event of a dissolution which has been held over our heads for the last two or three weeks, in the event of the Ministry being defeated on this question. But that threat is not to prevent us on this side of the House from doing our duty in the way we think the circumstances of the colony demand. I confess, I should have been more satisfied with the speech of the honorable the Minister for Lands and Works, if he had been fair and free and above board in the outset; but I can scarcely pay him the compliment, as the head of Her Majesty's Government in this colony, of dealing in that way with so important a question; or lose sight of the fact that in referring to a number of gentlemen representing a large portion of the community, and that the weightiest portion of the community, he has misrepresented both them and their policy. The Bill has been introduced and is now advanced to the stage of its second reading, and we should have supposed we should, on such an occasion, have heard how so important a measure was likely to affect the class to which it alludes; but the honorable member does not shew how the measure is likely to benefit the class for whose especial benefit it has been introduced. Now, I should like to know how we have been enlightened on this proposition. The honorable gentleman ran through the nine divisions of the Bill in as many minutes; but will he shew how the class he refers to—who, I suppose, will be the agricultural class, when they come here,—will he shew how that class is to be benefited, or how the colony is to be benefited by their being benefited, and another portion of the community not sacrificed? I should have liked him to have shewn how this system would work without injury to other interests of the colony, or how the other interests of the colony could work harmoniously with this system. It is only by legislating for the general prosperity of all classes that we can expect to give satisfaction and to do justice. But I have failed to see that the honorable the Minister for Lands and Works has done so; I have failed to see that he has done as he ought to have done. The honorable member, instead of that, has attempted to throw cold water on a

policy which I shall presently advert to. He has endeavored, by taking advantage of a series of resolutions submitted to him on the occasion of a deputation waiting upon him—he has undertaken, on the strength of those crude resolutions submitted to him for his information and for his consideration—to put them forth as expressing the policy of this side of the House, and to lay down to this side of the House that that is their policy, without reservation.

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS: I never said a word of the policy of the other side of the House.

Mr. PRING: It is quite true that the honorable gentleman did not use the word "policy," but he commented on the resolutions, and we all know what his language meant; but, perhaps, the honorable member did not know himself what it meant. Now, I am quite correct in what I say, when I say that we—or rather the interest I represent at the present moment—have laid down a policy, which was apparent from certain resolutions that were submitted to the honorable member; and the honorable gentleman has gone through those resolutions, and has commented on them in a rather severe manner. If the honorable gentleman really wished to shew what honorable members on this side of the House really did wish, and how they wished their policy to be brought to bear, he would have informed honorable members that he had been, since those crude and hastily drawn up resolutions were submitted to him—that he had since been in communication with honorable members on this side of the House, to see whether a compromise could not be effected between his side of the House and this side of the House. The honorable member was perfectly well aware that other fresh resolutions were drawn up, and I think I am correct in saying the resolutions were considerably modified, in order that the views of this side of the House should coincide with the views of the other side of the House, and that there should be no dispute as to regarding this Bill as the comprehensive measure that was promised last session. The honorable Minister for Lands and Works has not informed the House of what took place after the first set of resolutions were presented to him,—of what took place with the view of preserving peace and harmony in the consideration of this important question. He has not informed the House that certain propositions were laid before him, or were fully explained to him—which propositions were fully gone into by honorable members on this side of the House, and in these resolutions the principles embodied in the first set of resolutions were materially modified, in order, if possible, to obtain some degree of relief in reference to the interest the deputation represented. I can assure honorable members, and the public, that it is not the wish of this section of the House to interfere with the alienation

of Crown lands—to interfere with the question so far as it affects the interests of the agriculturist. It has been the tactics of the other side of the House to misrepresent the wishes and opinions of honorable members on this side of the House. I have read misrepresentations on this question to any extent, and I have seen great anxiety and desire shewn by a certain portion of this House to misrepresent the opinions and objects of certain other honorable members, with the view of being able at the hustings to reap the benefit of their misrepresentations. Nowhere have I read, except in the columns of one or two publications, the views of honorable members on this side of the House correctly represented. In fact, misrepresentation has been the order of the day. Now, why did not the honorable the Minister for Lands and Works state that he had again been in consultation with honorable members on this side of the House, and that he could not coincide with the resolutions submitted to him on the second occasion? The honorable gentleman knew well that a second set of resolutions had been submitted to him; and I can tell him, too, that some resolutions which I shall submit to honorable members before I sit down were agreed to by the honorable gentleman; but it was some stubborn member of the Cabinet who would not agree to them, who prevented them from being acceded to by the Ministry. Now, when we find the honorable member abusing this side of the House for the principles they put forward, it was—I think it is—asking too much to ask the House to put faith in him when we find him acting so disingenuously. I shall be obliged to occupy the time of the House at some length on this subject, because I am determined, and honorable members who agree with me are determined, that we will not be misrepresented in this House, and that, unless our speeches are burked in the public press, we shall not be misrepresented before the public; and as this is the time when we should speak out, I do not fear to tell the public what my opinions on the question are, and comment on the principles of the Bill; and I can say that for once the views of this side of the House will be clearly stated, if I have the power to do it. I will have no burking of principles. I care not whether or not it may suit some honorable members who have sat on this side of the House, but have gone to the other side of the House, that I should do so. I want no appointment from the Government. I am not like some honorable members who have said they did not want it, and all the time held their hands behind their backs. I am not like some honorable members who are—but I will not say what. But I will go on, and say I will not be touched on this question by threats of dissolution or anything else. With regard to the question before the House, it is an error, and a very common

one, to suppose that, because a particular individual said the lands of the colony were public property, they were to be dealt with as he thought they should be, so that if that were the correct principle on which the land law of the colony was to be arranged, every person would have to be accommodated. A says the leasing system is the best system, and that the introduction of a large immigration under such a system is the only way in which the country can be saved. B says we must have free selection without survey. C must have his land at one pound an acre; well, land must be found for him at one pound an acre. But D must have his land at two shillings and sixpence an acre, and land must be found for him at two shillings and sixpence an acre. Then there is the cormorant squatter, who wants the whole of the land at two shillings and sixpence an acre. And next, there is the squatter who is not quite so much of a cormorant as the other, who would be content with a run of twenty-five square miles, with the right of pre-emptive purchase. Then there is the other squatter, who is in favor of fencing. He has, say, a thousand pounds or so, and is satisfied that by fencing he would be able more profitably to graze his sheep or cattle. Well, he also, as well as the rest, must be accommodated; and how are all those to be accommodated?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: The best way we can.

Mr. PRING: Exactly. You have spoken the truth, for once in your life. Now, I ask, does this Bill effect the purpose of accommodating all parties. If it does not do it the principles of the Bill are not satisfactory, and if the principles are not satisfactory, we shall continually be having this Land Bill brought before the House. Now, can't we get a Bill that will be satisfactory. Cannot we, by the experience we have obtained from other colonies, and looking at the principles which guided them in such matters—cannot we have a Bill brought in that will put us in a fair position with other colonies—in a good position with the mother country—in a good position with America and Canada—and last, though perhaps not least, put us in a good temper with ourselves? Now is it impossible to bring in such a Bill? I say it is not. I say that all the interests I have alluded to can be dealt with, and if such a Bill can be introduced, that is the measure which I wish to see passed, and it is the measure the country should adopt, for if you begin to class legislate you will never be able to carry on; because if you class legislate to-day for one class, another Government that might come in afterwards would class legislate another day for another class. Well, I think a satisfactory measure can be introduced, and if so, it is the duty of the Government to introduce it. I do not see why the Government should not have introduced a comprehensive measure themselves, and not have

asked this side of the House to find brains for them to do it. They are considered the ablest men, and the most constitutional men, and, altogether, they are perfection. Well, if so, they should have been able to produce something better than this shred of a Bill. The honorable the Minister for Lands and Works has used some very strong language in dealing with this question—language that might do very well for a speech at a general election, or from the hustings; but it will not do here—it will not do for honorable members who are accustomed to speak and think for themselves. For myself, I shall exercise the right of speech, without fear, one way or another; and as language has been used that misrepresents what the squatters want to do—that represents them as uniting to do what would be injurious to the interests of the colony generally,—and though it will not be necessary for me to comment on the language which has been used by the honorable the Secretary for Lands and Works, still, I must notice that he has represented the gentlemen sitting on this side of the House as wishing to retard the progress of agricultural settlement in this colony, and he has stated that it would be impossible to stem the current of public demand for agricultural reserves, and the whole tenor of his remarks in reference to runs, as he has thought fit to express them, as held by honorable members on this side of the House, is that we do not wish to have agricultural reserves in the colony,—that we want to prevent them from being proclaimed,—and that we did not, in fact, want to see any thing existing in the colony except pastoral settlement, as regulated by the Orders in Council. Now our policy is nothing of the kind. I will presently state to the House what are our views, and what are our propositions, and these, I submit, will be found to be a fair way of dealing with the public lands,—though, perhaps, they will not be considered to be so by some honorable members. I emphatically say that the honorable the Minister for Lands and Works has not fairly stated the policy which we advocate.

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS: I did not use the expression "policy" at all. I did not attribute any policy to the honorable member.

Mr. PRING: I will use the word as often as I please.

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS: Then I must call the honorable member to order. I repeat, I did not use the word "policy" at all.

Mr. PRING: I know what the honorable member meant—

The SPEAKER: But the honorable the Secretary for Lands and Works denies having used the word "policy."

Mr. PRING: I do not say he did, but from the language he used the only inference that could be drawn was that his representation of

the resolutions was a representation of the policy of honorable members on this side of the House. But it was not a representation of our policy. The honorable member stated in one part of his speech that, according to our resolutions, no reserves were to be made.

THE SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS: I did not. What I said was, that according to the resolutions no reserves were to be made till they were previously submitted to both Houses of Parliament.

MR. PRING: Exactly; and that portion of the honorable gentleman's address I shall come to presently; but he has wished the House to consider that such restrictions were to be placed on the agricultural reserves of the colony as would interfere materially with their being taken up, or, in point of fact, with their being able to be taken up. Such, however, is not the spirit in which we consider the land question should be dealt with in this colony. We are willing to do anything in our power to pass a good and comprehensive Land Bill, and we think we are bound to do so; and are bound to oppose class legislation; and we think that this House ought to adopt a scheme which, while it is beneficial to the community as a whole, should not injure any particular class whatever. And that, no doubt, is the true principle of legislation; and if it cannot be carried out at the present time because of the different opinions held by honorable members,—and if to carry out these it is necessary to bring in a particular measure—there can be no reason why they should not be carried out as nearly as possible, leaving it to the operation of time, and to the change of opinions to work out the rest, whenever the circumstances of the colony are such as to admit or demand it. Now, in dealing with the question of the disposal of the waste lands of the colony, I think we may consider we have had some experience in having the example of other colonies before us; and it appears to me that, in dealing with this question, we should look at the way in which the waste lands of other colonies have been dealt with, and take into consideration the results; and if we find, as undoubtedly we shall find, that the waste lands of other colonies have not been dealt with in a manner to make them most productive, and most beneficial to all parties residing there, as well as to offer inducements to others to come and settle in the colony, surely it behoves us to look for a new system; and if we can devise a new system, to give it a practical form; and, in endeavoring to find out a new system, we must be guided by fixed and known principles. I think it cannot well be denied that the land laws of neighboring colonies are not good land laws. I have never heard them spoken of as such. Take the last Land Act of New South Wales, known as Robertson's Land Act. It is well known that, when Mr. Robertson succeeded in passing that measure in 1862, by which he gave what is

technically termed free selection—though it hardly amounts to free selection, but more correctly represents the system existing in this colony—it was represented then by Mr. Robertson, and his supporters, to the colonists of New South Wales, that the system only had to be known in England, when a rush would take place to New South Wales that would set the colony all right, for it appeared to be all wrong then. Well, the Bill having been passed, the rush did not come; and Mr. Robertson's expectations were not realised; and it is now confessed by the best politicians in New South Wales that the system was a hurried one, that it was not a matured system, and that it had not been beneficial to New South Wales at all. I am stating what I know to be facts, and what I know cannot be contradicted by any honorable member in the House; and I ask any honorable member to say if it would be well for us to adopt such a system, or anything like it, or if that system would be likely to benefit us to any extent at all. We should not have a system similar to that in force in New South Wales if we can help it. The Bill which has been brought before the House consists of nine parts, and they may all be summed up in small compass. In point of fact, if it is considered to be a Land Bill that will work for the benefit of the class which it is intended to benefit, I say it would be better to have been left alone; for it is a Bill which, instead of benefiting that class, will bear harder on them than the existing land law. Now, if the present system in force in this colony, which regulates the taking up of agricultural reserves, is a bad system, why it ought to be altered; but it should be altered by a system that would meliorate the condition of the persons who wish to locate themselves on the agricultural reserves. But this Bill does nothing of the kind. It is a measure that will be harder on them. (No.) I say it is so, and I am prepared to prove it. It proposes a worse system than the present, and will not do so well for the class for whose special benefit it is meant to be passed. The agricultural reserves portion of this Bill is the principal part of it, because all the other clauses are chiefly sections shewing how matters are to be dealt with in detail, instead of providing rules and regulations; but the material portion of the Bill is contained in a few clauses in those affecting the agricultural reserves. Now the mode in which persons are to obtain land in those agricultural reserves is by selection; so under the old system, in agricultural reserves, the land was taken up by selection. Again, the Bill only allows persons to take up land by selection and pay for it at one pound an acre. Well, so does the old land law, if I am not mistaken, allow persons in agricultural reserves to take up land at one pound an acre, and pay for it, and occupy under certain conditions.

So far so good. But let us see the difference between the present system, and the system in this Bill. Under the old system a person who took up land was allowed to lease so many acres alongside of it, at a merely nominal rent, so that when he had got land with all the available capital he had—that is, all the capital he could lay out in the purchase of land—because he would have to reserve some of his capital to enable him to work the land and maintain himself till the land was productive—the Act enabled him to lease, alongside his purchased land, say forty acres, if he were entitled to that quantity, at forty shillings, with the right of purchasing it at any time during the currency of his lease. The system gave the agricultural settler the opportunity of purchasing his land, and also assisted him to work it. But here the leasing clause is taken away, and yet we are told that this is one of those measures that is to do so much for the people, and with the benefits of which the Minister for Lands and Works is to rejoice the hearts of the people when he next addresses his constituents at Ipswich. The system proposed by this Bill is just the old system stripped of its leasing clauses, which has been the salvation of the man who has occupied the agricultural reserves up to the present time. This Bill, I maintain, is similar in most respects to the old system, so far as it relates to the agricultural reserves, without the leasing clauses, which are taken away; and, I ask, is this the boon which the colonists were led to expect by the promise that a comprehensive Land Bill would be brought in this session?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: There are no leasing clauses in the last Act.

Mr. PRING: I beg the honorable member's pardon, I find, on referring to the Act, that I was mistaken. I am perfectly willing to admit that. The leasing clause was done away with by the Agricultural Reserves Act, which was passed a session or two ago; but it was in the original Act. All I can say is, that we are retrograding further and further; for, instead of effecting an improvement with an alteration, we are not giving the people the benefits which they had some years ago, when the first Land Act was passed. With reference to this Bill, I say it is not a comprehensive land measure for the disposal and alienation of the Crown lands; it is not a comprehensive measure for dealing with agricultural any more than with pastoral interests, for it leaves things exactly as they are now; and I do not myself see any difference between the law as it stands and the Bill before me. The question now comes, whether some other system ought not to have been devised—whether the great question of the disposal and alienation of the Crown lands of the colony should not have been dealt with, and all the interests of the community considered. It is quite clear that, in dealing with the

waste lands of the colony, there must be certain fixed principles upon which they are to be disposed of; and there can be no doubt that the proper system—that the basis of every land law—should be alienation. It cannot be denied by any honorable member of this House, that this is the acknowledged fixed principle—alienation of Crown lands. Then follows the question—How is the alienation of Crown lands in a colony like this to be effected, so as to meet the interests of the people, and the requirements of the colony? And, therefore, in dealing with this question, we shall have to consider the proper mode of the disposal of those lands, without reference to any particular class; although, no doubt, in devising a scheme we must not lose sight of every individual interest. I think that this colony is placed in such a happy position, if I may say so, that our legislators can dispose of this question, and guard every interest; because, from the peculiar nature and character, from the variety, of its soil, so far as regards products and pastoral occupation and pursuits connected with land, they will be enabled to deal with it, I should think, very easily, and no doubt, if they take the trouble, satisfactorily. Now, the alienation of Crown lands, I submit, must be upon a grand system here: it must be the right of purchase to every one. I will not go so far as to say the right of purchase to every one alike, because interests are different; but the right of purchase might accrue to every one so that his particular interest may be regarded, and that no favor shall be shewn to one more than to the other. Let us take the two or three great interests, so far as regards the land, of this colony—we will take the agricultural interest, and we will take the pastoral interest. The agricultural interest, we may say, will include all producers from the land other than by grazing. Of course, it must be confessed by all that the whole of the country is not available for agriculture, if indeed any very large portion of it is. Again, if a very large portion of it is fitted for agriculture, the climate is undeniably against the growth of products.

Mr. BROOKES: No.

Mr. PRING: The honorable member can say "No;" but though some favored districts may produce certain articles, over the colony as a whole—and, of course, I am speaking of the colony as a whole—the climate, in the opinion of all sensible men, militates materially against agriculturists, as a body, making their pursuit a profitable one to live by. I speak of a body, not of particular individuals; and I am positively certain in my own mind, although I know I shall not meet with the approval of all honorable members of this House, that although agriculture may be carried on to a certain extent, it will never be the mainstay of the colony—at all events, it is not likely to be for very many years to come. But, at the same time,

its interests should be taken care of, and every facility should be given to foster its extension and progress. I freely admit that, and in admitting it I don't think I can be charged with wishing to do anything to injure the agricultural interest; and, therefore, I do not wish to find in this House, by-and-bye in the course of the debate, an aspersion thrown out at myself and all honorable members on this side of the House, to the effect that we oppose anything like unlocking the lands or opening up reserves, or that we oppose anything like doing for the interests of the people what the people wish. But it is to the mode in which the Government propose to deal with this question that we object, and we also object to their dealing with it in the way of class legislation;—that, while on the one hand, I, as well as my honorable friends on this side of the House, am willing to do all that can be done to aid, abet, and foster the agricultural system, and those engaged or interested in agricultural pursuits, we ask not to be swamped ourselves. I ask whether that large interest, the pastoral interest, is therefore to be swamped? Is it to be supposed that while everything is to be done for agriculture, nothing is to be done for pastoral pursuits? On that question alone, we ask that even-handed justice be dealt out: we ask nothing more. We ask nothing but what everybody is entitled to—as well he who purchases his forty acres for a farm as he who leases a hundred square miles for grazing his stock. We only ask that our interests shall be taken into consideration—that they shall be taken care of; but only so far as will benefit the whole community. It is not fair to charge the squatters with being anxious to take care of their own particular interest. Does not every honorable member opposite take care of his own particular interest? It would be the height of absurdity for me to say that everybody does not look after his own interest, or to deny that the squatters do not look after their interests. Everybody does it. Yet the squatters are charged, as for a crime, with doing what everybody else does; they are charged with sitting in the Legislature and voting for their own interests. Do not honorable members on the other side do this in an equal degree? Do not they buy and job in land, and come into the House and vote on the land question, just as they charge the squatters with doing? It is human nature to look after your own interest; but it is not squatters' nature any more than of any other section of the human family. But, as legislators, we must not look after particular interests only;—there is no reason why we should not deal with this question fairly as between all parties and all interests alike. If, then, alienation be the basis on which the land laws should be raised and established, it should be alienation of the whole.

Mr. R. CRIBB: Hear, hear.

Mr. PRING: I knew that would come from the honorable member for East Moreton; I was expecting it, when I said that. He would like to have the best of the land around Moreton Bay at an upset price of £1 an acre, to buy with £30 land orders, and to sell at a large profit. His interest, his particular interest, is there. But that is not the interest of the legislator. It is feared by some that alienation as a whole will be giving the pastoral lands to the pastoral tenants—that it will open the door to speculation. Well, so it will; and it will give the picked lands to the small capitalists. The objection, if there is anything in it, is as applicable to the purchase of lands in the agricultural reserves as to the purchase of lands outside those reserves. Is the whole colony to be injured by a restrictive principle? Is the wealth of the colony to be kept down; is the introduction of capital to be prevented; is the employment of labor to be prohibited; is the prosperity of the colony to be turned back; is the settlement of the colony to be retarded, by the stupid cry of "speculation by the capitalists"? Certainly not. It is impossible to prevent capital coming in where there is a proper field for its employment. I think myself the cry is absurd, as I will endeavor to shew by-and-bye. It is absurd to suppose that capital will not be used where it exists. Capital will always command the market—that is well known. Then it is worth while to ask, by way of argument, must we shut out capital, because, if capital is brought in, it will be employed?

AN HONORABLE MEMBER: How?

Mr. PRING: How? In purchasing lands, which are not to be bought without capital any more than labor can be hired without capital. Men who will bring capital to the colony will support the colony: they will provide employment for labor, and abundance of employment will demand immigration, and immigration will demand abundance of products and imports, and add to the revenue of the colony. The man who invests his capital in the colony will support immigration, because he wants labor; and as honorable members will all say that immigration is the mainstay of the colony, they must wish to see the man of capital coming here. I am not inclined to support the argument that the alienation of the Crown lands in the whole will give rise to over much speculation; and I think, if it were likely to give rise to speculation, it may be restrained. There are ways of doing everything, right and wrong; and there is a way of restricting even that by passing proper measures. I do not think that the broad principle of the alienation of Crown lands, being the best, ought to be laughed at and despised, because it may produce what the honorable member for East Moreton, Mr. R. Cribb, seems to think it might, a benefit to the capitalist;

because, I say, restrictions may be placed in the way of the capitalist using his capital so as to injure the colony. Yet, I am not sure that I think it would be very far wrong if an amount of capital should be brought into the colony forthwith and expended, or that anything finer could happen to Queensland. I do not wish it to be brought against me, by-and-bye, that I wish the capitalist to have unlimited sway; though I am not sure if it is not right. If the argument I have used be correct in principle—and I think it is, because I have had an opportunity of reading upon this subject, and of gathering my knowledge from other people's diligence, and from other people's thoughts, and from other people's writings; and if I am not familiar with a subject, I can always, by reading, endeavor to understand it, and form a pretty correct idea of what should be the proper principle in guiding a colony or a people on certain questions; and I can come to no other conclusion but that the principle which I advocate is right—that the alienation of Crown lands should be the basis of our proceedings, then the Bill before us is not the measure that we should have to consider to-day. I am as certain of the correctness of this principle as that I hold the Bill in my hand. This question of the alienation of Crown lands is one which has been written upon to a very large extent in the mother country, and it has been written upon by men who are well known to the political world—by men who, I have no doubt, by their writings, have afforded information to the British Legislature, and by their writings alone. Although they have not taken an active part in the House of Commons or in the House of Lords, still their writings have been quoted in the British Parliament, and have been the means of effecting reforms in the mother country, commercial and otherwise. The subject of alienation of Crown lands, the "forest lands" in England, has been dealt with; and also the most desirable mode of the alienation of Crown lands in the colonies has been treated of, especially the Crown lands in America. All of these writers have come to the same conclusion—I will not say that I have come to; for I have been enabled by their writings to come to the same conclusion that they have arrived at;—they have come to the conclusion I advocate, that the true and sound principle for us to proceed upon is the alienation of the lands of this colony. I have to thank some gentlemen resident in this colony, for the references which I shall give, this evening, to these writers—these gentlemen having taken great interest in, and devoted much time to, the consideration of this subject, and having looked up those authorities for me to read. I question very much whether there are half a dozen honorable members in this House who have ever looked into the question as it ought to be looked into, in the

manner in which political economists have considered it; and I expect to see most honorable members get up and speak, simply propounding their own crude notions of how the lands of the colony ought to be dealt with—just delivering their own *ipse dixit* ideas off-hand, without thought, without information, without considering calmly and quietly upon it, and without going to those authorities which they should consult for advice on this important subject. I have no doubt I shall hear many speeches, without honorable members having taken the trouble to ascertain what it is they want, or to understand what we want, or what the colony wants. I have endeavored to find what is the true principle of our proceedings; and I feel that it would not be just of me to induce this House to think that I have done more than look into those authorities, having been referred to them;—I have read them to enable me to enforce the arguments I have advanced. I think no honorable member can be expected to do more than look into these questions as they arise here; yet, the production of high authorities for his conclusions is much better than getting up and trusting to his own crude notions. The authorities on the subject are very numerous, and I will mention them in order that if this debate be not concluded this evening, some honorable members who take an interest in the present subject may refer to them. In Adam Smith's "Sources of Public Revenue," McCulloch's edition, p. 370, it is clearly shewn that the public benefit requires the alienation of the Crown lands; and the author goes on—

"But if the lands of Great Britain, in the present state of their cultivation, do not afford a rent of more than twenty millions a year, they could not well afford the half, most probably not a quarter, if they all belonged to a single proprietor, and were put under the negligent, expensive, and oppressive management of his factors and agents. The Crown lands of Great Britain do not at present afford the fourth part of the rent which could probably be drawn from them if they were the property of private persons. If the Crown lands were more extensive it is probable they would be still worse managed."

Now, honorable members must recollect that Adam Smith is here speaking of the "forest lands" of England, which are held by the Crown; but the principle which he upholds is equally applicable to this colony.

"The revenue which the great body of the people derives from land is in proportion, not to the rent, but to the produce of the land. The whole annual produce of the land, except seed, is either annually consumed by the great body of the people, or exchanged for something else that is consumed by them. Whatever keeps down the produce of the land below what it would otherwise rise to, keeps down the revenue of the great body of the people still more than it does that of the proprietor of the land. \* \* \* If the land, which in one state of cultivation affords a rent of ten millions a year, would in another

afford a rent of twenty millions, the rent being in both cases supposed a third part of the produce; the revenue of the proprietor would be less than it otherwise might be by only ten millions, but the revenue of the great body of the people would be less than it otherwise might be by thirty millions a year. The population of the country would be less by the number that thirty millions a year could maintain."

And so he goes on. Therefore, it is quite clear that if his arguments be sound, they go to shew that the alienation of the Crown lands in this colony is the proper mode of disposing of them. He goes on, further, in vol. 5, p. 376, of the same work. There is also a very interesting passage to be found in President Jackson's "Fourth Annual Message" in the "Stateman's Manual," vol. 2, p. 787:—

"It seems to me to be our true policy that the public lands should cease, as soon as practicable, to be a source of revenue, and that they should be sold in limited parcels"—

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL and MR. PUGH: Hear, hear.

MR. PRING: I am very glad honorable members follow me so far. I approve of the principles which I am enunciating for their advantage. The passage runs on—

—"to settlers, on such terms, as barely to reimburse the United States the expense of the present system."

Another one goes on—

"To avert the consequences which may be apprehended from this course, to put an end for ever to all partial and interested legislation on this subject, and to ensure to every American citizen of enterprise the opportunity of securing an independent freehold, it seems to me therefore best to abandon the idea of raising a future revenue out of the public lands."

Other equally interesting illustrations are to be found in a speech of Edmund Burke on "Economic Reform," vol. 1, page 273; and in M'Culloch's opinion on the alienation of Crown lands in the colonies—"Colonial Policy," p. 601; and in Jeremy Bentham's "Principles of Civil Code," vol. 1, p. 333. All of these go to shew that the alienation of the Crown lands is the true principle on which the law should be framed. I think I may assume from the "hear, hears," that I have heard since I began to read out from the political economists—and I should hardly think that the honorable the Attorney-General and the honorable the member for North Brisbane, Mr. Pugh, will dispute these authorities—that if the gentlemen were themselves here they would feel complimented. I have no doubt the same principles have been cheered over and over again in the British Parliament. I think they shew that the alienation of Crown lands is the proper basis on which our land laws should be fixed. That being so, how is the principle to be applied? The best way to apply it, so far as we can ascertain, is to sell the lands by public auction. There are different descriptions of

land, as I have pointed out, and, of course, there are lands required for a number of purposes, being only fit for the growth of particular products; therefore, care should be taken that all interests in the land should be protected—not that there should be a general alienation of lands by a scramble. There should be no alienation of Crown lands here, and there, and everywhere. We do not argue such a line of policy as that, although we say the alienation of Crown lands should be made on a proper footing, and be fenced in in a certain way, so that particular interests, while enabled to purchase land, should be enabled to purchase that particular land which they require; and that other interests should be so situated and guarded, that when they want to purchase the land on the true principle they should be enabled to do so. That is to be done in only one way, no doubt, and that is by reserves. So far from rejecting reserves, they are one of the principal features of our policy.

MR. PUGH: Oh, oh.

MR. PRING: The honorable member for North Brisbane, because he has not been behind the scenes with us—because he was not able to ferret out and convey to his great leader, in George-street, the principles of our policy—is surprised to hear it. Although honorable members had been seen hanging about the doors, waiting to be invited in—although there were messengers and touts hanging about—they were not able to get at our principles; if they had been able to do so, the House would not have heard the speech which I am making to-night. Now, they come out in their true colors; we see how they have misrepresented the squatters. I say we do advocate reserves.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Bring in a resolution, then.

MR. PRING: Bring in a resolution. I am advocating a principle now; and I am telling you what they ought to do—what you ought to have done for the benefit of the colony; and I will tell you what we will do, if you don't do it.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: If you can.

MR. PRING: If we can. I leave the honorable the Colonial Secretary to bring in a resolution if he likes, and proceed with my speech. I have seen the honorable member bring in many resolutions this session, but I have not seen one that there was anything in. Honorable members are very much taken aback by what I say; they are on their beam-ends; they find that we are not the cormorants that we were reported to be—that we are not the land sharks that we were represented to be; we do not take the bread out of the poor man's mouth. I respect the poor man: I was a poor man myself, and may be again. But I don't respect those who trade on his name. It is a miserable cry—"The poor man!"—it is a

nonsensical cry; it is a clap-trap cry; it is a dishonest cry; it is the cry of stump orators, and never raised by an honest independent man, who believes in his principles, and does not want to take advantage of the poor man. We advocate reserves, and in the fullest sense of the word; not in the way of the honorable members whom I see before me. We advocate different kinds of reserves, for agriculture, and for other pursuits too; and to the fullest extent for agriculture in the Darling Downs and Moreton Bay Districts;—wherever they can be found, they shall be given up with the greatest pleasure. What does the Minister for Lands and Works want more, then? What does the Colonial Secretary want more? He shall have every inch of the Darling Downs to-morrow for agriculture, if he can occupy it. We shall be very glad to see the Downs occupied—glad to see capital invested—glad to see agriculture go ahead—glad to see labor employed. What does he want more? Can the Bill do more? I think not. We are willing to do that, at any rate, and to pass a Bill this very session. We are willing to co-operate with you, if you will. We will shew who are the true friends of the people. We are also disposed to go in and assist in passing a measure to give reserves in other parts—on the banks of navigable rivers, or in other portions of the colony which may be peculiarly applicable to the growth of particular products. The Darling Downs may be very good—I see the honorable member for North Brisbane, Mr. Brookes, does not like the policy; it does not suit his book, because he told me the other day he knew nothing of this; but I wish he would remain in his place to hear me—but there are other parts that might also be acceptable for other interests. Well, we advocate those reserves, but I think we put it in rather a different way from the Minister for Lands and Works. He has provided for agriculture; and it is a most extraordinary thing that he has provided for the agricultural interest only in the Darling Downs and Moreton Bay Districts. We propose to go a little further;—we will provide for all interests. I will shew how we will do it. We do not propose to give our Minister for Lands and Works power to make free grants to people who come out, and to companies that are formed, to grow sugar, and other things. There is a little clause in this Bill, that the Government shall have the power, without the sanction of the House, to make free grants to people to make experiments and to enter into doubtful speculations. Only fancy the Minister for Lands and Works having that under his thumb! Fancy the mild insinuation of this little clause! While he talks about the Darling Downs and Moreton Bay, he forgets the beautiful acres on the banks of our navigable rivers which are to be given away. How will the revenue be increased by this? We prefer not to let the Minister for Lands and

Works have any such powers. We do not propose to give our Minister for Lands and Works—when we get one, though we will trust him—such powers; nor will we allow the present one to have such powers. What we intend to do is, to have the land kept open for certain purposes, if it is wanted; and to give facilities equal to those for agriculture. What more can be required than that the land shall be kept open? And those who require it shall be able to obtain it when they like. This is a far better system, as my knowledge and my experience tell me, than the keeping of any reserve of lands to be granted away without the sanction of this House. Then, again, with reference to the disposal of the lands in agricultural reserves. Of course, in dealing with the price of land, the first principle is the general one of alienation by public auction. A very grave question here arises, and a very difficult one, as to the upset price; and, perhaps, on the first blush of the matter it would appear that the upset should be a minimum and an universal upset price. But there appear to be some objections to that, and it has been considered by many good men, who have thought carefully over the matter, that owing to the peculiar position of the colony, the upset price of land in certain parts must differ. For instance, take the agricultural reserves in the Darling Downs and Moreton Districts;—these are the two districts referred to in the Bill brought in by the honorable the Minister for Lands and Works. Now, if you were to put these lands up for sale at public auction, at an upset price of five shillings an acre, it might be said that that would be unfair to those persons who have purchased at one pound an acre, because they would not be able to come into competition with those who should purchase at auction at the upset price of five shillings an acre. That may be so, or not; I do not know. But the only answer which I shall give is, that to me it appears to make very little difference whether the upset price is five shillings an acre or one pound an acre, because at auction the market value of the land will be determined. Land will always maintain its market value.

AN HONORABLE MEMBER: No, no.

MR. PRING: I am speaking of the reserves. If the land is surveyed, and marked out in specified quantities, and put up at so much per acre, whether one part is worth three pounds and another only one pound, no doubt the purchaser will have to give the market value for what he buys. All I can say, further, is, that if it be thought best to put up the agricultural reserves in the Darling Downs and Moreton Districts at the present upset price, or at five shillings an acre, there will be no opposition on this side of the House. We are willing to support any measure by which the agricultural reserves in the Darling Downs and Moreton Districts shall be put, and to advocate any system of alienation by public auction, at an upset price.

Honorable members will pardon me for speaking at so great length: this is not a question to be got over in half an hour, or in an hour's or two hours' speech, if you wish to do that justice to it which I wish to do. I wish to consider every man's position; and I have not given up my time and attention so long to this question, without desiring fully to express my views upon it. I am endeavoring to work it out as clearly and correctly as I can. I have got so far as to inform honorable members how we propose, how we recommend—because, after all is said and done, I have but recommended it—that the lands should be dealt with in agricultural reserves. It is, as we say, following out the true principles of alienation by public auction, that the land will fetch the market value. The land may be put up at one pound or five shillings, in the agricultural reserves, as may be thought fit;—we have nothing to object to in it. Now, the agricultural interest having been taken care of, I shall turn to another very important matter to be considered in the discussion of this question. But, as I stated before—I do not wish to be misunderstood—let the agricultural reserves be to any extent; do not let it be said by any honorable member that the squatters of the Darling Downs do not wish to give up their runs; do not let that argument be used against them: they are perfectly willing to do so. Then, having got as much land as you like out of the Darling Downs or Moreton Bay Districts, is there any reason why the squatter should not come in himself? Will any honorable member tell me that, after squatting has done everything that can be done, offered everything that can be offered—the squatters' capital, their industry, their energy, are not to be used for the advantage of the colony? If we can get the unavailable portions of the Darling Downs and Moreton Bay Districts taken up by men of capital and industry, to be used in one or more ways—by the investment of their capital permanently, by the employment of labor, by the introduction of immigrants, and the consumption of dutiable articles—will any honorable member say that it shall not be done? If there is any truth or justice in the principle of alienation, why should not they be allowed to purchase? They ask for nothing more. That is all they ask for—these cormorants, as they are called. Why should not one man be dealt with as fairly as another? Why should not even-handed justice be dealt out between man and man? This is all I ask for on behalf of the pastoral interest, and it is all that will be asked for by other honorable members who will follow me, and who will deal with the various bearings of this question. Why should not they, as citizens and as colonists, be allowed a little of the freehold of the soil of this country? They are prepared, no doubt, for the sake of the interest with which they are connected, to purchase, if they are allowed to do so. But, by this

measure, we are told that they shall not be allowed to purchase—not an acre, not a rood, on which to put a humpy or a hut, or erect a roof to cover themselves and families—that all they have done, all the money they have spent in the country, is to go for nothing; they are to be looked upon as scabby sheep, and to get nothing but abuse. I have read enough abuse of them lately; it would lead people who do not know better to believe that the squatters take everything out of the colony and bring nothing into it. Some persons ask, "If alienation is your principle, how are you—the squatters—to be allowed to purchase without injuring other interests?" It is in this way: they may be allowed, outside of the reserves, to purchase the public lands in certain given quantities. "At what price?" They are so very liberal that they are willing—although they think five shillings an acre should be the upset price at which land should be put up in agricultural reserves, in order that people may come on the land—that one pound an acre should be charged to them. Let them come in—they will give up as much as you require, reserves and all—outside of the reserves. I ask, is that too much, after meeting every interest in the community? Are they to be charged now with wanting everything for themselves? I cannot conceive any more one-sided notion than, or any argument so injurious to the welfare of this colony as, that the squatter is not to purchase land. The only argument in favor of the doctrine that the squatter should not purchase—and it is not a sound one—is, that he would prevent agricultural operations. He says—"I don't want to prevent agriculture; all I want is to be enabled to settle on the land myself. You may ask me why I want to buy? The reason is, that as the land laws of the colony now are, I may expend £1,000 or £10,000 on the land, and occupy it, and be at the mercy of the Minister for Lands and Works. When I settle down in the colony of Queensland; when I build a homestead; when I employ a lot of immigrants, and put up cottages for them; when I establish a school, and cause a church to be built, and cause villages to surround me; when I have done all this, I ask, ought I not to be allowed to secure a freehold?—ought I not to have something to hold by, some sheet anchor, the same as other members of the community?—and are you to give nothing to me?" This is the policy the Government have advocated for a long time past. If it had not been that, I should not have had the speech to make that I am making this evening; if they had brought in a liberal land policy, I should not be holding forth in this House now, to tell the House and the country of these principles which I advocate. So far, we are willing to be liberal to the vested interests in the districts of Moreton Bay and Darling Downs, which are in a different position from the outside districts.

In those districts, a different plan must be adopted from that which applies to other districts, where there are no reserves for agriculture and other purposes, as they exist in Moreton and Darling Downs; so that in any Bill brought in by any Government, there must be some change in respect of those districts. In dealing with the Moreton and Darling Downs Districts, I have been advocating some principles which I shall have to deviate from in dealing with other districts. I think that as to the outlying districts, there should be greater concessions made, and I do not think the colony would be injured at all by any act of this Legislature which would give facilities for the occupation of the Crown lands of this colony, and also for the settlement of population on a freehold tenure. Of course, there would come another question, in connection with the occupation of the outside districts, which could not be introduced into a Bill of this kind; because it should be dealt with in a Bill particularly prepared for dealing with that subject. But with reference to the alienation of Crown lands in the other districts, this question can be dealt with, we think, in a different way; because the position of the outside districts, and the position of the people in them, are entirely separate from those I have before referred to. Therefore, it is proposed by us that the same principle should exist which I first commenced with, namely, the alienation of Crown lands;—that all lands should be alienated, subject, of course, to certain rules. There must be reserves for public purposes, and I take it, that these reserves would be pretty much of the same description as the reserves made under the Orders in Council, and under our existing land laws, for agriculture and other purposes. These reserves having been made, from time to time, and especial care being taken always to recollect that there must be a supply of land fit for the purposes thereof kept in hand, then the alienation should go on or be allowed to be carried out in the same way as in the other districts. Therefore, it would come to this: that the Crown lands in the outlying districts, after reserves have been made for the purposes which I have enumerated, and for all the purposes which may be considered necessary, shall be open for alienation; and that the occupiers of Crown lands shall be allowed to purchase on their runs certain defined areas or quantities to enable them to carry out pastoral occupation with safety to themselves, and also with as much, if not greater, benefit on the smaller quantity of land held under freehold tenure than they can enjoy on a large quantity of unfenced land which they hold as tenants at will. For, I maintain, the pastoral tenants are tenants at will.

DR. CHALLINOR: Not quite—not practically.

MR. PRING: Yes. I tell the honorable and gallant member, if he understands what

tenants at will are, that the pastoral tenants of the Crown, under the present leasing system, are just as badly off as tenants at will. What we ask for, therefore, amounts simply to this: that the squatters shall be enabled to purchase certain areas to carry on their occupations, on such a system as we find agriculturists do now—to occupy the land, to work it as they think fit—by fencing and improvement, and the expenditure of capital otherwise upon it, to make the most they can of it. We require that they may be able, at all events, when the residue of their runs is wanted, to stay with their families on their own freeholds in the country, and to carry on in a degree the pursuits they have been accustomed to; that they may be able to retain their homesteads, where they have spent so much of their time engaged in those pursuits—instead of having to give way to every other class; and that they may have the same chances that are offered to other classes. Can there be any objection to that? Honorable members will agree with me that it would be a great benefit to the colony. We must view the question in every aspect, for it is important; and however much time is taken up, this is necessary. It must be recollected that in the northern districts of this colony the greatest quantity, if not all, of the land is not fit for agriculture, in the proper sense of the term. Although there are in the south such districts as Darling Downs and Moreton, which will grow wheat and other products, such is not the case in the north. It may be that hereafter large quantities of land will be found fit for, we will say, the production of tropical products. If it comes to that, why then my position will be more fortified, as I shall explain. It has been proved, or, if not proved, it is generally considered by good authorities, that sheep can be carried upon a much smaller area of land if enclosed, and with equal, if not greater, profit to the grazier, than if the land is not enclosed. Therefore, if facilities are given to persons to purchase adequate areas of country fit for pastoral purposes—the Crown can reserve those portions fit for plantations of tropical products—we shall be in the position, not only to obtain an increase to our revenue by the money derived from the absolute sale of the Crown lands, but to reap prosperity otherwise. The purchaser of the Crown lands, to derive any benefit from his purchase, will have to fence and to employ labor for the carrying out of his pursuits on his freehold; and he will not only engage in pastoral pursuits—he will most likely put a portion of his land under cultivation, to provide for the wants of his family. Under such a system we shall have homesteads in the colony, with families located on them; for it would attract capital speedily to our shores. Population of the best description would come, because we should have resident owners of the soil to invite it; resident *employées*, who would no doubt be

better than the sort we are getting now, would settle with the freeholders from time to time; and we should have *bonâ fide* settlement rapidly advancing and becoming permanent. And why should we not bring about this state of affairs, if we can do so without detriment to the community, or any difficulty whatever? I ask honorable members, now, if it is so difficult to deal with this question? Is it difficult to provide for people coming to the colony? If the restrictions that I suggested be imposed, while we provide for the alienation of the land as I have proposed, those dangers which are apprehended from throwing open the lands will be guarded against and avoided. I wish, also, to draw attention to this fact, which has not been generally thought much about:—There is a class of persons most desirable for this colony, yet that I have never seen carrying on operations here; although I know many have come out to the colony, willing to invest their capital and employ labor, but could not do so, because there was no inducement held out to them and the land laws of the day did not enable them to do so. I speak of a class of men who are amongst the best colonists; not professed agriculturists, who understand the practice and the theory of the cultivation of the soil, and can invest their capital and their labor in the agricultural reserves; but men who, though they would not attempt to follow out a pursuit with which they are unacquainted, and which requires peculiar skill, would be able to settle in the colony if we gave them a chance to obtain the freehold of land, which they could occupy with advantage to themselves. I allude to men who can bring with them a small capital of £1,000 to £3,000, and who would readily enter into that system of stock-keeping or grazing within enclosed lands, that I have already mentioned. Are we to lose such colonists? Are we to turn such a class from our shores? We can bring out these people if we act properly, and the colony will be benefited by their settlement, their industry, and their capital. Are we not bound to do it? I say, Yes. How are we to do it? I will tell you how we are to do it. By supporting the principle which I have laid down, the alienation of the Crown lands. After the reserves are made, even after the squatters have taken up their freeholds, there will be large portions of country available. For what? For sale by auction. And if that country can be taken up—I speak of the outside districts—in areas of six hundred and forty acres, or double that quantity, or enough for men with a small capital to keep two or three thousand sheep, within fences, then you will get that most desirable class of immigrants out directly. Get them set down within their fences, on their own freeholds, and you will have a population worthy of Queensland. Nobody can deny the correctness of my proposition, because those men have been

out here. What have they done? Some of them, not able to go into grazing pursuits according to the present system because they had not capital enough, have been unable to work their capital, and have either spent it by loitering about and then had to earn a living by the sweat of their brows, or have turned their backs on Queensland and gone away from the colony which had no room for them. That class is one that can be introduced largely if the laws are properly framed. It is not to be supposed that because the largest portion of the country is fit only for squatting pursuits that the squatters want the whole of it. If the squatters occupy such a large portion of the territory now, it is because it is better that they should do so than that the country should be waste. Yet they are reviled for that.

**THE COLONIAL SECRETARY:** Who is reviling them?

**MR. PRING:** I have heard it. Not to-night, but often enough; and, perhaps, before this debate is over, we shall hear them reviled again. That is no reason why they should be hardly dealt with or roughly handled at the present moment; nor is it a reason why we should not take some trouble, after all their labor, anxiety, and expense, to enable them to get some little footing on the soil on which they have spent so many years. I have gone very much into this question, because I think it is one that ought to be well considered by all of us; and I think I may safely state, if my views are correct, that the principles I have enunciated this evening ought to be the principles to guide this House in framing and passing a Land Bill. Therefore, I have objected to this Bill, brought forward by the Minister for Lands and Works;—it is not, I say, a Bill to meet the requirements of the country. It is not a Bill sufficiently extensive, or comprehensive; it is a mere alteration, to a very small extent, in the main, of the present land system; and it is not sufficient. The colony is in a state that demands something more. The immigration question is intimately connected with the sale of Crown lands. And while we must, in passing a land law, consider the question of immigration, we must take immigration as a whole, not in part; for we are not to legislate for a particular class of immigrants who come out with £30 land orders to work on the reserves; we must take all classes into consideration—the man of capital who will settle amongst us, as well as the mere laborer. We want labor, and we can get it by a particular kind of immigration; and we want capital, and we shall get it, and labor too, if we go the right way about it. The latter is of little use without the former, while capital will attract labor, and employ it too. Capital is necessary to labor, and labor is necessary to capital. It is absurd to say that labor is comprehended in

the few ships and the sort of immigration we now have coming out, or that they are all we want. There are no men of capital coming out now, even under Mr. Jordan's arrangements. We want capital—we want labor. Without immigration there is no money, without money there is no employment for labor;—so that we do not want labor alone. If the banks close their doors, and the pastoral interest be ruined by a false system of legislation for a particular class, that class will go to the dogs very quickly, and all the legislation of this House will not keep the country above water. You must induce persons who have capital to come out, or to send their capital out. It must be recollected that no capitalist will come out, or send his capital out, to invest in agricultural pursuits in this colony, unless he can see his way perfectly clear to getting a fair profit or interest on his money, after paying all expenses of the tillage of the soil. Before such a class of persons come here, you must shew that agriculture will enable them to do that. But you may get a class of pastoral occupants, of limited capital, to come out under such a system as I propose, who will materially advance the prosperity of the colony. The other classes of immigrants who come out to take up the land are not capitalists. They are good men, no doubt, because they have the bone and muscle to work; but what is the good of their coming out if no money comes out? They cannot get food to eat if there is no capital to purchase the produce of their labor. We shall see them walking about the streets having nothing to do, and we shall be called upon to contribute to their support, either through the corporation or as private individuals. I have now concluded that portion of my address in which I have endeavored to enforce the principles which I advocate for the alienation of Crown lands upon a proper basis. I will proceed to offer a few more remarks, which I trust the House will listen to patiently. In the first place, I shall make a few observations in reference to a remark which fell from me as to the leasing clause in the Agricultural Reserves Act, and although I fell into an error in reference to the Act now in force, I was right to a certain extent, because I believe that system of leasing, upon the principles embodied in the former Land Act, the agricultural reserves clauses of which contained a leasing clause, is carried into effect at the present time in the new reserves. That must be considered by the Government a valuable clause, and therefore they ought to have restored it by inserting it in the Bill before the House, as they must have found out that the present Act is inadequate to the wants of the colony without that leasing clause. Now, sir, I also wish to draw the attention of the House to a remark which fell from the honorable Minister for Lands and Works, and a resolution which he read to the House, which

he informed the House was a resolution arrived at by honorable members on this side of the House. I believe the honorable member was so far correct, but he did not state all the circumstances connected with the ultimate proposition made by the honorable members he referred to. It is true that when the policy of the Government first became known, certain honorable members did feel considerable alarm at the proposed action of the Government in reference to the Crown lands of the colony, and they did pass certain resolutions among themselves, as undoubtedly they had a right to do. Those resolutions were submitted to the Minister for Lands and Works for his approval, and contained the one which had been read—whether they met with his approval I cannot say. But a different resolution was arrived at subsequently—and I think great credit is due to honorable members of this House who consented to the alteration—and that resolution was either submitted, or the effect of it was intimated, to the honorable Minister for Lands and Works; and, therefore, when he entered this House this evening, he was well aware that the resolution which honorable members on this side of the House proposed in reference to the reservation of agricultural areas was a different resolution to that which he read to the House. I will now read that resolution, which, I believe, was submitted to the honorable Minister for Lands and Works: and it will be seen that it differs from the previous one to a very great extent. There were two or three objections to the first resolution, one of which was, that the Legislative Council should have nothing to do with the matter, or be in a position to prevent the Government from proclaiming special reserves. I think if that had been finally proposed, the House could not have accepted it, and I do not think I, myself, could have advocated such a resolution; and, no doubt, when the honorable members who proposed the resolution reflect, they will come to a similar conclusion. This only shews that the more consideration we give to an important subject like this, the more likely we are to come to a fair and correct decision. I will now read the resolution which we intend to submit to the House this evening, and I think it will be admitted to be a fair one. It states—

“That reserves sufficient for public requirements shall be made in every district; but no proposed reserves shall be proclaimed if both Houses concur in objecting to them.”

Now, that is a very different resolution, as I will explain, to the one which was read by the honorable Minister for Lands and Works, and the effect of it is this: that no reservation of lands for public requirements shall take effect if both Houses refuse to concur in it—that is to say, if the reserve is so bad that the Legislative

Assembly condemns it, and the Legislative Council also refuses its assent, it cannot be proclaimed—it is not sufficient for one House to consent to it. For it must be a bad piece of workmanship which, upon discussion in the Lower House is objected to, and is also refused in the Legislative Council. When that is the case, I think it is time to condemn it. I think, sir, some protection of this kind is necessary, and that it will meet with the concurrence of all classes; because I cannot think the public of this colony will ever refuse to allow justice to be done, or to uphold the principle, that while the Government shall be allowed to carry out the Acts of Parliament, some kind of drag must be put on to prevent bad management, and to guard against the effects of unlimited responsibility. And this brings me to a consideration of the question raised by the honorable Minister for Lands and Works, as to whether the Government should not have power to proclaim these reserves absolutely, without any check whatever. It is all very well for the Minister for Lands and Works to lay down the proposition that the Government must not be hampered, but it must first be shewn that this resolution does hamper the Government; and I think honorable members will agree with me that it does not. There ought decidedly to be some check, and for this reason—if the Legislature gives the power to any one individual, by a stroke of his pen, to reserve any quantity of land which he in his wisdom may think fit, without any check on his action, and without any power of appeal to the representatives of the people in this House, the people will be quite at the mercy of the Minister for Lands and Works. I do not mean to say that the Minister of the present day, or any other Minister for Lands and Works, would deal improperly with the selection of reserves; and of course it must be understood that no argument of mine is intended to cast any reflection upon the honorable gentleman at the head of the Government; but the whole question is, whether we are not bound to secure the colony against the effects of such an irresponsible exercise of power. If a Minister for Lands and Works has the power, which he now possesses under the present Act, and will have under the Bill before the House, I repeat it is necessary that there should be some check held over him; let us provide this check, in the least offensive way to any Government, and at the same time in such a manner as to guard the interests of the public. The Minister for Lands and Works may act hastily, and without being at all prejudiced, from perhaps the best motives, yet in such a manner as may not be considered most conducive to the interests of the country. Let us take the present case and the present position of the country, and we find that there is a great anxiety on the part of the Government to provide for agricultural interests, because, as they assert, and pro-

bably believe, that it is necessary to give some stimulus to that branch of industry. But, in endeavoring to carry out their proposition, they are inflicting a serious injustice at the present moment upon certain persons, and are not benefiting the public to the extent they imagine; while by a more judicious management they might benefit the country to the same extent, and obtain the aid necessary to carry out their views. If that be the case, such a check as I have mentioned is necessary—at all events the necessity of such a check should be fairly discussed by both Houses. Now, sir, it has been deemed necessary by the Government to provide large quantities of land, which may be taken up under the present system or the proposed Bill, for agricultural purposes, and they have also proclaimed a large quantity of land open for selection. The first question that arises is, is it necessary that such a large quantity should be proclaimed at the present moment? and if not, has not the action of the Government, in proclaiming, or being about to proclaim, such a large quantity, been beneficial, or rather, I may say, has it not worked injuriously? I say that it has, and I will endeavor to prove it. In the first place, there has been a very large quantity of land selected by the Selector of Agricultural Reserves in the Moreton Bay and Darling Downs Districts, and we also know that his report has been laid upon the table of the House; and we may fairly infer, after reading in this proposed Bill the clause which gives the power to the Government, or the Minister for Lands and Works to make reservations, that all the lands enumerated in the report of the Selector of Agricultural Reserves will be immediately proclaimed. That is quite clear, because the quantity of land referred to in the Bill must be the same number of acres mentioned in the report. (“No, no!” from the Government benches.) I say Yes; if a member of the Government informs me that it is not so, then I can only say, why are we led to believe it? I say that my argument is based upon facts, and that I have drawn the proper inference. And if the Government say “No, no!” what objection, I ask, can they have to a check being placed upon them? I can come to no other conclusion than that, as soon as this Bill is passed, every acre mentioned in the report will be reserved. The effect of that will be, that there will be a much larger quantity of land reserved than is required at the present moment, or would even be taken up under free selection, and because we have not the people in the colony to populate these reserves, or to take up the land at one pound per acre. We must first get them out; and we have not found out how to do that, nor has the honorable Colonial Secretary, or he would shew us—he would have shewn us how we are to get people out to this colony with their pounds in their hands to pay for the large number of acres

it is proposed to reserve, instead of coming down to the House, and asking us to shew him how a proper class of immigration can be obtained. The honorable gentleman did, certainly, bring in a resolution on the subject; but it did not tend much to solve the problem. The Government are neither prepared with the immigrants or the money;—they have both to find. Then, of what use are these large reserves?—none, at all. They may be required by-and-bye; but at present they can be productive of no good, and will be an injury to other interests. The effect will be that those large areas of land will be kept until the expiration of three years unoccupied, or only occupied by the few immigrants who may take up land in them. That is clear enough, for if there are such strong inducements to take up land in these reserves, how is it that the present reserves have not been taken up to a greater extent? I think I am warranted in taking what has been done as a proof of what will be done, and in affirming that these large areas will be occupied, *pro tanto*, so far only. And how will other interests be injured? Why, in this way—these reserves will not be available for the use of any persons except those who happen to be in occupation of them—the squatter on whose run the reserve is made will not be allowed to use it for grazing purposes. Now, if it were not for certain reasons, which I shall explain, I do not think it would be too much to say that he should not make use of it—although, perhaps, there could be no harm in grazing his sheep over that portion of it not used by the settlers—but the injury of reserving so many acres, without any probability of their being occupied, consists in the fact that these areas have been taken out of runs held by gentlemen under lease. These leases were leases which commenced in 1860, and were renewed at the expiration of 1865—leases held under the old Orders in Council. Now, under the Orders in Council, the lessee not only had the right of grazing, subject to certain regulations laid down—an indefeasible right—but he had also the option of buying any portion of his run at £1 per acre, under the pre-emptive right which has now been taken away from him, I will point out another way in which these interests have not been duly provided for. At the expiration of the fourteen years' leases, at the end of 1865, the pastoral occupants of the Crown were subject to a revaluation of their runs, in order to decide the rent they were to pay for the next five years, commencing from 1st January, 1866. Now, in that revaluation of runs, the Government have not taken into consideration all these reserves—all these large areas—and the squatter is paying rent for all the land within the original boundaries of his run. The Government knew very well, when they were valuing these runs, that the Selector of Agricultural Reserves was selecting land in all parts of the Downs;

and he knew very well that he could have made the reserves so as not to take away these large areas from the lessees. I think it is unjust to the lessee to compel him to pay rent upon land which has been taken away from him, and upon which he is not allowed to graze his sheep.

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS: He does not pay one shilling.

Mr. PRING: The Secretary for Lands and Works says that the lessee does not pay; but he must first shew that the reserves were taken into consideration in revaluing the runs,—until then my argument is correct. I know the land laws as well as anyone in this colony,—as well as the honorable gentleman himself; though I may not be so conversant with the machinery of the Lands Office, or so well up in the Ministerial working of that branch. I am not arguing without evidence to back me, and I ask how it can be shewn that I am wrong when I say that the squatters are paying rent for land which they are not allowed to use? I maintain, sir, that some compensation should have been made to the lessees, either in the form of a diminution of rent, or some system of revaluation to include only the land actually used. I say that these reserves ought not to be proclaimed, and I have shewn, by the arguments I have used, what may be done by the Government if we do not place some check upon them. Therefore, checks are useful, and I think especially so in this instance, to prevent enormous tracts of country, one-half of which cannot be occupied for years to come, from being reserved. As long as the Government have the power to take up lands from time to time as they are required, what complaint can there be—what more can the intending emigrant require? I repeat, that it is unjust to the lessee, and unwise, to set apart lands which are not required and cannot be used. The resolution I have read is, therefore, I maintain, a useful one, because it places a check upon the Government; it does not throw the power into the hands of either House, of refusing to allow these reserves to be proclaimed. And although honorable members, who do not like to have their theory upset, may be very pettish, I can tell them that there are other men outside the House who are of opinion that the proposition is a good one, and they are persons who are not guided by political feelings or interests. (Oh, oh.) Honorable members may say "Oh, oh," but in dealing with a question of this kind I do not consider very much the opinions of honorable members, I prefer to take public opinion; and, therefore, they need not be so quick with their *sotto voce* remarks. I wish now, sir, to say a few words on the land question as connected with immigration. Not that I wish to go into the whole subject of immigration, as that is not the question under the consideration of the House. I regret very much that the honorable Colonial Secretary, with his experience and the amount of time

he has evidently given to the subject of immigration, as well as to the question before the House, should have brought forward resolutions in reference to immigration, which simply amounted to nothing. The honorable member, before asking us to affirm that resolution, should have been prepared to say what was wanted, and to have set forth a remedy for the evil. It is a very easy thing for a doctor to come into my house and say there is a disease in it, but that is of very little use unless he makes some effort to cure it. I hope the honorable member will take a leaf out of my book, and go home and prepare a series of resolutions, embodying some practical suggestions; and I think, if he listens to my remarks this evening, he will see what he ought to propose. If, sir, it had been my duty to have brought the subject of immigration under the notice of the House, I should certainly have been ready with some distinct proposition, good or bad. There is another subject which has reference to immigration, and as the question before the House is so closely connected with immigration, I trust the few remarks I have to offer will be listened to patiently. I do not expect honorable members on the other side of the House to assent to everything I say, but I consider it to be my duty, as one of the people's representatives, and a member of this House, to do the best I can for the interests of the community; and if the opinions I express do not meet the views of a majority of the people, I can only hope that I shall be able to amend them. There is one question which must be considered by this House, because, although I have gone at great length into the question of alienation, the whole question cannot be dealt with by a simple debate on the alienation of Crown lands: I must, therefore, necessarily touch upon the position of the pastoral occupants of the Crown in the outlying districts, leaving the Moreton Bay and Darling Downs Districts, and a few others, in the hands of the honorable member for East Moreton, Mr. R. Cribb; and as that honorable member has informed the House that he could give them all I have said in about five minutes, I trust he will not hesitate to enlighten the country, and if he keeps his word, I can only say he will have done more than any other man of his age. It is obvious that the alienation of land in the interior can hardly be dealt with in the same way as in the southern districts, and therefore it will be well to consider the question in reference to the position of the present and future occupants of land in the outlying districts. It cannot be denied that the present system is a very bad one, and requires some alteration. The occupants of Crown lands themselves do not feel secure in those districts, and I do not wonder at it, because confidence has been so much shaken in the security of their tenure that evil results are daily occurring to the colony. No doubt some of those evil

results have arisen from no fault of the Government; and, possibly, partly from the fault of the squatters themselves; but, at all events, they require some assistance, and some alteration should be made in the laws which affect their properties. Even if the peculiar position of the pastoral occupants of Crown lands in the outlying districts did not call for some alteration, we are bound, as members of this House, legislating for the general good, to remedy any evil which may affect the position of the colony itself. One of the evil results I have spoken of is that, under the present system, the introduction of a capital is prevented—or, I will say, rather the introduction of a particular capital is retarded—perhaps that is a happier term. Now anything which retards the introduction of capital is a serious thing, because, although we may have golden dreams of agricultural produce, and the successful cultivation of cotton and sugar, there can be no doubt that at the present moment we are deeply interested in the production of wool. I believe that the existence of the colony—whatever it may do by-and-bye—at present is dependent upon that. And, if I am correctly informed, the position of the colony in this respect is not very good, and something should be done to remedy the evil; and I maintain that one of the reasons which mitigate against the introduction of capital is the insecurity of tenure possessed by the pastoral occupants of the Crown. It is perfectly true that in these districts they have fourteen years' leases; but, at the same time, they are subject to certain restrictions which, in point of fact, render their occupation a very insecure one, as far as regards the investment of capital. It is well known that the pastoral occupants of Crown lands in this, as well as in the other colonies, carry on their operations with borrowed capital, as well as their own; and, therefore, if the facility for borrowing money is interfered with—and, of course, the expenditure of borrowed capital is just as beneficial to the colony, although, perhaps, not so much as to the borrower—the progress of the colony is retarded. We must, therefore, consider the question in another phase, and regard capital as not only belonging to the individual, but the colony, and to enable him to borrow, we must do something to add to the stability of his position, and give him a greater security of tenure. It is useless for any honorable member to contend that this is not the true position of the colony at present, and no stability will be given to the position of the pastoral occupants unless some measure be devised for their benefit. I do not mean to say that we must give any partial privileges, which persons in other districts are not to have, but I think we can apply such a remedy as will enable them to borrow money from England, at a much lower interest than they pay for colonial

capital, and that we may pass such a measure as will encourage the introduction of capital into this colony. The insecurity of tenure is one of the principal causes of the present distress, and that arises from the existing laws. If the principles which I have endeavored to inculcate in the earlier part of my address could be carried out, one great evil would be remedied; because the first question a capitalist asks, before he advances any money to a squatter, is—"What is your security?" And the answer may be—"A fourteen years' lease under the Crown and so many sheep on the run." The capitalist replies—"Very good, but I am told that your lease, although for fourteen years, is so far insecure that your land may be taken up at any moment."

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: No, no.

MR. PRING: It is absurd to say "No," because there is the clause in the Act which says that it may be taken away at any time, after twelve months' notice. The argument then resolves itself into this: the capitalist says—"That is all very well, but I do not care a two-penny bit for your run, because, if the land is taken away from you, the sheep will die, and, therefore, what is the security of your tenure? You may have a good holding lease for fourteen years, and if during the term of that lease you can shew me that you can purchase land to graze your sheep on, I will advance you the money, but not otherwise." And that argument applies to the man who carries on his operations with his own means, as well as to the man who lends his capital to be expended in the country. So that, if we provide some better security of tenure we obtain a large influx of capital, and the colony will be benefited *pro tanto*, and instead of being in a languishing state, as is now the case in the outlying districts, the prosperity of the country will be revived, trade will be invigorated, and confidence restored, and we shall be able to give such evidence of our progress to the people in England, that capital will flow into the colony. For there are persons, sir, at home as well as here, who are deeply interested in our affairs. We must not think, in debating a question of this kind, that the actual occupants of Crown lands who invest their money in this country are the only persons to be considered. There are many persons in England who do not find sufficient opportunities of employing their capital at home, who would be glad to reap the advantage which this colony affords to invest at a higher rate of interest; and if we can pass such a measure as will induce them to come out, we shall confer a lasting benefit upon all classes of the community. For each person in this colony is more or less interested in every pursuit—we are all dependent upon each other. It is perfectly ridiculous to argue in favor of one class or the other; we can only get on as a body, and it is that which I wish

to impress upon honorable members—that we must legislate for the whole community. I am anxious to impress upon the House the necessity of doing something to secure, if possible, a security of tenure to the pastoral occupants of the Crown lands of the colony. I do not pretend to say that I have put forward such able arguments in support of the position I have taken, as might have been advanced by other honorable members, but I believe I have given a truthful version of the state of things which is well known to many honorable members in this House, and to many influential people in this country. Sir, I feel convinced that evil results will accrue unless something is done. I have made these remarks upon the position of the squatters in the northern districts, and the mode in which the lands of the colony at present unoccupied should be dealt with, that honorable members may endeavor, by-and-bye when the proper time comes, to make some better provision than at present exists. I have been induced to make these remarks, also, because the subject is one which is ultimately connected with the question before the House, and also for the still greater reason, that the main principle, which I have advocated this evening in reference to the alienation of Crown lands, would tend to give that security of tenure which I so earnestly desire to secure. I think, sir, I have now said enough upon the subject, because it is not the question that we are practically debating. I think I have addressed myself, to the best of my ability, to the principal points of interest. I must confess that I have not been able to devote as much time as I could have desired to the consideration of these important questions, because, as honorable members and the public are aware, my time is taken up by my professional pursuits. I regret my inability, from want of time, to do greater justice to the subject; but I trust, nevertheless, that I have advanced arguments which will so far operate upon the minds of honorable members—I will not say to such an extent as to induce them to depart altogether from the views they have taken up before they entered the House, but I hope the remarks I have made will have the effect of modifying those views very considerably. One good effect, I trust, will have been produced. I hope we shall discuss this question calmly and impartially; for I am convinced that the interest of this colony will never be successfully advocated, as long as class feelings and party discussions are introduced. I am thoroughly satisfied that the greatest deliberation is necessary in debating a question of this importance, and that it is not a question in which either side should endeavor to stand out against the other; and although questions may occur which may give rise to strong feelings, this is not one of them. I think we should, if we possibly can, meet each other and devise some measure to suit all classes, and if we

cannot at the present moment carry out such a measure, we may at all events get an instalment of some comprehensive scheme which may hereafter be fully carried out. I am certain that this can be done, if honorable members will apply themselves to the task, because we are now in the position that each honorable member, as far as the interest he represents, may fairly give and take, if only there is the will to do so. But if there are obstinate minds in this Assembly who will insist upon acting dictatorially, and refuse to be convinced by any arguments, and party feeling and party faction is introduced, no good whatever will result from the debate, and we shall be placed in this position: that what is done by the majority of to-day will be undone by the majority of to-morrow; and we shall appear to the world as a colony in which the land policy is in an unsettled state, and nothing that we can do will give any confidence in our legislation, and we shall lose the good faith we have hitherto possessed. I feel so convinced of this, that I again ask the House to reflect upon what I have said, and to debate the question calmly and dispassionately and not to come hastily to a conclusion; and if I have been wrong in some of the arguments which I have advanced, or in any inference I have drawn, I trust I shall be convinced of my error. I say again, for myself, and on the part of the honorable members whose views I advocate, that I now hold out the hand of friendship to the Government, although we have been called the Opposition, and have been represented as coming down to this House with the intention of overturning the Ministry and bringing about a general election; as one of that body, I say, with their full authority and sanction, that we are quite prepared to hold out the hand of friendship, and that we are ready to assist the Government to the best of our ability in framing a Land Act which will conduce to the honor and credit of the colony. And I do think, sir, that the Government might accept our offer. It may be, and I think the honorable Minister for Lands and Works at the present moment might, with a very good grace, tell the House that although it was not the intention of the Government at present to bring in a comprehensive Land Bill, yet, after hearing the views of honorable members during this debate, he had so far altered his opinion that he considered, at least for the interests of the colony, it was necessary that the propriety of introducing such a measure should be fully and carefully deliberated. I can assure that honorable gentleman that no objections will be raised on this side of the House; that he will receive our support, and I think there is no doubt that such a measure could be carried out. At all events, if evil consequences follow his refusal, and that of his colleagues, to accept the proposal which I now offer to him, all I now say is, that the

responsibility will rest upon him, and not upon us. The Government will not be able, hereafter, after having been warned and invited to co-operate with us in the settlement of this question, to cast the blame upon us—they will not then be able to say that the question was not fairly brought before them—they will not be in a position to accuse us of any *lâchetés*, or to say that we endeavored to coerce the Government to pass a Land Bill peculiarly suited to our own interests. I ask them, therefore, carefully and deliberately to consider what I have said, and I should further like to ask this House, if I may be permitted to do so, because I shall not have another opportunity of speaking upon this question—not to come hastily to a conclusion. Most honorable members on one side or the other will desire to give expression to their views upon it, and I trust, therefore, the debate will not be a hurried one, and that the question will be fully and fairly considered. I believe I have now said all I have to say, and I only wish to observe, in conclusion, that if in the course of my speech I have said anything which can be considered discourteous to any honorable member of this House, I am sorry to have done so. If I have made any remarks which have appeared so to the honorable Minister for Lands and Works, I can only assure that honorable gentleman that they were provoked by the manner in which he chose to handle his own brief, if I may so term it, and that they were made with perfect good temper. If I have involuntarily used any harsh expression I willingly withdraw it, because I hold this to be a question which ought not to evoke any intemperate or any bad feelings. It is not one upon which party feelings should run riot. I have dealt with it as temperately and calmly as I could. I thank the House for the attention it has accorded me during my rather lengthy address—more lengthy, perhaps, than it should have been, but not more so than the subject demanded, for I trust honorable members will agree with me that it embraces a number of important questions which cannot be hastily decided. I hope the result of this debate will be, that we shall produce a measure which will satisfy all classes and be worthy of the colony of Queensland.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: During the first part of the speech of the honorable and learned gentleman who has just resumed his seat, I was inclined to think that my honorable friends on the other side of the House had made a mistake in choosing their advocate, as I thought the honorable gentleman did not appear to be well up in his brief, but latterly I have somewhat changed my opinion, and I agree with the suggestion the honorable member made towards the close of his speech, that honorable members should approach the consideration of this question in a temperate and forbearing spirit towards each other, and I will endeavor to act upon that suggestion.

Since the Land Bills were passed in 1860 it has been the desire and object of the Government, while protecting the great producing interest of the colony, to encourage as much as possible, without damaging other interests, the settlement of an agricultural population. That system has been pursued since the passing of the land laws in 1860, and it is not intended by the present Government to depart from it. The policy which has been laid down this afternoon by the honorable the Secretary for Lands and Works was alluded to by him some months ago in a speech he delivered when on a visit to the Darling Downs. When I took office the Bill now before the House was in print, and had therefore, I presume, been carefully considered and agreed to by the former Government. It was laid before me, and the honorable gentleman who joined the Ministry with me, and after considering it, we agreed to its provisions; under these circumstances, I consider the present Ministry are not doing more than carrying out a measure that would have been brought in by our predecessors, and we have not, as the honorable member who has sat down has asserted, originated the policy of the Bill. As to the propositions that were submitted by some honorable members opposite, I can assure the House that great consideration has been given to them by the Ministry. It was stated to me that by the first proposition it was intended to do away with agricultural reserves altogether.

Mr. DALRYMPLE—No! never.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Well, it was certainly stated so to me. However, that was modified so far as, that by the resolutions ultimately drawn up it was proposed that the necessity of proclaiming agricultural reserves should be left to the decision of both Houses of Parliament, which was the same thing. This proposition was objected to on the ground that to accede to it would be to give over the executive functions of the Government to the Parliament; and if that were done the House might depend upon it that there would be no agricultural reserves given at all. The Government endeavored in every way possible to meet honorable members opposite, but we found that we could not make reasonable terms with them at all, and that is the reason the negotiations came to an end. The honorable and learned gentleman who is the leader of the Opposition said that the negotiations were broken off on account of the obstinacy of some honorable members of the Ministry. That allusion may have been intended to apply to myself; and if so, I can only inform the honorable gentleman that all the other members of the Ministry held the same opinions as I held; and the honorable the Premier acted on his own responsibility, being of opinion that his views were in accordance with the views generally entertained on the land question throughout the colony. I will now proceed to meet some of the arguments put forth by the honorable and learned

member for Ipswich; and I would remark, in the first place, that though this is a Bill professedly dealing with the alienation of the Crown lands of the colony, it is more to be regarded as merely a codification of the law as it at present exists, with a few slight alterations, the same as was done with the Leasing Act last session. I did not agree with the Act, but I see some honorable members opposite who did agree with it. A statement has been made that the question was asked the honorable the Secretary for Lands and Works last session, whether he intended introducing a comprehensive Land Bill providing both for the leasing and alienation of lands; and that his answer was that he would do so this session. Now, I am satisfied he did not make any such promise.

Mr. DALRYMPLE: He did.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I am satisfied he did not, or I should have remembered it, for I felt a deep interest in the answer that might have been made to any such question.

Mr. DALRYMPLE: You were not in the House at the time.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: It has been said that the question was asked when I was not in the House; but if so, I cannot find any notice of it on the records of the House. The honorable member for the Kennedy can bear me out in saying that the question asked was as to the Leasing Acts; and the answer given was, that it was not the intention of the Government to interfere with the Leasing Acts at present in force.

Mr. DALRYMPLE: The other question was asked on a subsequent occasion.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Then I was not in the House at the time. This question is so much mixed up with the propositions that have been submitted by honorable members opposite, that in dealing with it I shall have to allude both to them and the Bill. The present land laws have been in force now for a period of six or seven years, and during that time millions of acres have been alienated, and such portions as have been re-sold by the original purchasers from the Crown have realised prices very much over the upset price by the Government. Now I ask whether, in the face of such facts, we are entitled to make such an alteration as that contemplated by honorable members opposite—that the price of land should be reduced to five shillings an acre. There are many objections to such a course, and arguments that may be used to the contrary. The Government stand in the position of conservators of the public property; and, standing in that position, should, in alienating lands, do so gradually, and should take care that the lands are sold only at such a price as they will fetch in the market. Now what would be the effect of reducing the lands to five shillings an acre at present? A large quantity of land has been sold at the usual upset price, and to reduce the upset price of Crown lands to

five shillings an acre would be in effect to reduce the value of those lands already alienated by three-fourths of their original value. That is a fact which should be taken into consideration. Again, honorable members should remember that if we reduce the price of land, one of the principal effects will be to give rise to a large amount of speculation and jobbery; and that is one of the evils that all Governments have to guard against in anything they do in relation to the lands of the country. There is another objection which occurs to me, but which I have not yet heard touched upon; and that is the effect such a reduction as that proposed would have upon our credit at home. What will the public creditor think of it?—and how can we go into the market for further loans, with any chance of success, if the public creditors are told that we have reduced their security at one swoop by three-fourths of its value? The application of this principle has been so far departed from, that the proposal, it is now suggested, should not take effect in the southern, but only in the northern portions of the colony. Now, I do not see any good reason for making this difference, except that in the north there are no vested interests; but even so, I do not see why the price of land should be five shillings in one part of the colony, and four times that price in another part of the colony. In this view, I may state that I do not agree with all my colleagues; at the present time, I do not see it. The proposal of the Land League in the north is, that the land should be reduced, not to five shillings an acre, but to half-a-crown an acre. Now, we will suppose that the land in the north be reduced to half-a-crown an acre; do the people suppose that the land at such a price would fall into the hands of the squatter, or of the agriculturist? Not at all. A letter from Sir Charles Nicholson has lately been published in the colonial papers, in which he deprecates the continuance of the leasing system, and advocates the principles of the Land League. I happen to know that Sir Charles Nicholson is the chairman of a company, possessing a very large capital, which has been formed in England, and I know they sent out an agent some time ago for the purpose of buying up all the land he could get at a low price and selling it at an advanced price. Now, if the price of the land is reduced to half-a-crown or five shillings an acre, the land, I undertake to say, will not fall into the hands of the squatter or the agriculturist, but into the hands of Sir Charles Nicholson's company. Well, we are told the northern squatters are in that position, that they require relief from the Government, and yet they propose to buy up the lands; and the proposition of the league is, that the selectors of land should be allowed to purchase it by deferred payments, which is a proposition that would not be agreed to by any Government. But we

were more startled by the statement made by the honorable and learned member for Ipswich, when he said that his constituents—I mean the honorable member's opposite—were prepared to agree to the lands in the agricultural reserves being reduced to five shillings an acre, if the squatters were allowed to purchase their lands at half-a-crown an acre. Now, what is the cause of the lands in the agricultural areas being sold at a lower rate than those outside of the reserves?—simply that there may be secured to the immigrants who come here at their own expense an equivalent for their passage money, in the shape of so many acres of land. I remember when the matter was taken up by one of the present members for North Brisbane, Mr. Raff, when he was formerly a member of the House, and who has ever been consistent in his views on the question, which is more than I can say with respect to the honorable and learned gentleman who is now the leader of the Opposition. The Government, at the time to which I refer, gave way to the honorable member so far, that, as recommended by a committee, each immigrant paying his own passage to the colony should receive a land order for eighteen acres of land on his arrival—or, rather, that he should receive a land order for thirty acres, receiving one portion on his arrival, and the other portion after he had resided in the colony for two years. Since then the thirty acres has been given to him at once, and he can go and select his land on the reserves as soon as he lands in the colony. We have been told, also, that the Alienation of Lands Act does not afford a sufficient inducement to bring people out here from home, and we are told that greater inducements are held out in America and Canada, and other colonies, for people to go there. Now, I maintain that the difference in the matter of inducement is immaterial, and that the difference lies in a cause beyond our control. An immigrant arrives in America or Canada, and he gets his land on his arrival there, if it is given to him; and an immigrant who comes out here has his land given to him on his arrival here, in the agricultural reserves. Therefore, the difference is not in the matter of inducement, but in the length of the passage. The facilities that have been held out to agriculturists and to persons of small capital to come here have been as great as could be conceded to them. We give them the land, and all we could do in addition would be to fence it in, plough it up, sow it, and give them the first year's crop for nothing. I do not know if honorable members, who advocate greater inducements, would be prepared to go that length. The cause of the falling off in immigration is, I believe, owing to the adverse and unpropitious seasons we have lately experienced, and it appears to me, so far as my experience goes, that the seasons here are all unpropitious. However,

the people who come out get their land at once, and they can go and settle on it and cultivate it. We know that for the last three seasons, since agriculturists came and took up the land, the seasons have been unpropitious. One season the crops were destroyed by rust, the second they were destroyed by floods, and during the third season they have been destroyed by drought. Such has been the history of agriculture since the present laws came into operation. Again, those who are complaining of the depressed state of the country should bear in mind that the country has been raised from its true state to a false state in England, and that the people in England have discovered that we are now suffering the consequences,—that we are now suffering the consequences of over inflation. The country has been too much cried up, but there is an under-current of information, as to the state of the colony, which we do not see, but feel the effects of. I mean an under-current of information by letters sent home, which is more efficacious than all the leading articles that appear in the newspapers here. I hold, then, that it is from this over-inflation that we are now suffering. I now come to the cause of the depression in the case of the northern squatters. When the Land Acts were passed in 1860, the whole of the lands in the north were in the hands of speculators who shut up the land, and made no use of it at all. (Cries of "No, no.") I say, Yes; and the object of the Unoccupied Crown Lands Act was to enable *bonâ fide* squatters to take up the country. There was a clause inserted in the Act that made the occupation of the country by stock compulsory, and the object of the clause was to prevent the evil I am referring to. I am told that the great evil in the Bill was this clause; but I cannot agree in that opinion, especially as the whole of the country in the north, up to the shores of Carpentaria, has been taken up and stocked. If this clause that is complained of had not been in the Act such would not have been the case. But here, again, there are adverse circumstances at work. Almost immediately on the passing of the Act a great demand arose for sheep and cattle with which to stock the runs. Unfortunately, it happened at the time that scab broke out in New South Wales, and we were obliged to stop the importation of sheep from that colony. That caused a great rise in the price of sheep obtained elsewhere. Then, in consequence of the wet season, and the great expense thereby caused in removing stock from one place to another, and the great rise in wages in spite of our immigration, occasioned by the demand for labor from the rapid taking up of country, it was impossible for the squatter to stand against all those adverse circumstances. I know, also, that those who took up runs in the north, by buying up runs at enormous prices from those who held them, had also to pay enormous prices for their

stock; and many who took up those runs had neither capital of their own nor experience. That being the case, can we be surprised at the result, and are the Government to be blamed for those results, as being attributable to the operation of the Acts in force at the time? I should think not. If there is any blame to be attributed to the Act for those results, it is that it was too liberal. The Government are told that they did not give due facilities for taking up country, that the tenure is so bad the banks would not advance money to enable the holders of runs to stock them; but against that, we have the fact that the runs are taken up with a rapidity unprecedented. Why has the country been taken up so rapidly? Because the squatters in other colonies consider our land laws so much more liberal than those in the other colonies. Now I come to the question of capital. One great argument which has been used in that way goes to say that an alteration in our land laws, and an improvement in the tenure of the squatters, would induce a large amount of capital to come into the colony. I say that that capital has come into the colony already, whether borrowed or in the hands of those by whom the runs are occupied. I know that there are between three and four millions of borrowed money owing by the squatters, which is as much as they can stand; the most of this money is in the country, and it is only the interest upon it that goes out of the country. Now this we all know, that the tenure of the northern squatters is not to be interfered with in any way, nor are the northern squatters to be interfered with. Everybody knows that in the course of time the lands of the Darling Downs will pass out of the hands of the squatters; and all these circumstances were as well known when the three or four millions were brought into the colony as they are now, so I cannot see how any alteration of the land laws that would cause money to flow into the country would benefit the squatters, for already most of the runs have been taken up by means of borrowed capital. Most of those who have taken up runs had no capital of their own at all, and hence to a great extent was to be attributed their difficulties. Now a great deal has been said about the antagonistic feeling of the present Government to the squatters; that there is such a feeling, I deny altogether. It would be rather an extraordinary thing if a Government, three of whom are squatters, and two of whom have had long experience in matters relating to squatting property, should entertain any such feeling. For my part, I have seen squatting in all its phases, from the very commencement; and I maintain that the leasehold system—speaking with all respect to Sir Charles Nicholson and his company—is the system that has made this colony. I say that, but for the leasehold

system, the colony would not be in the prosperous position it is in at the present time, covered with flocks and herds, in a flourishing condition. I remember the time when Sir Charles Nicholson held a different opinion to what he has recently put forth, and that was when the first tenure was given to squatters, twenty-five years ago. I consider myself to be the friend of the squatters, and I desire to act towards them as a friend. Their own policy which they have put forward I consider is a suicidal one; and I would advise them to let well alone, and accept their present position. When the land laws were passed in 1860 the squatters were contented; and I remember when the Bill for giving them a five years' extension of their tenure was about to be read a second time, the honorable member for North Brisbane, Mr. Raff, walked out of the House, as he would not consent to the squatters legislating for themselves. When speaking on that Bill at the time, I remember saying that the Bill was not a measure for terminating the leases at the end of five years, but a Bill providing for their renewal from five years to five years on a revaluation; and I appeal to the honorable and learned member for Ipswich himself, if that was not the case when those Bills were passed through the House. With regard to the agricultural reserves, the honorable member who preceded me is all abroad, for no agricultural areas have been proclaimed since he left the Government. The honorable member, also, speaking of alienation, argued that there should be leasing clauses applicable to those areas. Well, in the first place, there were leasing clauses, and the occupiers were allowed to lease lands along with their purchased lands; but what has been the result? Why, that out of 7,000 leaseholds of that kind, 6,000 have been forfeited for non-payment of rent. If that is not a proof of the failure of the system, I do not know what is. It is the like of this that prevented the passing of a perfect Land Bill such as was shadowed forth by the honorable member for Maryborough the other night. Since this question has been raised, we find that we have all different opinions as to what the land laws should be, and every one who speaks on the subject will express an opinion different from that of any one else. The honorable member for the Leichhardt, Mr. Sandeman, said the other night that the cry had been raised by one section of the community against the squatters. That honorable member, who is the head of the squatters—the head centre, as I may say—has got up scheme after scheme, and meeting after meeting, for the agitation of this land question, and I believe a sort of club was formed amongst the squatters, and a room was specially engaged in which to hold their deliberations. I was never invited to attend, but on one occasion I happened to enter the room accidentally when a scheme of some

kind or other was under discussion. If I remember rightly, it was a scheme for buying up the lands of the colony at the rate of a shilling an acre. Mr. Moffatt, the late Colonial Treasurer, was present, and I remember his saying that it was impossible for the Government to agree to the proposition. It is the honorable member himself who has raised the cry, if there is any cry at present. Up to the present time the squatters have always been well treated. The Darling Downs squatters have had twelve years of uninterrupted prosperity, and have been allowed to buy up princely estates by means of land orders which they purchased from immigrants. No one can object to that, not even the honorable member for East Moreton, Mr. R. Cribb, who out of doors is considered to be the great anti-squatting member of the House, but who, when there is any question before the House affecting the squatting interests, always takes the part of the squatters. It always happens when there is any depression, and the public mind is directed to seek for the cause and the remedy, that the squatters, if the land question is adverted to, get up and say that a cry has been raised against them. Now, this cry was never raised till those honorable members opposite came from Ipswich, created an agitation, formed a club and took rooms, and entered upon a course of action with the purpose of shewing the Government that they meant to carry their views. I believe the Bill before the House to be a good measure, and I have no doubt some valuable amendments will be made upon it in committee. As I previously stated, the Bill was in print when I came into office, and it has since been well considered by the Government. The present Government, I have no hesitation in saying, is the friend of the squatters, and, as I told the squatters, if they would leave the matter to the Government, a cry would never be raised on this occasion; but, from the action taken by the squatters themselves, a cry has been raised and meetings are held at which the land question is agitated and the squatters are referred to in no very friendly terms.

Mr. DALRYMPLE: I am not at all surprised to hear the speech of the honorable the Colonial Secretary who has just sat down. It is only such a speech as we might have expected, considering his previous career. It is only what we might have expected from him, from the course he has adopted in regard to the land laws of the colony, and especially from the position he has assumed towards his brother squatters. I shall not at the present moment enter upon an answer to the various questions he has raised in this debate, but I will proceed to the general consideration of the subject; and I feel that in doing so, as a comparatively young member of the House, as one comparatively unused to debate, after the prolonged speech, I may say eloquent speech, made by my honorable and learned friend on my right,

the honorable member for Ipswich, any address I may make to the House will appear poor and lame. At the same time, I shall endeavor, from the little experience I have had, to adduce a few facts for the information of the House. The question has been entered into, and the manner in which it has been entered into induces me to commence with the state of the question during the session of 1865; and I beg to recall to the recollection of this House, that during the session of 1865 the consideration of the question of granting relief to the northern squatters first brought about the consideration of an alteration in the land laws; that a deputation, consisting of a number of influential members of the House, waited on the honorable the Minister for Lands and Works, and requested him to take into consideration the advisableness of framing a comprehensive land law, and to afford relief to the squatters; and also to introduce into the details principles similar to those which have been alluded to by the honorable and learned member for Ipswich to-night. It has been stated by the honorable the Colonial Secretary that no promise was ever given by the honorable the Minister for Lands and Works to introduce such a Bill; but I state distinctly to this House that such a promise was given, not only in this House, but also in the office of the honorable gentleman, to the deputation who waited upon him.

THE SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS: I beg the honorable member's pardon. What do you mean by comprehensive?

MR. DALEYMPLE: I beg to draw the attention of the House to the speech of the honorable the Secretary for Lands and Works, on the subject of agricultural reserves, made in this House last session, in reference to this subject, in which the honorable gentleman says:—

"The Government have felt that the introduction of a new land law is a question which will be approached and regarded with great interest by all classes of the community. In all the other colonies of Australia the land question has always been looked upon as the great question of the day. And as the Government of this colony are perfectly prepared to approach the subject, and to introduce such a measure, all they ask of the House is to allow them sufficient time to prepare and arrange the details of such a Bill as they trust will satisfy the House, and meet the requirements of the country for many years to come."

If the honorable gentleman, when he so expressed himself, did not mean to introduce a comprehensive measure, I do not know what he was driving at. It certainly appeared so to me, and to gentlemen who joined me in the deputation, and who agreed with me in the agitation during the last session. As during the latter part of last session I was unfortunately absent from the House, and unable to take part in the debate, or to carry on the agitation as it should have been carried on, by which we might have saved

a year of time to the country, I will beg the liberty of the House to allow me to read a few observations I addressed to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, which explain the feeling of the country, and of a large section of the country, and of honorable members of this House, on that occasion. As there are various matters relating to the question of alienation referred to in the letter, which it is not necessary for me to allude to on the present occasion, I will proceed to the portion which bears on the question.

"The inhabitants of New South Wales, sir, are, to a great extent, generally unacquainted with the internal condition of Queensland at the present moment. Successful beyond the most sanguine expectations during the first five years of her infancy, she has, I fear, unless a change suddenly takes place in the legislation of her Parliament, arrived already at a point in her prosperity when her advancement will drag on with slow and labored steps, and other less gifted countries, with more liberal Governments, will pass her in the race of advancement.

"Gifted by nature with the splendid dowry of over 600,000 square miles of country, which is washed on two sides by the ocean, and penetrated by a vast number of harbors and navigable rivers, with rich low country, fertile table-lands, and climates varying from inter-tropical heat to more temperate extra-tropical temperature, capable of growing the finest wools, the prime beef, and of producing from her soil every tropical and extra-tropical article of commerce in the greatest profusion. With the example of other colonies before her to enable her to avoid their mistakes, with everything of modern science, education, and enlightenment to her hand, to turn her talents to account, Queensland should outstep all colonial competition, and attract a stream of capital and population to her shores—and has she done so? Very far from it. Her land laws are a mass of annual tinkering, and the insecurity of what is to be the next change, has unjustly made her squattages to be looked upon with disfavor and distrust by the capitalists of the other Australian colonies.

"Her lands are equally tied up, and their alienation so encumbered with senseless restrictions, that the new arrivals find that free country, where the poor man is supposed to become his own master and the cultivator in peace and prosperity of his own acres, to be almost an absolute myth. He must not have this piece of land, because it does not suit the authorities to have the kangaroo turned off it yet. He must not have this piece of land, nor any piece over such an extent, or under such a size, because he might ruin his poor self, and then a paternal (?) Government would blame themselves. He must not cultivate his land, because of course only the Darling Downs squatters have the privilege of having lands in fee-simple under pasture, and the lands must be doled out with a sparing and stingy hand, as though our splendid colony were no larger than an English parish—as though there were not millions of acres lying a vast wilderness under the wide vault of Heaven, ready to yield millions of wealth to teeming populations, if man be but permitted to enter in and possess them.

"While Canada and the States receive their immigrants in millions, Queensland can only get her few thousands. While hundreds have sought Natal to cultivate sugar, for the cultivation of which Queensland is pre-eminently suited, a few have come here, some have turned back, and many more, after inquiring, are turned back to the more favored East African shores.

"In populating and bringing capital to our colony, we had to enter into competition, in the English capital and emigration markets, with the whole colonial world. We had to outbid the Australian colonies, the Cape, and Buenos Ayres, in the liberality of our squatting laws—we had to outbid the States and Canada, and other grain producing colonies, in the price of our land and its alienation regulations—we had to outbid the whole sugar producing colonies in the liberality of our regulations connected with tropical cultivation, and after five years of our existence as a separate colony, find ourselves being distanced in the race, tied neck and heels by English torism, Darling Downs obstructiveness, political cliquism, and private interests, and those adventurous spirits who lament our comparative failure, foresee future disaster, and come forward with the voice of warning and suggestions for wholesome change, meet with the frowns, unreasoning opposition, and even threats, of the Minister and his satellites.

"I am happy to say, sir, however, that a number of the members of both Houses of the Legislature are alive to our position and requirements, and have agreed to the necessary policy. Deputations have waited upon Mr. Macalister to urge upon the Government the necessity of introducing a comprehensive land measure, sweeping away all restrictions on agricultural lands, extending the agricultural areas, extending leases of squattages, whilst leaving to the Government the power to withhold any portion or all of a run for public purposes. The public to purchase land in agricultural areas, and squatters on their runs, by public auction, and fixing the rent of runs after the first four years by fair assessment of capabilities and qualifications. After coquetting with these gentlemen till the last week of the session, Mr. Macalister at length has refused to have anything to do with it. A Bill, however, of this description has been introduced by a private member in the Upper House, and printed, and I trust that during the recess it will be carefully discussed by the intelligent public of Queensland, who cannot fail to discover that it offers to them that free possession of the public lands, and that assistance in developing their resources, which is their right as colonists and British subjects, but which is now denied them.

"It is a curse to a colony, sir, when political adventurers base their political greatness upon the advancement of one class upon the ruins of its brother.

"There is no occasion, sir, why the agricultural and squatting interests of Queensland should be at open war. Her territory is vast and varied, there is room for millions of our fellow creatures of every class, interest, and denomination to dwell together in Christian peace and unity.

"The squatters of Queensland as a class are not the selfish obstructionists which they have been attempted to be depicted by Mr. Macalister.

They have taken warning from the direful effects of obstructiveness elsewhere. They are well aware that as the tide of population rolls onward, they must give way before it. They know well that the richest lands of the colony will be required of them for the homesteads of the multitude, and they are ready to give—to give freely, liberally—aye, almost before it is asked. Their representatives have offered to do so; have offered to give terms to the agriculturist, which he would only get from the Macalister school of politicians after years of obstructiveness, and at the cost of that mass of evils which accompany class bitterness—political strife, and the pitting of interest against interest, and man against his neighbor. But because this liberality emanated from squatting members, it has been refused.

"Mr. Macalister having refused redress to the memorialists in the Assembly, the Legislative Council have passed a Bill, sweeping away all restrictions which have hitherto encumbered the alienation of agricultural lands, the agriculturists having prayed for relief, said restrictions and provisions being as they stated unbearable, and impossible to be complied with, and in doing so, have given far more to the agriculturist than Mr. Macalister, although affecting to do much, could be prevailed upon to concede.

"Such, sir, is the present state of affairs in Queensland, so far as the land laws are concerned, and it is to be hoped, for the sake of the peace and prosperity of the colony, that Mr. Macalister will during the recess, when free from irritations and impulses engendered by the heat and acrimony of debate and defeat, ponder over the causes which have endangered the Government during the past week, and give calm and unbiassed consideration to this most important question, and will, by introducing such a measure at the commencement of the session of 1866, re-establish the Ministry, or, what he cares more about, himself, in the confidence and respect of the colony.

"Be that individual as honest as the daylight, the possession of such a power far too temptingly offers means for political ends, and the public would hail with satisfaction the legitimate division of the power and patronage attaching to the departments of 'Lands' and 'Works,' and the adoption by the Government of a land policy which, by offering to the vast northern and outside districts a more secure grazing tenure, and to the agricultural interests freedom of acquisition and occupation of land, would draw to Queensland an amount of capital in proportion to influx of labor, to develop her resources, and maintain her hitherto remarkable state of advancement and internal prosperity.

"If the inhabitants of the northern districts of Queensland find their voice is unheeded, and their expostulations are as at present, cast to the winds by Brisbane, Ipswich, and Toowoomba 'vested interests,' they will doubtless cry out with one voice for separation, from the watershed of the Mary northwards, and leave no stone unturned to obtain their just independence.

"How far the necessity for such a course, in the mere infancy of the colony, will reflect credit upon the Macalister policy or the selfish legislation of the southern members, I leave it to a discriminating and unbiassed public to decide."

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Read the leading article on the subject that appears in the paper of the same date.

Mr. DALRYMPLE: I will if you give it me. If I take up the time of the House, I beg they will excuse me for doing so in reading these few paragraphs of my letter; because they throw a great deal of light on the feelings which existed in our minds at the time: they shew that the feelings which have been so eloquently expressed by my honorable friend, the member for Ipswich, Mr. Pring, are not the offspring of our thoughts this session. They existed a year ago. We have been for many months endeavoring to get the principles which we propose to inaugurate brought before the Ministry, and carried into law for the benefit of the country. In making these remarks I have alluded to the Darling Downs squatters' obstructiveness; and I have to offer an apology to them for my mistake in supposing that they were the members of this House who would be the obstructionists in the way of this improvement of giving just rights to the people of Queensland. In consequence of the promise which the honorable the Minister for Lands and Works made, last session, I believe he has now laid upon the table of the House, and we have now under discussion, this "comprehensive" Land Bill; and it appears to me we are left to find out the meaning of it ourselves, for I cannot say that we derived the slightest information on the subject from the honorable gentleman at the head of the Government, or from the honorable the Colonial Secretary who just sat down. There are many points in the Bill they have not attempted to explain to us. There is one thing I object to: I object to the Bill, because it is a continuation of that tinkering policy which has existed for so many years in the formation of the land laws of this colony, and which we sincerely hoped, from the influence we undertook to bring to bear on the honorable member at the head of the Government, last session, and by the "comprehensive" Land Bill—meting out equal justice to all classes alike—which would be introduced by the honorable gentleman this session, would be put an end to. I am sorry to say I see that the claims of the general public have not been recognised by those gentlemen, and that, as was most ably shewn by the honorable member for Ipswich, in the first place, it is very evident that the Bill of the honorable gentleman at the head of the Government aims a death-blow at the great producing interest of the colony. It still hampers the establishment of the great producing interests, and it does so in this way. The power is left in the hands of the Minister for Lands and Works to declare reserves of large extent upon the runs on Darling Downs, or in any portion of the colony. It has been already, by one honorable member, shewn that these reserves are in excess of what are at present required. I

think they are so. Then, why are those reserves not taken up to a larger extent than they are at the present moment? Why is not one-third of those reserves taken up? Yet larger reserves are to be proclaimed.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: They are not surveyed.

Mr. DALRYMPLE: If they are surveyed, they will not be taken up. As the honorable member for Ipswich said, there are not the people in the colony, there is not the capital in the colony, to do so. But, in taking them from the squatter before the time has arrived when they are absolutely necessary, the Government are depriving the squatter of what is to him, until they are required for public purposes, a legitimate subject of security for the advances of capital. There is a very large extent of those lands, which are not absolutely required at the present moment, upon which large flocks are depastured. According to the clauses of this Bill, it appears distinctly that if two or three men settle down on these reserves, they shall have the right to commonage over the whole reserve—five thousand to fifteen thousand acres—thus destroying the run to that extent.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: No; it is not so.

Mr. DALRYMPLE: I can refer the honorable member to the Bill, where it is shewn.

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS: It is only the surveyed parts.

Mr. DALRYMPLE: It is in the ninety-first clause, under the seventh head—"Commons":—

"All ratepayers in any municipality and all householders in any town all selectors and all holders of miners' right shall be entitled subject to the regulations hereinafter referred to and free from all charges save the fees imposed by such regulations to depasture their cattle upon any common appropriated to them respectively and no other person except as herein expressly provided shall depasture any animals thereon."

I beg to argue that this is depriving the squatter, before there is absolutely any necessity for depriving him, of this security of capital; it is depriving him of a most valuable security, and, in doing so, it is doing a great injury to the great producing interest of the colony. At the same time, squatting members on this side of the House have told me, and I believe I speak their words in saying, that when the time arrives for giving up those reserves, they will freely and willingly give them up. As much is said in the letter alluded to. This Bill aims a death-blow at the great producing interest of the colony by its adherence to the ruinous and, I trust, soon exploded, "Wakefield system"—to sell land at an upset price of a pound an acre. That system has been ruinous to Australia generally. The only colony in Australia that can shew the successful establishment of an agricultural population on a large scale, similar to

Great Britain, is South Australia; and there the auction system at a reduced upset price has been carried out. In New South Wales and in Victoria a different state of things has taken place. In New South Wales, which colony has been in existence seventy or eighty years—look at the vast area which is still unoccupied. Although they have had a most liberal land law brought in by Mr. Robertson, and supposed to be a great boon to the colony, the greatest portion of the country, ninety-nine hundredths of it, is still unoccupied, and will be so for years to come. What benefit has that colony derived from an adherence to this system of the high price of land? If the price had been reduced, as in the most successful colonies in the world, that colony would not be as it is now, but it would have attracted the most desirable class of immigrants from other countries, who would have come and settled on the land. For these reasons;—the immigrants would not have had to expend the little capital they brought on the land they settled down upon, but only a small portion; and so they would have had money in their pockets, to go on with the improvement of the land. But this ruinous system has been to carry out what is, I trust, seen to be an exploded fallacy, that of keeping the public land for posterity. Now, I ask this House, what is posterity? When does posterity begin? During what lapse of years are we to keep the lands locked up for this imaginary posterity? I should say the proper posterity are the descendants of the present occupiers of the lands of the colony. If any honorable member of this House has a private estate, will he lock it up in a state of nature for his posterity; or will he fence it in, cultivate it, make the most of it for himself? The present people of this colony I consider the owners of this colony. To us ought this land to be alienated. If it is done upon a proper system, and we improve it, posterity will bless us for having so improved it, and for having handed down to them a flourishing estate instead of a barren wilderness. I must say, sir, that I think the farming classes of this colony have been very badly used by the Legislature since it commenced; I say my sympathies go with the farming classes of this colony—honorable members may laugh, but I may tell them that I have been a farmer myself in the old country—I am the son of a farmer—I have been brought up amongst farmers—I enter into their feelings, and I sympathise with their feelings, particularly in a young country like this; and, though I do not wish to boast of it, there are not many members in this House who can teach me anything on that subject—I have studied it, having been amongst farmers from infancy. The system of farming in this colony is not one that will succeed. I ask any practical Scotch or English farmer if the system of raising cereals only will answer in any country?—will it answer in any climate?—

will it answer in all soils? The system carried on in Britain and Ireland is a mixed system of grazing and cultivation. That is the proper system of farming to be introduced into this colony; but it cannot be introduced under the present land laws. Under the present prohibitions of the land laws, I am right in saying that that system of farming cannot be carried on. Why should this be the case? Why should the farmers of this country be debarred from depasturing small quantities of cattle and sheep? Honorable members say, "Hear, hear:" do they afford facilities for so doing by this Bill? I say distinctly, No. I say it is a pity that this Bill does not provide for this class of labor and colonists. In this country they would be the most valuable accession of immigrants that we could receive. Under the present land system, and under the new Bill, it is utterly impossible almost for a man to have a large dairy farm. But the Minister for Lands and Works, in his wisdom—and I give him great credit for it—has permitted licenses to be granted for portions of commons for dairy purposes. It is no use detaining the House to find it; honorable members are aware that it is in the Bill. However, sir, would it not be better if provision had been made in this Bill in such a way that the dairy farmer could obtain the land without restrictions—that he could make use of every acre to depasture in the same way he could do in his own native country at home? I have lately visited the district of Illawarra, New South Wales. I found there no compulsory agriculture—no compulsory cultivation. It was there found, after farming for years, that grain cultivation only did not pay nearly so well as dairy farming. I was in dairies there that would compare favorably with those in Ayrshire, or in any part of England. But here the dairy farmer is under conditions; he must cultivate a certain portion of his land. We want out in this colony that large class of respectable farmers and small farmers who form the strength and greatness of England; and whom we must have here in the shape of small graziers, wool producers, and farmers combined. There is no reason why we should not. The honorable member for Ipswich, Mr. Pring, referred to a class of immigration which would also be valuable to this colony; that is, the small capitalists, with £1,000 or £2,000. And honorable members of this House are quite aware that such a class of immigration at the present moment is almost useless in this colony; and that to send out young men to this colony with that amount of money has been in too many cases a curse to them instead of a blessing. This ought not to be the case. A colony of this size, at this stage of advancement, ought to throw out every inducement to men of this class; men of small capital, and men of education, who would be a credit to themselves, a comfort to their friends, and large con-

tributors to the prosperity of this colony. There is another portion of this Bill, the eighth or last head—"Leases and Grants for Novel Enterprises"—about which I have something to say. Now, under the old Wakefield system of one pound an acre, bonuses and grants were things which we were almost compelled to adopt for the purpose of inducing enterprise in the cultivation and production of articles which were experimental, but which would be of the greatest advantage to this colony; where agriculture will, in the course of time, be an equal producing interest to the great producing interest of the colony. But I do not believe in the principle of bonuses and grants to novel enterprises; and I believe that the whole of those interests together would be well served, would be sufficiently encouraged, by that great desideratum, that great consideration, which we on this side of the House urge on the Government—the reduction of the price of land for all. That is the best possible bonus the Government could grant. The lowering of the price of land in this colony would hold out inducements for every producing interest in the colony. We would thus be placed on a par with the United States, with Canada, with some of the colonies of South America, with the Cape of Good Hope. With those colonies, at the present moment, we have not the ghost of a chance; for they sell their lands at low prices without restrictions, whilst we attempt to sell—we do not do it to any extent—our land at one pound an acre—the old Wakefield system, and encumbered with restrictions. But there are honorable members of this House who object to the sale of public land at five shillings an acre, for fear that classes might interfere with each other, and that the capitalist might obtain more than was his just due. But, sir, if honorable members will give a full consideration to the benefits to be derived from sale by auction, and the putting up of land in reasonable blocks, they will see that sale by auction is the protection of every class of the community against his brother—that, if the public land is put up in sufficient quantities, no man in the country need let his neighbor obtain the land at less than its absolute value. Now, sir, these are my firm convictions; but I am happy to say, that I am supported in them by the opinions of many eminent authorities; and, without wishing to take up too much of the time of this House, I desire to quote several authorities to support me in what I have stated. The work I have before me, is Mr. Hermann Merivale's "Colonization and Colonies;" it is that of a gentleman, who is a professor of political economy in England. That gentleman, in entering first upon this subject, states:—

"Let us, however, for the present, regard these difficulties as subdued, and reflect on the principal causes which tend to produce the prosperity of new settlements."

Then he quotes Adam Smith:—

"Adam Smith disposes of the subject briefly enough, attributing that prosperity to one great cause, economically speaking, 'plenty of good land.' The abundance of produce, he says, at once induces the landlord to collect labor from all quarters, and enables him to reward that labor by high wages; and the laborer is speedily enabled to become independent, invest his accumulated capital in land, and employ other laborers in turn."

Mr. Merivale further proceeds to descant on the disadvantages of restrictions in the disposal of land.

"Now fertile soil is, to the settler, the machine with which he works; it is that for the sake of which he is content to forego all the benefits which he might have derived from remaining a member of an older and denser community. To prevent his occupation of the most fertile soil within reach, either by raising its price, or by any other conventional arrangement, is to force him to resort to the use of a less productive machine; it is to force him to waste a portion of his precious labor, to forego a part of his expected reward, with a view to certain speculative advantages for the community. It may be indeed true, as I have on a former occasion mentioned, that the mere spirit of independence may occasionally induce a man to take a wrong view of his own interest, and to move into the wilderness, when, for his own sake, he would better have remained in the clearing. But these are only exceptions to the general rule: nor could even these be prevented, except by a sacrifice involving greater loss. It is the energy and enterprise of the individual which leads him to commit the oversight. You cannot save him from the commission of the oversight, but by controlling that energy and enterprise, and preventing him from performing the part for which he is evidently fitted—that of a pioneer civilization. And this is, after all, the most formidable of all the objections to any scheme for controlling the natural course of capital and labor in a new colony, for confining its injudicious expansion within a belt of restrictions, to use a favorite metaphor of the advocates of those schemes. Every deduction from the liberty of man as a free agent is, in an economical sense, a diminution of his power. This is true in old countries, truer still in new ones; it forms the immovable basis of the general argument against public interference with the production and distribution of wealth."

Now, sir, in speaking of the Northern States of the American Union, Mr. Merivale describes the States of New England; and I think, honorable members will see that there is a considerable resemblance between the early condition of New England States and Queensland in its early days. He also descants on the necessity which existed there for the non-restrictive policy; and, I think, that honorable members will see, further, that it is actually necessary that the non-restrictive policy should exist here.

"A line drawn from the Atlantic to the Mississippi, nearly along the course of the Delaware and the Ohio, will separate pretty accurately the two classes of colonies which I have distinguished in this lecture. To the south of it lie

the regions where the great staples of American export have been raised, namely, tobacco, rice, and, more lately, cotton."

This, sir, has a certain resemblance, but on a small scale, to the seaboard of this country, to the north, however; and what follows would refer to the inland districts, beyond the Main Range:—

"To the north, those which produce corn and cattle, and from which little or no exportation takes place to Europe, except of timber. Let us fix our attention for a while on a small portion of this latter region; namely, the older New England States. Never were colonies founded under circumstances more necessarily tending, if the theories —"

that is, the Wakefield theory;

"—which we are now considering were true, to perpetual weakness and poverty. Their soil is, at the best, only of moderate fertility; while they border on the rich and interminable regions of the West. No restrictions were ever adopted in the granting of their lands: each settler could always provide himself with the most fertile, wherever he might find it. They never had, to any extent worth mentioning, the assistance of slave labor, or convict labor, or apprenticed labor; and they were peopled by the most enterprising and independent of men, the least attached, it is generally thought, of all men, to home and its associations,—the most determined enemies to all control. From them have issued innumerable swarms of emigrants; insomuch, that a great part of the United States has actually been colonized by descendants of the first New England colonists. It is true, that, on their first foundation, they exhibited a degree of concentration not often found in English settlements; partly from the strong religious and municipal feelings which bound the settlers together in townships and villages, partly from the density of the forest, partly from the hostility of the natives. But this concentration lasted only during the few first years of struggles and difficulties. Self-interest soon prevailed over the earlier principles of their foundation. Twenty years after their settlement they found Massachusetts too narrow for them; and swarmed into Connecticut and New Hampshire, 'because the Bay was overstocked.'

"In 1682, the governor of Connecticut writes of the land of that province, 'what is fit is taken up; what remains must be taken out of the fire, by hard blows, and for small recompence.' Connecticut had then scarcely more than 10,000 inhabitants.

"What could be prognosticated of such settlements as these, according to the arguments which might be deduced from some passages of Mr. Wakefield and his followers, but, at best, a slow, languishing advance through long periods of poverty and discouragement? Let us contemplate the picture presented by their actual condition. Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island, had, in 1840, about 1,200,000 inhabitants on 12,000 square miles English, or 100 to a square mile. Connecticut alone, of which, in the opinion of its governor, all the good land was taken up when it had 10,000 people, had 300,000, almost all agriculturists. But the population of England,

at the beginning of the last century, was not much above 5,000,000 on 50,000 square miles. So that New England had reached, in two hundred years from its first settlement, a density of population equal to that which Old England had attained, six centuries after the Norman conquest.

"It is now, notwithstanding its enormous annual drain by emigration, actually suffering under the evils incident to an old and over-peopled country. There is a very remarkable passage, in Miss Martineau's "Society in America," respecting the embarrassed state of many of the New England landowners, from the difficulty which they already experience in finding productive employment for their capital.

"Surely, when we hear of the necessity of stimulating the progress of young colonies, through artificial combinations of capital and labor, and reflect on the advance of communities like this, in which no such systems were ever attempted, we cannot but be tempted to ascribe such proposals to that impatience of gradual results, which is the common parent of rash political speculations."

I am sorry to occupy the time of the House so long, sir, but honorable members will find these quotations possess considerable interest in this debate. Again, Mr. Merivale, in speaking on the early state, and rapid advance to greatness of Virginia, goes on to say:—

"Can any one in his senses suppose that if Mr. Wakefield's 'belt of iron' had been put round the infant colony,—if the original settlers of Virginia had been forced to remain in their first clearings, and to expend their capital in maintaining them in a state of productiveness after their first fertility had disappeared,—Virginia herself, not to say the Union in general, would have been wealthier at the present day?"

He says:—

"That an ample supply of labor is not only desirable, but essential, in a colony raising valuable articles of produce for the general market. That in a colony not raising such produce in any abundance, it is unnecessary; and that any attempt to ensure it, by controlling the freedom of action of the settlers, or preventing them from the easy acquisition of land, would occasion a dead loss."

Here, sir, is a statement by Mr. McCulloch, which is quoted by Mr. Merivale, and which, I think, describes the position of Queensland at present, and bears very much on the state of this colony, especially as regards immigration, as was stated in the debate on that subject last night:—

"This is the view taken among others by Mr. McCulloch, the most determined assailant of the scheme of sale at high prices. 'It is a part of this new project,' he says, 'on the excellence of which much stress is laid, that the sums got by the sale of lands in the colony are to be expended in defraying the expense attending the conveyance thither of laborers. This is a species of bait held out to tempt capitalists to buy land by making them believe that, though land be artificially dear labor will be artificially cheap, and that, on the whole, they will be very well off. This, however, is merely attempting

to repair an injury done to the capitalists by inflicting a more serious injury upon the laborers. In a colony where a large portion of the capital is swallowed up in the purchase of land, the demand for labor must be comparatively limited, and this limited market is to be glutted by throwing upon it crowds of paupers."

Here is a statement, sir, which is also of considerable interest, and which is taken from the *Edinburgh Review*, by Mr. Merivale. It is a review of Wakefield's theory.

"You might, indeed, fix a higher price, in the first instance, than would be necessary to bring in the just supply of labor; and, in that case, you might use the surplus fund for other purposes, without losing the desired portion between land and labor; but you would introduce an evil of another kind; you would place an unnecessary restriction upon the field of cultivation: with a lower price, the same money would have been spent in buying more land, which land would have supported more laborers, which laborers would have raised more produce; and the money you want would be obtained at less cost by taxing the produce raised, than by taxing the fund which goes to raise it."

There is no doubt the present system of settlement in this colony, sir, is one which has been spoken against by many political economists; that is, its tendency to establish many separate communities, at a great distance from each other, which causes many difficulties in government, and in communication, and expense to the colony, which are not so self-supporting as large agricultural communities. On this subject the *Edinburgh Review* also remarks:—

"Suppose two fertile valleys separated from each other by a barren tract. On the uniform price system, the fertile would be bought up and cultivated, the barren left waste and unappropriated. An easy communication between these fertile tracts would no doubt increase the value of both; but whose interest will it be to make it?"—which seems at all events, to point to the conclusion that the uniform price system, in order to be successful, should be accompanied by the creation of some definite fund for those purposes which may be generally termed 'preparation.' It should, however, be added, that in Australia the intervening land thus described would probably be found valuable to let as 'natural pasture,' but not worth the while of any settler to purchase, whether by auction or otherwise."

Now, sir, in the pastoral districts, there are large tracts of land, certainly, which are available as being first-class land for agricultural purposes, and which are similar to the "two fertile valleys" which are here shadowed forth by the *Edinburgh Review*; but between those valleys there is, as the writer states, especially in Australia, intervening land of an inferior or lower class, which, in a vast number of instances, is not useful for agricultural purposes, and will not be for generations to come. But this land would be useful for pastoral purposes, and would become more useful for these purposes in time; the more improvements on it, the

more capital spent on it, of course, the more valuable it would become—and if this were sold by auction, there would be an opening for pastoral occupation, or for some of those classes which I have before alluded to as being beneficial to this colony. If laid out in farms of various dimensions, this land, by becoming fee-simple in the hands of those classes, would be improved, and would become—instead of, as at present, a wild, with a small amount of stock grazing over it—capable of carrying six times the amount of stock, and be amongst the improved and valuable lands of the colony. There is another objection honorable members of this House may enter against sale by auction, especially; that is, that the grasping squatter—who has been alluded to—would endeavor to possess himself of the fine water frontages and alluvial flats on the rivers. I think, if you listen to Mr. Merivale's statement, you will find that such a system is impossible:—

"One other serious difficulty presents itself in some localities; namely, how to restrict the monopoly by a few settlers of peculiar natural advantages, of which it is very desirable that a share should be left to a great many. Population naturally establishes itself, in the first instance, along great lines of communication: thus the banks of the St. Lawrence, from Quebec upwards, have been well peopled for a century, while ten miles from the river the country is often a wilderness. This is the natural progress of events, and it would be unwise in a government to attempt to check it. But take the instance of a country where water is scarce, as in Australia, generally speaking. It is absolutely necessary that the occupier of land for pastoral purposes should have access to a stream. But its banks will be immediately monopolized by a few. The first capitalists who purchase land will rush to seize them."

Now, mark!—

"Under the auction system, the price of such situations would rise to such an extent that no one would be anxious to purchase more water-frontage, as it is called, than was absolutely necessary for the sake of his other land. Under the other, every one would secure as much of it as his money would buy."

Still, sir, there are other colonies. There is that vast and rich portion of the American continent, the United States, which possess land laws which attract thousands to their shores for hundreds that we do. The reason is, the lower price of land, with the absence of all restrictions from settlement. We are situated sixteen thousand miles from England; those countries are situated only three or four thousand miles distant; and, in addition to the similar advantages the immigrant has available, and the less cost, he has the advantages I have named, on his arrival in the colony, which he does not get here—immediate facilities for settlement on the land. I will just take the liberty of reading this description of the American land law to the House, because it will shew

the vast advantages that are given in that country to those in Queensland:—

“The greater portion of the unoccupied lands of the United States constitute the national domain, and are, of course, under the control of the National Government.”

It is generally supposed, sir, that the system of the United States land laws would not answer in this colony, because in the land laws of that country there is no provision made for the alienation of land for pastoral purposes. But such is not the case, for here is the exact provision:—

“That all proprietors are subject after a few years to local taxation. It must be added, in order to obtain a tolerably complete view of the system, that ‘squatters,’ when the land on which they have established themselves is sold, are in some cases entitled by law to a right of pre-emption; and where this is not the case, they exercise a similar right by us all.”

It goes on to state that the ordinary price of land seldom exceeds six shillings and three-pence an acre. I quote these extracts, sir, because they are of vast importance, as shewing the nature and value of political freedom to young colonists. Mr. Merivale further remarks:—

“And if any one is disposed to undervalue the importance of that political freedom to new communities,—if he is disposed, by not an uncommon mistake, to attribute too large a share in their progress to natural advantages, and too small a share to moral causes,—let him note one social phenomenon, which is almost a crucial test of truth on this subject. Southern Russia possesses tracts of fertile unoccupied soil, second only to those of the United States, and a climate but little inferior. They are nearer than the western states of America to Germany, and quite as accessible. For a century past Russia has invited colonization in that direction. She has offered great advantages to German settlers, and exempted them from many restrictions to which her own people are liable. America offers them nothing, except a fair start with others in the common struggle for advancement. The German is equally a stranger in both. And yet from 150,000 to 200,000 Germans annually cross the Atlantic; while, of agricultural colonists, Russia scarcely receives a few scattered families. What is the cause of the difference? The attraction of freedom, political and commercial; and that, apparently, alone.”

Mr. Merivale sums up his most valuable observations as follows:—

“But the first great difficulty with which these attempts at improvement have to contend arises from the essentially fluctuating nature of colonial society during the period of immigration. So long as an English colony, or a western state, is annually receiving and parting with a large share of its population, so long its institutions are provisional and temporary in their working: and democracy—while even more a necessity than elsewhere—presents at the same time an exaggerated picture of itself. The very same institutions under which Texas and Kansas present all the repulsive features of backwood life,—under which the ever-shifting

community of New York city has fallen, if we may believe its writers, into the very worst abyss of local misgovernment and corruption,—are those under which the long established states of New England enjoy their profound peace and their enlightened practical freedom, and exhibit on the whole the most successful polity on which the eye of the statesman can rest. It is to this latter standard that we may hope to see Upper Canada, New South Wales, and Victoria approximate. If this hope be fallacious, there remains no alternative but that of anarchy and its consequent tyranny.”

And, I trust, we may add, Queensland also. The Colonial Secretary remarking upon the speech of the honorable member for Ipswich, Mr. Pring, alluded to a statement of that honorable member, that the declaration of agricultural reserves ought to be referred to both branches of the Legislature; and he endeavored to perpetuate the error into which his colleague, the honorable Secretary for Lands and Works had fallen, in stating that such was the wish of honorable members on this side of the House. No such intention, sir, belongs to us. The clause which the honorable member for Ipswich read to the House was of a very different nature, as he explained; and after his very clear explanation, I am surprised that the honorable the Colonial Secretary should recapitulate that statement in a garbled form. The clause which was read by the honorable member for Ipswich explained the true meaning of the intentions of honorable members on this side of the House—that reserves sufficient for public requirements shall be made in every district, but no proposed reserves shall be proclaimed if both Houses concur in objecting. Now, sir, as that honorable member pointed out, there is a great difference between the two clauses; for, according to the first proposition, it would be impossible for the Minister for Lands and Works to make the reserves without first submitting them to the Legislature by laying them on the table of this House; but that is not necessary—all that is required being that sufficient time shall be afforded for objections to be made against them. Now, sir, the honorable Colonial Secretary has himself admitted that this Act is simply a codification of old Land Acts, that it is not a new Act, and contains very few, if any, new principles. That amounts, at all events, to an admission that the Government have not taken into consideration the advisability of meeting the present requirements of the colony by a comprehensive land measure—they have blinked the question entirely, and ignored the opinions of honorable members in this House, and the opinion out of doors, that such a measure is necessary. The honorable gentleman also stated that in the scheme we have propounded, no difference was to be made in the price of lands to be disposed of in the northern and southern districts. But what we proposed was this, that the price should

be left to the public to decide. In the first instance the upset price is fixed by this House, and then it is left in the hands of the public to decide the exact value of the lands; because, if it is put up at five shillings an acre, it does not at all follow that it will be sold at five shillings—it may probably fetch one pound, or two pounds, an acre in the Darling Downs, and some other districts; while in the outside districts the land put up at five shillings may reach fifteen shillings an acre, or even more. The price will therefore be fixed by public opinion.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: In some of the districts there may be no public opinion.

Mr. DALRYMPLE: Then there can be no population, and I am quite sure in such a case no squatter would be willing to lay out his money. He would wait until a population had been created, and then the land would be purchased at its real value. The honorable Colonial Secretary also stated that great disaster had happened to the farmers during the last three or four years, owing to floods, droughts, and other calamities, and he urged that as an argument for continuing the present system. But, sir, I am of opinion, on the contrary, that these misfortunes to the farmers form the strongest possible reason for reducing the price of land, in order to enable them to meet such times of trial. The honorable gentleman also commented strongly upon the way in which the lands in the northern parts of this colony had been taken up, and displayed an ignorance of the subject which, in an old colonist and a gentleman of so much experience, I was surprised to see. He stated that they were taken up entirely by speculators. That I distinctly deny, because we know that a large quantity of those lands were taken up by the men who now occupy them, and many of those persons have succumbed to the difficulties of their position, and are not now the possessors of those lands. They have gone through troubles and endured hardships which are only known to the pioneer squatter, and I think the honorable member should be the last person to throw dirt at the pioneers of the colony. These persons whom he describes as land jobbers were men of small means, but possessed of energy and enterprise—the bone and sinew of the country. They had but little to embark besides their labor and energy when they went forth to the wilderness, and having but a small stock of capital were probably assisted by capitalists.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I beg to say, in explanation, that I did not allude to the pioneer squatters, but to those who, never having been squatters and entirely unacquainted with the bush, were guided entirely by the maps in their selection of runs.

Mr. DALRYMPLE: The honorable gentleman must then have alluded to such a remote period in the history of this country that it must have been before these districts were

settled; for I know that when I came to this colony I was unable to get an acre of land there, and I know others who attempted to take up country from the maps were unable to obtain it. The honorable gentleman also advanced as an argument against an alteration in the land laws, that the squatters were well off at present—sufficiently well off—and that consequently there was no necessity to bring in any measure for their benefit, and the proof he adduced of our splendid position was that we were encumbered with millions of debt, and that, I think, rather a peculiar position for men who are well off. But I may be allowed to inform the honorable gentleman that this debt costs the colony seventeen per cent., and that if our land laws were altered, and better security afforded, the interest would be reduced to ten per cent., which would be a saving to the country of seven per cent. What I should desire to see, with other honorable members on this side of the House, is a total abolition of the leasing system in due course of time. Let every man settle down upon his own land, with his flocks and herds around him, cultivate his land, and make a home for himself in the colony. We can only speak of the success of such a system by theory, and, speaking theoretically, I think it would answer; and we have the opinions of the high authorities from whom I have quoted to show that it has worked well in other countries. The leasehold system is the only one which has been tried in this colony, and I believe that if the American system were introduced, with a few alterations to suit the peculiar circumstances of the country, it would bring us a large influx of population and capital, and this colony would be established upon a basis of prosperity far above the expectations of its inhabitants, and would occupy a better position than any other in the Australian group. The honorable Colonial Secretary stated that the reason leasing had been given up in the agricultural reserves was, because a large portion of these reserves had been forfeited. I think the Ministry might have afforded us this information when they brought the system to a termination. But we find that they still, to a certain extent, adhere to that system. If it has been a failure, why do they still adhere to it, in the alienation of certain lands in the Darling Downs? I cannot think that, under proper management, such a system can be a failure. I believe it would assist the man with small means, who comes out to establish himself on a farm of his own, and afford him some chance of becoming independent; it would give him a few years to turn himself round before he had to pay for all the land which he required for his operations. In my native land, Scotland, a vast extent of waste lands has been taken under lease during the last thirty or forty years. A system of encouragement to the farmer is adopted there, which

it would be well for this country to imitate. There, when a man settles down on a piece of moorlands, he gets an improving lease, and is charged no rent for two or three years, according to the nature of the land. At the end of that time, he takes a long lease of it, and when he has rendered it productive he pays his landlord, but not before. It is in this way that a large extent of sterile land is cultivated and improved. The owner has sufficient sense to know that if he charges rent for the land, before it has been rendered productive, his tenant will be unable to pay him, and the land will necessarily relapse into its original state. He waits, therefore, until the farmer, by the sweat of his brow, has forced the land to yield some return, and then places a moderate rent upon it. A similar system, I think, might be carried out here—and it is proposed to carry it out in this colony to a certain extent—by allowing a man to purchase thirty to forty acres of land, or whatever number the Minister for Lands and Works has put as a limit, and to give him an opportunity of leasing an additional quantity—say three or four times as much—adjoining it. He would pay the first price of the land in fee-simple, and a small rent for the land under lease, over which he would have a pre-emptive right of purchase, at the expiration of five years, or at any time during that period, at the upset price at which the neighboring lands were sold. I think, sir, if honorable members on the other side of the House will take this question into serious consideration, they will find that there is really not much difference between us, and they will find, upon reflection, that if we both give way a little, we may be able to frame a land measure which will be of the greatest benefit to the country, without stirring up, what is the curse of all countries, class differences. I trust the Government will seriously consider this subject, and not force on the debate with undue haste. Every honorable member will, no doubt, desire to have an opportunity of expressing his views upon so important a question—a question which should be calmly and deliberately discussed. I hope honorable members on the other side of the House will consider in what way they can meet the offer which has been made, and accept the right hand of fellowship extended to them, and that we shall, by our united endeavors, succeed in settling the question upon an amicable and satisfactory basis.

Mr. RAFF: Sir, at the commencement of this session, after viewing the position taken by the Government on the one side, and certain squatting members on the other, and being strongly of opinion that, although a change in our land laws was urgently required, the demands, as they then appeared to me, made by the one party were such as could not be acceded to, and the opposition of the other party to any change such as I feared,

if persisted in, and not overcome, would materially retard the progress of the colony. I was anxious to see the question referred to a select committee of this House, in the belief that when both parties came to deliberate calmly on the matter, there was a likelihood that some modification would be made in the views of each party, and that some arrangement would be arrived at which would conduce to the benefit of the colony. I still indulge in that hope, sir; and I am glad to perceive, from the course which the debate has taken this evening, that such an arrangement is probable. When I saw the motion of the honorable member for West Moreton, Mr. Herbert, to discharge from the paper the order to refer this question to a select committee, I did not concur in it; for I believed that, although the House was unfortunate in the choice of that committee—unfortunate, because the committee did not represent one party at all—yet I considered that the evidence which would thus be obtained would be of service in settling the question. From the way in which the honorable member put his motion, and the manner in which it was received by the House, I was led to change my opinion; and I now think the action of the honorable member has increased the probability of a satisfactory arrangement. I am glad to see this question discussed fairly, and that there seems to be no inclination on either side of the House to make it a party question. I believe it is the first time that it has been debated in this House except as a class question. For myself, I may say that I belong neither to one party or the other; and if there had been a fight over the matter, I should have done battle for neither. I do hold opinions—strong opinions—on the subject; and I may say I have held the same opinions for the last six or seven years. The land laws of the colony were not settled originally in accordance with my ideas; but I have always abstained from counselling any change up to the present time. Now, I consider that an urgent necessity exists for some change; and although this is rather a late hour of the evening, and we have already had a long sitting, yet as this is a question the importance of which it is impossible to exaggerate, I hope honorable members will not consider that I am unnecessarily occupying their time in stating my views upon the general question. I may, perhaps, express opinions which have been expressed to-night, in the course of this debate, but I prefer doing so in my own way to referring to statements made by other honorable members on either side of the House. It cannot be questioned that it is the first duty of the Legislature of this colony to legislate for its progress and well-being; and it must be admitted that the best way to secure its progress is to pass such laws as will ensure a continuous influx of capital and labor. Then, sir, the inquiry suggests itself, what

are the strongest inducements we can hold out to attract this influx of capital and labor?—certainly not a suit of clothes and a free passage, with, perhaps, the addition of a few shillings to get drunk with on arrival, as has been the case with a *few* of those who have lately arrived among us. Now, sir, we want a class of immigrants who are not to be attracted by such inducements—men with sound minds and sound bodies, men of energy and enterprise, who come to the colony, not tempted by high wages only, but with the prospect of one day becoming employers of labor themselves. These are the men who, by enriching themselves, will, ultimately, enrich the colony. This is the class of men we should look for; these are the persons we should encourage to come out and settle among us. Let us, then, give the world proof that we are increasing our wealth, and that we have ample room for such a class of emigrants, and that there is every prospect that they will obtain here an ample return for their labor, their enterprise, and capital. As the law now stands, I believe the sooner we recall our Emigration Agent the better; and if we can pass such laws as will hold out the inducements I have referred to, I believe it will not be long before we can dispense with the services of that officer, valuable as they have been. The honorable Colonial Secretary has referred to an under current of letters—and there lies the whole secret of the matter—which renders all puffing useless. We can all understand, and we know, that the most powerful means of stimulating immigration of the right sort is contained in the letters written by persons who come out to this colony, and the encouragement they give to the friends they have left behind them. The prospect of soon increasing our wealth by an alteration in our laws, would not only be actually the best stimulus to immigration of the right sort, but would do more to remedy the present depression than anything else we could devise. Without a proper proportion of producers, traders can only live upon each other; and prosperity not based upon production, must be a hollow prosperity. It behoves this House, therefore, to offer every encouragement to producers. Now comes the question—do our laws as they at present stand encourage production? Do they give the means of cheap and extensive production, or will this Bill before the House afford the means? I affirm that they do not, or that they do so only to a very limited extent, and that this Bill does not in any degree mend the matter. The title of this Bill is, “A Bill to repeal the laws now in force respecting the disposal and alienation of Crown lands, and to make further provisions in lieu thereof.” The words “and re-enact the same” would have been quite as applicable, for its provisions are almost the same as those of the Bill which it repeals. It certainly cannot

be called a comprehensive measure, I would call it fragmentary, made up of patches. I say it without disrespect to the Government—for although it has been called a Government measure, made up of patches, it cannot be said that it is made up of fag ends. I believe I can easily shew, as other honorable members have shewn to-night, that the man of small capital is completely shut out from being a producer, while the man of large capital is unnecessarily restricted in his operations. We all know that wool growing has been the mainstay and chief producing interest of the colony, and the Government have been granting the use, on very moderate terms, of a very necessary instrument in the production of this staple, but only to a class;—the man of small means cannot make use of this instrument, he is completely shut out from being a producer of wool—he cannot become a squatter, for it takes a very large capital for that. We are now, I consider, suffering from the effects of this locking-up policy. The character of our immigration of late has been completely changed. I have already referred to the reason, people who come out here get disappointed, and deter others from following their example. There is always in the United Kingdom a very numerous class—and for our purposes, a very useful class—of persons who are on the look out for fields which offer the prospect of more profitable return for their capital and labor than perhaps exists in their own country. We, at one time, had our share of this class of immigrants, thanks to the indefatigable exertions of our Emigration Agent. They came out with the idea of making their fortunes by growing cotton. Now, we all know that, from exceptional causes, cotton growing for two or three years proved a complete failure. Some honorable members may contend that it has been a success this year, and that I admit: but the great success this year is also, I consider, owing to an exceptional cause. We have had an unusually dry season to mature and facilitate the gathering of the cotton. Two years ago, when cautioning the Government about their expenditure, I said that cotton, though it might ultimately prove a success, would at home be looked upon as a failure; and that they must not calculate upon the revenue continuing to increase as it had done from the influx of these people into the colony, and the result has proved that I was right. It will take some time, and continued success, to obliterate the impression which has already been made. It is useless to tell people at home to come out to Queensland to grow cotton; they do not believe in it, and will not for some time to come, until we have proved that we can cultivate it successfully. I should be the last to say that we cannot grow cereals with success in this colony, because I know that they are successfully cultivated; not, however, by the capitalist farmer, but by the man who can grow them

with the help of his own family, and without paying for labor. I say, therefore, that wool growing has been the most profitable pursuit, and had our land laws afforded facilities for agriculturists to carry on a grazing farm alongside their cultivated land, we should not now have to talk about depression in trade, and the necessity of making some alteration in our immigration system, or in our land laws. A very great blunder was originally committed in not adapting our land laws to the circumstances of the colony. It is well known to many honorable members, and has been admitted by the honorable Colonial Secretary, that I have for years advocated the same views. But as there are many honorable members present who were not in the House at that time, I will just call their attention to the fact that, when the battle was fought as to the upset price of lands, and it was decided that the price should be one pound an acre, I suggested the insertion of a proviso to the effect, that all lands which had been put up at one pound per acre, and left unsold, should, after twelve months, again be put up at ten shillings an acre; and that after another twelve months, the unsold portion of those lands put up at ten shillings should again be put up at five shillings an acre. Now, sir, I maintain that if that proviso had been in force, and had formed a portion of our Land Bill, the greater portion of the lands in East Moreton, and the rough land from the coast to the Range, would in all probability have been profitably occupied by the men who are now earning a bare subsistence, and are, most of them, waiting to get something for the farms upon which they have expended so much, to enable them to leave the colony. I have come in contact with some of these men, and they tell me it is difficult to get as much for the hay on their lands as will pay the wages of the men they employ. It was a very great mistake not to allow these men to carry on a grazing farm at the same time that they cultivated their land. If they had been allowed to graze 2,000 or 3,000 sheep, they would have been able to place themselves in an independent position, as the profit they would have derived from their stock would have enabled them to carry on their agricultural operations successfully. I will explain to the House that my attention was first called to this matter seven years ago by a practical sheep farmer from Van Dieman's Land, who visited this colony, and saw the land between Brisbane and the Main Range. We were then about to make our land laws; it was about the time of Separation, and of course there was a great deal of discussion as to what laws would be the most suitable for us. This gentleman pointed out to me that farming would never pay any one but the hard-working farmer, who would do all the labor himself, and that there were many persons who would come out and take the

charge of grazing farms who could not do the work upon agricultural farms. He added that he had seen our land on this side the Range, and that the worst of it was better than the best grazing lands of Tasmania, where sheep, from the fact that they were allowed to roam, and were not shepherded in flocks, did well. Well, sir, it is known to most honorable members that for the last two or three years this new system of sheep farming has prevailed to a great extent in Victoria, and has been attended with decided success. And many honorable members are well aware, from their own experience, that sheep which may have been lost in the bush for a few weeks, when restored to the flock, may easily be distinguished by their superior appearance for months afterwards, and that land, which is otherwise utterly worthless for pastoral purposes, will carry sheep if they are allowed to roam and not shepherded in flocks. Why, then, should land of this character not be rendered available? The honorable the Colonial Secretary talks about depreciating our lands. I was astonished to hear him make that remark, because it appears that he is confounding the upset price of the land with its real value. The upset price may be only one farthing, but it does not follow that it will be sold at a lower price than it is worth. The honorable gentleman said, that if we reduced the price to five shillings an acre, we should reduce the value of our securities. I maintain, sir, that anything which increases the prosperity of the colony, must raise the value of our securities. There are a number of persons in this colony who have purchased land at one pound per acre, and I cannot see that any injustice will be inflicted on those persons, if the lands of the colony which are not worth that sum are sold for less. On the contrary, it would be a benefit to them, for it is absurd to argue that the interest of one person can be opposed to the interests of the community at large. Every man's success must be mainly dependent upon the general advancement and prosperity of the colony. The honorable the Colonial Secretary, in the course of his speech, referred to the immense amount of foreign capital which has been brought into the country to enable some squatters to carry on their operations. Well, I take it, that circumstance of itself shews the necessity that exists for an alteration in the present state of things. Another honorable member referred to the high rate of interest the squatters have to pay—from seventeen to twenty per cent.—for the loan of money. He believed that if those leaseholders had smaller runs as freeholds their profits would be much increased, and there would be less necessity for borrowing money; and if a necessity arose for them to borrow money they would be able to get it at a lower rate of interest on freehold security than twenty per cent. The honorable the Colonial Secretary stated, that on a

certain occasion, when the leasing Bill was under consideration in committee, I walked out of the House. Now, the honorable member was mistaken, for I was on the opposite side of the House all the time. There were few members in the House at the time, and I remarked to honorable members that it would be of no use for me to offer any opposition; and at the same time, I reminded them of their position—that they were sitting here as agents for the Crown, and settling a matter between themselves as tenants and their landlords, as represented by the Government. And in answer to his observations, the then honorable member for West Moreton, Mr. Broughton, said, “After what the honorable member has said we must do something.” I only mention that circumstance now to set the honorable member right, for he was mistaken in saying that I walked out of the House on the occasion. Now, I have shewn, I think, that there exists a necessity for a change in the laws, to meet the necessities of men of small capital; and I now intend to submit that there is also an urgent necessity for a change in the laws, to meet the views of men of large capital. The system of squatting is undergoing a change, and the duty of the Government and this House is to encourage and assist the transformation by every possible means. The change would not only be highly beneficial to the squatters, but to the country. Their profits would be increased to a very large extent. Other honorable members during the debate will no doubt be able to shew that more clearly than I can. It is well known that sheep, when enclosed by a fence, want but little labor, and but little attention; that they yield much more wool, and run less risk of being attacked with disease of any kind. I believe I shall be borne out in this by every squatter in the House. Now, those changes would not only tend greatly to decrease the cost of production, but would enable the amount of production to be more than doubled; and country that is now considered well stocked with 20,000 sheep, would, I believe, if the runs were enclosed, be able to carry 60,000. Honorable members can all understand that sheep driven in a large body, destroyed three times as much grass as they can eat. As the thing is so easily understood, I think the House and the country ought to be well pleased to see the squatters adopting those views. I think I remember one honorable member in the Government advocating a reduction of the upset price of land to two shillings, and the honorable member now at the head of the Government was at that time in favor of the reduction of the price to five shillings an acre.

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS: Never.

Mr. RAFF: Well, I may be mistaken. The honorable the Colonial Secretary has talked about my consistency. Well, I make

no boast of my consistency, for if I held certain opinions at one time, and changed them, I would willingly admit it. When this question was first discussed, the squatters were the great obstructionists, and I give them credit for changing their views.

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS said he was in a division, on the occasion referred to, with the honorable member, and a number of others, and the ground on which they went was advocating the reduction of rent to five pounds; but he did not advocate that. That was on the occasion of the second reading of the Lands Alienation Act.

Mr. RAFF: Well, then, if that was the case, I must have been mistaken. Honorable members all knew that the price of a bushel of maize varies here according to the supply, but that is not the case with wool. The value of wool, if three times the present quantity were shipped, would not be affected. Now, that is a question not to be overlooked in this discussion—that however much wool is grown in the colony, or however much cheaper it is grown, the value will not be affected. I will now briefly refer to the financial part of the question. When honorable members speak of the general prosperity of the country, they should remember that on the land laws depend to a great extent the prosperous condition of the finances of the colony. I think the honorable the Colonial Treasurer must admit that the rent he at present receives for the grazing lands of the colony does not amount to one halfpenny per acre, and every honorable member knows that the country is now paying an enormous sum for borrowed money, and yet we are hoarding up the waste lands of the colony instead of selling it in order to avoid increasing our debt, and to get the means of paying the interest. Valuing the land at five shillings an acre, the amount paid in interest on borrowed money comes to about threepence or fourpence an acre on the leased lands of the colony, and yet all that the Government get for the use of them is about one halfpenny an acre. Now, where is the policy of that? If we go on for some time longer at that rate the Government will pay over and over again the value of the lands in the shape of interest. In a few years, the interest that was paid for this money will more than swallow up the value of the land. If a man buys a portion of land, and borrows a sum of money on it, if the land be ever so cheap, if he cultivates it, he will raise the value of it; but the Government are obtaining only one halfpenny an acre from these lands, and yet they, by continuing an upset price above their value, prevent them being made to yield more. It is a great mistake to confound the upset price with the value. Some honorable members have referred to a proposal for the classification of lands. Now, the classification of lands would be a very difficult matter to accomplish. It is all very well, I admit, in theory,

but it is very difficult to carry out in practice. It would be so difficult a duty to perform, that it would be unfair to ask any officer of the Government to attempt it. Holding these views, I of course conclude that auction is the fair and true test. We hear nothing about five shillings an acre for the pre-emptive rights; and the Government would not be justified in giving the pre-emptive rights at five shillings an acre. Nor should the Government throw large quantities of land into the market, but should bring it into the market as it is required to meet the demand; and there should be no restrictions to the lands being used by the occupier in the way that he found to be most profitable to himself. The lands of the colony are held in trust by the Government for the community, and the Government equally abuse that trust whether they throw them away or lock them up. It is an abuse on the part of the Government to lock up these lands when they can be profitably occupied. I will not detain the House longer, for I am but repeating arguments, perhaps, that have already been used; but I may conclude by expressing a hope, from what I have seen to-night, that there will be on both sides a considerable modification. I must say that the demands of the squatters, as set forth in the resolutions read by the honorable the Premier, appeared to me to be extravagant, and such as will not be acceded to; but as put forth from the Opposition side of the House in the debates to-night, I saw nothing unreasonable. The principle of alienation, instead of leasing, I decidedly hold by—they should both be encouraged; and when honorable members on the Government side of the House come to look quietly into the matter, they will come to see that it will be best for the colony to let every man who can profitably occupy land have the lands, whether for agricultural, pastoral, or other purposes.

Mr. R. CRIBB moved that the debate be adjourned till Thursday next, the 17th instant.