

Queensland



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[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 3 OCTOBER 1867

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, 3 October, 1867.

Repeal of a Standing Order.—Crown Lands Sale Bill.

REPEAL OF A STANDING ORDER.

Mr. MACALISTER said that, seeing the honorable the Attorney-General in his place, and referring to a matter to which he called the attention of the honorable and learned gentleman in the course of the forenoon, he now rose to what he considered would be regarded as a question of privilege. Having occasion to search the Standing Orders, his eye caught one which appeared to have been passed so far back as the 3rd of July, 1862. It was as follows :—

“Any member calling the attention of Mr. Speaker, or of the Chairman of Committees, to the fact that there is not a quorum of members present, shall be held to be present during the counting of the House, whether he be so present or not.”

Now, it appeared to him that this was a very important question, and that any difficulty in connection with it might have the effect of invalidating their legislation. As he understood, by the Constitution Act passed by the Imperial Parliament and amended by an Act of the Parliament of the colony, a certain number of members should be necessary to form a quorum, but the standing order he had quoted went to enact or lay down a rule that if a member was even half way down Queen street when the House was counted, he should be counted as present—that was

that a member should be counted as present who was really absent. Now, the question that occurred to his mind was whether the House had power to pass such a rule. He thought it had not. The clause in the Constitution Act required that there shall be sixteen members present, exclusive of the Speaker, to constitute a quorum for the despatch of business. Now, to his mind, it seemed very clear that in the Act the word "presence," meant natural presence in the chamber, and not merely presence within the precincts of the House; and he did not think that the House had power to say that an honorable member was in the House when he was not actually within the House. He thought it might be well for the Standing Orders Committee to take this matter into their consideration. The standing order to which he referred was at the end of the book. It seemed to have been passed specially, as it was ordered to follow standing order number six.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said he thought the honorable member for Ipswich had very plainly stated the view he had taken of this matter to the House; and he had no doubt that the best plan would be to refer the standing order in question to the Standing Orders Committee. It appeared to him that there might be a great deal of force in what the honorable member had said as to the conflict there was between the Constitution Act and the standing order; and whether therefore such a standing order should not be repealed. He would suggest that the matter be referred to the Standing Orders Committee.

Dr. CHALLINOR said he remembered that the standing order in question was prepared and passed because the Government of the day were not able to command a majority. They could only command fifteen members, and the Government had this standing order passed, to enable them to ride roughshod over the Parliament, and do as they liked. Mr. Herbert, he believed, was a member of the Standing Orders Committee at that time, or it was through his influence it was passed. At any rate, it was very characteristic of that honorable gentleman, who was never so careful to attend to the equity or legality of a thing as to the opportunity of accomplishing his object. He never considered the rectitude or want of rectitude of the means he employed, if he could only secure his end by them.

The matter was then, by general concurrence, referred to the Standing Orders Committee.

CROWN LANDS SALE BILL.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Mr. Speaker—In moving the second reading of a Bill to consolidate and amend the laws relating to the alienation of Crown lands, I regret that I shall not be able to adorn the subject with the amount of eloquence it

deserves, from its importance; but I trust that deficiency will be somewhat made up by the experience which I may claim to have brought to bear upon it. In the early days of Australia—not the land of my birth, but the land of my infancy, boyhood, and manhood—she did not possess such noble institutions as the universities of Sydney and Melbourne, and I had not the same advantages, or the same opportunity, of cultivating the *cacothres loquendi*, as many young Australians whom I now see around me have enjoyed. But at that time of life, when they graduated in these schools, I may say that I graduated in a still greater school—the school of colonial experience. At a very early period of my life, I was part owner of a station in the Lachlan District, New South Wales. I remember well the 7th of October, 1847, the day the celebrated Orders in Council were first promulgated. In terms of the eleventh section of chapter two of those regulations I made my demand for lease, and had the boundaries of the run published in the *Government Gazette*. The result was that three caveats were filed against me, and three I filed against my neighbors. These cases were tried in the Disputed Boundaries Court, and though I had arrayed against me the best legal talent of the south, I am happy to say, single-handed I pleaded my cause, and won every case. I do not, sir, allude to this subject to boast of my prowess to this House, but I refer to it more as an answer to those parties out of doors who, in addressing public meetings, hope to raise themselves in public estimation by detracting from public men, when they ask such questions as in my case—What does he know about this subject? Sir, I may say I have grown with the question. In dealing with a question of such magnitude, and such importance to the present and to future generations, I may observe, that I was much struck with a remark which fell from an honorable member in this House, that if the Government in power did not take a lesson from the failures of former Governments, they would be neglecting their duty. I say that if this Government, or any other Government, does not take lessons from what has occurred in the history of other nations, they are equally to blame. And the first thing that strikes one is the scarcity of facts which history presents—the few guides it gives to shew us how to turn a pastoral country into one of more settled occupation. The first country we turn to is the United States, but there is hardly any analogy between the States and these colonies. That country possesses large tracts of rich alluvial land intersected by magnificent navigable hives, whose ports are situated within a few days' reach of the very thresholds of the rivers of the most active and intelligent portions of the human race, who, from the nature of things, follow agricultural pursuits from the very day of their landing. With

the exception of Texas and California, there is no analogy between the two countries. There is, however, some resemblance to Queensland in the latter. But California, having been conquered by the Spaniards some two hundred years ago, they have mingled with the conquered race until their descendants at the present day display a civilization inferior to that which existed when their ancestors first landed on its shores. I have travelled many hundreds of miles in that country, and have been struck with the miserable condition of its inhabitants. We there see a remnant of the descendants of the Spanish conquerors who, having first enslaved, next intermarried with the Indians. A more miserable population cannot be imagined. Passing over Mexico—and we all know that the position of that country is most degraded—I then turn to the southern republics of America, which in their physical features also bear some resemblance to this colony, but the inhabitants of that country having been conquered by the same race, we find a similar state of things existing there. We see a country but poorly populated, a vast extent of wilderness peopled by a few miserable outcasts, tending the flocks and herds of their masters, who revel in luxury in the towns. I am referring to Paraguay, Uruguay, Monte Video, &c. But the analogy between these countries and Queensland is not perfect, and we must therefore, in dealing with this question, turn to some other countries for a parallel. If we look to ancient history, and take the land of Palestine, we there find a country whose physical features resemble much those of this colony, its eastern and western watersheds, its climate, its soil. The very name of Palestine is a corruption of a term signifying a land of shepherds, and in many ways it closely assimilates to this colony. I have met many squatters who have travelled in that land, who have told me that they have been struck with the extraordinary resemblance between the two countries in the physical features in soil and in climate. We find that that country was occupied in the first instance in a similar manner to this,—that the patriarchs of old lived with their flocks and herds in much the same way as the squatters of Queensland do at the present day. We lose sight of the records of that country for five or six hundred years, and we find in the interim that a land which was devoted exclusively to pastoral pursuits has been turned into one of more settled occupation. We then read of thriving farms, rich corn fields, and a population of some millions of people flourishing in an area not larger than the Darling Downs; we, therefore, may hope yet to see the Darling Downs in a condition of equal prosperity. I merely refer to this example because I have often been struck with the striking analogy between the physical features of the two countries. In the Roman history there is very little for

us to follow. If we take the history of the first gentleman who introduced free selection there, and were to follow it, I fear I should have to tremble for the position I hold. I allude to Tiberius Gracchus, who was the first who held the office of Commissioner of Crown Land, till, with his brother Caius, he came to grief. His idea was, that no man should possess more than 250 acres of land—that if he possessed any land above that quantity it should be taken from him. He, however, threw out a sop that children over five years of age might receive 125 acres each—so that if one had a large family, he might manage to get hold of 1,000 acres. It will, perhaps, be thought that some of the large land-holders must have objected to give up all their property over 250 acres for the benefit for their fellow-men. The history of the land measures of these countries is, however, very meagre, and we cannot glean much from it. I will, therefore, come at once to colonial history. In reading it, I cannot say it tends to make one hopeful, viewing the fate the different land measures of other colonies has met with. When I look to Sir Richard Bourke, Sir George Gibbs, Gibbon Wakefield, and a host of lesser lights, and see that all their measures for the settlement of this question were of a temporary nature, and could not stand the test of time, I cannot, I say, be very hopeful that the measure I now introduce into this House will be a final one. If it last only as long as the celebrated Orders in Council, I shall be very well satisfied. But, notwithstanding that such great thinkers as Gibbon Wakefield, and those who framed the Orders in Council, failed to pass a measure for the settlement of the land question, yet when I see around me men from the classic shades of Oxford and Cambridge, men of education and ability, and of great experience in these questions, I am inclined to feel sanguine that the assembled wisdom of this Parliament will be able to pass such a measure as will, at any rate, be more final than those which have preceded it. I hope for no more. And now, sir, I will give a short account of the land laws of this country, that is to say, of the mother colony, New South Wales. In the early days of that colony, land was given away to any person who was worth £500, who was under an obligation to occupy it, and to employ twenty convicts on the ground. And I find, sir, that no less than 1,219,000 acres of land were given away in that way, and 2,600,000 acres as grants to large companies, such as the Agricultural Company, the Peel River Company. I should regret to see any similar state of things inaugurated in this colony, not that I mean to say that grants of land to the early settlers were not desirable, but I maintain that such a system does not tend to benefit a country, as may be seen by the grant to the Hudson's Bay Company in America. There the land belonging to that

company lay neglected and unimproved, inhabited only by the beaver and the Indian, while all around it the country was cultivated and flourishing. In 1831 the land in New South Wales was put up at five shillings an acre. That lasted till 1839, when another change was made. The country was then divided into three districts—the northern, the southern, and middle districts; and I beg the attention of honorable members to this fact, that in the northern district the price of the land was fixed at twelve shillings, and in the southern and middle districts at twenty shillings an acre. Honorable members will therefore see that the classification of land is no new feature in the history of Australia. In 1843, the price of land is again changed to one pound an acre throughout the country. I will not go into the question of pastoral occupation. I will proceed to give a description of the principal features of the Bill before the House; but, before doing so, I may say that this Land Bill is a measure that has been agitated throughout the colony, and has, in consequence of that agitation, been forced upon the House. I do think that if the land laws already in existence had been fairly and properly administered, there would have been no occasion for this agitation. However, that is neither here nor there. We bring in this Bill, and as long as the main principle it embodies is untouched, we shall leave it to the wisdom of the Parliament to put it into such a shape as will render it somewhat final. The plan proposed in the two Land Bills is to divide the colony into two divisions—settled and unsettled districts. The gross amount of settled areas is 50,323,000 acres, and the unsettled areas 382,636,600 acres, power being reserved to bring in to the former any portion of the unsettled districts. The settled districts are then divided into two great divisions—northern and southern. In the northern division there are 41,245,440 acres, and in the southern division 9,077,760 acres. These are again divided into homestead or grazing areas. The northern homestead areas amount to 33,802,240 acres, and the grazing areas to 7,443,200 acres; and the southern homestead areas to 5,642,240 acres, and the grazing areas to 7,443,200 acres. In the homestead areas the conditions are—cultivation of one-tenth of the land, with residence extending over a period of three years, the land to be open to selection, with deferred payments extending over seven years. In the grazing areas, the land is open for selection in the same way, as far as grazing is concerned, with the condition of a certain expenditure upon it, either in the shape of buildings or fencing. I may observe that in the homestead areas the amount of land that may be taken up is from 40 acres up to 640, and in the grazing areas, from 60 acres up to 2,560. I presume honorable members have made themselves acquainted with the principle of the Bill, and they will find additional information given in the map which I have had prepared.

I have left a blank to be filled in with the price of the land in the northern districts, as it may be desirable to adopt the principle in force in 1839, and to vary the price of land according to its position. I think, if we insert fifteen shillings, we shall be pretty near the mark. Some honorable members may, however, think ten shillings a better price, some even one pound, and I shall leave that point to the wisdom of the House to determine. I have an account before me which shews that the rapidity with which the settlement of the country fell off when the price of land was raised was something astonishing. I see that in 1836, when the price of land was five shillings an acre, 389,540 acres were sold. That was in New South Wales, the population of that colony being then only 77,096, that is an average of five acres on each inhabitant that year. In 1837, there were 370,376 acres sold, and the population had increased to 85,267. In 1838 216,160 acres were sold, the population being 98,912, the land being still five shillings an acre. In 1839 273,619 acres were sold, the population being 114,386. In 1840, when the price of land was changed to twelve shillings in the northern districts, and twenty shillings in the southern and middle districts only 129,787 acres were sold. I find, sir, that the sale of land fell off the next year to 92,473 acres, though the population was steadily increasing and then amounted to 149,669 souls. So that we find, although the population increased, the quantity of land sold when the price was raised was considerably less. In 1843, with a population of 165,000, only 5,227 acres were sold, the price having been raised to one pound throughout the colony—

AN HONORABLE MEMBER: That was during a panic.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Probably there was a panic that year; but if the honorable member will follow me out in my figures, he will see that the land sales decreased in proportion to the increase in price, although the population steadily increased all the time. The sales of land continued small for some years until, in 1851, when, with a population of 197,168, only 24,030 acres were sold. It appears, therefore, from these statistics, that the theory of Gibbon Wakefield is a fallacy. And although I, for a long time, was a disciple of that gentleman, although I had the honor of knowing him, and, like many others, was converted to his policy, I have been obliged to confess that his theory is not one which will stand the test of time. I believe, sir, that the principle of deferred payments is a step in the right direction. There is one portion of the Bill upon which honorable members would, perhaps, like some explanation. The honorable member for Drayton and Toowoomba stated that certain persons who took up land at sixpence an acre, under the leasing clause of the Act of 1860, were in some alarm at this Bill. Now,

if honorable members will turn to the seventy-second clause, they will see that every provision is made for persons holding land under the twelfth clause of the Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1860. The seventy-second clause of this Bill only excludes persons who have not complied with the conditions of fencing, &c., which the former Bill exacts; but, on the other hand, every provision is made for those who have complied with those conditions. I now turn to a new feature in the Bill, in clause forty. Honorable members will perceive by reference to clause twenty-seven, that the auction system has provided for the sale by auction of all town and suburban lands and land adjacent to the town—that is to say, included in the town reserves and commonages; and if they refer to clause forty they will see that any lands which have been so offered for sale, and have not been sold, or lands upon which the deposit has been forfeited, may be selected within twelve months, at the reduced upset price of ten shillings an acre, and in another twelve months, if still unsold, at a still further reduced price of five shillings an acre. This, although a new feature in a Land Bill, was, I am aware, embodied in some resolutions brought before this House by Mr. Raff, during a former session. I think the principle is a good one. Some persons may object to it on the ground that intending purchasers might forfeit with the object of taking up the land afterwards by selection. But as such persons would have to pay two shillings and sixpence an acre down, and the land would be open for selection to other parties as well for the next twelve months, I think this objection is more visionary than real. But if honorable members are of opinion that some further precaution is necessary, they will, perhaps, suggest some way of meeting the case. I will draw attention to the fact that all the conditions appertaining to mining purchases have been embodied in the Bill, and that the Bill has been framed in such a way as to take away from the Government the power of making regulations, so that any person who holds this Bill in his hand will be in a position to know exactly what he can do. And if, in the short compass of 100 sections, I have not been able to make this Bill as comprehensive as might be desired, I can only say that I shall be happy to attend to any suggestions which honorable members may make in reference to matters of detail. There are one or two additions which, I must confess, I should be glad to see made. I think that all applications for lands for sugar, coffee, or for mineral purposes, as soon as they are made should be entered in a book, kept for the purpose, and open to the inspection of the public. For my part, I do not believe in secret diplomacy, and I believe that diplomatists in the older countries have, of late years, greatly changed their policy in this

respect. And now, sir, as honorable members are all acquainted with the principle of this Bill, and as I think I have given, for the present, a sufficient explanation of its details, I will move that it be read a second time.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said there did not appear to be any desire to follow the honorable member; perhaps he had gone rather too far into ancient history for them. He did not believe there was any intention on that side of the House to offer any opposition to the second reading of the Bill. There were, however, some few alterations which he should like to see made in committee, and perhaps the honorable member would name as long a day as possible for its committal. He would like to ask the honorable and energetic member for Maryborough, what steps he intended to take with regard to the classification of lands, as that seemed to be a prominent feature in the Bill, and the Government seemed to have an itching in that direction. He thought that question might be very properly left to the committee to deal with, and he felt sure that any alterations might be made without any party spirit and in the best possible feeling. He was not in favor of one price for northern, one for southern, and another for western lands; he would prefer to have a general price, and a classification of all lands, wherever they might be, throughout the colony. A distinction in the price of land in different districts would be an inducement to persons to go from one part of the colony to another, and a man might say, "Why should I give so much per acre in the south, when I can buy at a cheaper rate in the north or west?" The variation in the price of land would be an equal objection to people coming out from the old country, for it must be remembered that a good many people with capital had left this colony, where land could not be retained without an immense deal of trouble, and gone to New South Wales, where no such difficulty existed. He thought the distinction would be invidious and objectionable, and if northern members would look at it in the same light as he did, and forego their wishes in that respect, with the intention of adopting the more shrewd plan of the honorable member for Maryborough, and classify the lands in the south as well as the north, it would be much better; for it could not be denied that some lands were worth ten times as much as others. The classification of lands would be of great advantage, for it might be very convenient to a man who had a piece of good ground of his own to purchase a piece of indifferent land at the back of it which might be of no earthly use to any one else. There was one feature in the Bill to which he would like to call attention. He had observed that, wherever selections had been made, either under one Act or the other, upon a run, the squatter had to pay tax for every inch of land in that run, except the piece which was

purchased. He inferred, therefore, that the purchaser of that piece of land had not a single yard of commonage. He referred to the late proclamations under which land had been taken up. There had been upwards of three thousand acres taken up by selection in that way, at Ipswich, in the course of one day. The runs were still in the possession of the squatters, who could claim every blade of grass, except the lots actually purchased. It was clear, therefore, that there could be no grazing farmers in those localities because a man could not turn his cow or his bullock outside his fence without having it impounded. In the old country there were always some mountains or places used for commonage, where cattle could be turned out in the winter, besides the land cultivated.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The Bill provides commonages for people living in the towns; but it is presumed that if a man takes up 640 acres he does not require it. I believe that people in England look upon these commonages as rather a nuisance. Still, provision is made according to population.

MR. O'SULLIVAN: He believed there was some provision of the sort. He had not read the Bill with a very critical eye, but his attention had been called to the fact that the squatters had to pay for every acre except the land actually purchased. That involved an injury to the squatter as well as to the settler, because the cattle of the latter would eat his grass as well as their owner's. He hoped that when the districts of East and West Moreton were proclaimed they would be left to the agriculturist, and that the squatters would push further out, as he did not think there should be so many thousand sheep depastured on lands so near the town, which were fit for agriculture. There was the Peak Mountain, for instance, with so many sheep on it that the settler had not grass enough left to feed a goat. It was not to be inferred that because the former did not complain, he did not feel the grievance. If he did complain, why, of course, the very moment his cattle were outside his gate, they would be impounded. The squatters under the range had had enjoyment of the country for twenty or thirty years, and he thought it was pretty near time they pushed further out. If they did not, there would be endless disputes, and they would be going into court continually to settle them. There were not many squatters left there, so that no great injury would be done, and the interests of the few should always give way to the interests of the many. He made this suggestion in the best possible spirit, and he thought it would be well if he and other members who represented agricultural districts would lay their heads together and devise some plan of shifting the squatters over the range.

MR. STEPHENS said that honorable members could hardly be expected to read the Bill a

second time before hearing the opinions of the honorable member at the head of the Government. He was quite willing to move the adjournment of the debate, in order to give the honorable gentleman time, if he were not prepared to address the House.

MR. FRANCIS said he thought honorable members were under an obligation to the honorable gentleman who had introduced the Bill, inasmuch as he had admitted the absolute necessity that existed for liberal legislation upon the land question. He had admitted, because it could not be denied any longer, that the time had come when something must be done in order to give the people of the colony access to the lands. He (Mr. Francis) could not be expected to render a very hearty or ready adherence to any measure prepared by the party to which the honorable member belonged who introduced the Bill; because he was troubled with a memory which told him that, within the last three or four weeks, or some two months at the most, they had been told in the House, by a member of that party, that no new land Bill was required. The honorable member had admitted, however, that, owing to some agitation not particularly described, out of doors, he imagined a measure of land reform was no longer to be denied to the people. Although he was very forcibly reminded of the sacred words, "You cannot find grapes on thorns, or figs on thistles," yet he wished to divest himself of all prejudices against the measure, on account of the quarter from which it came. He was most anxious, if possible, to see in the measure sufficient virtuous qualities to demand the acquiescence of the House; for he was most anxious there should be some satisfactory settlement of that all-important question. No question of equal importance would be brought forward that session. If they asked themselves how it was that the colony was not at the present time in a prosperous condition, the obvious answer was—because there was so little production in it. They had the materials of wealth on every side of them, but somehow it had happened that the people, through whose instrumentality those materials of wealth could be made valuable, had not been able to come into connection with the soil for its beneficial occupation. A very little consideration would convince every one that the only thing wanted to set them in a right and prosperous condition was a satisfactory solution of the much vexed land question. What they wanted—if they could get it—was a measure which should be final and permanent; for nothing he conceived had injured the colony so much in the past as the everlasting tampering with its land laws which had taken place. And if by some gift from heaven, or some happy chance, a final and permanent settlement of the land question could be decided upon—a comprehensive measure, if it could be devised—

it would be the most blessed consolation that could be arrived at. He did earnestly hope that, in the course of time, by the hearty concurrence of all shades of opinion and all parties in the House, and in view of the extreme need of the colony for some beneficial measure, some satisfactory result would be achieved by the united energies and common-sense of honorable members. He did not think it would be possible to decide upon at once, perhaps not during that session, at all events not in a hurry, and without mature deliberation, a comprehensive and final settlement of the land question. The interests involved in it were vast, so numerous and so complicated, that if a person were to come to him and say that he saw his way quite plainly in the matter, he should reckon him up unmercifully as a fool. He did not wish to take up the time of the House on that occasion; he was anxious to confine himself strictly to the question before the House. He thought the honorable member who had moved that the Bill be now read a second time should have given some further explanation of the principles involved in it. It aimed, like the address—the very able address—with which it had been introduced, at being comprehensive, but in his estimation its very comprehensiveness was its principal defect. It aimed to do too much. Other opportunities would, however, be afforded him of explaining his views on that subject. He would simply refer for a moment to what he considered its essential principle, viz., that the colony should be divided into two districts. It appeared to him that no cause had been shewn for dividing it into northern and southern divisions—the south being about one-quarter, and the north three-quarters, of the colony. That was merely an arbitrary division; he thought it embodied the very worst principle; and it behoved honorable members to be very careful how they sanctioned it, for there was a great deal involved in it. Would the House consent that three-fourths of the lands of the colony should be fixed at once at a lower upset price than had been the rule heretofore without any cause being shewn for such a change? He was not an advocate for keeping the price of land at twenty shillings, or at five shillings, or at any arbitrary price; but before any change was made in the established rule of things, he thought it very important that some cause should be shewn. No man could say that he was anxious to lock up the lands, or to restrict its beneficial occupation. But he could not see that a mere reduction in the price of land was a measure calculated to bring people into proximity to it. Any measure that enabled a man with cash to buy up large areas, he took to be a measure utterly hostile and ruinous to the people of this country. Honorable members should not be asked, without explanation, to consent that the price of three-fourths of the lands of the colony

should henceforth be reduced. There was a very serious principle involved in the Bill, and one which he must for the present protest against. The adoption of that principle involved the repudiation of their existing obligations. That was a position which, he maintained, no one could overthrow; for those obligations had been contracted under certain land laws existing at the time, embracing a certain price for the land as an essential part of the system. To alter the main principles contained in those laws, and entirely to repudiate the state of things which then obtained, would be as much as to say that—"We will no longer meet our obligations." The honorable member for Rockhampton had stated, as he understood him, that he would not consent to lay any portion of the burdens, under which the colony for a while labored, upon the northern half of it. Now, as he looked at it, the Bill before the House was the first step towards separation, and, consequently, the first step towards the repudiation of the common debt. He felt, therefore, bound to protest against it. He should have been better pleased if the honorable member who introduced it had, in view of the press of business before the House, and the lateness of the season, taken a different course of dealing with the all-important question of the public lands. He should be glad if the honorable Secretary for Lands would state more particularly what agitation he had referred to as the cause which induced the Government to bring in the Bill. He presumed he could only have meant agitation on the part of the people out of doors, who only wanted to be allowed to settle on the land, and to see what they could do for themselves. He was of opinion, that a small part of the very lengthy measure laid before the House would have been sufficient to meet all present requirements—some provisions with regard to homestead areas, to supply the want that existed. He could not say that he thoroughly approved of the way in which it was proposed to supply that want, and when the proper time came he should be prepared to give his views on the subject. He did not think the Government, with all their liberality—for which he thanked them—had been liberal enough to the *bonâ fide* cultivator of the soil. But he thought that, instead of this long Bill, of one hundred clauses, embracing so many important principles affecting the future of the colony, the Government might have brought in some simple measure for the benefit of the agriculturist—the only class really in want of a liberal land law at present—the only class whose demands demanded recognition by the House. He had no wish to be unjust towards the large interest which had been established before agriculture was commenced, but he thought the Government would have had a better chance of satisfying

the country, and securing the good-will of the colonists, if they had merely introduced such a provision as he had described. There were many other points in the Bill to which further reference might be made, but he believed he had touched upon the most prominent. Nothing had impressed him more forcibly than the fact that legislation on this very important public question had been throughout hurried and superficial; and that being the case, he must repeat his regret that, with so much other business before the House, the Government had not adopted the course he had indicated, instead of attempting to pass what they intended to be a final and comprehensive settlement of the whole question. He tried to accept the Bill in the spirit in which it was offered by the Government, namely—that honorable members should unite to do with it what they could towards restoring the country to that state of prosperity which existed some four years ago, and of which there was a bright prospect in the future, for any man who was not mean-spirited enough to despair. The Minister for Lands expressed his anxiety for their co-operation in considering the details of the measure, and in making it suitable to the requirements of the country. It was said to be a liberal measure—it was feared it might be “too liberal.” Having regard to that statement, he was justified in looking with some degree of suspicion on a measure of land reform coming from that quarter. Nevertheless, not being a party man, and having no desire to be of any party, save the people’s party, and looking at this question as one in the consideration of which it was altogether out of place to permit party feeling or party influence to have anything to do, he was sorry that the feeling of suspicion which he had mentioned had any influence over him. He was anxious to see what good there was in the Bill, and, if possible, to give it his support. There were many things in it that were not new, and he was glad to see that much in it was taken from the Bill which had been brought in by the honorable member for Ipswich, Mr. Macalister;—there was in it the recognition of a new fact in the history of Queensland—that of a strong and growing feeling for agriculture. But there was one new thing in it which struck him at the outset, namely—that the whole colony was to be divided into two portions—an arbitrary division was to take place, why or wherefore the House were not told—north and south. He was bound to ask the House to consider whether it was safe to sanction a measure having such an important principle in it. He hoped they would give it serious attention. He did not see why the sum of twenty shillings per acre was to remain the upset price of land, but he certainly did not know why twenty shillings was to be the upset price in one part of the colony, and a “blank” per acre left for another part. That blank

looked very significant. He thought, also, that the Dutch system of auction provided in the Bill would be fatal to the interests of the colony. Suppose that fifteen shillings was inserted in the blank, and the price could not be got this year; next year ten shillings would be the upset price per acre; next, five shillings; and next, half-a-crown. That would be throwing the land away; for, perhaps, from lack of purchasers, it would be eventually offered for sixpence. The probabilities involved were so fatal to the best interests of the colony, that he must protest against being asked suddenly and without consideration to adopt that principle of the Bill. It looked like a first step towards separation. He was not for separation. He should be extremely sorry if the south lost the services of those honorable members who had come from the north to adorn the House—he meant particularly the honorable members for Rockhampton and Kennedy. The House ought not to take a step to drive away aid from any quarter. Neither was he one of those bigoted people who would not do justice to the north, or any other portion of the colony. Separation might do a hundred years hence. It might be asked, why all this dislike to a reduction in the upset price of land? It was simply because, although it looked like liberality—“too liberal,” in the honorable Colonial Secretary’s words—it was in effect, and in fact, a most illiberal dealing with the lands. If, by reducing the upset price, they put it in the power of anybody to buy up large areas of land, they would only reproduce in the colony that accursed system of land monopoly which many of them had much reason to remember with regret and disgust, as obtaining in the old country. That was his objection to reducing the upset price. The poor man was not such a fool as to believe that the reduction was made for his benefit, for the capitalist—he (Mr. Francis) did not care who, squatter or speculator, or agent of the banks—would inevitably step in and keep him out of the market. If the House could arrive at some simple solution of the land question, it would be a most desirable thing. Any settlement of the land question must, to be satisfactory, be a simple measure, easily intelligible. One mistake of the Bill before the House was its cumbrousness, its complicatedness. It would take a great deal of time for any man to understand the bearings, the ins and outs, of the measure. Free selection was nominally granted by it, but he thought it would be found really to be withheld, and, in point of fact, that the Bill gave with one hand while it withheld with the other. He begged honorable members of the Government to believe him, that he did not charge them with any insidious attack on the people; but he merely stated what the Bill appeared to him. He believed that the Government had felt bound by the necessities of their position to deal with this question. But it was utterly new to them;—

they had not had time to go into the merits of the question, and they had not really acquainted themselves with the bearings of the measure. When he asked himself what made Queensland so prosperous as a colony—in Yankee phrase, “going ahead”—four years ago, the answer that occurred to him was, that at the time there was a steady influx of population. And, if he asked himself how it was the colony was now looking down, the answer was, because the supply of immigration had ceased. No land Bill would be satisfactory to him, or ought to be satisfactory to the House, which did not provide for a continuance of that steady flow of immigration. It was no use sending a man to England, however able, to attract a flow of immigration, unless they could make it certain that the people would not be deluded on their arrival upon these shores, as had been the case with previous immigrants. It seemed to him that the Bill did not make adequate provision for this all important matter. There was a proposal to grant forty acres to every immigrant coming from Europe, or America—which last provision was an improvement—but that was not enough. More liberality in that direction might, it was true, be infused into the Bill in committee; but one great complaint he had to make was, that it contained so very meagre and miserable provision in connection with that matter. In the face of the inducements held out to emigrants in Great Britain and Ireland, by America, New South Wales, New Zealand, and other places, the forty-acre grant of land was not enough to ensure a flourishing community in Queensland. He had no wish to interfere with or hinder the progress of the Bill through the House, if it could be made to serve the interests which he represented, but his position was at this moment an extremely difficult one. If he consented to the second reading of the Bill, it seemed to him that he sanctioned a principle which, in all probability they would see cause to regret, and which succeeding generations would deplore—a first step towards repudiation of the colony's debt and towards separation, and a step moreover towards that vicious and fatal principle of so-called liberality, but which, in its essence and evident purpose, was one towards the locking up of the lands, and putting them beyond the reach of those who were most competent to turn them to account. The only pressing need of any dealing with the land question was, as it seemed to him, the necessity for settling what some called the as it was a matter of opinion who was poor and “poor man”—he did not know the poor man, who was rich—the *bona fide* cultivator, on the land; the man who turned up the soil, and made it grow something it did not produce before. That was the real necessity for legislation at this moment. He admitted that the great and important vested interests now existing—those of the pastoral occupants

of the country—ought to be dealt with in any land Bill which could claim to be regarded as satisfactory; but, however, their need was not of immediate pressing importance. He would say, in vindication of himself, that it was far from his desire to consent to anything like an interference with, or an encroachment upon, the true rights and vested interests of that very important class. He wanted the whole body of colonists to feel that they were all in one boat, and especially he wanted those large sections of the colonists, the squatters and the agriculturists, to feel that they ought to have a considerate disposition for one another, and that there was no antagonism between them. They did not live on one another. The producing interests, which were at the foundation of all national prosperity, ought to respect one another, and pull together. He must confess, for his own part, that he had nothing but respect for those interests. The land was large enough for all, and there was no need for them to be jostling one another. The House had to deal with the question in the largest spirit, and with the most intelligent views. He was thankful to the honorable member who had brought in the Bill for his references to the history of colonisation; but he was afraid, at one part of his address, that he was about to “come down” on the class that he (Mr. Francis) was supposed to represent, and tell the House that the first squatter had been murdered by the first farmer—for it was true that Cain murdered Abel. However, they were spared that. He would suggest—if a suggestion could be taken from him—that the Government should not press the Bill upon the House in any hostile manner, but should just take into consideration whether the making provision in the Homestead Bill, for the agricultural class, in the meantime, would not meet the requirements of the case; and whether it was not worth while to appoint a commission, either of members or private persons, to examine into and report upon all the land legislation of the Australian colonies, to which the honorable Secretary for Lands had directed attention, and to look abroad and see what had been the course of colonisation there, that Queensland might escape the errors from which other countries had suffered, and so arrive at such a permanent and final settlement of the land question as would give everyone reason to believe that he might soon see a bright and enduring prosperity for the colony. Once more, he might say that he regretted to see the introduction of that new principle—that classification of areas, that division between north and south, that arbitrary and unjustifiable treatment of the lands—in the Bill. Seeing that, he could not give a hearty support to the present measure. He would make a clean breast of it—he was not for selling the lands, and did not care how little was sold. If a man could give him a guarantee that he would improve the land, he should have it

for nothing; but if he only wanted to hold it in order that, by a rise in the market price, he could make a profit, such a man should not have it, with his consent, even at twenty pounds per acre. He did not want such a class in this country; he desired to see the land improved, and turned to the settlement of an industrious and virtuous population.

Mr. CLARK said he was glad to see, from the turn the debate was taking, that most honorable members considered this a very important question. He had heard it said in the House that the land question was not the vital question of the day; and he disagreed with those who said it. He believed the prosperity of the country depended upon the solution of it. And although the colony was saddled with an enormous debt, and although at the present moment it was not in a prosperous state, Parliament could, if they passed a good land measure, find means to get out of those difficulties. There was a great future in store for Queensland. He was afraid that, during this session, they would not be able to pass a good Land Bill. In times of agitation upon any question, it was difficult to legislate in a calm, fair, and unbiassed spirit upon it; and that there was considerable agitation outside still going forward on the land question, and that the provisions of the present Bill had been forced upon the Government and the country by that agitation, he thought few honorable members would deny. One honorable member had asked, what agitation? He had nothing to do but to read the daily papers to see what had been going on for several months, to satisfy him that there was considerable agitation. When, at the opening of the session, it was stated in the House that there was no necessity for a new Land Bill, or rather that free selection could be carried out under the existing Land Acts, he did not think it was meant that there was no necessity for a new Land Bill. He never understood it in that light. He thought the present Ministry had shewn that free selection could be carried out under the existing law. There was not the slightest doubt that the late proclamations meant, and, in effect, were, free selection before survey. The honorable the Secretary for Lands, in his speech, had quoted from ancient and mediæval history, to prove that it was a very difficult thing to bring any colony from a pastoral into an agricultural state, and he had tried to prove that there were few examples in history of such a thing ever having been accomplished. But in Queensland they did not want to do any such thing. A Land Bill which, he believed, would be acceptable to the country, would not be a Land Bill for agriculturists simply, but for the whole of the colony. He was sorry to have heard the honorable member for East Moreton, Mr. Francis, make such a statement as that agriculturists were the only class whose welfare the Government had a right to consider. The honorable member had doubtless made that

statement in an unguarded moment, because he afterwards took care to qualify it by saying he did not wish to interfere with the squatting interests of the colony. But he (Mr. Clark) thought that the mere fact of the honorable member making such a statement shewed the bent of his mind. He must say that the honorable the Secretary for Lands had fully proved that, in proportion as the price of land was risen, so decreased the quantity sold. A great deal had been said about decreasing the price of land. He must say that he disagreed with, and distinctly disapproved of, that clause of the Bill which made a distinction between north and south. He did not, for one moment, suppose, however, that that was a symptom of separation; it meant nothing of the sort, and it was stretching a point to say that it did. He believed the honorable members from the north had felt a conviction that the price of land must be decreased in the north, to suit the desires of the residents in that part of the country; and those honorable members, he maintained, had a perfect right to legislate for the population of that particular portion of the colony. Coming down to the south, and finding a disinclination here to decrease the price of land, they mentioned to the Ministry that they would be satisfied with decreasing it in the north; and he thought the Secretary for Lands had acted wisely in leaving it open. But, if the second reading were passed, he hoped more discussion would take place in committee on the principle of reducing the upset price. Personally, he was favorable to the reduction of the price, if done in the right way. There were many ways of reducing the price of land; but he thought it would be distasteful to make any reduction suddenly. But, if it were done on a sliding scale, and if people were given time to know that, from year to year, a reduction was to take place, it would lead to the settlement of the country by a numerous population quicker than anything else. He was glad to have heard the remarks of the honorable member for West Moreton, Mr. O'Sullivan, who, in his usual manner, took a very sensible view of the whole question; but there was one thing in which he could not agree with him, and which was his view of the question of commonages. He had no doubt that the honorable member was influenced in his views on that question by the abuse of commonage rights which had occurred near Ipswich, by squatters feeding their sheep in the neighborhood of the town, and washing their sheep in the creeks from which the inhabitants were supplied with water. Now he (Mr. Clark) believed that the whole country would feel, when they once had free selection, that commonages were not wanted; because, if a man chose to go and buy land, he bought it for the purpose of running his cattle, sheep, or horses upon it, and he did not care what price a man bought land at, he ought to be kept to his own

selection. A man did not buy land for the purpose of keeping nothing on it, and running his stock outside. It would be found that very large commonages would be a curse instead of a boon to the community. To his own district he was almost pledged that large commonages should not be given to farmers. The people did not want them. At present, all the unalienated and unavailable land which was not taken up by farmers was eaten off by the sheep of the squatters. What did the farmers say? If they had commonages to themselves, one would have his sheep on the land, and overstock it, another would want his sheep on it, and so on. There would not be enough for all, and so there would be constant quarrelling amongst them. What they wanted was, the power to go and take up land for the purpose of keeping their own sheep or cattle, as they chose. The people in his district were beginning to feel that it was not the mere fact of ploughing the land which made them prosperous; they wanted, on a smaller scale, the same means of prosperity which the squatters had had for so many years—that of growing their own wool and fattening their own sheep. The saving point in the Bill was, that a class of men would be led to settle down on the grazing areas, who had not before been allowed a chance in this colony. He did not say that the homestead areas were not good in certain parts of the colony; for he believed there were some parts where agriculture could be carried on successfully. It had been proved that sugar, cotton, and other productions, could be grown here; and, by all means in their power, let the House encourage the growth of those commodities where the land was suitable. He had been sent to the House by a farming population—the largest in the colony—in a district where more land had been sold than in any other, and he did not say, as did the honorable member for East Moreton, Mr. Francis, that he did not wish to see the land alienated. He had been sent to foster and encourage every producing interest, and, if legislation was to take place on the land question, to try how soon the land could be alienated—he did not care at what price, so long as the people could get it—so that, instead of being held as large sheepwalks, it should be occupied by a large population. Let them grow or keep what they liked; if they thought keeping sheep would pay better than cultivating crops, let them do as they pleased, so long as they turned the land to profitable account, and produced from it more than it had before yielded. He found that the great difference between the Bill now before the House and the Bill which the late Ministry had circulated before they left office, was, that in the former provision was made for a larger class of people than in the latter. The Bill brought in by the late Ministry made provision simply for the agriculturist; nobody else was

thought of. He could not help thinking that they had been guided by the same feeling as actuated the honorable member for East Moreton, Mr. Francis. In the Bill now before the House, there was an attempt made—he (Mr. Clark) did not say properly made, because he disapproved of many things in the Bill; but there was the foundation on which work could be done—there was a willingness shewn to meet the demands of all classes in the community. The present Bill would not put power into the hands of any Government or any Minister to say what land should and what should not be sold; and the country would feel all the safer for that. The power was in the hands of the House. He said this without any feeling of disrespect to any Ministry. The country would feel more safe in the hands of the House than in the hands of the Government. One great point of the Bill was, that not only homestead areas were given, but grazing areas. Although he considered the conditions named most illiberal—he said distinctly the Bill was not half liberal enough, though it had been stated by a Minister that, if anything, the Land Bill would be “too liberal”—he hoped that, in committee, the House would knock it into shape, and make it a truly liberal Land Bill. He was glad that the Bill would allow a class of men to come on the land who had heretofore been denied the right to come—the class of grazing farmers—men who would not simply rely on wheat, sugar, or cotton crops, but who would adopt the plan which had been found so paying on a large scale by the squatters, and combine sheep farming and stock raising with cultivation. They would get the freehold of small quantities of prime land, from which, in his district, they would likely make ten times the profits that were now realized. The man to improve land was not he who could turn it up for cultivation, but he who could make more of it than his predecessor. In no enactment of this colony had that class or its interests been encouraged; but therein was the grand and redeeming feature of the Bill. If the grazing and the homestead areas should be compared in three or four years time, it would be found that the prosperity on the former would be ten times that on the latter. If he had had the framing of the Bill, he would have had no homestead areas, but only the one kind, on which he would allow the farmers to go where they chose, to cultivate or to graze. He could not see a reason for the distinction. The honorable member for East Moreton, Mr. Francis, had said that the division of north and south was an arbitrary distinction; so was the distinction of grazing and homestead areas. The only distinction that was required in the Bill, was between settled and unsettled districts. Free selection, as far as he (Mr. Clark) understood it, was introduced in the Bill; the provisions

were almost copied entire from the Bill of the late Ministry. He was glad to say that in both measures free selection was proposed in a very different way from that in which it had been initiated in New South Wales. He was happy to say, that the example of the neighboring colony would enable Queensland to avoid the ills which had been suffered there. There was a wish among many persons here to have free selection all over the colony. That would be a great mistake. If there was less land, and the population was one hundred times greater than at present, then he would give such free selection; but, under the circumstances, the districts were large enough, if not a great deal too large. He had heard an honorable member speak of immigration in connection with the Bill. With regard to that question, he (Mr. Clark) thought forty acres quite enough to give an immigrant. That was more than had heretofore been given, at all events. He had not the slightest objection to giving a man more; but he did not approve of giving more to future immigrants when so little had been given to those who had arrived previously. This colony could not hold out the same inducements as America to emigrants. But, if more land were given, the next thing would be—the honorable member for West Moreton, Mr. O'Sullivan, would bring in a Bill to give those who had received only eighteen or thirty acres something more. If a man could not make his living off the land, the country was not yet prepared to give him rations and tools. The honorable member for East Moreton, Mr. Francis, had said that the alienation of the land was the beginning of repudiation of the debt. He (Mr. Clark) objected to those sweeping conclusions. Neither did he agree with that honorable gentleman in his assertion that the lowering of the price of land would lead to the same result. The colony was in debt about £2,000,000, and possessed 430,000,000 of acres of available land. The whole proceeds were not required to pay the debt. He really could not understand the honorable member.

Mr. FRANCIS, in explanation, asserted that he did not say selling the land would be repudiation; but, that the separation of the colony, with the repudiation of the debt, was what the House ought not to countenance.

Mr. CLARK: He had taken the honorable member's words down. He was sure the honorable member did not recollect what he had said, or he would never have told the House that the agriculturists were the only class whose interests they ought to consider. He had been returned by an agricultural constituency, and he could not express such an opinion. There were other classes to be considered. The agriculturists in his district were not suffering from want of land, but from having been induced to plough the land. They wanted grass—that

was all. Any Bill that would give the agriculturists plenty of grass, would be acceptable to them. He was happy to think that the Bill would be so altered in committee that land would be given to the people who could make use of it. One remark of the honorable member for East Moreton, Mr. Francis, he could go with. That honorable member had said that throwing open the land indiscriminately would allow large capitalists to come in and buy it up, to keep it, not for improvement, but for a better price, to sell again. He (Mr. Clark) would not vote for any Land Bill which would allow that class to come in. He was pledged not to vote for a Bill that would not restrict the number of acres to be taken up. He would not vote for a Bill that would allow the capitalist to come in and buy the land for speculation. He would vote for the second reading of the Bill, as he said before, though he did not approve of it entirely. He believed that if the present Ministry had brought in a Bill such as the whole country would have approved of, it would not have been accepted by the House. That was what he meant by agitation. He did not believe that the House could give its calm attention to any Land Bill this session, that would last for a long time. He could not agree with the honorable member for East Moreton, in the opinion that only a simple measure for the agriculturists was required this session. He remembered that, when the honorable member proposed the address in reply to His Excellency's Speech, he stated, that what the country wanted was a comprehensive Land Bill; but now, because this measure happened to be the production of a Ministry in whom, he admitted, his unbiassed opinions would not allow him to place faith, he altogether changed his opinion, and said that all that was wanted was some small measure for the farmers. He could not understand why the honorable member had come to change his opinion so much. There was not a very great difference between the Bill and the measure described in the Speech of His Excellency at the opening of Parliament, and which the honorable member praised up so much at the time. There were certainly some grand points of difference between the two Bills; and when the honorable member said he did not like the division of north and south, he could tell him that he went with him in the dislike; but the fact of that being in the Bill was no reason why he should have condemned the measure in the wholesale way he did. He did not think that any unbiassed man could condemn the Bill as the honorable member for East Moreton did. At the same time, he believed that the honorable member was perfectly willing, as he said he was, to give the measure a fair trial, and see what could be made of it. He was glad to hear the honorable member say he intended to do so. He trusted honorable members would give the Bill a fair trial, especially in

committee, and see what could be done with it there. There were many things brought before the House that honorable members could not agree with altogether, and especially Land Bills. But he hoped they would give the measure a fair trial, and see whether, in committee, they could not make it such a measure as would satisfy the community. For his part he should support the second reading.

Mr. RAMSAY said, that in the few remarks he had to address to the House upon the Bill, he would confine himself to general principles, and not go into details, which should be dealt with in committee. He intended to support the second reading of the Bill, not because he entirely approved of it, and not because he thought it was the sort of Bill the country required at the present time, but because he thought it was as good a Bill as there was any chance of the House passing at the present time. The last two speakers both expressed their opinion that the land question was, of all others, the question of the day, and, in effect, that a good Land Bill was to be the panacea for all the woes of the colony. He did not agree in that view altogether. The land question was, no doubt, a very important one, but, considering the position of the colony at the present moment, and the largeness of its indebtedness, the question of finance was of greater importance. He believed that the land question, important as it was at the present time, derived its importance from its bearing on finance. Now, holding such opinions, it would be seen that he could not agree altogether with the principles of the Bill, because it made no provision for the disposal of the land except in small quantities, coupled with very troublesome conditions. No one could have paid much attention to the very important documents lately placed before the House respecting Ways and Means, and the Estimates, or have duly considered the speeches of the Colonial Treasurer and the honorable member for South Brisbane, without being seriously impressed with the difficulty of their position. There was a very large deficiency to be provided for at the close of the year; and probably there would be a larger, or, at any rate, as large a deficiency at the end of next year. There were £300,000 worth of Treasury Bills to pay for in 1869; and yet, in the face of all that, and in the face of the great amount of their indebtedness, they adhered with a pertinacity which was perfectly inconceivable, to holding on to the land—a commodity of which, practically, they possessed an unlimited quantity—and would not sell a single acre of it. He knew that some honorable members of the House, and a great many outside of it, were of opinion that they had no right to sell the lands, and held that the lands were the heritage of posterity, and should be handed down as nearly as possible intact. He did not agree with

that view of the case. It would be in the recollection of most honorable members, that a gentleman who, he regretted to say, was no longer a member of the House, in a farewell speech to his constituents in Brisbane, said—"If the lands were the heritage of posterity, and if it was necessary to hand them down to posterity, the debt would have to be handed down with them; and posterity would have a very bad bargain." Now, he thought that the gentleman to whom he alluded did not put the case strong enough; for he thought they would hand down the debt to posterity without the lands, or, at any rate, without a certain portion of them. In the figures he was about to quote, he did not pretend to accuracy, but would only give them by way of illustrating his argument. Different amounts would answer his purpose equally well. He would take the whole debt of the colony at £4,000,000, and the interest that would have to be paid upon it annually at £240,000. Now, if the debt was to be paid out of the sale of lands—and directly or indirectly it must be paid in that way—they would have to alienate 240,000 acres annually, at one pound per acre, to meet the interest; and in sixteen years they would have alienated four millions of acres, and the debt would be as large as ever. Now, if they sold four millions of acres at once, the debt would be at once annihilated.

Dr. CHALLINOR: No; the holders of the debentures would not take the money.

Mr. RAMSAY: Well, but the money could be applied to the buying up of the debentures in the London market, which, most unfortunately, could be done at a heavy discount. Now, he would ask, which position would be best for posterity and best for themselves? In either case they would alienate four millions of acres; but in the one case they would get rid of the debt, and in the other would have it still. He knew very well that they could not sell four millions of acres; but he had taken an extreme case to illustrate his arguments, and smaller amounts tended in the same direction. The House proposed to do in its corporate capacity that which no individual would do in his individual capacity. There were in the House plenty of shrewd business men; and there was not one of them who, if he had any property or commodity to dispose of, would not ask the intending purchaser how he proposed to pay for what he wanted. But, what did the Bill before the House say, if it were carried out? It did not ask the question—"have you the means of paying for the land?" but, on the contrary, it asked the question—"Are you devoid of the means, and prepared to take seven years' credit? For, if you come with money, we will have nothing to say to you, let you be ever so desirable as a colonist? Let you have ever so much money, and be ever so anxious to settle in the colony, and to make it your home, you cannot possess more than a limited quantity of land; and the rest of your

fortune you must take somewhere else." He might go to New Zealand, or any other colony; but here he could not come, if he wanted more than 2,560 acres in one place, or more than 640 acres in another. Now, he asked, was that a sensible way to act? Here was a country overburdened with debt; and yet, if an opportunity occurred for paying off the debt, they would not embrace it. They should take some lessons from experience. At the present moment two great interests had arisen in the colony, which he hoped would before long compete with the pastoral interest in magnitude and importance. He referred to the cultivation of cotton and of sugar. How had those interests been fostered and brought to their present state of prosperity. Had it been by small farmers, struggling with forty acres of land, and unable to lay anything out upon it besides their daily toil, or by capitalists, expending thousands upon thousands of pounds in carrying on their experiments. Let them look at the history of the cultivation of sugar in this colony; and he would ask where, but for the exertions of one individual, and his spending thousands and thousands of his capital, and struggling through every difficulty, sugar growing would have been in this colony at the present time. Take, again, the case of cotton. It was not exactly the same as the case of sugar. Cotton growing was tried at first by a number of small farmers; and he remembered that some years ago it was held that cotton growing was a failure in this colony. Insects destroyed the crop one year, and the seasons were bad another—and so on; but at any rate the farmers failed in their attempts, and they had to give up the experiment of cotton growing. But a single individual came forward, who had energy and enterprise, and capital with which to obtain all necessary steam appliances and machinery, and he had placed Queensland in the proud position of taking the gold medal for cotton at the Paris Exhibition, against the competition of the world. Now, he asked, would that have been brought about without capital? But let him not be misunderstood. No one could be more opposed to anything that might stand in the way of the settlement of agriculturists on the land than he would be. But here they had forty-five millions of acres of land in the settled districts alone; and was all that land to be shut up in order that forty or fifty thousand acres of it should be taken up for agricultural purposes? Now, he would suggest that a board or committee of competent persons should be appointed to go over the country and pick out the good lands for agricultural purposes in as large areas as they liked. Within those areas let the purchases be limited, and let every restriction necessary be imposed to prevent the lands being used for any other purpose than they were set apart for; but outside the limits of those areas, if people

chose to come and say they would purchase the land, and so help to pay off the debt of the colony, in the name of all that was good let them not compel such people to go away. He did not mean to oppose the Bill, but would support its second reading. He did not mean to make any proposition such as he had suggested, but only desired to place on record that he was not one of those who desired to bind upon posterity that burden of debt which they were all so desirous of getting rid of.

Mr. DOUGLAS said he was not in a position fully to discuss the Bill before the House at present, because he had not had time to give that attention to the details of the measure which they deserved. Nor was he singular in this respect. The important questions they had lately had to discuss, had prevented him from giving this one due attention. He held a variety of opinions upon this subject, and had sought at different times to explain them to the House. He had acted with two separate Governments who held different opinions upon it; and he was not quite sure that he agreed with any of them; for, as the honorable member for Fortitude Valley had said, every man in the colony carried a Land Bill of his own in his head. He hoped, whatever might be the result of the debate, that it would not pass coldly or indifferently. It was of the highest moment that they should determine the principles upon which they were to base their land legislation. Those principles, he presumed, were broadly set forth in this Bill, and there were some of them he was prepared to give a cordial adhesion to. He must confess that when he heard the opinions expressed by the honorable member for the Western Downs, Mr. Ramsay, they coincided more with his own opinions than did those of any other honorable gentleman who had yet addressed the House. He did not agree with the honorable member, however, that it would be either desirable or possible that they should sell some four million acres of land, in order to pay their debt. He imagined that the honorable member had used that simply as an illustration of what they might do. He did not understand the honorable member to say that it was desirable they should do so; but it was most desirable they should sell by auction and dispose to the best advantage for money, portions of the country lands—of those unalienated Crown lands which they possessed in such vast quantities. He could not for a moment admit that the auction system might not be applied with advantage to country lands. It seemed to him ridiculous that they should gauge accurately by one principle the whole system of their land laws. But were they to affirm that they were not to have the principle, and that they should not alienate lands except for value received in the shape of improvements, and not for money? If so, he maintained that they could not sell any town or suburban lands by

auction. If it were asserted that they were not to sell lands except under conditions of improvement, then he contended they could not sell town lands without such conditions; and they must then take into consideration what were to be the improvements required on town and suburban allotments; and they would have to ascertain of the purchaser of town lands if he had a thousand or a few hundred pounds to expend upon improvements; and would have to accept the man with £1,000, and turn the cold shoulder on the man who had only a few hundreds. He admitted that it was desirable to give every facility to the men who desired to set up as agriculturists or farmers. He would give the land away, if necessary, to them; and would even go to the extent of giving a larger amount than was proposed in the Bill. The argument of some honorable members, such as the honorable member for East Moreton, had been that, if they did not hold out some counter attractions to emigrants starting to America, they would not succeed in obtaining any of them. Now, what were the attractions held out by America? They were far greater than those offered by this colony. If, therefore, it was proposed to offer advantages to emigrants, they must offer greater advantages than the Bill before the House proposed to offer. The honorable member for the Western Downs had said that it was most desirable that certain portions of the country should be reserved for certain purposes; and he must say that he entirely agreed with the honorable member in that opinion. In this country, as every one knew, there were only small portions of the land thoroughly suitable for agricultural occupation; and, in that respect, he entirely differed from the opinion expressed by his honorable friend the member for Warwick, who professed to represent an agricultural district. He had no objection to the assertion the honorable member made—that he represented the largest agricultural district in the country; but, at the same time, he could not allow himself to forget that he was honored with the representation of an equally large agricultural community; and he had held and expressed opinions different from those expressed by his honorable friend. It was, he admitted, somewhat of an anomaly that the honorable member should profess to represent the opinions he had expressed to-night as being the opinions of the constituency he represented; and yet that he (Mr. Douglas) must, and was in duty bound, to affirm and hold that the people whom he represented, according to his interpretation of their opinions, held entirely different opinions. He understood the honorable member to say that it was highly undesirable that any of those small farmers—any of those would-be agriculturists, in a district that was agricultural, if any district in the colony was an agricultural

district—he understood him to say that the inhabitants of that district wanted to confine their operations solely to those portions of land which they had purchased. Now, if he had understood aright the object and views of that class of the industrial community, the opinions of the honorable member were entirely at variance with the opinions they held. They deemed that in order to carry on their agricultural operations—which, in spite of what the honorable member had asserted, they believed in—and to do so profitably, it was necessary they should have some pastoral rights outside the lands they had purchased. What was the great incubus in that magnificent district? It was, that the Crown lands that had been for many years held there were still held by lessees, and that from those lands, to a great extent, the people were excluded. It was that which weighed down, and so seriously oppressed the efforts of those people. Now, if they were to do any good to that particular district—if they were really to be of use to those people who had collected in some numbers in that particular district of the colony—they must, he affirmed, sweep away leasehold tenure in that district—at any rate, leasehold tenure such as had hitherto been known. The great attraction in that district would be the vicinity of railways; and the assurance the people would have that they would not be hemmed in and confined in their operations by large pastoral leaseholders. He hoped it would be possible to give effect, in the Bill before the House, to the opinions he had expressed. If not, the Bill would prove an utter failure as regarded the case of the people he spoke of; and he was sorry he was obliged to contradict, in their name, the opinions that had been asserted of them by his honorable friend. He believed that his honorable friend conscientiously held the opinions that he had expressed; but he could not believe they were the opinions of those he represented. What, he asked, would be the use of tempting a poor creature of an agriculturist to settle down upon forty acres of land if he was to be hemmed in on it by lessees of the Crown? The next thing would be that he would be called upon to fence in his forty acres, and he would have no share of the benefit of any commonage in the vicinity. What was it that formed the charm of America, but the fact that there were no such restrictions, and that all the unalienated waste lands were to a certain extent commonage? He did not desire to see that system here; but he maintained that where there was a large agricultural settlement, there must be commonage rights, and that from that district they must absolutely exclude leaseholders. Those, he believed, were old-fashioned feelings and opinions of his, and he had never swerved from them, but had held them ever since he had the honor of a seat in that House. He believed that if the Government and the Legislature had been a little larger in their

notions about agricultural reserves, and monagies in connection with them, they would have found that that was all the country demanded. He held it was the duty of the Government to point out what were deemed to be the most favorable localities for population, and to do all they could to attract population to those localities. He had been twitted by his honorable friend at the head of the Government with proposing the setting aside of particular portions of the country and making them the habitations of cattle-stealers and gully-rakers. The honorable gentleman had said so to him over and over again, and that privately as well as publicly. Now, he would ask the honorable gentleman what was he doing himself? If he had wished to confine his operations to a million acres, what was the honorable gentleman doing now? How many millions of acres was it proposed to throw open by the Bill? Taking the Bill before the House as expressing present opinions on the subject, he found that the tide of opinion had swept far beyond him, and that he had been left lagging in the rear; and he had to confess, therefore, that he was not up to the spirit of the times. There was an evident indication that the Bill would be adopted all over the country, and that the evils asserted of it would therefore be equally distributed. Now, he affirmed that he should have been perfectly satisfied if a couple of millions of the best agricultural lands in the colony had been set apart for settlement, and that the Bill had held out every encouragement by giving homestead rights to persons locating themselves in those localities—in localities in the vicinity of railroads and of navigable rivers. He should have been glad to see the Bill confined to that; and more than that, he should have been glad to have sold lands outside those areas. Those, he took it, were also the opinions of the honorable member for the Western Downs; and he did not see why they should not now be carried into effect. They ought, as far as possible, to concentrate population in those parts of the colony that were suitable for location; and in that respect he might agree with the honorable member for Maryborough. He believed the cardinal principle of that honorable member was the classification of lands, and he agreed in that principle. He held that it was necessary to affirm, to specify, and classify what were agricultural lands; and also to specify and classify what were pastoral lands suitable for sale. There were many such portions of land that were suitable for agriculture, and those should be sold for cash. There were also vast districts of country that were not suitable for purchase; but if there were persons willing to purchase lands in the far interior, he would not say to them, "Gentlemen, do not purchase those lands; but if you will purchase for value, I am willing to part with the lands to you." But he did most firmly protest against sud-

denly and heedlessly alienating the really small portions of good country they possessed for agricultural settlement; and his consent would not be given to any Bill, on its third reading, that did not recognise that principle. He had endeavored to deal with this measure, which they were to give effect to in law. He had had no intention of speaking upon it to-night; but he had felt it necessary to record his emphatic denial of the principles that were announced by his honorable friend the member for Warwick. He believed the honorable member wholly misunderstood the opinions of his constituents. It was merely so many idle words to say that it was not possible to settle on that magnificent and fertile district a population larger than could well be conceived.

Mr. CLARK: I never said so.

Mr. DOUGLAS: The honorable member said that agriculture was a fallacy.

Mr. CLARK: In certain places.

Mr. DOUGLAS: He took it that the honorable member, in speaking of certain places, spoke of the places he had to speak of; and that he spoke of them from his local experience. Well, on the other hand, he (Mr. Douglas) had to speak of the same places, and to put his local experience against that of his honorable friend. Now, he would affirm that if agriculture had not succeeded there it had been because the energies of the people had been attracted to other pursuits. The large profits that had been made of late years by carrying, and the contingent advantages that attached to the large expenditure upon the railways, had attracted the most energetic of the community. But when those attractions ceased, where were the people to find a scope for their energies if not in such a district as the Eastern Downs? Would the honorable member for the Western Downs, Mr. Taylor, affirm that the country about Drayton and Toowoomba was not an agricultural district, and that the land there was not capable of producing as good crops as were produced in South Australia? Would he even affirm that the crops that were now produced were not as good as the average crops that were produced in the United States of America?—and that was a broad assertion, but it was one that he was prepared to prove. He might except some of the most fertile regions—the region the honorable the Minister for Lands referred to, the region of California, which was considered to be the most fertile region in the world; but in the country bordering on the lakes the average of yield was not fifteen bushels to the acre. Now, did any honorable member mean to affirm that here they could not produce fifteen bushels to the acre on the fertile lands stretching away from the eastern slope of the Main Range at Toowoomba, to the southern boundaries of the colony? If he could feel certain of anything, he could feel certain that that could be demonstrated. He had never ceased to affirm that in that particular

district nature had favored them with the most uncommon means of wealth and prosperity. In addressing the House on the present occasion, he had not pretended to touch on the principles and the details of the measure, for he must confess that he had not bestowed that sufficient time and attention to it that would have enabled him to do so. He, however, understood broadly the principles the honorable gentleman asked to embody in the Bill. Those were a grand advance upon what the House had hitherto been accustomed to; and in that respect he cordially accepted of them. But he observed, as he thought, some dangerous features in the Bill, which he would do his best to counteract. There were deficiencies in it which he would take occasion in committee to point out to the House; and it would depend upon the form in which the Bill was brought down to the House for a third reading whether he could consent to support it or not. The honorable member who moved the second reading of the Bill said he hoped to give effect by it to legislation that would extend over a period equal to that during which the Orders in Council were in force. Well, he cordially hoped so, too. The honorable member said he hoped this measure, though he could hardly expect it to be a final one, would be permanent for a considerable number of years; and he urged upon the House that whatever they did they should pass a comprehensive measure that would settle this question on a satisfactory footing, so that it would not be raised again for many years to come. He would, himself, say that whatever measure was passed let it be fairly tested, and allow time to record its verdict on the legislation. He was afraid honorable members had been frequently led into impetuous and hasty decisions; and had been inclined in some cases to readjust their opinions before those opinions had been fairly tested. Such, however, he hoped would not be the case with the measure now brought before the House for consideration. He could assure the honorable member who had brought it forward for a second reading that it would receive his best consideration. Where he considered it to be defective he would attempt to remedy it; and he hoped that, in this session, or the following session, they might be able to carry some measure that would be satisfactory to the country at large.

Several motions to adjourn the debate were made and negatived. In the course of the discussion which ensued,—

The SPEAKER called the attention of honorable members to the parliamentary practice, that after a motion to adjourn the debate was negatived, it could not be put again, unless some other motion intervened. The practice adopted in such cases was to move alternately the adjournment of the debate and the adjournment of the House.

The debate was finally adjourned, on the motion of Mr. MACALISTER, until Wednesday next.