

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Assembly**

**WEDNESDAY, 9 OCTOBER 1867**

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Wednesday, 9 October, 1867.

Crown Lands Sale Bill (Resumption of Debate).

## CROWN LANDS SALE BILL (RESUMPTION OF DEBATE).

MR. FITZGERALD: Sir—I voted for the adjournment of the debate upon this question last week, because I really had not been able to master the provisions of the two Bills introduced by the Government. I had much else to do, and the Bills were so long that it was not possible to arrive at anything like a correct judgment, without making an analysis of them, and comparing one with the other. For it is evident that the Crown Lands Alienation Bill must be considered concurrently, and side by side, with the Pastoral Bill. I must confess, sir, that after the first hasty perusal of the two measures, I looked upon them with great suspicion, and, in spite of the promise that they should be of a very liberal character, I fear they will not be judged so when they are looked into, and a fair epitome of their contents is placed before the public. It is quite impossible to come at once to any definite opinion as to the merits of measures comprising 190 and 21 clauses respectively, making altogether 211, besides covenants and schedules. I am sorry to see such a large and labored enactment introduced, and I especially regret to observe that the Bill before the House contains those restrictive clauses which have been found so inoperative in the agricultural reserves. My experience tells me—and I have seen a great many attempts at land legislation, some of them very successful—that provisions of this

nature, which compel persons to spend money either in fencing or cultivation, which they might lay out to more advantage in some other way, will never answer. I am sorry to see the principle adopted to such an extent in these Bills. In proof of my argument, it is only necessary to look at the machinery which would be required to carry out their provisions in the event of 1,500 or 2,000 persons taking up land under them. I maintain that if that number of persons took up land under this Bill, the machinery at the disposal of the Government would be altogether insufficient. If voting for such measures as are now before the House implied an approval of the principles contained in them, I should feel obliged to oppose them. At the same time, I do not see how it will be possible to attempt any emendation of them, for I believe the only way to amend them, would be, as I remarked to the honorable member at the head of the Government, to retain the titles, and to pass a white-wash brush over the remainder. I feel that many honorable members—those who have just come from the north, at any rate, must have experienced a great disappointment. When I heard, on my way down, of the change of Government that had taken place, I said to myself, “A new era has dawned upon the colony, and most of our difficulties will soon be got rid of.” But I find that the financial, as well as the land and general policy of the Government, is but a repetition of the policy which has already caused such dissatisfaction, and I think the honorable member at the head of the Government has taken a false step in adhering so closely to measures which has been found so objectionable. I speak plainly, because I have understood that this question is not considered a ministerial or party question, in view of the necessity which exists for passing a Land Bill of some kind. I must say, however, that I think the Government would have done better if they had struck out a new path for themselves, instead of coming down to the House with a financial policy which I and other honorable members were compelled to vote for because we desired to support a Ministry who had promised to do so much more than their predecessors. We knew that if we voted against the present Government we should only be jumping out of the frying-pan into the fire—we knew we had been burned by the last Ministry, and we expected some good might come out of the change. I am sorry to see the same system of finance adopted which was pursued in 1867, and to see it proposed with the full consciousness that unless some change in land legislation takes place all progress will be checked, it will be impossible to complete our railways and public works, and a great injustice will continue to be done to the section of the community which I represent. However, nothing was left for us but Hobson’s choice, and in voting with the Ministry on the budget I have

done the only thing I could do under the circumstances. Then, with regard to the land policy of the Government, great expectations were formed that a really liberal land measure, based upon some fundamental principles which every one could understand, would be introduced. For where is the use of change if the change be not beneficial?—it would be better to let well enough alone. I am free to admit that the “well enough” is not suitable to the requirements of the country, and I had hoped that some new system would have been tried which might have produced better results; but from an analysis of the Bills before the House I am convinced that no benefit can be expected from them. In my opinion, sir, any fresh legislation in this direction should embrace three very important principles—First, that some reasonable security should be given to those who hold lands in the squatting districts upon a very uncertain tenure. I am not a squatter myself; I have no personal interest in the question, and in speaking upon it I say what I believe would be to the advantage of the whole colony. Very large sums of money are invested in station property in this colony, and a great portion of that money is borrowed. But, from the uncertainty of their tenure and the doubt which exists in reference to the land laws, the holders of squatting properties can offer no good security to capitalists, and the consequence is that they are pressed by the latter, and are cramped for means to extend their enterprise and industry. It is a well known fact that the want of that security of tenure is the great hindrance to the advancement of squatting pursuits, and not only does this affect the squatters themselves but it affects injuriously the whole colony. One great object, therefore, in the new Land Bill should be to place squatting upon a firm basis, to give the pastoral tenants some reasonable security, and to put them beyond the control of the Minister of the day. For nothing can so retard the prosperity of a country as to place a large and influential section of the community at the beck and call of any one man. It is a bad principle, and one which I ask to have abolished, by inviting the House to join in giving the squatters such security as will render them independent for the future. The next principle I propose is a still more important one, and that is the location on portions of this immense territory of an industrial population, who shall not be confined in any way to the growth of cereals or vegetables, but may engage in any pursuits they like; such as agricultural and pastoral farming combined. The third principle is of no less importance. It is evident that there is but one kind of property which can be made use of to pay the debts of the colony. It is necessary, in order to carry out the engagements imposed upon us by former Governments, that the waste lands of the colony should be turned to account, and that upon those lands should be thrown the

burden of that heavy expenditure, which is sucking out the life-blood of the colony. This, sir, is not a question of northern or southern interests, but one which affects the colony at large, and more especially the industrial classes, and the inhabitants of the towns. Is it reasonable to expect the people of Brisbane—about 15,000 in number—for instance, who have to meet the different heavy expenses involved in a residence in the city, to pay taxes at the rate of £2 10s. per head per annum for works, the expenditure on which ought not to be charged to them at all? Local works they ought to pay for, but there are railways at Rockhampton and elsewhere, from which they receive little or no benefit; at any rate, it is a very indirect one, the real benefit being derived by those who obtain cheap carriage up and down the line. This burden of taxation should rest upon the land revenue. The three principles which I advocate, therefore, are:—security of tenure to the squatters; the settlement of our industrial farming population; and the disposal of the waste lands to meet the public debt. To go back to the Bills before the House, which without a month's study are really beyond ordinary readers, I would point out the position of persons in the settled districts—that is to say, thirty miles inland and along the coast, and principally of the present run-holders. A great many of my constituents reside along that strip of coast, and I am interested, although not in a pecuniary point of view, in their prosperity. I affirm that it would be unjust to those persons to allow confiscation of their property, by permitting indiscriminate free selection all over the locality in which they reside. If the land were really good, or worth selection for the settlement of an industrial population, I should not object to it, but when it is known that nine-tenths of it is useless for agricultural—in fact, for any other than pastoral—purposes to proclaim it either as a grazing or a homestead area would be a manifest injustice. The Pastoral Leases Act of 1863 made very good provision for those who are occupied in the present unsettled districts, but their tenure, which under that measure, though uncertain, was practically a very good one, is now to be changed to a permanent one; what necessity, I ask, is there for such a change? But it is actually proposed to give them indefeasible leases for twenty-one years, and in some cases, to give one man as much as 700,000 acres without any additional rental.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Subject to appraisement.

MR. FITZGERALD: Well, the appraisement provided by law is very trifling, and while we should be careful to give good terms, we should not give such terms as these, which are very different from those provided under the Orders in Council, especially when the lands cannot be resumed for twenty-one years. If our lines of railway are to be

extended, we must be careful not to commit the country to such a loss of property.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: There is exactly the same provision as under the Orders in Council.

MR. FITZGERALD: I think I have shewn good reasons for objecting to the Bills introduced by the Government, and have proved that they do not carry out the first principle I have named. In one case they give too much, and in another too little. The conditions which apply to the homestead areas, I consider very hard for farmers or graziers. In the first place, there is residence on the land for three years from the date of selection. Now, there are many persons living in the towns who might wish to secure a piece of good land which they knew of, who could not afford to go on to it for a short time until they had saved a little more money, who would thus be prohibited from making a selection. Then the cultivation of one-tenth of the land is also a very hard condition. The sugar regulations only require cultivation of one-twentieth, and the cultivation of that one-twentieth part, or five per cent., involves an expenditure of more than twenty shillings per acre on the whole land taken up. I will proceed to shew the operation of the Bill in the case of a farmer who takes up 640 acres. He would have to pay the principal in seven years, and, if he cultivated one-tenth of the land, which he would not do under one pound an acre, he would have to pay, according to my calculation—about £182 a year for seven years—very nearly £200, supposing him to make a living out of his farm. These appear to be unreasonable conditions, and to expect that any man will come out to the colony, and take up land under them is simply nonsense. The objection raised by my friends, the residents on the coast, is, that while the Bill looks a liberal one, in reality it prevents settlement altogether. Then, again, the grazing areas are different from the homestead areas. I think it would be much better to class all the lands as agricultural and non-agricultural, because there will be many places in the homestead areas unfit for agriculture, and many places in the grazing areas very suitable for that purpose. I will next shew what advantages a man of moderate means would obtain under the Bill, if he took up land in a grazing area. He could take up 2,560 acres, for which, in due time, he would pay £2,560, with, say, fifteen shillings per acre all round for improvements, which would bring the cost of the land down to £4,480. For seven years he would have to pay, principal and rent, a sum of £640 per annum. Where is the man who could pay at that rate for his land? What I should advocate would be, not to clean a man out in this way, but to allow him the same advantages on a small scale which were accorded on a larger scale to the runholders—to give him the

land at a low rent, and afford him a chance of becoming independent. That is one of my chief objections to the Bill; it does not carry out the second principle I have laid down as a necessary one in any land measure—the location of an industrial population. In fact, the principle does not seem to have been recognised at all, or no such conditions would have offered to men of moderate means. I grant that the Government have had a difficult task, in consequence of the pertinacity with which previous Governments have adhered to the price of one pound per acre; but I think they should have struck out a new path for themselves, and given some encouragement to the industrial classes. Then, with regard to the third principle, our great aim should be to get rid of the heavy load of debt with which the colony is encumbered—to allow people to save their money, and not to strip them by means of oppressive taxation. I believe the honorable Treasurer made no miscalculation when he estimated the net land revenue at £30,000. But I should never be satisfied with that sum. I contend that a revenue of £200,000 or £300,000 ought to be derived from that land, if it were properly managed. The restrictive prices put upon the lands, however they may benefit certain southern portions of the colony, are positively prohibitory at the north. I am quite convinced that, in the northern districts, not a single acre will be taken up under this Bill for the purpose of cultivation. Are we, then, to go on year after year, absolutely refusing to lighten the public debt, to settle an industrial population on the lands, and to develop the resources of the colony? It may be said that it is easier to destroy than to build up—easier to find fault than to suggest a remedy. It has often been remarked that every man in Queensland carries a Land Bill in his head. I do not say that I do; but I have certain general principles which might, perhaps, be made into a Land Bill, though not such a lengthy one as the Bill before the House. The subject is one upon which I have bestowed a good deal of attention; and, without boasting, I may say that I have had considerable experience in the management of waste lands. Well, then, my proposition would be, without disturbing past legislation altogether, to maintain the Pastoral Leases Act of 1863 in the unsettled districts, or, if the holders preferred to exchange an uncertain tenure for a certain one, I would offer them a lease for twenty-one years of half the runs they now hold, provided always that the area did not amount to 500,000 or 600,000 acres, or anything like that. I believe that would be quite fair and reasonable, and that, if they got an indefeasible lease of half their runs, it would be quite as valuable to them as their present lease of the whole. The next step I should propose would be, in the settled districts to classify all lands by the agency of land boards, composed of the local commissioner and two or three other mem-

bers, one of whom should be nominated by the Government, and the others by the people, who ought, through local authorities, to have a voice in the classification of lands in their district. Of course, if anything wrong was done by local officers, the local government could always be appealed to, and the completion of the act prevented; while this plan would relieve the central Government of an immense deal of work. I would classify the lands into agricultural and non-agricultural, and reserve all the lands on the banks of rivers and creeks and elsewhere as agricultural areas, to be specially dealt with. Then, I would suggest, that the run-holders in the settled districts should have leases for ten years of half the non-agricultural land comprised within their present runs, at the same rental they now pay for the whole; because, I believe, that a certainty of tenure for half the run would be worth more to a man, even at an increased rent, than his present uncertain holding. I would also offer them security for certain improvements, or give them power to purchase certain portions of their runs, so as to include those improvements. When honorable members consider that this proposition deals with lands which are not fit for agricultural purposes, I think they will see that is fair and equitable, and that it will meet a great many cases. In agricultural areas, that is, on the banks of rivers, creeks, and in other suitable localities, I think the land should be reserved to provide for immigrants, or actual occupiers. They could, of course, take possession of it with their land orders, and after residence in the colony for a certain time they would obtain Crown grants. To other settlers—persons in the colony—who wished to purchase in these places, I would give the land upon payment of 2s. 6d. per acre the first year, and 3s. the second; and if, at the end of that time, they had made improvements to the extent of 15s. an acre, I would give it to them altogether, without further trouble, and let them do the best they could with it; for I believe that the withholding the grants for a long time does more harm than good. I would, therefore, give them their titles as soon as possible, which would save the Government a great deal of trouble, and do away with the difficulties which must always occur in collecting arrears of rent. I would also provide that, if the conditions of improvement were not fulfilled, the land should not necessarily be forfeited, but that the holder should pay 3s. 6d. the next year, and 4s. the year after, when the title should be given to him. I do not believe that the system of forfeiture could be carried out; and I should like to see the Ministry who could enforce it, if a great number of persons took up land. Then I would deal with all the other agricultural lands, by allowing them to be selected in portions of 60 to 640 acres, on payment of 2s. 6d. the first year, and 3s. the next; the grant to be issued on proof

being afforded that 15s. an acre had been spent in improvements—such as dams, wells, fencing, and so on. If they did not improve, they should pay 3s. 6d. the third, and 4s. the fourth year. They would thus really pay in the four years 13s. an acre, which would be equal to a cash purchase at 10s. I think we ought to get rid of this absurd price of £1 an acre. We have virtually done so for some time; for the payments under the leasing clauses are only equivalent to 12s. an acre cash payments. I would ask to get rid of this fictitious price at once—at any rate until the country becomes more settled, and we have a more prosperous population settled in it. It has been said that, if the price were reduced, the land would be seized upon by cormorant capitalists. But I have seen the same state of things elsewhere. The people have not the money to purchase these large properties; and capital will never be invested in our land as long as people see that those who went before them have not done well. There need therefore be no apprehensions on that score; and, if we find the land is being bought up too quickly, we have always the power to increase the price of it. Now, sir, to encourage the settlement among us of those who have not a large capital to start with, I would suggest that they should be offered lots from forty to six hundred and forty acres of agricultural land, not included in agricultural areas, on the same principle as was introduced in the sugar and coffee regulations—that is, in the settled districts along the coast, on lease for ten years, at sixpence an acre per annum, with the option of purchase at the end of that time, provided they had expended 10s. an acre upon it. And I would allow persons to take up land in the grazing or non-agricultural areas, at threepence per acre per annum, extending the lease to the same period, and with the right of purchase at the end of that time, at such a price as this House should decide upon. I think it should be ten shillings an acre for agricultural, and five shillings for non-agricultural land. This would provide for a very large class of persons, who have hitherto only been looked upon as subjects for taxation; and I think we should advance the prosperity of the colony more by giving settlers a chance of making a living, by asking them to pay only a few pounds yearly, and allowing them to spend the rest of their money in fencing their land, making dams and improvements, and breeding stock. I think it is quite necessary to look after the interests of this class at this time, and that after all the professions which have been made, we should take some practical step in that direction. I think, sir, I have now said all that I have a right to say. I will, however, finish with this further proposition, that in cases where persons with capital wished to go into the country and invest their money, they should be allowed to purchase for cash, agricultural land not included in

agricultural areas, at auction, at an upset price of ten shillings an acre, and pastoral or non-agricultural land at five shillings, at the discretion of the land board in that district. Now, sir, having shewn how we may provide for the farmers, we must not shut out the pastoral tenants, but deal liberally with both classes. There is a great deal of land of no use except for grazing purposes, for which I am quite sure five shillings an acre could be readily obtained; and I think we shall not be foolish enough to rent such land even at one penny an acre when we can get the cash for it at once and put it into the Treasury coffers. If a man pays the Government five shillings an acre for non-agricultural land, he gives the best possible proof that he intends to improve it, and the only way to make it pay a moderate interest would be to fence it and make use of it. I have seen the beneficial results of this system in other countries; and if we adopt it in this colony, we shall soon change the squatters into a class of freeholders, who, instead of turning the grass into wool and tallow, would cultivate and improve the country and develop its resources, and would become settled residents instead of wandering Arabs. I demand, therefore, sir, in the name of the whole colony, that no further obstructions shall be thrown in their way. One class is dependent upon the other; and our object should be a general one to afford every facility to men of all classes to settle on their freeholds, increase the value of their properties, and so conduce to the general prosperity of the colony. I trust we may be able to effect this object, which has hitherto been prevented by bad legislation.

Mr. MACALISTER: Sir—I wish to make one or two observations in reference to the Bill before the House. Before doing so, I may say that I have been very much interested in the remarks which have fallen from the honorable member for the Kennedy; and while I would not, for one moment, bind myself to any of them, I think they are all well worthy of the consideration of this House. I think that the House cannot do better than pass this Bill through its second reading, and let it be matured in committee. I confess that the Bill is not what I should like it to be. In the very outset, it appears to me that we ought to have had two Bills placed before us, for the very first clause of this Bill refers to a Pastoral Leasing Bill; and it is expressly stated that that is a concurrent Act, and that the two Acts must be read together. Now, though we cannot expect the second reading of both Bills to be proceeded with at the same time, still the second reading of the one having been proposed, I think the second reading of the other might be advanced a stage, so that we might learn from the honorable member who presides over the Lands Department the principles of the measure. We might hear from him some definitions which some honor-

able members have a difficulty in arriving at, with regard to several portions of the Bill. To my mind the Bills are too cumbersome. They not only include much that is in the law at present, but they also include much that, as the honorable member for the Kennedy observed, would take a very long time for any one to understand. There is no man more desirous than I am, not only of promoting agricultural settlement in the colony, but of giving a fixity of tenure in the unsettled districts. But there are a variety of opinions as to what the fixity of tenure should be. The honorable gentleman who brought in the Bill seemed to think that the Pastoral Leases Act gave an indefeasible title; but I do not know that I view an indefeasible title in the same light exactly as he does. I should rather call it a defeasible title. It is possible that the title might be defeated; but there is no doubt the Act is intended to confer on the lessee a continuous lease, and not only a continuous lease, but that the rent should, in point of fact, continue to be what it is at present; because, though the Bill does leave a blank for a per centage to be added to the rent, still there is a proviso follows which would compel the Government to go to arbitration to get the lands appraised. Now, as the honorable member for the Kennedy very properly observed, we all know very well what is the value of that to the Government. Stations are appraised by friendly neighbors, so that all round the lessees practically fix the rent of their own runs. Now, I think it would be much better if the matter were to be settled by a per centage, and that the per centage should be decided in the Bill. There would then be an end of it. But the Bill leaves simply a blank for the per centage. But coming back to the Alienation Bill, it appears to me that the great object of all legislation on this subject ought to be to throw the lands open for settlement on the easiest terms compatible with a due consideration for the interests of the colony. I think that all obstructions in the way of acquiring land in fee-simple should be abolished; but I confess that I am not prepared to go with the honorable member for the Kennedy in proposing that there should be a different price for land in the southern portions of the colony from that which is to be charged in the north. Nor can I see that any good reason exists for a distinction being made. It may be that there is a difference of climate between the north and the south, but it is a notorious fact, and is well known to all who have been in the northern districts, that there are as fine lands in that portion of the colony as exist in the south. I have heard, on what I believe to be excellent authority, that there are better lands for agricultural purposes in the northern districts than there are in the southern districts; but I cannot understand, unless there is some description of classification, why we should choose, and, by an arbitrary rule, fix the price

at one pound an acre in one place, and at five shillings in another; or that a dividing fence should have on the one side of it land at five shillings an acre, and that on the other side the land should be one pound an acre. My view on this point has been so frequently expressed to the House, that I shall not trouble the House with it longer at present; but I should like to read to the House the opinion of a very eminent member, and one whose opinion, I am sure, will have great weight with the House in the consideration of this question. I find that the honorable gentleman now at the head of the Government, when he held the office of Colonial Secretary last year, expressed himself as follows, in the debate upon the Crown Lands Sale Bill. I quote from the third volume of "Hansard," page 197, and commencing near the bottom of the second column:—

"The present land laws have been in force now for a period of six or seven years, and during that time millions of acres had 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."

I think that in that passage the honorable member has so very well expressed my own views on the subject, that I ought to be satisfied with having read it. But as I have already stated, if we are to have any reduction in the price of land in the north, let us know the principle that is to operate in making such a reduction. I quite agree with the observation of the honorable member for the Kennedy, that it would be a great advantage if there were district boards, for the purpose of classifying the lands in their respective neighborhoods. I think that a great injury is inflicted on the colony by our not being able to classify the lands, so that we might have, at any rate, something before us to go upon in considering what should be the price of land. We might either adopt one price, or have the land so classified that we should know we are not giving away an article for less, or asking more for it, than its value. Now, if anything of that kind could be done, it could not, perhaps, be better done than through district boards. I think such a system would be useful to the country, and would relieve the Government from a great deal of difficulty and responsibility. But I do object to reducing the price of land, because it has remained unsold for twelve months. The fact of its remaining unsold for that time is no proof that it is not

worth the money it was originally offered for. It might be that it would remain unsold because of the want of population, or it might be that what a man purchased to-day would be sufficient for his purposes for twelve months; but I cannot see that because land remains unsold for twelve months, that affords any reason why the price should be reduced. To introduce a clause to that effect would be to introduce into the Bill a very dangerous principle; because, under such a clause, the most valuable lands in the colony might be offered for sale by selection. I have no hesitation in saying that at the present moment there are thousands of acres of land forfeited that were taken up by selection, and I have no doubt that, under a clause of this kind, the whole of those lands would be taken up at five shillings an acre,—at any rate, they would be liable to be taken up at that price. Now, I object to a clause of this kind, unless there is a classification of the land in the first place, and a good reason given for the price of any land being fixed at this amount. But I cannot understand why a blank should have been left in the Bill to apply a rule to the lands in the north that is not to apply to the lands in the south. There may be reasons, geographical reasons, why there should be a difference in the price, but if so, those reasons should be stated. Now, nothing of the kind, so far as I can recollect, was stated by the honorable the Secretary for Lands in moving the second reading of the Bill. We certainly had an interesting account from the honorable gentleman of Adam and Eve, Tiberius Gracchus, Palestine, Mexico, and California, but as for reasons for reducing the price of land in the northern districts, he mentioned none. As I have already stated, that I think is a question well worthy of discussion when the House is in committee on the Bill; and for the purpose of having this Bill fully considered, matured, and developed, and put forth to the country as a useful measure, I shall support its second reading. But there is another objection occurs to me with regard to this Bill, and one which I trust the Government will be prepared to amend in committee. The Bill contains no power, so far as I can discover, for resuming lands for sale. It contains no power of resumption.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The other Bill provides for that.

MR. MACALISTER: I think that is a very important question, because, though the other Bill, which is a concurrent one, does contain a clause to that effect, still, as the provisions of this Bill are to be preferred to the other, I am not sure that the power of resumption in the other Act would apply. However, that is also a question that is well worthy of the attention of the House in committee. I quite agree with the honorable member for the Kennedy, that any Land Bill passed by this House should have in view the three objects he set

out with—security to squatters, the settlement of population, and finance. I think those are all matters that are involved in any Land Bill. Settlement I hold to be the principal one; but I think that they may all very well be taken up as involved in any alienation Bill that goes through the House. I am not prepared to follow the honorable member in the various suggestions he made to the House; and I am not inclined very much to approve of a great deal that he says; but I shall be very happy, and I dare say other honorable members of the House will be glad also, if the honorable member will throw his suggestions into the form of clauses, and get them printed and circulated amongst honorable members when the Bill is in committee. There is another clause to which I think it would be well to draw attention in committee, and that is the clause giving power to make new districts and alter the boundaries of existing ones. It seems to me, that if the clause is retained as it is, there will be nothing to prevent the homestead areas from being converted into grazing areas, and the grazing areas converted into homestead areas. It seems to me, that upon the present occasion, at any rate, an attempt ought to be made by the House to make this such a Bill as will meet the wants of the colony. We have got a magnificent estate, and all that we want in connection with the estate are population and capital. I think that, if we can direct our attention to the promotion of those two objects in connection with this Bill we shall—and do so to some purpose—do a great deal for the country. For the purpose of seeing this Bill made what I believe it ought to be, I shall certainly vote for the second reading of it.

MR. WALSH said he was sure the House must have heard the remarks that had been made by the honorable member who had just sat down with singular satisfaction; because he thought it might now fairly be presumed that the period of factious opposition to useful legislation in that House was at an end. The signal defeat the opponents of progress received on the previous day had already had a most excellent effect. He was glad to find that the honorable member who was at the head of the late Government was inclined to pursue a more independent and better course than at one time his supporters seemed willing to permit him to do; and he would promise that honorable member that if he would continue in the course he appeared to have chalked out for himself this afternoon, it would not be long before he became, as he had been in times past, and as he was capable of becoming, from his great knowledge, a very useful and valuable statesman in Queensland. He had always said of the honorable member that in his case had been exemplified the adage—“Evil communications corrupt good manners;” for he had invariably found that when



the honorable member associated himself with those honorable members who had the welfare of the country at heart he ever pursued a course which the country had no cause to regret afterwards. It had only been when he had thrown himself, as he did lately, into the hands of the party whose interests were inimical to the country, that he and others had had to regret so much the result of the combination. He believed the present was a very important period in the history of Queensland. He believed honorable members would have it now in their power, and it was their bounden duty to avail themselves of the opportunity, to make this country a great, prosperous, and thriving one. He believed that if they did avail themselves of the opportunity now afforded them, and passed a wise and salutary land law, they might do a great deal to redeem the mis-spent moments of Queensland, — and do a great deal to restore her to that position which her geographical standing warranted her inhabitants to expect she should occupy. He believed it was yet within their power, even during their own lifetime, to make Queensland the first and principal colony of the southern ocean. It was because they had at their command, or had the dispensing of, such enormous wealth in the shape of rich lands — because they had in their power the possibility of directing a large population to their shores, that he said the present was a very important period in the history of the colony; and it depended upon the present session of Parliament whether Queensland would obtain that position in the scale of colonies which it was expected, at one time, she would attain to — which mis-government had prevented her from reaching, but which was still within the possibility of achievement. In coming to deal with the question before the House, he must state that he was not one of those who looked on the Crown lands of the colony as a gift to the people for the purpose of raising a revenue. He thought that if they were to deal with the lands as a source of revenue for the purpose of liquidating their debts, they would be doing injury to the cause they were attempting to serve. It was by getting people on to the lands that they would derive revenue from them; and in proportion to the prosperity of the population planted on the lands, would be the prosperity of the colony as a whole. He did not believe altogether in the measure now before the House. He thought it was quite unworthy of the Government. As he viewed it, it was only a continuation of the past bad legislation on the subject; and it treated the land question in a petty shop-keeping manner. He could not himself vote for the second reading of the Bill, if he thought that the consequence of allowing it to go to a second reading in its present shape would be that it would leave the House, or become an Act of Parliament, in anything like its present shape. It would be better to have no legislation on the

land question at all if the Bill were not to be improved. He held now in his hand three Land Bills — two prepared by the honorable member who last addressed the House, and the one now under consideration. Now, honorable members must see that such frequent dealing with the land question, as such a fact exhibited, must have a most dangerous effect. One of its effects was, that it unfitted honorable members to deal with the subject, because they saw no finality; and they did not apply themselves earnestly to the question, because they did not know but next session another measure of the same kind might be brought forward. If that was the effect upon honorable members, what must the effect of such tinkering be upon others — what must the effect of it be upon capitalists, as they did not know what a day might bring forth? He could, from personal experience, assure the House, that the effect of such changes in the land laws had been to prevent capitalists investing their money in pursuits connected with land, as they did not know how long the laws might exist. Though he considered the Bill before the House was unworthy of the Government, he was glad it had been introduced. There was very little difference, he thought, between it and the Bill of the late Government; both were bad in details, and bad in principle; but both Bills had been forced upon the Government of the day by the vicious and narrow feelings that had been introduced into the land question by the public themselves. It was because the public had had so much influence on the Government, or because the Government had had so little influence in instructing the public on the subject, that the production of the two measures, that might be said to be now before the House, was due. He did not believe that the honorable gentleman who last addressed the House thought the Bill was suitable to the country; and he did not believe that the honorable gentleman who introduced it thought it was; but he believed that both gentlemen saw the necessity there was for producing some measure that would pass through the House, and satisfy the present feeling of the country; but he protested against the House longer compelling the Government to pass measures that would not be beneficial to the country, though they might be temporarily beneficial to the Government in power. The Government had no real possession of the lands as a landlord, but held them only in trust for the purpose of distributing them; and, he maintained, there was even a better claimant, a person who had a better title to the lands of the colony than the Government, and that was the person in occupation of the land, whether he had purchased the land or not. The original land laws of the colony recognised that idea, and were framed with the purpose of fairly distributing the lands for the owners to take possession of them. It was quite a new

thing for the Government to put any one in possession of the lands. Formerly the Government were not supposed to be in possession of the land, but the people were supposed to be in possession; and the Government only stepped in, and for the purpose of securing law and order took, as it were, possession of the lands, and gave a title to them. Now, the factious legislation that had arisen was occasioned by the false conception that had obtained possession of the minds of the Government, and of the people themselves, that the Government were in possession of the lands, and not the people themselves. The Government were not the owners of the land. The people were the owners, and it was amongst the people that the land should be distributed, in the freest and fullest and most satisfactory way for the benefit of the colony at large. A great deal had been said about posterity, and the duty that they owed to posterity. Well, he acknowledged they had a duty to perform to posterity in the matter of the lands, and that duty he held was to bequeath to posterity, not an unknown and untraversed wilderness, but a country well peopled, fully developed, and strong in the number, success, and affections of its inhabitants. By their present system of legislation they were retaining the country as a wilderness, and alienating from it the affections of the persons scattered over it by the miserable tenure allowed to them. If posterity could suddenly arise, it would not thank them for what they were doing. It would tell them that there were at one time plenty of people on the soil, but that they had not treated them as colonists, but had obliged them to consider themselves as aliens, in consequence of the odium which was attached to them, and the legislation directed against them. If the Government were wise, they would do away with that feeling as far as the present colonists were concerned; and they had it in their power to multiply the number of the inhabitants to any extent, and to augment their prosperity and cause increased satisfaction in the minds of the holders of the soil and the real producers of the revenue. He hoped honorable members would endeavor to deal with this question in a large and comprehensive manner, and, before they were done, would commence on a path that would lead to the object that he believed they should direct their attention to. It was with singular regret that he listened to the speech of the honorable member for East Moreton, Mr. Francis. It was with pain he heard that honorable member, in the first speech he addressed to the House, say he believed it was his duty, and that he should carry it out, to legislate against the squatters. At any rate he said something to that effect; but he did not think the honorable member when addressing the House thoroughly understood the subject. For instance, one of the remarks made by the honorable member, when moving the address

in reply, was that the squatters bought land for the purpose of perpetuating squatting. Now, if the honorable member had been as long in the colony as he had been, he would have known that there were two classes of colonists—the squatters and the settlers. The settlers consisted of agriculturists or stock holders who ran their stock on their own purchased lands. If the squatter purchased his run and yet followed the same pursuit, he would cease to be a squatter, and would become a good colonist; so it must have been in ignorance of the condition the squatter would be converted to that the honorable member for East Moreton said the squatter merely purchased his run for the purpose of perpetuating squatting. The very reverse was the case. The squatter felt the inconvenience and uncertainty of his tenure, and the odium of his occupation in the eyes of his fellow-colonists, and he purchased land as far as his means would allow him, frequently and wisely, for the purpose of giving up squatting. The honorable member also said there were two classes of land buyers in the colony whom he considered it would be his duty to obstruct. The one was the land-speculator, and the other was the squatter. Now, he would tell the honorable member that if that was his idea as to legislating on the land question, he was totally unfit to take any part in dealing with the question; and he believed that every one who viewed the question in a narrow light was as unfit as the honorable member for East Moreton to deal with it; because if they were to legislate against any class, speculators or any other, they would signally fail in accomplishing what they aimed at, and the evil effects would recoil upon themselves. He maintained that the speculator was as useful in the country as the squatter; and he said that, not as a squatter himself, or as the representative of any class, but in his position as a humble statesman. The speculator, he repeated, was as useful in his vocations as any class in the community. There would be no prosperity unless there was speculation. Almost every venture, from the purchase of a horse to the ploughing of a field, was neither more nor less than a speculation. It would be destructive to the interests of the colony, even if they took the extreme view of the honorable member for East Moreton, to legislate against the speculator or the squatter. Why should the squatter be legislated against? What had he done as a colonist, or what was there in his wish to become a colonist—for he did wish to become a colonist when he bought land—that he should be marked out by the honorable member for East Moreton, and those who thought with him, as one who should be told: "You shall have no fixity of tenure; you shall not be a farmer; you shall not be an agriculturist, or landowner; but I will compel you to belong to that class which I am always upbraiding?" He trusted that

such views would cease to be entertained, and that they would continue to deal with the millions of acres of land they possessed in a way that would be beneficial to every one in the colony—as well for the squatter and the speculator as for the agriculturist. One would almost be led to think, from the way the question was discussed, that all the land that was in the colony was about a thousand acres, and that one or two people wished to take it all up. But instead of that being the case, the territory was so vast, that, notwithstanding all the grasping of the squatters, and all the ambition of all the speculators, the greater portion of the colony would remain a perfect wilderness for many years to come. The honorable member for East Moreton had also objected to the division of the country into north and south, as proposed in the Bill, on the ground that it was an arbitrary division. But all divisions were arbitrary, and must be. They could not lay out a town, or a district, or even a field, without making arbitrary divisions; and why should the Government be ridiculed because they proposed to do that which was absolutely necessary, because they proposed to act as practical men? There must be divisions; and he could see no objection to the proposition of the Government. Geographically, the north was divided from the south. The climate of the north was not that of the south, and it would be madness on the part of honorable members to shut their eyes to that fact, and deal with the lands as if they were all lying underneath the same temperature, and had the same population. If the honorable member for West Moreton, Mr. O'Sullivan, had been in his place, he would have pointed out to him that it would be unjust and unwise in the extreme not to make a very marked division between the lands in East and West Moreton. In the neighborhood of Ipswich there was land that was worth a pound an acre; but would it not be insanity to maintain that the lands on the Ranges, and ten or fifteen miles from a town should be classed as of the same value as the lands in the neighborhood of Ipswich. Would it not be better to sell the lands at a low rate than allow them to go to waste?—and much of the land was rapidly going to waste. A great deal of the land in the neighborhood of Brisbane would, in a few years, be unfit for even pastoral purposes. The land he referred to was getting so overgrown with underwood, that the grass was being absolutely choked out. He could walk for miles and miles around his own habitation, where there was not a blade of grass to be seen. That would not have been the case if there had been wise legislation some years ago, and the land had been sold for what it would fetch. The purchasers, let their means have been ever so small, would have taken care that their humble properties should not have become worthless as they now were. There was a paddock

that he rented from the Government; but, except the ten or fifteen acres that he had cleared, all the rest of it was useless for any purpose that he could conceive; and the very cattle that were upon it knew that, for they never strayed beyond the portion that was cleared. If the lands had been given away to the men of small means who were the first settlers, or to those who came to the colony a few years ago, there would now have been large tracts of cultivated land all over the colony, and there would have been a very different class of occupants from the present. The honorable member for East Moreton also complained that the Government had brought in a comprehensive Land Bill, and said that all that was wanted was a small Bill, containing a few clauses for the benefit of agriculturists. Now, he was astonished to hear the honorable member say that; because, in his speech in moving the Address in Reply, the burden of the honorable member's speech was, that he intended to support the then Government, because they had signified their intention of bringing in a comprehensive Land Bill. But, now that another Government was in power, the honorable member turned round and said that a comprehensive Land Bill was not required, but only a short measure, for the benefit of agriculturists. If that was the spirit in which the honorable member was to act, the House would always find him contradicting himself; for, if he attached himself to a party to such an extent as his conduct on the land question made it appear he had done, he would have to change his opinions as often as he changed his position in the House. As to the Bill before the House, he objected to it because it was too illiberal, and because, on that account, it would have an injurious effect upon the country. He took it that, by the Bill before the House, as well as by the Bill that was to have been introduced by the late Government, had they remained in power, only one class of persons would be able to purchase land; and that was the class who would be able to purchase it, and improve it in a way according to the narrow notions of the honorable member for East Moreton. Those persons whose vocations required that they should reside in a town, if they had any spare money, had as much right to invest it in the Crown lands as those who could occupy the land; probably they would do more good for the country than those who really occupied the land, because they would be keeping their money within the colony, and devoting it to the revenue, which was supposed to be spent for the benefit of the people at large; but, if any one of those people were to give up his usual occupation, for the purpose of becoming a farmer, he would probably be ruined. He believed he might unhesitatingly say that, at the present moment, nineteen-twentieths of the farmers in the colony were ruined men; and, until there

was an introduction of capital, of science—which had not yet been imported—and more skill, those who might now be induced to go into farming, and pay the present rate for their land, would stand in the same unfortunate position, in a few years, as many of the constituents of East Moreton were now in. He believed he might safely say, without fear of contradiction, that it would be almost impossible for the honorable member for East Moreton, Mr. Francis, to point out to that House half-a-dozen prosperous agriculturists in his constituency. There was another class that they were legislating against—a most valuable class—those who were reared in the management of sheep and cattle, and had worked their way up from the position of shepherds to that of overseers or superintendents. Such persons were not fitted, probably, for any other pursuit. They were attached to the spot where they had lived so long, and where families had sprung up around them. Now, why should they not be enabled to make provisions for their families, by investing their savings in the colony? But, under the present laws, they could not invest in the lands, which the stranger could come and take. They would have to stand aside and see the strangers take up the lands while they themselves, who had been reared upon the land, could not, from the nature of the laws, take up a single acre of land for the only purpose to which they could beneficially employ it. Now, it was within his own knowledge that the most saving classes in the colony were the servants of the squatters. They were the wealthiest classes—and far wealthier, in proportion, than their employers. If inquiry were made at the Savings Bank, it would be found that numberless sums of money were lying there because the depositors did not know of any better way of employing it. He had had men in his employment who had entrusted him with hundreds of pounds to deposit for them in the Savings Banks. When he gave up sheep farming, he paid a German and his two sons £800, and others who were in his employment, from £200 to £300. Now, he could safely say that most of these men would have readily embarked in the purchase of lands if there had been a prospect of making instead of losing money by it. It was bad enough that the price of the land should be fixed at the prohibitory amount of £1 per acre, which often increased to £5 or £10, for country lands; but how much worse would it be when these persons found that under the clauses of this Bill they must, if they wished to invest their money in land, leave their present occupation, and run the risk of shattering their prospects altogether. He hoped that some provision would be made in the Bill for the benefit of the class to whom he now alluded, and who, of all others, were destined to become the yeomanry of the colony. As to the profitability of farming, he held in his hand a letter, dated from

Cooper's Plains, 9th October, in which the writer stated, "I wish you would have the goodness to get me a situation on a station, as farming is ruining me." Now, he could assure honorable members that that was only a specimen of applications that were made to him every week by men who were either deserting their farms, or were compelled to abandon them, and take to some other pursuit than farming. Respecting the value of agriculture to the colony, he doubted its value very much, and always had. He regretted to say so; but he had been in various parts of the colony, and he had never seen a flourishing agricultural district yet, without exception; and, therefore, he could not agree with those gentlemen who looked upon agriculture as the panacea for all the woes of the colony. He believed the idea that agriculture would be a source of wealth to the colony was fallacious. So far from believing that agriculture would be a source of wealth, he believed it would be a source of impoverishment to the colony. It was because of that, that he considered it to be their duty to do away as far as possible with agriculturists themselves, and convert them if possible into stock-holders, on their own soil; and he would endeavor to have the Bill altered to a great extent, to facilitate that being done. He could not conscientiously agree with the conditions that were prescribed in the Bill, or as to the amount of land which a man should only be allowed to buy, except in certain areas. He would never be a party to any measure by which a man who possessed 640 acres of productive land, and who employed it so as to accumulate wealth, from purchasing other 640 acres, or other 6,000 acres of adjacent land. But what would those two Bills before the House do, if they were passed? They would prevent the man who commenced with 640 acres of land, and performed the miracle of making money out of it, from embarking his increased capital in the colony. The man was to be tied down to 640 acres, and if he had money to invest, he would not be allowed to invest it in land. Now, he could never be a party to a measure of so restrictive a nature as that; which would prevent a man, no matter what amount of money he might wish to invest in land, from holding a single acre beyond a stipulated quantity. It was necessary to remind honorable members that on the question of alienating the Crown lands he was always of one opinion, which was, that the Legislature should be rational in the use of them—that they should use the lands as a means to an end;—the means, the exchanging of them for people and wealth; the end, the colonisation and the prosperity of the country. He had endeavored to shew, what he believed, that the prosperity of the country depended more on the rapid alienation of the lands than upon deriving a large direct revenue from them; that by attempting to legislate against

a particular class, or for a particular class, the House would, judging from experience and common-sense, utterly fail in those objects. As previous legislation had so utterly failed of its purpose, it was now their duty to see if some new course ought not to be started upon, some fresh plan adopted, for the better carrying out of that which he believed they must all acknowledge they had failed in. The land law had, in no instance, answered the purpose for which it was devised; it had not rapidly peopled the country, it had not provided a revenue, it had not produced a prosperous country of itself—for the only portion of the country that still seemed to prosper, was that which was in existence before the colonists of Queensland ever attempted to legislate on the subject. All the efforts of the Queensland Legislature were total failures, and only had the effect of marring the interests of the colony. And the Bill before the House was so similar to previous measures, being but the result of their teaching; and where it went further, it was more pernicious than they—it legislated more directly for one class, and more directly against another than previous measures; that he could not see how the House would be justified in holding out any hope to themselves or the country that, if passed, it would have any more beneficial effect than previous enactments. He believed that Queensland was lagging in the race that was taking place amongst the various colonies. He spoke from his own knowledge, when he stated that legislators in the other colonies were beginning to awaken from their dreams, and were escaping from the thralldom which had bound them so long, respecting the administration of the Crown lands. He knew that there was a growing feeling in the neighboring colony that the time had arrived when the waste lands should be used as a great attraction for population; and that the conviction wide-spread in the minds of the people there was in favor of the more speedy alienation of lands, and of reduction in the price that would most speedily lead to it. He always regretted that Queensland was not in the van in that respect, and, not for the sake of setting an example to the other colonies, but for the sake of improving on the position occupied by them, he regretted that this colony had not initiated the idea, and put it in practise, of attracting population by the reduction of the price of land. Had the Legislature, immediately after Separation, reduced the price of agricultural land to ten shillings an acre, and of pastoral land to five shillings an acre, and of town lands proportionately, this colony, instead of being in its present state of dependence, having a sparse, wretched population of 90,000 scattered over it, would have some half million of souls settled on the land, and would be able to boast of an improving, an overflowing revenue, instead of being under a

disastrous debt. It was within the bounds of possibility that, had the Legislature acted wisely—it was within the compass of their own ability—to have attracted capital and population together, and, consequently, an extraordinary amount of prosperity would have been insured to the colony. What had been the result of their efforts? They had done nothing of the sort. With this pretended liberal land law, they for a time attracted capital to the colony; but they never succeeded in attracting population, because the price of land was still kept up to that extent that a population could not settle on the land. Hopes had been held out to emigrants, apparently with the intention of falsely breaking them when the people reached these shores. There had been fixed in the colony, for a time, an unprecedented amount of faith and expectation. From Victoria, New South Wales, and the other southern colonies, an enormous amount of capital was attracted, with the idea in its possession that it could be safely invested here in pastoral pursuits. But, no sooner was that a patent fact, than, in that inimical spirit to the pastoral interest which had so often manifested itself, by legislation, by declarations, by Orders in Council, by regulations, and by speeches, the good that had been done was undone; and all the high hopes, all the good faith, that were reposed in the colony, began to be disappointed; and from that time to this, instead of there being a constant flow of capital towards the colony, to add to its strength of industry, and invigorate the development of its resources, to enable all the varied pursuits to which it was so well adapted to be carried on, there had been a constant interruption of legitimate enterprise, and a withdrawal of confidence, in Queensland. Owing to the pernicious one-sided legislation that had been forced on the country by the House during the last four years, the capitalists of the other colonies had been advisedly, studiously, and continually withdrawing themselves, and separating their interests from this colony. It was from that pernicious legislation that the country suffered, as much as from any other cause. He trusted that the Bill would be the means of bringing about a better state of feeling throughout and towards the colony, and that the present Legislature would inaugurate a better state of things than had previously existed. He hoped that they would not only attract population by reducing the price of land, and offering it freely, liberally, and fairly to all classes, large and small buyers; but that they would set about restoring that confidence in the squatting interest which had formerly existed, so that the still almost boundless and unoccupied portions of this country might be taken up by the surplus stock of Queensland, and the surplus capital of the southern colonies; and thus, by promoting a feeling of safety in one investment,

the position of every other would be placed on a sound footing, and manifold benefits be conferred on the colony through the medium of the Crown lands. He regretted much that Queensland had failed to take advantage of its opportunities. He saw, in New South Wales, that a proposition was made for the reduction of the price of land. The effect of that in Europe, he expected, would be injurious to this colony. It would have been better that Queensland should have been the first to take advantage, at home, of the good understanding that would be produced by the announcement of a reduced price of land, and facilities for its acquisition; because he believed that this colony should stand before all its neighbors in attractiveness. Those astute Ministers in New South Wales, fearing probably that this colony would soon be forced, for self-preservation, and from conviction, to recognise what was absolutely required, had come forward with a land Bill that had, to a certain extent, "taken the wind out of our sails." If Queensland had been the first to proclaim that the price of land should no longer be kept up to the fancy, fictitious, price that had hitherto been maintained, the colony would have risen to an extent in public favor at home. He ventured to tell the House that for the next ten years there would be a race between the colonies, to see which should exhibit most liberality in reducing the price of land. If Queensland, in her obstinacy, insisted upon keeping up the minimum at one pound an acre, she would fall back irrecoverably; because none of the other competitors would go on in that stupid line—she would lose ground to an extent that no efforts of the Legislature would ever enable her to recover. He had a statement, shewing that the present Ministry of New South Wales proposed to throw open land, at fifteen shillings per acre, in quantities of 12,500 acres.

Mr. GARRICK: No; 1,200 odd. It is the large areas that you have.

Mr. WALSH: He might say that he had talked, not long ago, with one of those astute senators who took a deep interest in the Government of New South Wales—he was not in the colony now—and who told him that there was nothing he so much regretted in his past conduct as a member of Parliament and a Minister, as the suicidal policy he had acted up to of retaining the upset price of land at one pound an acre, and not throwing open in a more extended way the lands of the colony to all comers. That gentleman acknowledged, frankly and fairly, that it was a mistake he had made, but that the difficulty he had was, he did not know how to acknowledge it. He (Mr. Walsh) felt satisfied that the Legislature of this colony were in a similar difficulty. The Government must have had a feeling of the same kind. They had been blundering in their policy; but owing to the pressure brought to bear on them from outside, they felt unable

to pursue that course, which he felt they were confident would be best for the country, though not directly so satisfactory to themselves. What the colony really labored under was, the want of independent statesmen, who would acknowledge that they had committed errors, and who could come forward in the House—not for the sake of courting a transient popularity, or for the applause of this or that set of men—and say boldly that they had done wrong; that they were satisfied that all the acts which bore on the land question, the immigration question, and railways, had not been beneficial to the country; that they were prepared to admit all that, and, with the support of the House, to strike out a new line which must, at all events, be less detrimental than the course which had been pursued. The laws which had been attempted in the agricultural interest—he said it again and again, with the strongest conviction, and he regretted it—like that interest itself, in this colony, were a fallacy, a delusion, and a snare. Agriculture in Queensland, as far as his observation and experience enabled him to judge, unaccompanied with capital and with science, would continue to be a total failure—would continue to entail distress on those who were deluded into it—would continue to be of no benefit to the country. He wished it to be understood that he represented an agricultural constituency—he said it, emphatically, that he represented a town in an agricultural district; and he yielded to no member of the House in his desire to benefit the one and the other. He did not stand before the House as an apologist for the squatting interest, nor as a representative, in any way, of the squatters. On the land question, he stood forward as a Queensland colonist; and, holding the views which he held—and he had for many years expressed them as openly as now, and long before they were generally expressed in this country—he was able to say that his constituents entirely indorsed his sentiments on this question. The last time he was amongst them, they all urged upon him the absolute urgency that there was for reducing the price of land. And be it known that all his constituents were owners of land, who had purchased at high prices. But they regarded this question with feelings superior to their own personal desires or advantage. They said that, because they had paid too much for their land, it was no reason why others should be forced to do so. Although many of them had paid £2 and £3 an acre for lands which were worthless when they sat down on them—because they never ought to have been charged a shilling for them—and they alone gave them value by occupying and improving them; they felt, as men of the world, that as long as there was an acre of Crown land near them, an acre of scrub unreclaimed, the value of their own land was deteriorated. It was not

the price of £1 an acre which the Government demanded for that land, and which had been exacted from them, that they now concerned themselves about; they said what would give value to their own land would be the inability of the Government to longer compete with them—when every acre had an owner—they would be enabled to sell whenever there was a purchaser, for adequate value. Strangers would not go into a settled neighborhood and pay twenty-five shillings an acre to a private individual for land, when they could go to the Government and get it for £1 an acre, even at the same price. There seemed to be a delusive charm in the minds of the people, that land bought from the Crown was better than land bought from a private individual. In the name of his constituents, he (Mr. Walsh) demanded more rational legislation. He demanded that the House should reduce the price of land in such a way as to attract population to the neighborhood, that the fallen state of the Wide Bay District should cease; that the rich land on the Mary should be thrown open to all comers, at such prices as would enable men to turn the scrubs, at present useless, to advantage to their neighbors and the country at large. It was pernicious legislation—they were nefarious regulations—that withheld the land from people willing to go on it. To that legislation he attributed the fact that that most fertile district, which, was capable of supporting a population of 10,000 or 20,000, at the present time comprised only 2,000 or 3,000 people. The land question must be solved. It was a wrong solution that kept up such a state of things as he had described. It was a wrong solution, to keep up the price of land; to maintain the hostility which had been expressed in the House and elsewhere to the alienation of Crown lands. The late Premier had spoken in a manner that was unfair and unjust—and if the honorable member was present he would use a stronger expression—relative to the appraisement of the lands for renewed leases to the pastoral tenants. The unfairness of his speech was intensified by the unnatural cheering which the untruthful remark received from certain of the honorable member's supporters, who never failed in the House to evince their hostility to the squatters. The honorable member had distinctly stated that for the purpose of appraising their runs, the squatters got two of his friends. He must have known he was not stating a fact at all; for the Act provides how every thing should be done. It did not provide that the squatter should be charged with the crime of cheating—it did not provide for an insinuation of that kind; but it expressly provided, in a much fairer manner than the honorable member had carried it out, that the squatter should name one arbitrator and the Government another, and that the two, if they could not agree, should appoint a disinterested party to act as umpire. How had

the honorable gentleman dared to carry out that arrangement? In a way discreditable to himself; and his statement this evening could not disprove it. He had given instructions to the commissioners of Crown lands to be the Government arbitrators, and they always had instructions which they could not depart from; and he had invariably laid down the rule that, if the arbitrators could not agree, the Chief Commissioner of Crown Lands was to be the umpire. In the face of such facts—of which he (Mr. Walsh) would defy the contradiction—it was barefaced of that honorable member, it was impudent of him, it was deceptive of him, to come down with such a statement as he had made. He did not wish, he repeated, to be the apologist of the squatters. Heaven knew they had been blind enough to their own interests! But when an ex-Minister attempted to blind the House by such a statement, somebody should get up to vindicate the law, and do justice to those who were slandered. He felt he was bound to say a few words on behalf of the maligned squatter before he sat down, notwithstanding that he represented a town constituency. Was it never to be remembered in the House what the squatter had done for this country? Was it never to be remembered, all the toils, troubles, losses, and dangers he had incurred for the good of the country?—primarily for the good of himself, secondarily, for the good of the country? Would it never be remembered that he alone had been the discoverer of the country itself? Would it never be quoted in his favor, that no other class of colonists had ever done the pioneer work, braved the dangers, endured the trials, incurred the losses, that he had? Had there ever been an instance of the much-lauded agriculturist being a pioneer? Had it ever been stated that a townsman had been a pioneer, or had opened up the country? Who was it that created the revenue, or caused it to flow into the country, from that much-lauded district, the Warrego? Who added so much wealth to the colony? Who gave the absolute wealth to the colony—the produce for export—which came from that district? Who, but the actual squatter. Was it the agriculturist that had ever done anything in the Warrego, to benefit the colony? Was it the trades? When he mentioned the Warrego, he meant, also, nine out of every ten districts of the colony, where the squatter stood in the same position. He regarded the squatter in this light—that he was the conquering force of the country; he represented the victorious army going through a subjugated territory;—those other people who were yelping and yapping at his heels, were nothing but the camp followers, who lived on the spoils, and who did nothing towards gaining the victory, or adding to the glory, or enhancing the advantages, of the occasion; but who reaped too frequently the sole mercenary profits. He regretted

much that class legislation enforced allusions to class. But when he listened to the speech of the honorable member for East Moreton, Mr. Francis;—when he listened to that unwarrantable statement of the honorable member for Ipswich, Mr. Macalister—made for a certain purpose; he felt that, until the unnatural war of classes was at an end, nothing like wise legislation on the waste lands of the colony was likely to take place. He ventured to tender advice to the Government—he trusted that they would not stake their reputation or their existence on the Land Bill. He would venture to apologise for them to the fullest extent he could go. They had endeavored to make it as much like their predecessors' Bill as they could, and, consequently, it was naturally defective. He hoped they would accept his advice. Although, probably, they would not know the Bill when it left the committee—

Mr. GROOM: If ever it does leave the committee.

Mr. WALSH: They would do well to accept it as an evidence of the better wisdom of the House, and as something more like what the country required than it was in its present form. He felt that they took the honorable member for Eastern Downs at a disadvantage the other evening. There was no other gentleman in the House who held wiser views on the subject of alienation of Crown lands than the honorable member. He regretted that he was the cause of forcing him into a speech on the second reading of the Bill, when he was not properly prepared for it; and he felt it due to the House to remind them that the honorable member was well-intentioned—that he held somewhat similar views to his (Mr. Walsh's) own—that while he was perfectly prepared to provide that *bona fide* agriculturists should be amply supplied with sufficient and suitable land for their purposes, he had ever entertained a desire to alienate the mere useless, uncultivable, non-agricultural lands of the colony as rapidly and as reasonably as circumstances would permit. So long ago as 1864, the honorable member endeavored to press on the House similar views to those which he (Mr. Walsh) had so fully endeavored to lay before them. That the honorable member had proposed an arrangement for the alienation of lands when pressing his own Bill—one of the clauses of which he had just quoted—on the House, the following would shew:—

“He contended that this was an equitable arrangement. The greater the amount of land which a man was willing to take in one block, the less should be the price charged.”

Those were exactly his (Mr. Walsh's) views. He regretted the honorable member's Bill had not been carried.

“It might be said that we should be thus liable to sell the best portion of our land at 7s. 6d.

an acre, but in reply to this he would draw attention to a few figures. If an area of twenty-five miles were sold at 7s. 6d. an acre, the amount of that area would be 16,000 acres, which would represent the sum of £6,000. So that if a pastoral tenant chose to pay for such a block of country, he would have to give £6,000. Now, would it not be worth the while of the Government to take this money? It would be certainly more economic of them than to borrow money at six per cent.”

Dr. CHALLINOR: Not always.

Mr. WALSH: They believed it would be better for the Government to acquire a perpetual revenue from the sale of lands, than a fitful revenue only from the rent of land. For instance, if the Government sold on the Darling Downs—which he trusted they would—£40,000 worth of land, that would ensure to them and their successors, if they properly invested the purchase money, from £2,000 to £4,000 a year; so that it all resolved itself into a mercantile question, whether, for the sake of revenue, it was best for the Government to sell the lands and invest the proceeds at a paying rate of interest. He ventured to say that if the honorable member for Eastern Downs' plan had been carried out, the Darling Downs, instead of returning £1,000 a year—this sum was given only for comparison—would be yielding, in the shape of interest derivable from the money realised for sales, and invested, something like £20,000. He was not oblivious to the fact that the Government had been paying for borrowed money eleven and twelve per cent. interest. Persons had realised from the sale of country for which £200 and £300 a year rental was paid to the Government, a sum that enabled them to command for interest alone an income of £4,000 a year. He (Mr. Walsh) was glad to do justice to the honorable member for Eastern Downs. It would appear inconsistent, if he did not, in the same way, do justice to the honorable member for Ipswich, Mr. Macalister, whose statesmanlike views shewed that he was not to be out-done by the honor of dealing with squatting interests. It would also be well for the honorable member himself to be reminded of the degree of fairness he exhibited on 31st August, 1864, towards that class who were so maligned this evening. He had opposed the proposition of the honorable member for Eastern Downs, on behalf of the squatters; and had done so in the most justifiable manner, and had fired up against their oppressors. What did he say in defence of the Darling Downs squatters, whose runs the honorable member for Eastern Downs was desirous to take from them to give the fee-simple?—

“But this fact was not to be forgotten—and he would ask the honorable member whether he did not think that the country had pledged their faith to the squatters, who held their fourteen years' leases.”

The country, and the honorable member himself, as the initiator and principal mover



of the Land Bill which gave the pledge, were pledged to the squatters. In an opportune moment the honorable member had remembered the pledge. He (Mr. Walsh) must do history justice, and say that the honorable member had also forgotten the pledge, when it suited him—when that tremendous slice was taken from the Darling Downs squatters the other day. When the House saw the self-same Minister act in both ways, it was quite time that the suggestion was adopted—that the administration of the lands of the colony should be removed from political hands. Injustice would be done also, if the reasonable and satisfactory remarks of the honorable member for West Moreton were not quoted:—

“He thought that the introduction of a system of pre-emptive right on the new lands of the colony would have the opposite effect to what had been stated by the honorable Minister for Lands and Works. This was yet but a new colony, with an immense area of land to be occupied, and the House should remember that at the present time it was opposed by the neighboring colony of South Australia, which was offering the most liberal measures for the occupation of its new lands. They had not, he thought, held out sufficient inducements to the people of the neighboring colonies to come here.”

That was precisely what honorable members on the Ministerial side of the House said. He claimed the repetition of those convictions from the honorable members opposite: because nothing had transpired since 1864 in the administration of this country to prove the reverse of what was then stated. For the sake of their consistency, for the sake of everything which statesmen valued, he wished they would adhere to those wise views; and that they would say the Land Bill before the House, and the Land Bill of the late Government, were not satisfactory, because they did not substantially provide for making this colony—as the honorable member for West Moreton, Mr. Bell, had put it—more attractive than even South Australia:—

“They had not made sufficiently liberal laws to bring them [the people] in.”

These words, in fact, justified the right of that honorable member to be considered a prophet. On that occasion he enunciated views of which concurrent circumstances demonstrated the correctness.

“If some such inducement as was proposed by the Bill [Mr. Douglas’s] were held out to people to purchase the land, it would be a great inducement to them to come here and settle permanently.”

That Bill did not become law; and it was very evident that the colony had suffered seriously because the House had not followed the wise advice of the honorable member.

“It would, doubtless, be the case that the great bulk of the new settlers of this colony could not purchase their stations either at current rates

or reduced rates for some time; but the Bill would afford them the opportunity of permanently attaching themselves to the land.”

He affirmed, that a statesman who could bring in a measure which would conquer the prejudices of the country, and have the effect of permanently attaching the people to the soil, would earn for himself a name and fame which great men even in the nineteenth century might be proud of. In a young colony like this, such a measure was especially necessary, and he would rather have the reputation of being the cleverest coloniser, than the most fortunate general of the day. He thought he had sufficiently shewn, that there had been a time when honorable members who now sat on the other side of the House were in favor of passing a liberal Land Bill. He thought he had sufficiently demonstrated that the exigencies of the country required that something of the kind should be done at once; he believed it had been shewn that the lands of the colony had not succeeded in making it prosperous, or getting it out of its difficulties, and therefore he implored honorable members to forget their past prejudices, and their past determinations, and to join in legislating for the benefit of Queensland, even at the sacrifice of their own consistency.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said, that after the expressions of opinion concerning the Land Bill before them, speaking for the Government, he felt like the old man and his donkey, in the fable; in attempting to please everybody, they seemed likely to fail. It was manifestly the case that, in any discussion upon a Land Bill, every member was ready with a separate Land Bill of his own in his pocket. His only consolation was, that any four members, in the attempt to produce a satisfactory Land Bill, would meet with the same fate as the Government had met with, and fail to satisfy the members of the House. That was exemplified in the first night of the debate, in the speeches made by the honorable member for Warwick, and the honorable member for Eastern Downs. The former announced principles which, he said, his constituents had elected him to support; while the latter affirmed that those principles were directly opposed to the wishes, and against the principles of, his constituents. The honorable member for Ipswich had quoted largely from a former speech made by him (the Colonial Treasurer) in the House, to shew his inconsistency. But he would point out, that it had been the custom with statesmen to give way in their own opinions in order to settle a question that was agitating the country. That position might be illustrated by the conduct of statesmen at home, in respect to the Reform Bill of 1832, which he was old enough to remember, and so with the second Reform Bill of the present time; and again, with respect to the repeal of the corn laws. The difference between the late and the present Government was this, that while the former had begged the question,

the latter had met it. The late Ministry had begged the question, and formed the agitation by keeping the whole community ringing with the necessity of a Land Bill. The present Government had met the question by laying a Land Bill on the table of the House, for honorable members to deal with as they thought fit. Every honorable member who had spoken had admitted that no Land Bill of any description could be passed, unless all parties gave way to a certain extent. In the stage to which that question had arrived, when everything was in an unsettled state, and capitalists were hanging back, it became the duty of the Government to introduce a comprehensive measure in order that it might be dealt with in all its points by the House. The honorable member for East Moreton, Mr. Francis, had thanked the Government for the introduction of the Land Bill; had bestowed much thought upon it; he had read the Bill over, and smoked his pipe over it (as he had seen him doing), and had obviously come to the conclusion that his occupation as agitator upon the question had gone, and therefore nothing at all could satisfy him. Hence that honorable member had stated that he could not believe in the Land Bill, because he suspected the quarter from which it came. The honorable member admitted that there was some good in it, but complained that it was cumbersome in the extreme, from containing over a hundred clauses. But, in answer to that, he would observe that the same remark was true of the late Premier's Land Bill. In reality, however, the present Bill was contained in about a dozen clauses. But the liberal member for East Moreton would only pass some few clauses on behalf of the agriculturists alone, although he had been willing to pass the comprehensive and long Bill of the late Premier. Yet there was no great difference between the two Bills of the present and the previous Government, as had been admitted by the honorable member for Ipswich himself.

Mr. MACALISTER: I did not compare the two Bills at all.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Well, he had understood him to do so. The honorable member for East Moreton did not like the land alienated at one pound an acre, nor at five shillings, or even half-a-crown; in the first place, because the price shut out the poor man, in the second because it let in the capitalist. Nothing would satisfy that honorable member. Again, the gentleman had objected that under the Bill the immigrant did not get sufficient inducement to land here; and yet the inducement had been considerably enlarged by the Bill. To give the immigrant 640 acres would cause complaints among residents in the country already, as unjust to themselves. In fact, a monomania on the question seemed to possess the honorable member for East Moreton. He had it in his recollection that, at a

meeting of the agricultural association, the honorable member had taken the present Government to task—or if he had not done so, he was in the chair at the time, for issuing the recent land regulations under proclamation, and had stated that the land should be kept entirely for agriculturists—that persons wanting land should make a declaration that he was a *bond fide* agriculturist—born and bred he presumed—and that he wanted the land for no other purpose. There was a motion upon the paper by the honorable member for the Eastern Downs, affirming that the regulations issued by the Government were illegal and ill-advised. The motion came with a very bad grace from a member of the former Government, after their proclamations, which included the whole of the Darling Downs in an agricultural area. That Government, in spite of a clause in the Act which said that before lands were resumed there should be a year's notice, had proclaimed them without such notice. They had justified this by a subterfuge, that the pastoral tenants of the Crown had not got their leases. That was by the advice of the then Attorney-General. The old leases of the pastoral tenants had expired, and meantime they had not received the new leases, but by no fault of their own.

Mr. LILLEY: I must, by leave, correct the honorable member. I gave no such advice; but I advised the Government that the proclamation was legal.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Well, he had understood that to be the case. In point of fact, he believed the leases had never been issued. He had been Colonial Treasurer for some years, and had never seen them, or heard of them, and he himself had never received a lease, though for years holding pastoral lands. In fact, a return recently laid upon the table had shewn that only a few, three or four, leases had been issued altogether. As to the honorable member for East Moreton, it was obviously impossible to satisfy his peculiar proclivities, or to tell what he wanted, except it was a measure with two or three clauses. It was stated that the Leasing Clauses Bill of last session had been forced upon the Government; but he thought the honorable member for East Moreton had fallen into an error, in stating that that Bill was considered sufficient for all purposes, though, if the land laws had been properly administered, there would have been no such outcry as was raised. It was the interference with the regulations, by the late Government, which had prevented the people from getting on to the land. The difference between the present Land Bill and that of the late Government was very considerable. The honorable member for East Moreton had complained that the greatest fault in the Bill before the House was its comprehensiveness. He considered that to be its greatest merit. Its object was to place everything before honorable members—the

different ideas as to the price of land, as to the way the classification of land should be carried out, and the question of allowance to squatters in the outside districts. He maintained that all that was done. There was a clause embracing a sliding scale in the price of land, which embraced the practical and sensible suggestion of the honorable member for West Moreton, Mr. O'Sullivan. Another feature in the Bill was referred to land orders to immigrants. It was generally admitted that the land order system had proved an entire failure. The idea of settling the immigrants on the lands of the colony had been a favorite idea of his. He had made a similar proposition in 1860—to give the immigrant a grant of land, upon condition that he would settle on it and make use of it. But the system, as introduced, had become a mere vehicle for speculation. The land orders were bought up at a reduced price by speculators; he had even heard of their being sold for eighteenpence. The Bill proposed to correct that state of things. Then another difference in the present Bill was, that it took everything, as far as possible, out of the hands of the Government. He was aware that this had led to a misapprehension on the part of honorable members as to the power of the Government to resume lands. Possibly the Government had gone a little too far; but, looking to the seventy-eighth clause of the Bill, it would be found that—

“Any Crown lands other than those comprised in the southern and northern settled districts and defined in schedules B and C of this Act which have been reserved as town or suburban or country lots or for any public purpose by any Act Order in Council or regulation heretofore in force or which may be resumed in pursuance of the provisions of the Act of this session intituled the Pastoral Leases Act of 1867 shall be deemed to be portions of the settled districts of the colony and subject to the provisions in this Act contained in reference thereto.”

Then, again, there was the grazing areas clause, which was put before the House in good faith, to see whether the middle man, who wished to commence squatting on a small scale, could be provided for. There was also a proposition to reduce the price of lands in the north. Last year he had stated that if he did give way in the price of land, it would be in the case of the northern districts. There were no vested interests to be injured in these districts, and their position was widely different. It was well known that, beyond a certain latitude in this colony, the climate was not suited to European labor, and that the land would have to be divided into large grazing areas, and localities for sugar and cotton plantations. It was evident that that must be the future of the north. That was why these provisions had been made, and a blank was left in the Bill, so that the House might consider what price should be inserted. There was nothing in the Bill about five shillings an acre, as some

honorable member had stated; and he thought the question might be met without going so low as that, and without keeping the price of the lands in the north as high as one pound. He quite agreed, however, with the honorable member, Mr. O'Sullivan, that the classification of lands was very desirable. He next came to notice the very able and statesman-like speech of the honorable member for Western Downs, Mr. Ramsay; and he was glad to see that the idea had been started, and had been received with favor—that of not restricting the sale of lands. The Bill did not provide for any such restriction. Several honorable members had expressed themselves to the effect that it would be very desirable to sell the land in large quantities, so as to reduce the debt, or, at any rate, to prevent its increase. He had made allusion to that in concluding his financial statement, and had stated that he thought the day was not far distant when the lands of the colony would enable the Government to meet all their liabilities. But there had always been a great jealousy about having large landed proprietors in the country. Now, there was no doubt, that there were large tracts of land in this colony which could never be made available for the settlement of a large agricultural population. Why then should they be allowed to lie waste when persons were ready to buy them, even if those persons made no use of them? Of course, the Bill was concurrent with the Pastoral Bill, which was lying on the table of the House, and had been read by honorable members. Reference had been made to the rental and appraisal of runs; and it would be seen by the Bill that there was to be a fixed rent. The re-assessments had proved altogether a failure. The rent had been considered high in the northern districts. The late Premier had himself admitted this, for he had introduced a Bill for the Relief of the Pastoral Tenants of the Crown. He believed he had now noticed the principal features of the Bill. The Government had done all they could to meet the requirements of the colony. They had framed the Bill with great care. They now left it for honorable members to make improvements upon it in committee, and, as he had already stated, if honorable members were prepared to make a little sacrifice of their personal feelings in considering it, there might be a chance of their settling the question. If it were not speedily settled the colony would assuredly retrograde. A great deal had been said, and especially by the honorable member for East Moreton, about legislating for one class against the other, but the honorable member himself could not help doing so; he was not prepared to meet the question in a fair and liberal spirit—for liberality meant that both interests should be considered,—without that it would be utterly useless to approach the subject at all. He hoped the House would pass the second reading of the Bill, and that

in committee any differences of opinion might be considered, and amicably discussed.

Mr. FITZSIMMONS said he believed no Bill had come before the House which had so engrossed the attention of the public, as the Land Bill now under discussion. The fate of this measure was looked forward to with great anxiety by all classes of the community, and he was proud to see that the Government had so promptly met the wishes of the people by introducing it. The great object which the people had in view was to be allowed to settle on the land and become freeholders, and there was no doubt that if the Bill before the House were allowed to pass, an opportunity would be afforded to numbers of persons to settle on the land at once. It appeared to him that the object the Government had in view was to give all parties an opportunity of getting on to the land, and to advance the prosperity of the country in every possible way. But he must confess that he did not like the Land Bill they had introduced. He had read it very carefully, and there were many clauses which he should wish to see altered. At the same time, if it were passed in its present state, though it might have the effect of settling many persons in the country, and consigning a number of townspeople to pursuits of which they knew very little, it would have the effect of reducing materially the price of sheep and stations throughout the country, without offering any adequate benefit to the holder of pastoral properties. One honorable member had stated that the Darling Downs was the most fertile district in the world. It was, therefore, evident that the remote districts in the west and north could bear no comparison with it, or, indeed, with East or West Moreton. The same laws which applied to those districts could not, therefore, be applicable to the north. He mentioned this fact in consequence of the remarks which had been made by the honorable member for East Moreton, Mr. Francis, who, in commenting upon the blank in one of the clauses of the Bill, had wished to make it appear that the said blank had been left there for some covert reason to defeat the object which appeared on the face of the Bill. Nothing could be more absurd than such a supposition. The blank was left in order that the question might undergo the consideration of the House. One thing was very evident, and that was, that the price of land had hitherto been stamped by the Government at one pound an acre, without any reference to its quality. Every one knew that the lands in this colony were not of equal value. Some were probably worth one pound an acre, and others not worth one-half, or, in some cases, one-twentieth of that sum. He had seen hundreds of thousands of acres which, even if cleared, would not be worth one farthing an acre. It was therefore manifestly unjust to place the same value upon all lands; they should be sold in the market like any other

commodity for what they were worth. There was another matter he should like to refer to—the position of settlers in the remote districts of the colony, especially in the western and northern districts. They labored under great disadvantages, compared with the settlers in the southern districts. First, there was the poverty of the soil to contend with; then the distance from seaport towns; and there was another disadvantage which, perhaps, affected them more materially than any other, and that was the climate. These were quite sufficient reasons for classifying the lands, at different prices. The honorable member for West Moreton, Mr. O'Sullivan, had made a suggestion to this effect, in which he hoped every honorable member would concur. It was a misfortune that for a number of years the land laws of the colony had not been carried out in such a manner as to give public satisfaction; had they been properly administered, such a Bill as the Bill before the House would never have been called for. It was dangerous to leave so much power in the hands of one man, and he thought it would be much better if the power which the Minister for Lands had been able to exercise, were taken from him and vested in the House. It should be the object of honorable members, in dealing with this question, to frame such a Bill as would induce immigrants to come out and settle in the country. Any land measure which did not produce this result would prove a dead letter—it would be perfectly useless. He could not imagine anything more absurd than to expect an emigrant to come out to this colony, and purchase 2,560 acres of land at one pound an acre, and to pay £320 a year for eight years before he became possessor of it, and at the same time to retain in his hands money enough to cultivate the land. He would ask honorable members if they could mention a single instance where a person was prepared to conform to these regulations. If the inducement had not been sufficient hitherto, it was not likely to be so in future. He was, and had been throughout, the representative of a town constituency, and he denied the right of the Government or the House to enter into any class legislation. One class should not be fostered at the expense of another. However, he believed that the requirements of all classes might be met by the Bill, by judiciously altering certain clauses. He should be prepared to support the motion for its second reading, and to assist in making those alterations in committee.

Mr. ARCHER said he rose for the first time to address the House, with a conviction that he should carry with him, at all events, only a small portion of the House. His views upon the land question were so utterly opposed to those of many honorable members, that he felt he had very little chance of impressing them very strongly. But he had already experienced a measure of success. He had set himself

steadily to the task, and had succeeded in convincing a great many persons of the soundness of his views who at first entertained an utter disbelief of them. It was not long ago since he first began to address the people of the town he represented, on the subject of the lands of the colony. Had he at that time appeared before them as a candidate for their suffrages, he felt satisfied that he should not have had twenty votes in his favor. He had, however, given himself a little trouble in writing and talking on the subject, and in trying to inculcate the principles which he conceived would be most beneficial to the colony, and he was now returned to the House in a position of which few persons could boast, to advocate those principles to the best of his ability. He had been requested by a country constituency to represent them, but he had refused, because he knew that to do any good in the House, he must represent a town, and not a squatting interest. Honorable members had possibly not read any of his addresses to his constituents, but he had stated—before he came down to take his seat in the House—he had stated distinctly the kind of land law he should advocate; and the very people who, a few years ago, would not have looked at him as a candidate, had returned him for the views he then urged. This encouraged him; and though he did not look for any great result this year, yet, it was only by frequently debating and writing upon the question, that the public mind could be brought to bear upon it. And though he did not pretend to be a Cobden, still, every one must use the talents they possessed, and he had for the last four years agitated for such an alteration in the land laws as would conduce to the interests of the whole community. He had been told by the honorable member for West Moreton the other evening, that he was preparing himself for a seat on the Government benches. Nothing could be a greater mistake. No Ministry would stand for a single session if he were to join it, and the land question come on for discussion that year. He could not accept a single clause of the Bill before the House, and he did not think it would be accepted by the House. It might be presumptuous in him to say so much, but he had had many opportunities of forming a judgment upon the question. He had spent many years of his life in the pursuits which many honorable members were anxious to encourage—the cultivation of coffee and sugar. Though at present a squatter, as far as knowledge was concerned, he was a farmer; and he knew how to cultivate the tropical products which honorable members were anxious to encourage. He was not, therefore, one of those who wished to foster only one interest. He was perfectly aware than anything said in that House by a squatter was looked upon with very great suspicion. It was difficult to make people believe, when a statement was made by a person who represented

that interest, that there was not some intention concealed in it which did not appear. For his part, he claimed the merit of speaking honestly; he spoke from experience, and he meant what he said. There were some honorable members who were in the habit of harping continually upon the "poor man." The term was one he greatly disliked; it was one, too, which the working man did not like to hear, for there were very few really poor men in the country. But, as he had said, there were certain honorable members who put themselves forward as the champions of the poor man, and he believed the poor man looked upon them as their friends. He considered that they were, in reality, the enemies of the poor man, and his worst enemies. It was by them that capital had been kept out of the colony. Their great aim, whenever they legislated upon the land question, appeared to have been to exclude the very persons who could give employment to the poor man. They had admitted a great number of persons who ought never to have come out, but had offered no inducements to capitalists, who would have found occupation for the working men, and allowed them to save a little money to start upon their own account. Labor was useless without capital to employ it. A great deal had been said about the boundless resources of Queensland, and the great future in store for her. He hoped those resources were boundless, but of what advantage were they without population to develop them? One argument had been made use of by the honorable member for East Moreton, Mr. Francis, which he had been sorry to hear. The honorable member stated that what God meant the land for was to be cultivated and turned up, so that something might be made to grow in it which nature did not intend to grow. Now, he did not like to hear such arguments made use of in the House, and fortified by the name which the honorable member had introduced. The honorable member might have expressed his opinion and given the House the result of his experience without introducing such a name. Much had been said also about the price of land in the north and south, and mention had been made of repudiation. One honorable member had asked why there should be two prices, one for the north and another for the south. The reason was obvious; the people in the south did not wish to alter the present price, and the northern people did; and he protested against the arguments that the whole country might be ruled by one portion of it. The very fact that northern members had been returned purposely to advocate cheap land was a strong reason for a difference in price, unless the south wished to join in the reduction. It was an insult on the part of the south to say to the north—"You are not to do as you like with your lands, but we will do what we like with ours and yours as well." The honorable member for West Moreton had given a much better reason against the

alteration, for he had stated that he did not wish to see the price of land lower in the north than in the south, lest the population should be attracted northwards to the ruin of the southern district. No better reason could be given why the south should lower the price of land, and attract people from the other colonies. Before proceeding further, he would endeavor to shew what he considered a Land Bill should be. The result of his travels and experience had convinced him that there was only one country in the world where the lands were so administered as to conduce to the comfort and prosperity of its inhabitants; and it was a great misfortune that every British colony had not taken that country as an example, in respect to their land laws. In the United States, which was a country very much in the same position, the Government placed no value upon the land. All that they looked for was a population to settle upon it, and with this object they held out inducements in the shape of cheap land to every man who could buy it and occupy it. If that example had not been held out, it would not have been surprising if Queensland had gone on blundering for some time longer; but seeing how prosperous the United States had become through their land policy; seeing that they attracted some three-fourths of the immigrants from the continent of Europe, while here the Government had actually to spend money to import the immigrants they required, it seemed extraordinary that the Legislature of Queensland had not taken a leaf out of their book, and changed their tactics altogether. He would now, with the permission of the House, read a few extracts from original works by eminent authorities, from whom honorable members might well take a lesson. The first was from a speech of the famous Edmund Burke, in the House of Commons:—

“As to the Crown reversions, or titles upon the property of the people, it is proposed to convert them from a snare to their independence into relief from their burdens; to sell unprofitable estates, and to turn the tenant-right into a fee on such moderate terms as will be better for the State than its present rights, and which it is impossible for any rational tenant to refuse.”

That was spoken in the House of Commons, in England, and addressed to a country which was certainly more densely populated than Queensland. And yet, although the land there might fairly be supposed to have reached its full value, Edmund Burke advised that it should be given in fee-simple on such favorable terms that no one could refuse it. He knew that a Government was the worst landlord, and that no lands possessed by a Government were ever improved; but that as soon as the land was sold upon easy terms, capital would be spent upon it, and its value be improved. It was the principle of alienating her lands upon such terms as attracted population and induced settlement, which

had made America so prosperous. Further on, Mr. Burke said:—

“The principal revenue which I propose to draw from these uncultivated wastes is to spring from the population and improvement of the kingdom, which never can happen without producing an improvement more advantageous to the revenues of the Crown than the rents of the best landed estate which it can hold. By means of this part of the reform will fall the expensive office of Surveyor-General, with all the influence that attends it. I have now disposed of the unprofitable landed estates of the Crown, and thrown them into the mass of private property, by which they will come, by the course of circulation and through the political secretions of the State, into our better-understood and better-ordered revenues.”

That was exactly what was wanted in this country—to deprive the Government, as far as possible, of the power of interfering with the working of the land laws. Every honorable member who had spoken on the question had admitted the necessity of taking this power from the Government and of vesting it in the House. The following was from President Jackson's fourth annual message:—

“It seems to be our true policy that the public lands should cease as soon as possible to be a source of revenue, and that they should be sold in limited parcels to settlers, on such terms as barely to reimburse to the United States the expense of the present system (meaning the survey), and the cost arising out of our Indian compacts.”

That was the original purchase from the Indians, which might have been a farthing an acre, and the cost of survey. Now, it was by following out that system that the Americans had succeeded in peopling their country, and making it the most prosperous in the world. It was strange, that in this colony they had been so long in taking advantage of the example the Americans had shewn them. There was another extract, which he felt he must trouble the House with. It was from McCulloch's edition of “Smith's Wealth of Nations,” and referred to the large reserves that were formerly kept up in New South Wales—that was, large portions of waste lands not offered for sale. The passage was as follows:—

“There are various ways in which an abuse of this sort might be obviated, and perhaps the best would be to apportion the land according to the available capital of the settlers, it being stipulated that no individual should receive above a certain number of acres, and that it should revert back to the public unless certain improvements were effected upon it within a specified time after the grant was made.”

Now there was one of the greatest political economists of the age advising the New South Wales Government to give away the waste lands as long as people would settle on them and improve them. Referring to what was known as the Wakefield system, the same authority went on to say:—

“It is a part of this new scheme, on the supposed 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 the capitalists, by inflicting a still more serious injury on the laborers. In a colony where a large portion of the capital is swallowed up in the purchase of land, the capacity to make improvements, and the demand for labor, must be comparatively limited."

The same was the case here. Every one who came to the colony was expected to lay out his last penny in the purchase of the land; and to leave himself without one penny for the improvement of it. The very class the Parliament desired to foster, brought with them so little money, that after purchasing what land they wanted, they had nothing left to spend in improving it; or for the employment of labor to cultivate it. Now, it was the evils of that which McCulloch tried to expose. He went on to say:—

"Few laborers aware of the facts of the case, who can afford to pay for a passage to the United States will voluntarily go to a colony where land is to be artificially raised to a high price, and labor artificially cheapened. And hence it is that the capitalists who have bought lands in Australia, and our other colonies, have been entirely disappointed in their anticipations of being supplied with cheap labor. The exorbitant price set on the land, by preventing the immigration of independent laborers, has rendered wages as high in them as in the most flourishing parts of the United States. It is further to be observed that the most desirable class of immigrants does not consist of capitalists, the number of whom must always be very limited—nor of paupers—but of small farmers, tradesmen, and others, with sums varying from £50, £100, or £200, up to £1000. Such persons form the stamina of modern emigrants; and, of these, nine out of every ten emigrate in the hope of acquiring the property of a less or greater price of land, the culture of which is to be carried on wholly, or almost wholly, by themselves and their families, and which is to engage all or a large portion of their attention. But the extravagant price demanded for land in our colonies, makes the class now referred to resort in preference to the United States; and there is no doubt of the fact, that for the last eight or ten years, nine-tenths of the most valuable immigrants from this country—that is of industrious individuals possessed of capital—have established themselves in some part of the Union. And how could any other result be anticipated? The Americans sell the richest and finest wheat lands in the Valley of the Mississippi for about a dollar an acre, whereas we exact a minimum price of six shillings and seven pence sterling an acre for the worse lands in Upper Canada, and twenty shillings an acre for the worst in Australia, from four to six acres of which is required to depasture a single sheep! Had such extraordinary regulations been devised to divert the current of voluntary emigration from our colonies to the

United States, they would have done honor to the sagacity of those by whom they were contrived, and there would not have been a word to say against them."

He hoped the honorable and gallant member for Ipswich, Dr. Challinor, would cry "hear hear" to that, because it really did honor to any man who had diverted the stream of immigration from Australia to the United States.

"But, as it is, they (the regulations) are repugnant alike to the plainest dictates of common sense, and to the best interests of the colonies and of the mother-country; and we leave it to others to decide whether their impolicy or the tenacity with which they have been supported by the Home Government be the more remarkable."

He felt it was almost absurd for him to say any more on the subject, after reading those extracts from McCulloch; for it was impossible for him or anyone else to state the case more clearly, or to express so much in so few sentences; and if such a statement of the case did not bring conviction to those who supported an opposition policy, he feared they would never be convinced. From what he had read, it would be evident to honorable members that he was one of those who thought the land should be cheapened—and cheapened a great deal further than it had been in that House. He did not hesitate to say that, because it was only what he stated during his candidature for election; and it was one of the objects he was returned to support. If the lands were classified, and those in the agricultural areas were sold at five shillings an acre, and those in the grazing areas at half-a-crown an acre, in ten years the country would be well populated, more prosperous, and a great deal richer than it was ever likely to become under the provisions of the Bill now before the House. Till they held out greater temptations to people to come here; and told them that they would get land on more advantageous terms than had hitherto been the case, they would never succeed in peopling the lands. Therefore, he insisted that the lands should be classified in two distinct ways, and let all that was fit for agriculture be sold for that purpose, in limited quantities, at five shillings an acre; and all other lands fit for grazing purposes at a lower price still—at half-a-crown an acre. Till they undersold America—and their best lands could not be compared to the rich lands in the Valley of the Mississippi—how could they expect people to come here and settle upon the lands? It was absurd to expect it, and the thing would never be done; but as long as they legislated to keep people from coming here, they might depend upon it they would succeed in that.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: What was the cost of clearing in the valley of the Mississippi?

Mr. ARCHER: There were hundreds of miles of the finest agricultural land without

a tree upon it—hundreds of miles of rich prairie land sold at five shillings an acre—and those were the finest lands he believed in the States, and, he might say, the finest lands in the world. He had stated why he considered the price of land in the north should be different from the price of land in the south, without either, as the honorable member for East Moreton, Mr. Francis, said, leading to repudiation; or, as the honorable member for Ipswich, Mr. Macalister, said, doing injustice to the colony. He considered that the Crown lands of the colony were for the benefit of the people who occupied them, and of those who were to come after them; and he also considered that if the people in the south had a right to legislate for their lands, the people in the north had an equal right to legislate for their lands. When provincial councils were established, as he hoped would be the case very soon, he should expect, when the northern members came to the House with a land law they could agree to, that the southern members would acquiesce in it, because it would not interfere with their lands; and if the southern members wished to keep up the price of the lands in the south at a pound an acre, let them do so. He, however, denied that they had a right to keep up the price of lands in the north; and, as soon as the administration of the lands was taken out of the hands of the Government, and put into the hands of district councils, he should expect the House to pass such a law as northern members were, by their constituents, sent to ask for. He maintained that every part of the colony had an equal right with every other part to say what land laws they should have in the district. Though they must now accept of a general land law, he claimed for the north, when they had a local board that agreed upon a land law, that they should have a right to ask the House to sanction the local measure. Whether the south would have the common sense to ask for a similar land law, was no matter to him, as he was not interested; but he would suggest to honorable members in the south, that they should pass a land law similar to that of the United States. When the honorable member for Ipswich, Mr. Macalister, asked him upon what principle he justified a difference between the price of land in the north and the price of land in the south, he gave him, as he thought, a sufficient answer, when he said that it was the right of the people settled in the north to say how their lands should be administered; and that was the principle they would claim to exercise. He was not going to say much in favor of the Land Bill introduced by the present Government. If he began to speak of it, honorable members would soon know that he thought it an abominable Bill; but no Bill that any Ministry might bring in would, perhaps, please him. He did not blame any one for

not agreeing with him; but he was only trying to inculcate those principles which he believed would, if carried into effect, promote the welfare of the country. As to the Bill before the House, he could only say that he considered it an exceedingly bad one; and one of the worst features in it was its proposal to divide the country into homestead and grazing areas. The proposed divisions were perfectly arbitrary. They were not made because the land in one place was suitable for agriculture and in the other suitable only for grazing purposes. The Bill did not attempt to propose any mode of classifying the lands for agriculture and grazing purposes. It simply proposed to solve the difficulty by making an arbitrary division. Now, both from experience of the country and from having read a good deal about the country, he had not the least hesitation in saying that there was no part of Australia that could be divided in such a way. The only way in which agricultural areas could be classed, was not by drawing arbitrary lines across the country, but by an actual examination of the country—and there was no provision in the Bill for that. Now, suppose that all that was really good agricultural land in a homestead area was bought up, and that a person wished to purchase one of the remaining lots, and which was only fit for grazing purposes, he would still be confined to 640 acres—the maximum block allowed to be taken up by any one person in a homestead area. Did any man in his senses mean to say that a person with a capital of £400 or £1000 could sit down on some of the ironbark ridges that would be included in the agricultural areas, and be able to make a living? The very idea was absurd; and so he maintained that the arbitrary division of the country, into what, after all, must be only fanciful agricultural areas, would seriously prevent the alienation of the Crown lands—which was quite the reverse of what should be the object of the Bill. Now, no kind of Bill would be satisfactory that did not divide the country, not according to geographical lines, but according to the quality of the soil; and when there was a division made according to the quality of the soil, and the price was lowered—for agricultural land to five shillings an acre, and for grazing lands to half-a-crown an acre—there might be some chance of people coming to the colony to occupy the lands. To lower the price of the land, would also free them from the necessity of expending large sums annually for immigration purposes; and from the trouble and expense of maintaining an emigration agent at home, as well as from the scandal that existed when ships came out here loaded with a class of immigrants that ought never to have been sent out here at all. When they had such a system as he alluded to, they would not require to foster immigration in any special way whatever, for people



would voluntarily come flocking to the colony to occupy the lands; and till they had such a system they would never have in the colony a population of the kind they wished to have—they would never have a population such as should form what was understood to be the middle class in the country. He objected to the Bill, also, because it contained restrictions as to what a person should do with his land when he had bought it. He thought that to legislate for any person—to shew him in what way to use his means best for his own advancement—was absurd. Why not also legislate for the merchant, to tell him the way he was to sell his goods and employ his capital in buying and selling? Why not legislate for every trade in the country? Why should they legislate more for those who went upon the land, than for those who followed some other occupation? If a person desired to possess a piece of land, and happened to see a piece that would suit him, and accordingly bought it, the first thing he would have to bring himself to understand was, that he must not employ his capital in the way he might think he would be the greatest gainer, but that he must employ it in the way the Parliament might think fit to direct him. Now, that was not only a most arbitrary assumption of power, but it was an interference with private business that was most unjustifiable. He believed there was no principle in political economy that was truer or stronger than this—that if every man was allowed to employ his capital and his means in the way he thought best, and under as few restrictions as possible, he would bring about the best results. That was a principle that applied to the occupation of the land as much as to any other pursuit. But there seemed to be a misty idea in the minds of some honorable members that it would be advantageous to the country if they were to grow cotton and sugar, and other things, rather than wool, or tallow, and hides. Now, he would say, that if a person could with a limited amount of capital get a better interest for it in growing sugar or cotton, or anything else, by all means let him employ his capital in that way; for it would be to the benefit of the country as well as to himself that he should do so. But he would likewise insist that in a country like this, which was not, like England, crowded with people, but which had large open spaces that were very thinly peopled, the best thing was for a person to use his money in the way that would return to him the best interest for the outlay. Now, if a man with £100, taking up land in a homestead area, found that at the beginning he could employ his money more profitably in growing wool than in growing cotton, he should be allowed to grow wool, because, in doing so, he would benefit himself and the country, by the difference between the price the wool would fetch more than the cotton; and he would be so much the richer, and have more capital the next year to work

upon. To try and force people into occupying a bit of country in a way other than their senses told them would be best for themselves, was not to foster the progress of the colony, but to prevent it by restrictive legislation. There was an idea in the country, too, that because a great deal of flour was consumed in the colony, wheat should be grown here, and so save the money that had to be sent out of the colony for the purchase of flour. Well, he admitted that they should grow wheat here, if by doing so they could get flour cheaper than by importing it; but if they could procure flour from Adelaide at a cheaper rate than it could be grown here, it was to the benefit of the country that they should continue to get their flour from Adelaide, and employ their capital in some other way. To force a man to use his capital in some way other than he wished, or thought would be most profitable to himself, was not only arbitrary but unjust. There had been a good deal said about some honorable members having changed their opinions on the land question; but he was not one of those who were fond of looking back to see what an honorable member had said some years ago, and contrasting it with what he said now. In his opinion, the man was a fool who never changed his opinions. No instance of a greater change of opinion could be cited than the case of one of England's greatest statesmen. Most honorable members, he thought, must remember the time when Sir Robert Peel was one of the greatest protectionists of his day; and they were all old enough to remember the time when he so changed his opinions as to abolish protective duties altogether, and inaugurate free trade principles—principles which his distinguished pupil, Mr. Gladstone, consistently carried out while he was in power. With such an example before them, they need not look back to see whether any honorable member here had changed his opinions on the land question. He was happy that he had not to descend to that. If he should be in the House for several years, he would not be afraid of any one bringing up any of his speeches to shew that he had changed his opinions. If honorable members would only divest themselves of the desire to please their constituents, which seemed to be too much the case with some of them, and would consider themselves to be the representatives of the intellect of the country; and if they would take the trouble to study how the land laws worked in America, and see how far their adoption—modified to suit the circumstances of the colony—would be calculated to advance the interests of this country, he believed they would be more nearly fulfilling the purpose for which they were sent to that House; and if they were to do that, they would, he had no doubt, in a very short time effect a change in the land laws of the colony that would be permanently beneficial. There was another short extract that he would like to read to

the House, as it bore strongly upon the leasing clause. From what he had said, the House would understand that he proposed to get rid of the leasing clause, by taking the first half-a-crown or five shillings an acre for the whole payment of the land. He would not propose a complicated Bill like that suggested by his friend the honorable member for the Kennedy, who did not go all the way with him, though he went a great part of it. He would take, as he said, the first half-a-crown or five shillings an acre as payment for the land, and say to the purchaser, "That is enough; employ the rest of your capital in improving the land." He did not expect at present to see that the case, but he hoped to see it in a few years. He would now read the extract to which he had referred, to shew the fallacy of the leasing clause. It was from "Bentham's Principles of Civil Code"; and he did not think that any one would say that Bentham was not the poor man's friend, for he took the deepest interest of any one in the laboring classes in his native country. That writer said:—

"By pledging an immovable, a productive capital may be procured; then one part of the value of an estate may be employed in ameliorating another, which, without this resource, could not be done. To hinder the alienation of land is, therefore, to diminish productive capital nearly to the amount of their selling value, since, in order that an article may serve as a pledge, it is necessary that it be capable of alienation."

Now, he thought that, with such a fundamental principle as that, the leasing clause in the Bill would be an insult to the people who might be induced to take up the land. They first asked a person to take up a piece of country varying in extent from forty to six hundred and forty acres, made him pay half-a-crown a year rent for it, and gave him such a title that he could not borrow money on the land to improve it. Under such circumstances what was he to do? Perhaps, after doing his best till what little money he had was gone, in struggling against the misfortunes of bad seasons, he would have to forfeit his land after spending all his money upon it. Now, if instead of a man being tempted in that way to go upon the land, he was required to buy his land and get a good title for it, he would be able to raise upon the security of the land as much as he had paid for it, for the purpose of improving it—for the lender would see that the money was for improving the land, and that his security would be good for the whole. But under the leasing clause a man could do nothing of that kind. He might earn a little money at the first, but it might be all swept away from him by a couple of bad seasons. But such a plea would be of no avail to him. Unless he paid his half-a-crown an acre every year and fulfilled all the conditions prescribed by the Bill, he would have no resource, and would have to leave his selection and allow it, with all the improvements he had made, to be sold

by auction. He thought that any Land Bill that contained so many faults as had been pointed out by different honorable members to be in the Bill before the House, must be a very bad one indeed. But he did not think it was a whit worse than the others that had been alluded to. From what he had said, honorable members must agree that he considered all the land laws that had been introduced into Australia bad; and so he was not blaming the Government for introducing a measure that was only slightly better than some very bad one. The Bill, in his opinion, was so bad that it would not effect the object they all desired to see accomplished. It would not be possible to induce people to come and settle on the lands till the price of land was so lowered that people would be tempted to leave the south and come to the north. Till the whole colony, or, at any rate, till that House, was convinced that such was the case, and passed a Bill lowering the price of land to five shillings or half-a-crown, or even nothing, an acre, if people would only come and improve it, they would never have an industrious class, or a large and settled population in the colony. He hoped honorable gentlemen who took an interest in the question would study the working of the land laws in America, and see whether it would not be possible to apply some modification of them to this colony.

Mr. BELL said he might be excused if he occupied the time of the House for a short period, in addressing a few remarks upon the subject before it. He had hoped to have had an opportunity of doing so at an earlier hour of the evening; and if he had found such an opportunity, he would have been relieved from the disadvantage of following so interesting and able a speaker as the honorable member for Rockhampton. It had been his peculiar lot on two occasions lately to follow the honorable member,—and that to his own great disadvantage. That was a disadvantage which he felt all the greater, because there was no instance when the honorable member addressed the House, that he did not leave behind him arguments and reasons which required an expression of opinion from any one who might follow him. It was, he admitted, his intention, in rising, to address himself specially to the Bill before the House, but the honorable member for Rockhampton had given the House his opinion broadly on the land question, in so important and so strong a manner, and in a speech full of so much argument and reasoning, that it had occurred to him that one or two of the most salient points of the honorable member's view of the land question of the colony, and opposed to it, might be taken into consideration at the present time. The honorable member for Rockhampton had argued altogether in favor of the future land laws of the colony assimilating as nearly as possible to those of America; and it was curious enough that the honorable member for the

Kennedy desired to take into consideration the land laws he specially referred to as existing in New Zealand. Now, he thought the position of this colony was different from that of either of those places. He thought, especially, that the position of the colony was so dissimilar from that of America, that, in his opinion, it would be unwise to attempt to confine the land legislation of the colony to an assimilation of it to the land laws of America. He also thought that the freehold tenure system proposed by the honorable member for the Kennedy, as existing in New Zealand, was not suitable to this colony, though the system was suitable to New Zealand, where the areas were less in extent, which necessitated the people fighting for the comparatively small quantity of land there was in the colony. Freehold tenure had forced itself on that colony earlier than it could force itself upon this colony. In this colony they were only yet emerging from that state when comparatively few colonists had attempted to acquire freeholds here. The honorable member for Rockhampton had told the House that if they were to reduce the price of land to half-a-crown an acre, and that if they were to confine themselves entirely to the system of America, they would have such a stream of immigration to their shores, that they would no longer require any expenditure for immigration purposes. But, surely, the honorable member did not attempt to say that if they were to hold out more liberal inducements still in the land laws, they could hope that emigrants from Europe would come to this more distant land, where, according to the honorable member, the best lands were much inferior to the lands he knew of in America. Such being the case, how could they expect, for many years at least, to have any stream of immigration to this colony, on a system that existed under more favorable circumstances in America? There was, he admitted, very much in that portion of the argument of the honorable member where he said that half-a-crown an acre was sufficient for land for agricultural purposes—for it was as to the lands for such purposes, he took it, that the honorable member had addressed himself. That portion of the argument, he believed, if it were forcibly put to the House, would be favorably considered. If those honorable members, who for a long time had advocated the pound an acre system, found, under the expression of new ideas that it was considered half-a-crown an acre was sufficient for land in limited areas for agricultural purposes, the honorable member, perhaps, might find a hearing in the House so far; but when the honorable member extended that and asked the House to concede a land law that would encourage the system of abuse which, as every one knew, large speculations in land must necessarily bring about, he thought the honorable gentleman had extended his argument on the

land laws to too great a degree of liberality. The argument no longer applied to a liberal land law; and they found in it what they found in the Leasing Bill—that it proposed a system that was subject to the greatest abuses. The honorable member had forgotten to say, when alluding to America, that here there was a liberal land law also, but under a different system. Here they had their own squatting laws, which, under the disadvantages of the geographical position of the country, had been a very great success. But no such system existed in America. In that country they had not the advantages of the climate and soil that existed in this country for such purposes—for depasturing stock in the open air all the year round. America had been unable to have the advantage of such laws as were in this colony. Therefore, here they had their success in the way that was suitable to their peculiar circumstances. He admitted the honorable member had stated very forcibly his views on the land question, but he (Mr. Bell) must remember that the honorable member had not attempted to shew to the House in what way he was to deal with those existing interests that had been useful to this country hitherto, and which the American people had not to deal with. He must say, that he had a feeling akin to sympathy for the honorable member who was in the position of Land Minister of the day, whoever he might be, and whose duty it was to introduce to the House a Land Bill. The land question had been, in all colonies, a difficult one to settle; and it had at all times been a difficult subject in that House. But he found, that the longer it was considered, the more diversified were the opinions expressed, and the less likelihood was there of finding any three members agree on a land scheme. He saw in the position of the honorable member who introduced the Bill an utter hopelessness of passing any Land Bill, if every honorable member of the House determined on forcing his own views. He had, himself, notwithstanding the opinions he had heard expressed in reference to the Bill, his own opinions; and he must say that it was with some degree of interest that he looked forward to the production of the measure before the House. From having himself previously held the office of Minister for Lands, he naturally looked forward with interest to the measure which his successor in office would introduce to the House, believing as he did, that, in the hands of those honorable members who now occupied the Treasury benches, nothing short of a revolution of the land laws of the colony could be embodied in the Bill. But he admitted that he was surprised, and agreeably surprised, to find that no such revolutionary system was embodied in the Bill. There was embodied in the Bill a policy to which he could not now object—he having previously introduced a Bill with similar principles. He might state now, that it was not his intention to offer any

opposition to the second reading of the Bill, though there was much in the Bill which he objected to; and he might say that any portion of the Bill—and it might be considered natural of him to think so—that was not embodied in his Bill, he considered to be a very useless portion of this Bill. He said that not lightly, but seriously; because he was sure that no honorable member who undertook to introduce a Land Bill could do so without much and serious consideration. He and his colleagues, when in office, gave to this question full and ample consideration; and after that full and fair consideration and consultation, they arrived at the conclusion that no other Bill except one embodying a similar policy was likely to be carried through the House. Now, it was no use denying the fact that it was not likely that this Bill would meet the views of every honorable member. But having heard the opinions of many honorable members of the House, he had come to the conclusion from those opinions that few of those honorable members found embodied in the Bill their own views upon the land question; or embodied in such a way as would not clash materially and effectually with the present interests and necessities of the country. He admitted that he fully concurred with the free selection portions of the Bill; and he further admitted that there was a time, and, perhaps, not a very long time ago, when he was not himself a convert to free selection. But he felt that the strides of population, and the exigencies of the times, had thrown them into that position in which the older colonies in their time had found themselves. He found it was necessary to take a first step towards the changing of the pastoral occupation of the country into an agricultural occupation. And what had they now the advantage of seeing? They had the advantage of seeing that in New South Wales, where free selection had been fully tried, it had proved there a great and signal success. (Cries of "No, no.") Honorable members might say "No, no," but he would repeat that free selection in the neighboring colony had proved a great and signal success. And more than that, the Bill that was lately introduced by the head of the Government in New South Wales—and which was referred to by the honorable member for Maryborough—embodied, and, with some few exceptions, in no way interfered with, the original principles of free selection. But it was more curious and interesting to them to see at this time that that new Land Bill, which was brought in with all the present talent of New South Wales, did not embody that portion of the Bill now before this House, which he considered to be an objectionable portion, and one which was open to the greatest abuses—he meant the large area system. Now, what did they find in the New South Wales Bill? He admitted that what he alluded to was not in the Bill the late Gov-

ernment proposed to bring forward, nor in the Bill that he introduced; but it was not lightly left out, but was left out after the experience they had of the working of a similar principle. The Martin Ministry in New South Wales did not go into the large area system, but adopted the very converse of what was proposed here, and fixed the area at 640 acres, as being preferable to 2,560. That principle was embodied in his (Mr. Bell's) Bill; so that, while the principle on which his Bill was framed was, as it were, that of the old system of land laws upon which the legislation in the neighboring colony proceeded, it was also a principle that was only adopted here after the success it had achieved in New South Wales. He differed with that portion of the Bill which attempted to establish a difference between the price of land in the north and the price of land in the south. He thought that, on the very principles which the honorable member for Rockhampton admitted were in the resolutions of the honorable member for the Kennedy, and on which a discussion took place, and on the assertions of the honorable member himself, it would not be right to pass a Provincial Councils Bill that would allow a different land law for the north from what existed in the south. The reply the honorable member for Rockhampton made was, that the honorable member who made the assertion should have recollected that any measure coming before the House was not likely to be one shewing a difference in the legislation for one part of the colony from the legislation for another. Now, he thought there was much in that statement of the honorable member; and he thought that if the principle had been carried out in this Bill, whether the price of land was reduced within the agricultural areas, or whether it remained as at present, the policy of the Government of the day would have been more acceptable to the House. It was not his intention at this time to occupy the time of the House in dealing with any portion of the details of a Bill that he objected to; because, as he thought, as was rightly observed by the honorable member who last addressed the House on the subject, the question of details should be considered in committee. But he felt a satisfaction in having listened to that expression of determination, on the part of honorable members who had addressed the House on the subject, to attempt, without anything like party spirit or party feeling, to work in committee together with the view of establishing a Land Bill for the colony; and he did hope that, notwithstanding the variety of opinions that had been expressed on the subject, there might be in committee found a determination to give and take on the subject in a way and to an extent that might bring about that which every one felt to be a necessity. He could not help adverting to the position that was taken by the members

of the present Government, before they came into office, in reference to the Land Bills, as they were produced by the previous Government; because it appeared to him that the Government of that day were not wanting in knowledge as to the position of the land laws of the colony, or that the honorable members who then sat on the Opposition side of the House were extremely wrong in their views of the land laws; but he was surprised to find that the honorable member who now held the position of Minister of Public Lands deemed it unnecessary at that time to introduce any Bill for the improvement and alteration of the land laws of the colony. True, the honorable member took a step after he accepted office, which went far to shew that he had views on the land question that honorable members sitting on the Treasury benches did not possess; but he ought to have gone further, and have shewn that if he was right previously, there could be no possible necessity for a Land Bill in the face of such a demonstration as he undertook to make. But no sooner did the honorable member take office than he came round to the opinion,—and he gave the honorable member credit for doing so, though it was an opinion that might only have forced itself upon him after that consideration honorable members must give to important subjects when they took office—he came round to the opinion that land legislation was necessary; and shewed that the policy, which he to some extent objected to when in Opposition, was not distasteful to him when he became a member of the Government.

The debate was adjourned till next day.