

Queensland



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[Hansard]

Legislative Council

WEDNESDAY, 18 DECEMBER 1867

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Wednesday, 18 December, 1867.

Suspension of the Standing Orders.—Crown Lands Sale Bill.

SUSPENSION OF THE STANDING ORDERS.

On the motion of the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, the Standing Orders were suspended, in order to allow certain Bills to pass through all their stages in one day. He explained that this course was necessary in order to save great expense and inconvenience to the country, which would result if the Consolidation Bills and other important measures were not passed before the close of the year.

CROWN LANDS SALE BILL.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said it was with much diffidence he rose to move the second reading of the Crown Lands Sale Bill. He felt he could not speak so well as he could wish, to explain all the points of the Bill to

the House or the views of the Government with regard to the measure. However, he hoped that the Bill might pass without opposition, or with very little opposition, from honorable members. The land question had been for a long time a vexed question in the colony, and one upon which so many and such various ideas were entertained, that a necessity was felt to adopt some measure which might be as permanent as possible. He did not himself think that this measure would be so permanent as he could wish, but it might last for many years; and he thought it would suit the country very well indeed. Every class would receive a benefit from the Bill if it was adopted in the shape in which it was before the Council, or with as little alteration as possible in it. Although the Bill came down to them in a different shape from that which it bore when the honorable the Secretary for Lands introduced it, in another place, yet it still bore the same principles.

The Hon. Sr. G. R. GORE: Oh!

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: This Bill bore the principles of classification of land, sale by selection, and sale by auction, principles which every honorable member would allow were contained in the Bill when it was first brought before the Legislative Assembly. There were several causes which had led to the Bill assuming its present shape. Perhaps the chief cause was the desire which had been shewn for the adoption of an uniform price of land in north and south. The great drought, which had gone far to prove that agriculture could not be carried on successfully in this country, was, perhaps, another cause why the Bill had assumed its present shape. It would not have been desirable that the north should have one price and the south another. At the same time, nearly everyone thought the price of land should be reduced. The upset price of one pound per acre, although not too much for some land, was far too much for the majority of lands. He was sure that many honorable members now present, who had been longer in the colony than he—some born in New South Wales, of which this colony had formed a part—would agree in what was said. He had not gone to books for what he had to say; he would draw from his own experience entirely, and what he would say would be practical, at any rate. Honorable members would remember that the first inducement to grant land to settlers for cultivation in this country was the great fear of famine in the early days of settlement. The Government, at a fixed price, purchased all agricultural crops, and stored them for future use. In those days, too, great inducements were held out to military men and civilians—in fact, to all freemen—to settle on the land, for its improvement, in town and country. The Australian Agricultural Company received large grants of land; so also did the Macarthurs, the Jamiesons, the Nelsons, the Bowmans, and the

Ogilvies, all names known to many honorable members present. And not only had those persons received grants of land, but they had been also provided by the Government with men, both laborers and mechanics, with stock, and even with provisions for two years. He believed his honorable friend, Mr. Fitz, would bear him out that that was the case in one particular instance which he knew. In those days, what was now termed squatting was not thought of. Subsequently, a price was set upon the land, and it was sold at auction—from about the year 1831 to 1839—at five shillings an acre. After 1839, the price was increased to twelve shillings an acre, and, in some parts of the country, to twenty shillings. The latter was eventually adopted as the upset price of all country land. The cause of the increase in the price of land was generally understood to have been owing to the system of immigration propounded by Mr. Gibbon Wakefield, under which a large portion—one-half—of the proceeds of the sale of land was devoted to the introduction of population from the mother country. He (the Postmaster-General) remembered that before he left England, in the year 1838, South Australia was the great field for emigration amongst these colonies: it was supposed, at home, to be a preferable place to New South Wales for emigrants—there was less fear of contamination from contact with the emancipist class, who had been sent originally to New South Wales. Persons were enabled, before leaving England, to purchase land in South Australia. If he remembered rightly, they could purchase town lots; and, also, agricultural land, to the extent of eighty acres. But many, when they arrived, found that eighty acres were not sufficient for them to live on; and, having pushed out, they took up land according to what was now called the squatting system. Honorable members would, he thought, remember a severe drought which occurred about the year 1838. The Hunter district had been pretty densely settled some time before that; but those concurring causes impelled several settlers to take their stock out into the unproclaimed country, and to form new stations in the north—on the New England table land. He (the Postmaster-General) remembered the time when his honorable friend, Mr. Gore, started from the Hunter with his stock; and he was, perhaps, one of the first who took up country northward.

The Hon. Sr. G. R. GORE: There were several before him.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: It was, perhaps, to be regretted that the price of land was ever increased as it had been. Had it remained at a low price, he thought it was probable there would now be homesteads all over the country. The system of squatting, however, worked very well until other interests arose, and those rapidly advanced, owing to the increase of the popu-

lation from immigration and other causes. He believed the term "squatter" came from America; but the classes that settled in America were very different from those that settled in Australia. The Australian squatter was quite a different person from the squatter of that country. The American squatter was a man who, either alone or with his family, went out into the wilds, trusting very much to his gun to provide himself with food; and he cultivated the ground. In Australia, the squatter incurred great expense in buying stock and taking up or occupying country at a great distance, in paying his men, in making improvements on his station, and in other matters, long before he could count on a return for his outlay and trouble. The two classes of settlers in the two countries could hardly be compared: the one went out at comparatively no expense, and improved his condition; the other went out, at great expense, to do the same, and, as he opened up and improved the country, he had a certain vested right in what he occupied. After the drought, say in 1839, the northern portions of New South Wales were successively taken up—Liverpool Plains, Namoi, Big River, New England. There was no law in those parts then; and the consequence was, that where one settler got his stock on good pasturage, another following would dispute for the country, and try to feed the first-comer off. The result was much annoyance, and even violence. The Government, hearing of those things, sent out the first Commissioner of Crown Lands, Captain Mayne. In those times, all that the squatter required was a license to depasture stock, which went to shew that he was a man of good repute and not a cattle stealer. The license cost £10. Having that, the squatter was allowed to depasture his stock on any part of the Liverpool country—of which there was a great deal to the north! Years after, that was, when the commissioner had been appointed, an assistant commissioner was appointed for Liverpool Plains; and, next, a Commissioner of Crown Lands, also, for New England; and, as time went by, the squatter was allowed to have a station in one district, and another in the neighboring district, but he had to pay £10 for each station. In the middle of 1842, a small tax, called an assessment, was put on sheep, of almost a farthing a head; three farthings on cattle; and three halfpence on horses.

The Hon. ST. G. R. GORE: Half-yearly.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: That tax was for police purposes, and continued until the year 1847. In 1847, an increased assessment was levied of a halfpenny a head on sheep; three halfpence on cattle; and threepence on horses; which, with the £10 license fee, was what the squatters paid for many years for the privilege of holding their runs. He might say that, naturally, for many years, there were few agricultural farmers in the

country; and those who were in the country had settled a very short distance from the towns. They did not require the land held by the squatters. But, as time passed, and population increased, and the lands near the towns were taken up, and a necessary amount of stock was required by the people—milking cows, for domestic use—with many other wants, so was legislation required and the consequent land laws that followed. To the same causes he might attribute, also, the fights that had taken place between the two classes—those who held possession of the soil, and those who wished to possess it. But honorable members would admit, with him, that when the squatters first came into the country with their stock, they had very little idea of remaining for a number of years; they had thought that, as soon as they should be enabled to do so, they would return home. They had very little idea of buying land; and it was only when the Orders in Council came out in 1842, that they thought of purchasing their holdings. Under the Orders in Council, the holders of Crown lands for pastoral purposes had the right to select and purchase, without competition, their head stations. But, in fact, up to this day, the pre-emptive right had been very little availed of, except on Darling Downs. There, naturally, as the population increased, such gentlemen as had the means, exercised the pre-emptive right, and bought largely in that district. It had been also exercised in the district of West Moreton, in the neighborhood of Ipswich, but not to the same extent as it had been on the Darling Downs. Very little land had been purchased on stations in East Moreton under the pre-emptive right, except near towns. One great objection which he had heard to the Bill was, that it contained the principle of deferred payments. But he would point out to honorable gentlemen that they had already admitted that principle in the Leasing Act of 1866. He believed that Act had been found to work well, and, if it had been carried out in its entirety, it would have worked very well. It was objected further, he understood, that, if the principle of deferred payments contained in this Bill was admitted, the farmers and others who took advantage of it would, at the end of one or two years, become so powerful, that the Government of the day would be obliged to give them a grant of their land. But he thought that that was not likely to happen. Men of that class did not generally take up a large amount of land, and the payment of one shilling and sixpence an acre per annum was very small indeed. They were anxious to obtain land, and would be glad to pay off the balance at the first chance, in order to make the land their own. On the other hand, the larger holders were still less likely to evade payment; and he could not enter into the feelings and fears of those gentlemen who were against the Bill on that account.

He presumed that it was in committee that the Bill would be discussed in detail. He earnestly requested honorable members to pause before they threw any obstacle in the way of its passing. They should remember that it was on the land question the country had been appealed to, and the Bill had come down to them approved from another place. He believed that many in this country—the majority of the people—looked forward to the passing of the Bill with the greatest anxiety. He thought it would work well, and he spoke as a purchaser of land, and as a squatter. So far as he was individually concerned, he would have preferred that land should remain at one pound an acre, and he should prefer to hold his run as long as he could; but, on the other hand, as a squatter, he was bound to give way—a large number of people required land, and he must put up with the deprivation, as it was to be put to other uses, which, it was believed, were for the good of the country. If honorable gentlemen who were adversely inclined to the Bill should throw it out, he believed they would always regret it; for he did not believe a more equitable Bill would ever be framed in either House.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ: No, no.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: It was, to a great extent, a compromise; but, at the same time, a compromise that dealt liberally with the squatters, especially the squatters on the Darling Downs.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ: Ha, ha!

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: It dealt liberally with the grazier and the farmer, and most liberally with those who wished to settle on the agricultural lands. The homestead areas were also objected to. But, he believed, the homestead areas would be the means of settling a yeomanry population in the country; and he should be very sorry to see any alteration made in the homestead areas. He believed that the homestead provision would be used, not abused. It would be availed of by such men as bullock-drivers, shearers, and others, who were employed on the stations in the interior, and who wished to form homesteads for their wives and children; and he had no doubt it would result in a great deal of good. If the Bill was passed, and he had every reason to believe it would pass, notwithstanding the objections to it, every honorable member would feel gratified at it. And he must say that he would never regret being an advocate for the Bill with any means of oratory that he possessed. He had very little more to say; for he must leave the Bill in the hands of honorable members. Those who followed him would, he hoped, touch on anything he had omitted; for he had no doubt that nearly every honorable member present would have something to say on the Bill. Although they might differ on certain matters, he hoped that the Bill would be fairly discussed; and he would leave it to

honorable members' consciences to do what was right, even if they injured themselves. He wished now to explain some portions of the Bill—to enter into its principal provisions. As honorable gentlemen were aware, there was a very large quantity of land available in the settled districts, amounting to no less than fifty millions odd acres. It was true that a comparatively small portion would be taken out of this area, on account of the proprietors of runs being allowed to retain half their runs on lease for ten years. Still, there would be ample land for any population that the colony was likely to acquire for years. Indeed, the amount of land available was so large that he could not imagine why the inhabitants of the colony had been fighting about the land so long. There was no less than 432,000,000 of acres in this colony; therefore, he thought all classes might be very well satisfied out of it. The only persons who could object to the Bill were those who objected to, or were injured by, the access of population. It was very natural to suppose that gentlemen who possessed fine tracts of country on the Darling Downs for the last twenty-five years or thirty years, at a very small rent, would feel disinclined to give up any part of them without making a hard struggle to retain them. He confessed that if he were similarly placed he might enter entirely into their feelings, and perhaps make a demonstration against the Bill. But, by the Bill, an attempt was made to deal equitably with them. There might be one or two minor amendments necessary, which would not be objected to. It was not to be forgotten, that if the Darling Downs country was more entered upon than any other place—and he believed it would be—the gentlemen who had settled on the Downs had for many years enjoyed great privileges. For many years they had only paid a license fee of £10 for their runs, and a small assessment fee on their stock for police protection. Their runs had been, also, assessed very much below their capabilities. He would mention particularly one run; and he might remark that what he said of it might be said of almost any other run on the Downs. Clifton had carried 80,000 to 120,000 sheep for many years; and yet, if he was not mistaken, it had been assessed as capable of carrying only 16,000 or 18,000.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ: Capital improved its capabilities.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: He would admit, that wherever capital had improved a run, great allowance should be made; for he did not wish to see the rights of any colonists unduly interfered with. The Downs, however, were a great exception to the rest of the colony in the payment of very small assessments; and he might instance Westbrook, and other stations there, in further illustration of what he had stated. In the Burnett District, the run of Hawkwood,

which consisted of only second-class country, and was at a great distance from the seaboard, with which it had no easy communication, and where large flocks could not run together—its capabilities were estimated at 35,000 sheep, and assessment was paid for that number; yet it only carried 19,000.

The Hon. H. B. Fitz: You wanted to sell your run, and boasted of its capabilities.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: That was not a solitary instance. It was honestly believed that the estimated capabilities were correct, and the assessment was paid accordingly. The Darling Downs squatters had possessed the pre-emptive right, which was no mean privilege. It was not exercised after the Orders in Council had come out—not until long after the land on the Downs had become valuable. The land had not been made valuable by anything that the original lessees, with their stock, had done to it; but by the settlement of a population in the immediate neighborhood. The Darling Downs squatters—whom he did not blame for using their pre-emptive right—must remember that much of the land which they had bought up at the upset price, £1 per acre, would have brought £3 or £4 per acre if it had been put up to auction. The land purchased under the pre-emptive right had also been purchased with land orders obtained at a remarkably low rate; and the purchasers had thereby made a very good speculation altogether. He did not wish honorable members to think that he brought those matters forward because he wished to bear down on the Downs squatters, but merely to shew that they would be doing only common justice to the country if they joined him in passing the Bill. The argument that applied to the Darling Downs squatters would, more or less, apply to places which had been required for settlement around townships—such as Toowoomba, Warwick, and Dalby, on the other side of the Range; and to Ipswich and the other townships on this side. He knew what his own feeling was on taking up a run—and honorable members present would acknowledge it was theirs, too—that they possessed a grazing right over the land until it was required for public purposes; and, when the land was so required, they had to leave it, and it passed to another class of settlers. He held that it was necessary to reduce the price of land. He remembered well Sir George Gipps, at one time the Governor of New South Wales, saying that the smallest coin of the realm bore the representative value of an acre of land in Australia. To a great extent, he thought His Excellency was right. Of course, he did not mean the valuable land on rivers and harbors. It had, however, become a difficulty, owing to vested interests, to decide how to reduce the price of land. Many were in favor of putting the land up to auction at a reduced price, holding that auction was the real proof of the market value of a commodity. Before the

general election, honorable members were aware that it was an avowed principle that the land should only be sold conditional on cultivation. However, as time went on, and owing to many causes, a revulsion of feeling took place—a change which he was glad to see. And, as the Land Sales Bill progressed through the other branch of the Legislature, the question assumed its right position, and it was seen that the alienation of the land to all who wanted it was the right principle; and it was now acknowledged, he thought, that the giving effect to the principles contained in the Bill would be productive of much good to the country. It was no new idea at all, the classification of lands contained in the Bill. The classification in the settled districts, was as follows:—Agricultural land, first class pastoral land, and second class pastoral land, at the respective prices of fifteen shillings, ten shillings, and five shillings per acre. It had been said that no man should have more than three hundred and twenty acres of land, and everything that could be done had been done to prevent it; but the result was not what had been anticipated. He did not, himself, see why a man should not hold as many acres as he could get, or why he should be restricted in the quantity of land he acquired any more than in the number of his stock, or the extent of any other property. But, as he (the Postmaster-General) had before said, the Bill was to an extent a compromise. In respect of agricultural land, it was provided that a person should have not less than forty, nor more than six hundred and forty acres; of first class pastoral land, not less than eighty nor more than two thousand five hundred and sixty acres; of second class pastoral land, not less than eighty nor more than seven thousand six hundred and eighty acres. Therein was an intention to provide for a new class of settlers, something between a farmer and a grazier. The conditions which had been found unsuitable on land taken up by selection before, perhaps on account of the drought, were altered in the Bill; it was thought sufficient that the land should be occupied *bonâ fide*, and improved in a certain proportion. So that any one taking up any of the land classified for selection, as already stated, could acquire the fee simple of his location under the following conditions:—Agricultural land, at 15s. an acre—payment of 1s. 6d. an acre rent for ten years' residence by self or bailee continuously, and expenditure on the land of 10s. an acre; or, after residence for two years, and on proof of expenditure of 10s. an acre, and the payment of the residue of rent due; or, at any time during the term of the lease, on proof that one-tenth of the land was under cultivation, and payment of the balance due. In first class pastoral land similar conditions of expenditure, at the rate of ten shillings an acre and residence, were imposed; the rent, however, being a shil-

ling an acre during the term of the lease. The expenditure must, of course, be on substantial improvements—fences, stockyards, and so forth, as needful. The same might be said for second class pastoral land, to the extent of five shillings per acre, the rent being sixpence. In all cases of selections, the cost of survey was to be paid by the selector. Provision was made in the Bill for selections for coffee or sugar cultivation, of not less than 320 acres, nor more than 1,280 acres, and, also, for bringing present selections under the Bill. Lands at present held under the Agricultural Reserves Act could be brought under the Bill. He (the Postmaster-General) had alluded to the new feature in the Bill—the homestead areas. Any person, with the exception of an immigrant who had not paid his own passage, could settle down on any portion of land in one block of 80 acres of agricultural land, or 160 acres of first or second class pastoral land, and the condition was only *bonâ fide* residence for five years; but if the land were abandoned for six months during that period, it became forfeit. Honorable gentlemen would allow that any person actually residing on land for five years would have well earned his 80 or 160 acres of land, and would do far more good to the country and himself thereby than if obliged to pay money for it out of his own pocket, with liberty to leave it. Not only were those provisions made in the Bill, but provision was also made for the sale by auction of country, suburban, and town lands, put up at an upset price:—Town lots, from one rood to one acre in area, £8 upset price per acre; suburban lands, within one mile of towns, in lots from one acre to eighty acres, at £1 per acre upset price; suburban lands, exceeding one mile from towns, in lots from forty to one hundred and sixty acres each, 15s. per acre; country lands, in lots from forty to six hundred and forty acres, at the prices already stated for agricultural and first and second class pastoral lands. In all cases of purchase at auction, a deposit of twenty per cent. must be paid, and the residue in one month. Honorable gentlemen would allow that every means had been taken to provide by the Bill for the alienation of the land to suit every class; and he had no doubt that its operation would be most successful for the colony. Selections of land that had passed at auction could be made, as follow:—Agricultural land, £1 per acre; first class pastoral land, 13s. per acre; and second class pastoral land, at 6s. 8d. per acre. There were other features in the Bill, which would attract attention in committee; but he had gone through every thing needful at the present stage, with one exception, that he would now touch upon—that was, the subdivision of runs.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ: Hear, hear!

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: He was nearly omitting mention of that; but it was not too

late to mention it now. That was a new feature of the Bill. When he heard of it, some time ago, he did not agree with it, at the first blush; but the more he thought of it, the more he was pleased with it. Any person holding a station could have it brought under the provisions of the Bill, and, doing so, the station was subdivided, and the lessee retained half on a lease for ten years, and the Government could enter upon the other for all purposes. The squatter could divide his run; he was expected to make an equitable division, and he could choose whichever half he liked to keep.

The Hon. F. E. BIGGE: He had no choice.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ: Hear, hear.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: By doing that, the lessee could secure the half of his run which he preferred, but which otherwise he might lose. Provision was made by which a pastoral tenant in the settled districts could come in as pre-emptive purchaser in right of his improvements, to the extent of 2,560 acres; and he could come in with any other purchasers for the purchase of land on the half of his run which had been taken away from him; and he shared the grazing right on the land that was not purchased with those persons who had taken up land on the half of his run. In conclusion, he (the Postmaster-General) could not regret that the Bill had come in. The land question was always a vexed question. Although the squatters felt they had rights, they could scarcely tell what they were; they had no security of tenure; any day, at short notice, they might be turned off their runs by the Minister of the day;—while under the Bill, half of their runs would be secured to them under a ten years' lease; and no land leased in the settled districts could be resumed, except by resolution of both Houses of Parliament.

The Hon. F. E. BIGGE: In eight-mile reserves.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: Yes. He really thought, when honorable members had time to consider the Bill during the adjournment, they would find that the more they looked into it, the better they would be pleased with it. He trusted that they would pass the second reading of the Bill, and that they would take a good deal of trouble to mark its details; and, that, as it was a matter of very great consequence to every person in the colony, they would be prepared to advance it in committee, and eventually pass it. He now formally moved—

That this Bill be read a second time.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ said he should not attempt, as the honorable the Postmaster-General had done, to go into the whole history of the land question in Australia. The question before the Council was the Bill for the Alienation of Crown Lands, and to that they must direct attention, and ask

themselves, was it a Bill to suit the requirements of the colony? For his own part, he had read the Bill carefully, and he answered, unhesitatingly, No! Its unsuitableness was stamped on its face. He considered it one of the most unworkable and impracticable measures ever laid before Parliament; and, before he sat down, he thought he should be able to prove what he said. Nearly every session of Parliament had seen a Land Bill, but the present one was the worst; in fact, the land question had been a sort of political standing dish, placed on the table each session, with a different flavored sauce; and on the present occasion it was flavored with a sauce which had evidently been manufactured in the north. Whether suited for the palate of the people of the south, let the honorable the Postmaster-General say. He (Mr. Fitz) was afraid there was too much pepper in it; and he, at any rate, did not like the flavor of it. The Bill did not provide in any way for the capitalist; it contained the principle of deferred payments, which he was convinced would be found one of the greatest mistakes into which the colony ever fell. He spoke as a colonist more than as a squatter; if he spoke as one who would like to secure his run, he could say that the Bill would be of the greatest possible advantage to himself and others on the Downs—they could secure their runs under very favorable circumstances. The gentlemen of the north had acted as midwives until the Bill in its present shape was brought into existence: as step-mothers, they looked after their own children of the north, letting those of the south out to dry nurse. The Bill dealt at first with the southern stations. The settled districts comprised fifty millions of acres of land, and the Bill proposed that twenty-five millions of them should be reserved by the Government. Now, he found that since Separation, 694,000 acres of land had been alienated; and out of that quantity, 340,000 acres had been alienated under the pre-emptive right. If honorable members divided the quantity sold by eight years, the age of the colony, they would get 87,000 acres as the average quantity of land alienated annually. The Bill proposed to throw open twenty-five millions of acres, which would leave about two millions open to selection, annually—far more than would be required. That was exceedingly unjust; and he would say, decidedly, that he so considered it, although the promoters of the Bill professed to regard it as a very great boon conferred on the people. The land boards created by the Bill would be the most perfect delusion ever heard of. He defied them to divide the runs. A run could not be divided as one could divide a piece of paper or a pocket-handkerchief. Another objection he had to the land boards was that they would be an immense tax upon the country. Instead of eight boards, if they were created, fifteen would

be wanted. Land boards would have to be appointed for Brisbane, Ipswich, Toowoomba, Warwick—in fact, there would have to be a board appointed for each district. They would cost £25,000 a year; so that the Government would require to alienate, yearly, 100,000 acres of land at five shillings an acre to pay the expenses of the land boards alone. He defied any land board to classify the lands. The Bill, as prepared by those kind gentlemen from the north, would enable the Government to resume half a squatter's run, while it charged him double rent for the remainder. But the framers of the Bill had secured to themselves the whole of their runs outside the settled districts; for their runs were not to be interfered with—they would get an indefeasible lease for a long term of years. The Bill dealt with the settled districts; yet it was a remarkable fact, that not a single member for the settled districts was an advocate for the measure. He (Mr. Fitz) could not see, if the Darling Downs were thrown open to free selection by the people of the south, why Peak Downs should not likewise be thrown open to the people of the north. The representatives of the northern districts had spoken of the immense revenue those districts returned, and of the great increase that was taking place in the population, there, every year. Surely, if such was the case, some provision should be made to provide land for the increasing population. When the census was taken, and a re-distribution of representation made on the basis of it, there would be a considerable northern influence; and the northern representatives would become so strong a body in another place, that no person who tried to bring the Peak Downs within the settled districts would be able to do it. It would come to this, if the present Bill was passed; and the south would become a mere appendage of the north.

The Hon. W. Wood: We have submitted to the other a long time.

The Hon. H. B. Fitz: With regard to the classification of lands, he maintained that the only true system it was in the power of Parliament to adopt, that would give satisfaction, was the auction system. The auction principle was the only true test of the value of the land. When the Bill went into committee, he should propose an amendment on the classification clauses. He should, certainly, propose doing away with the land boards. He could not see why the Government could not work with the present machinery. The Parliament had been told that the country was impoverished. Yet, scarcely a Bill had been introduced this session which would not cause additional calls to be made on the revenue. Were they, also, going to pass a Land Bill which would cost the country £25,000 a year, perhaps £30,000? He had no doubt that the land boards, besides causing great expense, would lead to a great deal of job-

bery. Honorable members remembered that he had carried a resolution through the Council, which took the power of resuming the lands out of the hands of the Government of the day, because it had been very much abused. What he suggested, at the time, was that a board should be appointed to administer the lands; that it should be appointed by the Government, responsible to Parliament, and only removable on the resolution of both Houses. Hitherto, as honorable gentlemen were well aware, the land laws had been administered in the most despotic manner. They had been used in many instances as the vehicle of oppression, and for political purposes. He would shew, in illustration of his argument, that such had been the case with the reserve proclaimed on the Darling Downs by the late Secretary for Lands, Mr. Bell. That had been, without doubt, made for political purposes, and also to punish certain parties. He (Mr. Fitz) was a marked man, and he had been made to suffer.

The Hon. St. G. R. GORE: No.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ: There was no doubt of it. The scheme was a favorite one of the honorable member, Mr. Gore. He produced a map, which he desired to place before honorable members, to prove the partiality which had been shewn to friends of the Ministry. He had no hesitation in saying that the late Secretary for Lands had availed himself of his position as a Minister to benefit himself, and had made his position subservient to his private interests. In proclaiming the reserve on the Darling Downs he had carefully left out his own run—as was clearly shewn by the very peculiar boundary lines on the map. That shewed that Parliament should, if possible, take such power out of the hands of the Ministry of the day. He (Mr. Fitz) believed that the land boards proposed to be appointed under the Bill would be nothing more than the tools of the Ministry; because regulations were to be framed and given to those land boards to administer. Therefore, he would sooner have the present machinery—the Surveyor-General and his subordinates. He believed the country would have more confidence in the Surveyor-General's administration than in the administration of any such land boards as were proposed in the Bill. He did trust that honorable members would carefully review the Bill, and deal with it without reference to the other branch of the Legislature. It was a Bill placed before them by the Government of the day for them to “worry”—he believed that that was the Parliamentary term—and they would try to make something of it. He did not believe in the present Bill; but as they had it before them, and as there was a general cry for a Land Bill, he should not oppose its being read a second time; but they must resolve to amend it in committee. With reference to the question of deferred payments, he

would quote from the *Sydney Morning Herald* the following extract from a speech made by the Honorable James Martin, on the second reading of the Land Laws Amendment and Freehold Settlement Bill in the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales:—

“The principles involved in this part were these—the concession of a privilege to compound the debt due for conditional purchases of land by the payment of a smaller sum, if such payments were made within a certain time; and the dispensing with the necessity of occupation, provided a certain portion of the land within a certain time had been brought under cultivation. The third principle was the extension of the area which might be conditionally purchased. As to the first of these principles, it had been frequently stated, he believed with considerable truth, that under the present law a majority of the free selectors would gradually cease to pay with any degree of regularity the interest upon their purchases. [Mr. ROBERTSON: Why?] They would cease to pay, in some instances, because they were unable to pay; in some instances, because they were following the example of their neighbors; because, in the course of years, they would arrive at the conclusion that they had, in the shape of interest and deposit, paid enough; and because, in the course of years, they would be sufficiently numerous to start the notion that they should have a discharge altogether of their obligations in consideration of payments they had made. This was only a question of time and numbers. The number of free selectors at the present moment was not less than 16,187. In 1862 the number of conditional purchasers was 3,231; in 1863, 2,615; in 1864, 1,947; in 1865, 1,916; in 1866, 4,070; and up to the 9th October, 1867, 2,408. The total number of purchases upon which the balances were paid up to the present time was 1,090. Of course, only those on the selections of the first three years were due, and that would amount to upwards of 70,000. [Mr. ROBERTSON: There were some forfeitures.] No doubt. There were about 6,000 who had not paid up the balances. That, taking the minimum quantity as a basis, made up the principal of £180,000 payable under the provisions of this Act, and not paid, but with respect to which interest had been paid, and that amount would largely increase in the course of years. In a few years we should have 30,000 or 40,000 conditional purchasers, which would be nearly one-half the entire constituency of the country, and we had a right to suppose the time would come when persons so powerful by numbers would be able to influence the Legislature to release them from these obligations. It was proposed that, before they had arrived at that pitch, an inducement should be held out for them to compound the debt, by paying a certain portion, and enable us to receive a large amount of money which we had every reason to believe would not be otherwise paid. This was not a new proposal, for he found that, in New Brunswick, a discount of twenty per cent. upon the purchase money was allowed for prompt payment. We knew that, when a large number of persons were interested in getting rid of these obligations, they would find means to carry out their views. Something of the kind occurred about twenty-five years ago, in the State of New York, where a large property on the opposite side of the River Hudson, be-

longing to the descendants of one of the old Dutch Governors (Van Ransellaer) was occupied by a number of persons who declined, when their ninety-nine years' lease expired, to give up possession, and successfully resisted the sheriff, the militia, and even managed to pack the Legislature. The dispute had finally to be settled by those people compounding their claim by accepting payment of a small sum. They bore nothing like the proportion of free selectors here, who would be sufficiently powerful to induce the Legislature to put an end to the debt altogether. It would vanish as years went on. He thought it advisable, then, to give them an opportunity of getting their grants, if they made prompt payment of a smaller sum."

He (Mr. Fitz) had no doubt that this colony would get into the same state, if the principle of deferred payments were carried out here. As he before said, it would answer his purpose as a squatter very well; but, as a colonist, he felt convinced that the adoption of that principle would be a very great mistake. Therefore, he should, in committee of the whole, move an amendment to the effect that the lands be classed by auction, that the capitalist might have an opportunity of coming in and making purchases of land. He would impose no conditions on the purchaser; but he thought that if the land were given to the selector on the principle of deferred payments, the Government had a perfect right to impose conditions. He (Mr. Fitz) had it on good authority, that if the Parliament passed a measure allowing the land to be bought at auction without conditions, and to be classified in the way he suggested, that was, the upset price reduced if the land was not selected within thirty days, and still further reduced, if not selected within sixty days—

The Hon. W. WOOD: That was Macalister's Bill.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ: Well, they were his own ideas too. Persons who could purchase land in that way would purchase without conditions; and, if such a measure were passed, a million of money would be invested in this country in less than six months. If the Downs must go, let them go; but do not sacrifice them in the way contemplated by the Bill—by giving them to persons who would not pay the yearly rents. It was not shillings and sixpences that would replenish the Treasury. In this Bill, he wished to insert a clause which would take the arbitrary power now possessed by the Government out of their hands; but he did not see how it could be done, unless the Government appointed a board which should not be removed except by a vote of both Houses. Then, the country would have a responsible board. He had no hesitation in saying that, although the Macalister Government had been guilty of corruption and political profligacy, they had not done half the amount of damage which the present Government had done. In order to substantiate what he said, he would read from a debate which took

place this session, and quote the words of the present Ministers on that act of Mr. Macalister's, which they had characterised as an "illegal resumption"—that act which led the present Ministers to try to knock the late Ministry off their perch—the proclamation of the Darling Downs reserves. And, first, the honorable Mr. Mackenzie, the Premier, had said—

The Hon. W. WOOD: The honorable member had no right to refer to debates in another place.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ insisted that he was right. He called the honorable gentleman's attention to the fact that in another place there had been references to the debates in the Council.

The Hon. W. WOOD: Two blacks did not make a white.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ: Until he was ruled out of order he would make his quotations:—

"He (Mr. Mackenzie) thought he could prove that it was a very short-sighted and unstatesman-like act. The effect of the proclamation would be peculiar, not only on the runs included in the reserves, but on the whole pastoral property of the colony. He happened to know that it was felt in the other colonies; and he was quite sure that the greatest democrat, the greatest free-soiler, would believe the Government had not acted properly when they reduced squatting property valued at £4,000,000 to £2,000,000. Better times should have been chosen, and more notice given; the change should have been gradual. Again, it was done merely to carry out an old idea of the Treasurer's, which was seized upon at the moment by the Colonial Secretary, because he believed it would make him popular with the people. Let the people believe him, if they liked. Look at the map, shewing the reserves;—there could be no mistake about the partiality of the proceeding—the extraordinary curves, the turns of the boundary lines—the leaving out of Helidon and Tenthill runs shewed it;—they could not have been left out without design. The surveyor had made lines something like the railway curves, to exclude those two runs. Why were they excluded? It was stated very broadly that one of them, Helidon, was mortgaged to Mr. James Taylor, a strong and consistent supporter of the Government."

Another said:—

"If it is necessary that the land of the colony, or any portion of it, should be reserved for the public, being dedicated by Act of Parliament to such purpose, then let the Government having the power to reserve it be honest, just, and impartial in its exercise. Do not let the Government reserve large grants of land from their opponents. Why not reserve it from their supporters? Do not let them favor one at the expense of the other; because the public derive no benefit from such a line of conduct. If it is necessary that the whole of the Darling Downs and West Moreton districts shall be thrown open for the benefit of the public, let it be thrown open; and I shall support it. But I will not support the reservation of only a part, to throw certain men out of their occupation, when I see other men in the same occupation, on better lands, which ought to

be reserved by the Government equally with the others, let go free and undisturbed. What do I find in that proclamation? That the Government, for purposes sufficiently known to themselves, and shortly before the meeting of Parliament, have thought proper to reserve certain tracts of country. Why not do it before? They profess to have made those reserves under sections of the Pastoral Leases Act. I am not aware that any new land Act has been passed which has very recently conferred that power upon them; I cannot see why, at this exact moment of time, this proclamation should have come out. The power of reservation has always remained in the hands of the Government, to be exercised at any time they think fit, according to the exigencies of the country. Therefore, I maintain, that if the reservation of the public lands was required for public purposes—for the occupation of those who choose to take them up—the Government might have reserved such areas as from time to time would meet the demand; and, in the meantime, those who remained in occupation of that which was not reserved, and paid the rent, should be secured in the peaceful pursuit of their industry. But those reserves cannot by any possibility be taken up and occupied within a space of about a hundred years. I do think I am very near the mark when I state that. According to the present prospects of the colony, I certainly am not exceeding the truth; because I am taking the Darling Downs as applicable to only a certain class of occupants. There must be a stream of immigration flowing into the country; and, even if large numbers come, there must be a certain amount of capital, to enable occupation to be carried out beneficially. Still, if I am wrong in my calculations, I am not wrong in what I have said about the partiality of the Government. If it is necessary to reserve such large areas, the distribution might have been impartial. I find, on the one hand, reservations have been made extensively in certain parts of the Darling Downs and West Moreton, yet Helidon has not been included; I find that Jimbour and Cecil Plains have not been included; and I find that there are one or two others which I had noted down, but have missed for the moment. I should like to know the reason why such distinctions have been made? Is it because the honorable the Minister for Lands owns Jimbour, that it is not included? Is it because Cecil Plains belongs to Mr. James Taylor, a consistent and thorough supporter of the Government? Is it because Helidon belongs to a friend of the Premier, that it has been allowed to go scatheless? If a man comes out to this colony, and takes a fancy to a piece of land on Jimbour, why should he not take it from Jimbour as well as from Pilton? Why not take some of the fat acres of Westbrook? Why was Westbrook left out? I know that Jimbour and Eton Vale are divided by only an imaginary line; and I want to know why an acre of land on Jimbour is not as valuable as an acre in other places? Why was not the owner of that delightful station, who is enjoying the fruits thereof, disturbed as well as his neighbors? These facts prove the position I have taken;—they are as I have asserted, and they cannot be disproved. My questions can be answered in one way alone—that, because the Government have it in their hands to proclaim reserves, they have so proclaimed them as to benefit their friends and to ruin their enemies."

That was what the present Attorney-General, then leader of the Opposition, said. Now, he would see what the present Minister for Lands said on that occasion:—

"In reference to the agricultural reserves, mentioned in the third paragraph of the Speech, he must say that he could not understand how the demand for land arose. There were Acts on the statute book of the colony giving the Government power to survey any quantity of land for sale; and if the demand existed, he could not understand why it had not been met before. It appeared to him that the head of the Government had fostered the cry for a time like this—when the general election was approaching—as a trump card. Remarks had been made about the connection of Messrs. McLean and Watts with the Government. The honorable the Colonial Secretary, in a speech at Ipswich, hinted that he would soon get rid of them; and, no doubt, he knew perfectly well how he could do it.

"The COLONIAL SECRETARY: No.

"Mr. LAMB had heard it from the late Mr. McLean himself: when he (the Colonial Secretary) got the toy railway finished—the railway to Toowoomba—he would have them no longer; his trump card was then to be played. The agricultural reserves did savor of oppression. The fairest way of giving land for agriculture would have been to have taken five miles on each side of the Dalby and Warwick Railways, which would have gone through the centre of the Downs, and given several thousand acres more than were in the present proclaimed reserves; and then there would have been no complaints such as were now heard. The Ministry, no doubt, if there were a dissolution, would go to the country with a cry of one million acres reserved for agricultural purposes. But that would be a fallacy; he did not believe there were more than half a million. Half of it was upland country, running into the ranges, and a great portion of the remainder was bought up under pre-emptive right. If they had taken five miles on either side of the railway, there could have been no charge of unfairness. As it was, the opinion would go forth to the other colonies that the Government had acted in this way to crush their political opponents—their conduct, at any rate, bore that semblance, and was most damaging to the interests of the country. The honorable the Minister for Lands had said that those squatters who were affected by the proclamation of reserves were better off than he was. But he (Mr. Lamb) did not think so. For outside an agricultural reserve the Crown tenant could, under the Leasing Act, secure the choicest portions of his runs, and water frontages; he did not, of course, then care about the public coming in—like a boy who had picked the plums out of his cake, he cared very little for the remainder. Then, in the same paragraph, there was a sop for the north, and he wished to explain to the northern constituencies why he was not prepared to swallow it."

Yet what had that honorable gentleman done? After condemning the act of the late Ministry, and saying that there was sufficient land reserved to supply the wants of the people for fifty years, he was sworn in as a Minister on the 15th, and on the 17th he issued the proclamation throwing the whole colony open to free selection.

The Hon. W. WOOD: He always said it could be done.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ: He might, in private; but he had not, in public. There was no occasion for his doing that. No doubt, the proclamation was made to obtain popularity—it was his popularity card. The present Secretary for Lands had done more than any other Minister to injure certain individuals, and pastoral property. If he remained in office, the present Government would go to pieces like a house of cards. When he (Mr. Fitz) objected to the Government, he must qualify his remarks by saying, that he did not believe the present Colonial Secretary had ever acknowledged, or become a party to, that proclamation: he was too straightforward and independent to trim his sails to any popular breeze. He wished he could say the same of the honorable gentleman's colleagues. The main principle of the Bill was the classification of lands. As to the homestead areas, there was no doubt that they would be a very mischievous part of the Bill. What he would do would be to confine those areas to the scrub lands of the colony. The scrub lands were the richest lands of the colony—the best for agriculture; and on those he would have the homestead selections made. Everyone admitted that the scrub land was the richest agricultural land; and if land was to be given away, by all means let the scrub land be given. When they cleared it, the people would have a perfect right to it. He denied that the Parliament had a right to legislate for one class more than another, and the Bill was certainly legislating for one class. It was a generally acknowledged principle that the land belonged to the people, and that the Government were nothing more than trustees for the people—they were appointed by Parliament, as a sort of select committee, to manage affairs. They had no right—nor did he believe Parliament had any right—to legislate for any class to the disadvantage of other classes. The scrub lands were not fit for anything else but agriculture. Where there were grass lands, the Government should, he thought, use them for the purpose of revenue. The seventh clause of the Bill was perfectly monstrous. The northern gentlemen proposed to take half the southern squatters' runs away, and throw the other half open to free selection. In common equity and justice, the squatter in the settled districts, who was to be held up as a victim, should have the right of feeding his sheep over the resumed half, until it was alienated. He should have a grazing right from year to year. He (Mr. Fitz) would introduce an amendment to that effect in committee. He was willing to give way, fairly, to the people, but not to give everything to them. He would not, as he had said, oppose the second reading; but he thought it right, as they were in the hands of the northern gentlemen, to hold out for fairness and equity. If the Parliament passed a Bill, let it be a Bill

which would not be a tax on the country—which would require machinery that would cost £20,000 or £30,000 a year, and turn out nothing more than a job, and a means of affording patronage to the Government of the day. He should oppose the penal clauses of the Bill. He thought the Government had no right to introduce such clauses. If the land was to be sold with conditions, let those conditions be something in the shape of improvements, and then the parties acting for the Government could judge whether the conditions had been complied with when the proper time to decide arrived. Say that a man took up land, after two years his improvements could be judged of properly.

The Hon. A. NORTON said he must say that, after all the time that the Bill had occupied the attention of the other House, he should have expected that something more equitable, and something that would have dealt with the different classes and individual classes as a whole, equitably, would have been sent to the House. Although the honorable the Postmaster-General said the Bill was an equitable Bill, he must say that he differed from him entirely. The honorable gentleman who last spoke said that the Bill had originated in the north, and had given a southern view of the case. As he was acquainted with the northern view better than any other, he would confine himself to the northern view, and the opinion of those who come under the operations of the Bill. Before the Bill was put into his hands, he had some idea of the proposals made, but he had had no idea of the gross injustice of its provisions to hundreds of squatters, while displaying the greatest favoritism to a few in the north. Although, in legislation, the whole country should be considered a member's constituency, the present measure formed an exception. The Bill was to benefit the whole community, but treated a portion with the grossest injustice; the representative, therefore, should come forward on behalf of his constituency, and protect the injured class. When he came to the third clause of the Bill, he found an utter disregard shewn to the existing interests of the great body of the squatters, although all interests were said to be considered in the Bill. In that clause they were told:—

“Within four weeks of the passing of this Act notice of resumption to the holders of runs within the settled districts as required by the forty-fourth clause of the Act twenty-seven Victoria number seventeen and not already resumed under the Agricultural Reserves Act of 1863 shall be given by the Minister for Lands and on the expiration of the period fixed by the said Act of twelve months from the date of such notice such lands shall be open to selection by conditional purchasers or for sale by public auction or subsequent selection as hereinafter provided.”

As far as the forty-fourth clause of the Pastoral Leases Act of 1863 went, perhaps the power of resumption was given. But when the Act was framed and that power

given, it was not contemplated that it would be exercised in a general way, but only according as the land was actually wanted. To take advantage of that Act was then a gross advantage, contrary to the spirit of the Act, and a breach of faith. Looking a little further, they came to the subdivision of runs as a main feature of the Bill. So far from the Bill being a Bill for the sale of Crown lands, it was a Bill for the locking up for ten years of some of the very best lands of the colony. So far as its effect in the north went, a hundred squatters would be injured by the subdivision of runs to one benefited. There would be one individual case of great benefit, and, perhaps, ten or twelve others. In that particular case, the benefit would be enormous, but the majority of squatters would be injured. The object of this subdivision was that there might be a large portion of land open for alienation in the different modes proposed. He admitted that a larger portion should be open to the public, but the land most wanted—land near market towns and centres of civilization—should be the first to go. In the north there were some hundred stations, the subdivision of which would not benefit the country; indeed, no one would be benefited by it. In the northern districts of the colony mortgages were more common, and all the runs and stock were heavily mortgaged, with few exceptions; the consequence of their subdivision would be that the security would be very materially damaged. It was very well to say that no one would select land upon those runs, but business men looked at the actual security you have, not at what was likely to be had; and if the runs were subdivided, they would disregard the second half of a run as security, entirely. As he had said, there was one extremely peculiar case in the north: any honorable gentleman who had been to Rockhampton was aware that it is surrounded by valuable land, perhaps not good agricultural land; but if the climate was suitable, that land was as good as any. But, yet, this Bill proposed to give up half that land for ten years, resuming only half of it for the public, while ever so much more useless land, any distance round that—about the Gulf of Carpentaria—and where no one would give threepence an acre for it—was open for selection. In fact, half the quantity of the millions thrown open for selection was land of no use, while half the good land near Rockhampton was to be held by a ten years' lease.

The Hon. W. WOOD: That land had been all under water in a flood.

The Hon. A. NORTON: But only a small portion of that run was under water, only some flats. He had called at the office for Lands, and procured information about this subject. There was one run near Rockhampton, and the present Bill originated from the person whose run that was, and only half that run would be reserved. The

run comprised 181,760 acres surrounding Rockhampton, the second city in the colony. Half of this area, by this Bill, would be rented to the present occupants for ten years. If that land were near Ipswich or Brisbane, no one would have dared to ask to be allowed to retain a quarter of it. But, by the Bill, 90,880 acres were asked to be retained by the holders of the run. Since he had received this information, he had found by the *Government Gazette*, p. 824, shewing money payable on certain runs, that this run contained 331½ square miles, or 212,160 acres, paying under renewed licenses a rent of £614. Thus, he was inclined to think that, according to the *Gazette*, 165½ square miles, or 106,080 acres of land, would be held on a lease of ten years, in the very vicinity of the second town in the colony. On that country, too, there are diggers in hundreds. It was not at all probable that it would be an advantage to the public that they should be allowed only one-half the country there, and so many thousand acres elsewhere, as at Cape York. Now, as they knew that one of the originators of the Bill was interested in that run, they should view the Bill with great suspicion. He had endeavored to shew how residents in the north were affected by this Bill. Their interests were to be jeopardised, while one individual was to derive a very great benefit indeed from it. They were told by the supporters of the Bill, that the present tenure of pastoral tenants was almost equal to none. He admitted this to some extent. But, in that case, how desirable an indefeasible lease, or what was almost so, for ten years over one hundred thousand acres of the finest land in the north, around the second city in the colony, would be! In the sixth clause it would be found that the pastoral tenant would be expected to pay for half his run the same as was paid for the whole of it. If the country he held was not very good, he could not afford to do so. Certainly, a great body of runs were not over-assessed; and with regard to the run mentioned, if ten years' lease be got for half of it, the occupants would be infinitely better off than with the whole run. For there was a very large market at Rockhampton, a large town population, and a large number of diggers on the gold fields; hence the owners of the run had been selling cattle at £6 a head, while others have been selling at £4, and numbers have been compelled to accept only £3 a head. They would see, then, that in some instances squatters could afford double rent. In the case mentioned, how well an indefeasible tenure for ten years would be. There was a great deal of trickery and jobbing in the Bill, looking at it in any way he would. The Bill had been very materially altered from that which had been introduced by the Government originally, although he differed from the honorable the Postmaster-General in that opinion. If the

original Bill had been introduced to them, he would not have objected to it. The honorable the Postmaster-General had told them that the drought had something to do with the alteration of the Bill—

The Hon. T. L. M. PRIOR observed that the Bill had been altered, but not in principle.

The Hon. A. NORRON: The principles of the Bill had been altered. The other Bill had been in favor of free selection, while the present provided that half the runs may be retained. As to the drought, the amendment would have been introduced in the Bill if there had been no drought at all. Why had the homestead clause been introduced, and induce people to come here under the idea of making money by agriculture? The reason for the Bill being altered on account of the drought was a very poor one. It was said, too, that the country had been appealed to on the land question, and the Bill was therefore introduced. But candidates had made no reference before their constituents to the division of runs. That was not the question before the country; if it had been, many members now sitting in the other House would not have been there. To the sixth clause he had another objection; it provided that the survey be paid half by the Government, and half by the lessee, "provided that such cost shall not exceed the usual Government scale." Now, he thought that if the Bill became law, they would have to pay three or four times the usual Government scale. Again, they were limited to six months to complete the survey. How could it be expected that the runs could be surveyed within the time? It was perfectly absurd to think of such a thing with the small number of surveyors in the colony. With regard to the lessee who did not take advantage of the provisions of this clause, the ninth clause allows him to purchase 2,560 acres. What was the use of that? A man with that quantity would find it more costly, and to insert any such clause as that was a perfect sham. At the same time, if the tenant has expended several thousands upon a dam, it is to be open to the public. Then, again, in addition to the double rent, and the damage to the run itself, and paying for the survey of the run within a limited time, there was a compulsion by the twelfth clause to fence what of the runs was left. It was said this was to protect the squatter. He thought the Government might very well allow the squatter to protect himself; he was generally quite capable of doing so. The Government, so far from protecting him, seemed to get all they could out of him. At one time, before considering the matter, he was under the impression that land boards would answer; but on looking into the matter, he had changed his opinion. He did not think it would be possible for them to act; they might perhaps bungle through the work somehow, but if they did, the expense would be too great. The cost would be from

£22,000 to £25,000 a year, perhaps over £40,000. Even gentlemen who supported the Bill, said it would take £25,000 to work it. The Honorable Mr. FITZ said he would oppose the classification of lands, and that it might be classified by auction. But he did not think that all lands should be put up to auction, but that large tracts might be reserved. The country likely to be required should be taken first, allowing the Government to sell by auction land where it was desirable, or there was reasonable cause for doing so; but a large quantity of land should be open for selection at 15s. an acre, and if not selected within a certain time—say, six or twelve months—the price should be reduced. He proposed that a large proportion of land, without being put up to auction, should be open for selection. It appeared that a great deal was made of the land to be open for selection. But when they looked into the matter, and the 25,000,000 acres thrown open for selection, it was nearly all in the northern territory or Cape York, and was land which even a pastoral tenant would not take up. As far as deferred payments went, there were arguments to be used on both sides, and, for his own part, he was not inclined to oppose them. With regard to the homestead clauses, if it were the case that the drought had led people to know that land was not so valuable as they had thought, the clauses were a great sham; they were inserted to induce people to come here and cultivate land, by those who thought that not one shilling would be made from them. On the whole, it appeared there was a certain object to be gained by certain parties. These sought to make the Bill popular by homestead clauses and reducing the upset price, and by that means to carry their own ends. The 131st clause appeared to be a most iniquitous one; if a man did not do what the Bill provided should be done, he was to be imprisoned for two years! He had said enough to let honorable gentlemen understand that he was opposed to the subdivision of runs and offering half the runs for selection. That was a blind to shew so many millions of acres open for selection, which was unnecessary and discreditable. Generally speaking, he could not help thinking, and, as a member of the north, expressing the feelings of the great body of squatters, saying that the whole affair was a gross imposition—an attempt to benefit a few while jeopardising a great many. He denounced it as the grossest fraud which had ever originated in the north—

The Hon. T. L. M. PRIOR rose to order. He hardly thought the expression "grossest fraud" applied to a Government Bill was parliamentary.

The PRESIDENT ruled that the honorable gentleman was out of order. Although unwilling to interfere with freedom of debate which was requisite to the interests of the country, he thought that the honorable

member had exceeded his privileges by using the term "fraud." He should therefore withdraw the expression, and apologise to the House.

The Hon. A. NORTON said he apologised for using the term; at the same time, he hardly knew how to express his feelings without using it. In withdrawing the expression, he said he had not said whether it was a gross fraud or not. However, he felt entitled to propose an amendment to the motion of the Postmaster-General, namely—

That this Bill be read a second time this day six months.

The Hon. Sr. G. R. GORE said he felt grateful to the honorable the Postmaster-General for the manner in which he had treated the question before them. They had not been treated like a set of dogs who had been thrown a Bill to "worry." He had not been particularly edified by the speech of the honorable gentleman, in which he made reference to the remotest annals of the colony, but he thanked him for it. Since he had held the position occupied by the honorable gentleman, this Bill was the first measure of any importance which had given him an opportunity to express an opinion upon the recent changes which had taken place, and the Ministry. He by no means wished to judge people unfairly, but he had observed the conduct of the Ministers with very little satisfaction. He thought their conduct such that they might well assume the title of the "Gamp Ministry." The Colonial Treasurer, with an umbrella and pair of pattens, would be a good representative of the great "Sarah Gamp;" the Secretary for Lands, either "Betsy Prig," or "Paul Sweedlepipe, the barber;" while the Colonial Secretary, as a jolly sort of fellow, might be "Mark Tapley," and his honorable friend the Postmaster-General might be compared to "Bailey, junior." Having thus furnished the Ministry with parts taken from Dickens' most popular novels, he would proceed to more serious business. He thought the place of the gentlemen in office ought to be filled by very different people; he did not allude to himself. He thought the honorable member for Rockhampton would make an excellent Premier; the member for Kennedy, a good Minister for Lands and Works; the member for Warwick might hold the third position in the Ministry, and surely the Honorable Mr. Wood should be entitled to the sweets of office, after having led the Opposition so well. If these had held office, he would have been disposed to entertain the Bill with some satisfaction. But the Bill was forced upon the Government by a select committee. He felt himself in a rather anomalous position with regard to it. He had always been the advocate of settlement in the House, and he still was so; and so far as the measure before them would promote the settlement of the country, he was in favor of it; but it was very ill cal-

culated to attain that purpose. He had always been a persevering advocate against those known as the "black soilers;" the bulk of the squatters had been sacrificed to them. By the present Bill they were to be sacrificed both to the Darling Downs squatters and those in the neighborhood of Rockhampton. He agreed very much with what had been said by the honorable member who had lately sat down. Those squatters who had been pointed at as oppressed by the Bill, had an outlet under clause eight, which allowed the squatter to remain as he is. The Bill had been passed by gentlemen knowing their own interests, at least he should not be so presumptuous as to tell them that they did not. But the boon of a ten years' lease, except in a few instances, would be no benefit in the settled districts. He did not believe that it was, because the half leased could only become valuable by a very great expense, while the security to lay thousands out upon was a very poor one. He could agree with the observations made with respect to the tyranny of exacting double rent for half of a run. The half run might not be able to carry half the stock; while the larger the run, the greater its capability of carrying stock. If a run were halved it could only carry about one third the stock. The proposal was only made tolerable by the right to graze over the remainder, and yet it was subject to continual diminution. The fencing clause was a great hardship; every man with a ten years' lease came under the Fencing Act. Say that the lease had almost expired, it would come very hard on the squatter to be compelled to fence out a free selector, and, after paying, to have the fence pass away from him. He thought it was an iniquitous thing to prevent a squatter from having a right to the reservoir he had made. The analogy of dry nurse had been used in the debate, with respect to the Bill; going a little further back, they might trace its source higher. The physiologists of America acknowledge a phenomenon called "superfetation;" that arises where twins are produced, and the one is white and the other black. The fair presumption in that case is, that the children have a different origin. The present Bill was in that position. A person could put their fingers upon the separate clauses of the Bill and father them. They saw a good deal about surveys, and a clause to raise the price of surveys. No doubt that could be fathered upon an honorable member who was a licensed surveyor. A great deal in the Bill could point them to gentlemen having large property in the north; while, doubtless, a gentleman could be found upon the black soil, whose claim to a paternity in the Bill could be established. He alluded to the honorable member for Warwick, who ought to be fathering the Bill in a legitimate manner as Minister for Lands and Works. Through all his life, he had contended that the general body of squatters

were sacrificed to the Darling Downs black soiler; and he was too much afraid that there was a move to sacrifice all the people between the northern shores of the Bay and Rockhampton to their interests. There was a loophole in the eighth clause to creep out of the Bill. But he did not think it was regular to go through clause after clause of the Bill. It would be canvassed in committee, when, their minds being concentrated upon each clause separately, they might make the Bill more practical. He was quite agreed that the land boards were impracticable, upon the ground that there were no people to fill office on these boards. It was doubtful if competent men could be found, even at a high price. But people are so universally interested in the disposal of land, and the number who are free from bias, are so small, that the money spent upon land boards would be worse than thrown away. There were one hundred and thirty-five clauses in the Bill, some of them formal, and there were others of a great length essential to the Bill or its working. He should not then go on at greater length in the discussion of the clauses, but would reserve his remarks for the Bill in committee. He could not vote against the second reading of the Bill, but he did not pledge himself to it. He hoped that many of the objections he entertained against the Bill might be purged from the Bill in committee, and any good there was in it might be improved.

The Hon. J. GIBBON said he should not go into the various clauses of the Bill, because he did not think that was the proper time to do so; but, dissenting altogether as he did from the principles upon which the Bill was framed, particularly that which proposed to sell all the lands of the colony upon a system of deferred payments, and that, too, at a time when the colony was in such a state of indebtedness, he could not allow it to pass without entering his protest against it. It appeared to him that the only means to get out of the difficulties in which the country was plunged would be to sell the public property for cash, and not to adopt the course proposed in some of the clauses in the Bill before the House—to sell it at a low price, the payments extending over a period of ten years; that appeared to him to be utterly absurd, in the present state of the colony. The mode of classification and value of the lands by means of land boards seemed to him very cumbersome and unworkable. It seemed absurd to suppose that a small body of men were to be entrusted to value land in all the different districts, and to divide them into first class, second class, and third class lands. The only way to determine the real value of those lands was to put them up for sale by auction. He protested against the public lands of this colony being sold in any other way than by auction to the highest bidder, without conditions, or restrictions of any kind. This

miserable Bill did not even offer any rebate or discount to the cash purchaser. Persons who purchased lands with those long periods for payments might wish to pay cash for them, and they were graciously informed that if they paid down the money which was only required in seven years' time, they would have title, but no discount was allowed. It seemed almost unnecessary for him, after the lucid statement of his honorable friend from the north, as to the way in which these selections were to be made and the land offered for sale, to add anything further. He would only say, that persons in those parts of the country would require the whole of their runs, and not portions of them only—they did not care for the offer of land in other parts of the colony. He objected altogether to the principles put forward in the Bill, and should support the amendment, that it be read that day six months.

The Hon. W. THORNTON said he was not surprised at the amount of discussion which the Bill before the House had provoked in both branches of the Legislature, because he looked upon it as the most important measure which had ever been submitted to the Queensland Parliament. It was not only a measure of vital importance to the colonists of Queensland, but one in which people in the other colonies were taking a deep interest, and were anxiously watching. A great deal of dependence was placed upon the passing of this Bill. They had spent large sums of money in order to settle a population in Queensland; but the high price of £1 an acre, and the restrictions attending the alienation of land, had militated against it, and no such settlement had taken place at all in accordance with the extent of its territory. They had borrowed money to a large amount to import immigrants, who came only to find their way to other countries, having got thus far at the expense of this colony, nothing having been done to induce them to remain. The first step to be taken must be to lower the price of land, to offer facilities for selection, without going through the tedious process of sale by auction; and to give grants of land to persons who arrived here from other places, having paid their own passages, as well as to persons in the colony who had borne the heat and burden of the day, and should be placed in the same position as the newly arrived immigrant. That was amply provided for by the homestead areas. If they considered how the other colonies were bidding for population, many of them offering greater attractions than Queensland, they would see the necessity of holding out as many inducements as they could. After reducing the price of land in accordance with the terms offered by this Bill, they would still be placing a higher price upon it than land was sold for in British America and the United States. He was not aware whether there was any difference in the

price, but he knew that in those countries ordinary land was sold at a dollar and a half per acre; while in Texas and in Mexico good land could be had in fee simple at two shillings an acre. It was well known that in those countries a good many Englishmen had settled and engaged in pastoral pursuits, which had tended to lower the price of wool, because it came from places where wool had never been grown before. He should not detain the House by going through many of the clauses, but would just allude to those which had formed the subject of discussion that evening, and had received so much opposition from those honorable gentlemen whom they appeared chiefly to touch. With reference to the third clause, which provided for the division of runs into two, he had not the slightest doubt that if two or three years ago these gentlemen who were so deeply interested in the question had been told that they would be offered these terms in 1837, they would have been glad to accept them. But such a proposition would never have been entertained at that time. Now, the squatting interest was largely represented in both Houses, and it was owing to that that such a liberal measure had been introduced. He was quite sure that if this Bill were not accepted, it would be followed by one which would amount to the confiscation of those gentlemen's leases, and they would bitterly regret that it had not become law. As had been remarked, those gentlemen who were so wedded to their runs could continue to hold them under the eighth clause of the Bill, and he believed many of them would do so. He could see no reason why the runs should not be divided. Those who appeared to be the most aggrieved were honorable gentlemen in that House who had runs on the Darling Downs. They had enjoyed those runs without let or hindrance, upon most absurdly low terms, for a great number of years. They had assisted in getting a railway made through that rich country, and they must have known when they were doing so that they were hastening the time when those lands would have to be converted into something more than mere sheepwalks. They knew very well it would be much better for the country, and he thought, when they were able to secure one-half of their runs, the offer was quite as liberal as they could have anticipated. No doubt this measure might press rather heavily upon some of the pastoral tenants; but no Bill could possibly be introduced which would not press heavily upon some one; and, perhaps, of all the questions decided by a colonial Parliament, this had been the most difficult of settlement, as there were two interests at variance with each other, in the Chamber through which the Bill had just passed. It had received great care and attention in its passage through the other House. It had been carefully drafted, and had been referred to a select committee, who had endeavored

to make it as perfect as possible. Of the two gentlemen who had assisted the Minister for Lands in that task, one was a squatter and the other an agriculturist; and they appeared to have modified their views on the subject very considerably. They had brought up a Bill to meet as closely as possible the views of the Parliament generally, and of those honorable members who were connected with those two interests. If they had not done so, no Bill would have been passed this session; and he thought it would be worse than folly, after so much thought and care had been expended upon the Bill in another place, to refuse to read it a second time. Honorable members would have an opportunity of making any suggestions they chose in committee; but he thought it would be a lamentable thing to retard the advance of the colony by checking the progress of the Bill at that stage. The honorable gentleman, Mr. Norton, had confined himself principally to personal allusions relative to a certain family in Rockhampton, one of whom had been employed in drafting this Bill.

The Hon. A. NORTON said his references had been made principally to the run, and not to the individuals.

The Hon. W. THORNTON: Well, to the run. However, it so happened that the idea of dividing the runs did not emanate from the gentleman, the member of the family which had been alluded to. It had been mentioned by the Minister for Lands before that gentleman had a seat in the other House at all.

AN HONORABLE MEMBER: It was the Northern Land League.

The Hon. W. THORNTON: He did not think the Northern Land League was in existence at that time. At any rate, he could state that, if the gentleman in question had consulted his own personal interests, he would not have agreed to the Bill before the House. The House was not, perhaps, aware that the railway would run thirty miles through his run; and that would take one hundred miles of country from him, by the reservation of land on either side of the line. The land, too, was not so rich and adapted for agricultural purposes as it had been affirmed. Many persons who had attempted agriculture upon that run had gone away disgusted; it was not even fit to grow sugar. The family to which the honorable member had alluded was well known to honorable gentlemen, and to the country; and he thought the very name was a sufficient proof that the Bill had not been introduced from any personal motives. The homestead area clauses had been largely canvassed that evening, and he must say that he approved of them. Rich and extensive gold fields had already been discovered in Queensland, and it was a matter of great importance to hold out some inducement to the successful diggers, in order to make them settle in the country. Those areas also offered the only provision

for giving grants of land to immigrants arriving in the colony who paid their own passages, which was a great advantage as a means of attracting population and capital. The very fact of persons being able to buy such a large quantity of land—second class land, 7,800 acres—would be a great inducement to small capitalists. No such opportunity had been offered before. Many persons with £2,000 or £3,000, who were not in a position to turn squatters, would be able to embark in farming and pastoral pursuits combined with some prospect of success. With regard to the system of deferred payments, upon which the honorable gentleman, Mr. Gibbon, had laid such stress, and had so much condemned, he must admit that, in the abstract, he did not believe in deferred payments. But it was well known that it was adopted in commercial transactions; and he would ask that honorable gentleman if he had not generally carried it out in selling allotments of land. The principle was precisely the same. The reason which induced him to accept deferred payments in this case was, that they involved the principle of lowering the price of the land, and that he considered a great step in advance; and as to any difficulty hereafter in collecting the balance of the purchase money, he could not see why it should be anticipated in this case more than in any other. The honorable member, Mr. Fitz, had quoted a speech of Mr. Martin, Premier of New South Wales, in which that gentleman had expressed his opinion that such a difficulty would arise; but that opinion was not based upon experience; and, for his part, he believed a man who took up land under this Bill would be so anxious to get his title to it, that he would be more likely to pay up the balance at once. He would then, also, have the power of disposing of it, or mortgaging it, if he chose. With regard to the land on the coast round by the Gulf of Carpentaria being included in the settled districts, he believed that the very best land for the cultivation of sugar was in that direction; and when a new colony was formed, then it would be of great advantage to have that land included in the settled districts. The Bill might not be altogether perfect, and there might, perhaps, be some clauses which could be altered with advantage; but, as a whole, he considered it as good a measure as was likely to be submitted to the Parliament. He had seen no measure so likely to tend to the benefit of the colony, as it combined the three good principles of free selection, reduction in the price of land, and homestead areas. He should certainly support the motion for the second reading.

The Hon. J. F. McDougall said, if he possessed the eloquence of a Pitt or a Fox,—or, to come back to more recent days, a D'Israeli or a Derby, he might be able to throw some light upon the question, which had been so much ventilated during the last three or four months; but, as he did not, he

should content himself with offering to the House a few practical remarks upon it; and he should take the somewhat unusual course of speaking against the Bill, and then voting for its second reading. He should do so because, much as he saw in it to find fault with, he thought it was necessary that some Land Bill should be passed this session, and that the question should be settled one way or the other, if it were to be settled at all. He should, therefore, vote for the second reading. To commence, he would say that his opinion of the Bill before the House was, that it was unjust at the outset, because it commenced with a violation of the rights of one class of the community—he repeated that a violation of the most oppressive kind was committed by the Bill. It was a breach of faith to deprive one class, upon a mere speculative, theoretical scheme, of that which they had held and were holding by virtue of the Orders in Council. It was a violation of simple justice to deprive that class of its rights upon such a speculative scheme, as it was now proposed to carry out. The Bill professed to be a liberal Land Bill, and its object was said to be to induce immigration. It was to be, in fact, the panacea for all the evils under which the colony was suffering, but for the life of him he could not see it. He believed it would have no such effect, if passed in its present shape, because it was encumbered with conditions which completely destroyed the liberal principles it professed. If it were really a liberal Land Bill it should allow a man, if he wanted land, to buy it at once, and when he had bought it, to do what he liked with it. He could not see why the purchase of land should be clogged and encumbered with conditions more than any other commodity. No man would be likely to invest his money in land, unless he saw a means of making money out of it. Poor men, as well as capitalists, would expect some interest for the money they laid out, and would not invest it if they were to be hampered with all kinds of restrictions. The next point he would refer to was the working of the Bill. It was proposed to throw the entire working of this Bill into the hands of irresponsible boards. Who these gentlemen were who were to constitute these boards he could not find out, or from what classes of the community they were to be selected from—the higher, the middle, or the lower class; whether they were to be black soil men, or sandy soil men; but he unhesitatingly declared as his opinion, that however these boards might be constituted, they would be unworkable, and it would be impracticable to carry out a proper administration of the lands by means of them. He maintained that the whole tendency of the legislation for the last eight years had been to class legislation—against the introduction of capital, which was the only thing the colony required. The whole sys-

tem of legislation had been opposed to capital, but the Bill before the House capped everything; that was his opinion of it. It was not a Bill introduced by the Government alone; it was a compromise. Honorable members had heard a good deal in the course of the debate about wet-nurses and godmothers taking charge of the Bill; but, at all events, it was admitted that it was a compromise. It professed to be the result of a sort of drawn battle between two opposite classes; but one class or the other must come to grief, and he believed no advantage would be gained by the other. The whole scheme was simply a theory; he did not believe it would have the effect which was anticipated from it.

The Hon. W. WOOD: Try it.

The Hon. J. F. McDougall: It was all very well to say "try this," and "try that;" that was all very well for gentlemen who had no stake in the interests under consideration. They looked at the question from a different point of view from those whose interests were affected. Perhaps it was just as well that it should be so, as those who were directly concerned might be less likely to come to a just conclusion. It was all very well for those who had no stake in the colony to say, as honorable members had just heard the honorable the Collector of Customs say, that the Bill was an extremely liberal one, and that the Darling Downs squatters, forsooth, could never have anticipated such a liberal measure; that, had it been brought forward some two or three years ago, it would have been ridiculed as preposterous, and that it was only on account of the present constitution of the Legislature that it was entertained for a moment. He entirely differed with that honorable gentleman in that respect, and he thought that the great evil under which the colony labored was that it was impoverished by the number of idlers who were supported by the real wealth of the colony—the working men. It was not for officials, and those who lived upon the working men, to descant upon the liberality of the Bill. It might suit them very well to have a general scramble. It was very easy for them to say, "We will take property from one class and give it to another," and do this upon a mere speculative scheme. He would not enumerate the different clauses of the Bill, which were very numerous. He hoped every honorable member had at least taken the trouble to consider them carefully. There was one clause, however, to which he should like to refer—clause fifty-one, which provided for the resumption of any tracts of land "exceeding eight square miles in area." Now, the Bill had already provided for the resumption of twenty-five millions of acres; and he should like to ask honorable members how long it would be before those twenty-five millions were taken up. The thing seemed to him to be perfectly preposterous, and he could not see why there should be

any further provision to take up "eight square miles in area." He should like to know upon what principle of justice a squatter should be deprived of the land upon which he had, perhaps, expended £1,000 or more in making a reservoir on a plain where no water had ever been deposited to remain an hour. Was there any justice in that? Was he to spend his money upon works like that, for the improvement of an arid country, which was quite unavailable without such outlay, for the benefit of the public? or was he to have a right to the property he had improved? He considered the proposition most unjust and illiberal. A great deal had been said about the homestead clauses. He objected to them; but he thought there would have been something reasonable in the proposition, if it had been to give away the scrub lands, which were the only real agricultural lands in the colony. Why not give these lands away for nothing? as it seemed to be the idea of the Bill that land was to be given away. Those lands could not at present be utilised, and there might be some reason in giving them away with conditions. (Hear, hear.) An honorable member said "hear." Perhaps he did not think the scrub lands were the best for agricultural purposes; but he (Mr. McDougall), as a farmer of twenty years' experience, could tell him that they were the only lands in Australia worth having. All the members of his family were farmers, and they had found that the scrub lands were the only lands really fit for agriculture.

The Hon. St. G. R. GORE: Brigalow scrub?

The Hon. J. F. McDougall: No, vine scrubs; and he affirmed that they were the richest lands in the colony. There was another clause, clause sixty-nine, which regulated the amount of stock which the pastoral tenant was allowed to run upon the resumed portion of his run. He thought that clause was very unjust and unfair. It had been stated by one honorable member that all runs could not be equally divided as to their carrying capacity for stock; that, in fact, was well known to everyone. The only principle in the Bill with which he could agree, was the reduction in the price of land. In that he concurred most heartily, and he thought it a step in the right direction. He believed the price put upon the land had always been too high, and that the land was not worth it. Even the land in the far-famed and much maligned Darling Downs was not, in his opinion, worth one pound an acre. He should, therefore, support the second reading of the Bill, because it embodied that principle, but he should, of course, be prepared to suggest many amendments in it when it came before the House in committee: and he hoped that, after the adjournment about to take place at the end of the week for some ten days or so, honorable gentlemen would be in a position to approach the sub-

ject with calmness, and from a disinterested point of view.

The Hon. F. E. BUDGE said he should certainly support the second reading of the Bill. It contained some very objectionable clauses, and others that were very good ones; but he hoped that, before it was returned to the other House, the former would be expunged, and the Bill would be made as perfect as it was possible to make it. He thought there were several amendments which might be made in it to advantage. He should certainly propose one to the effect that not more than one-half of the runs should be resumed—even one-fourth of them, he thought, would be quite fair. He thought, also, that at the end of the ten years, leases, which under clause three appeared to terminate, might be renewed for five years longer, until the runs were eventually required by the Government. He objected, also, to the power given in clause five to the Governor in Council to resume eight square miles in area in one block. He was of opinion, that if a lease were granted for ten years, it should be an indefeasible lease, unless a gold field were discovered on the land, or it were required for railway purposes. Unless it were indefeasible, the holder would be unable to borrow money upon it. Another clause (sixty-nine) had been alluded to by the honorable member who had spoken last, which provided that the right of the pastoral tenant to depasture on the unleased portion of his run, should be limited to one-third of his stock. That would cause a large quantity of stock to be thrown in the market during the next twelve months. He had no doubt that the framers of this Bill did not calculate upon this effect. It would, however, be found to be a fact, for most of the runs, in the settled districts at any rate, were fully stocked, and the holders would have to sell the surplus. Looking at schedule B, which defined the boundaries of the settled districts, he thought it would be most absurd to follow that line. Following down that boundary line on the chart, it would be seen that it was a most absurd one. He thought it should have been run from the point where Wilkie's Creek joined the Condamine, and thence north-west till it struck the sea, and that fifteen years' leases should be given; there would then be ample land for the next hundred years. The way in which the boundary line was laid down in the schedule was a fallacy; for, after including the Darling Downs, it went back in a north-easterly direction, then back again, and then along the coast through a number of small cattle stations, which no one would ever think of buying for agricultural purposes. He should support the second reading of the Bill.

The Hon. J. C. HEUSSLER said he had listened attentively to the debates on the Land Bill, both in this and the other branch of the Legislature; and he must say that the opinions expressed respecting the measure

itself, and as to what the land policy of the colony should be, were so conflicting as to produce in his mind a feeling of the utmost confusion. Judging by the discussions that had taken place upon the Bill, the whole question at issue seemed to be that of the southern squatter against the northern squatter, and the large agriculturist against the small farmer. Again, on the one hand, it was stated that squatting pursuits did not pay, and on the other, that agricultural pursuits did not pay. Indeed, it would seem, if all that was said was to be believed, that nothing paid. Nobody seemed to be satisfied with the Land Bill. The measure, it was said, was a compromise, and no doubt it was; and any measure of the kind must be a compromise, considering the many and varied interests that had to be dealt with by such a Bill. As to the squatting portion of the question, it was his opinion that the squatters ought to be allowed to hold their runs until the lands were required for more profitable occupation, whether for agricultural purposes or pastoral pursuits on a more improved system. The squatter ought to give way, and must give way, when the lands came to be required for purposes that would be more advantageous to the colony. However, care should be taken in dealing with such a Bill as the one before the House, that no more injury was done to existing vested interests than could possibly be avoided. He did not see that one squatter should be required to give up his run to another who proposed merely to supplant him; but, if the Government of the day could derive sixpence, or even a penny, an acre for lands for which they were receiving only a farthing per acre, then it would be for the good of the colony that a change of occupation should take place. If the alienation of the land was the only thing to be considered, then he would admit that no better measure than the one before the House could be introduced; but, in dealing with this question, it was necessary also to have regard to the introduction of labor and capital. Now, under this Bill, there were no inducements for the investment of capital, or, at any rate, no sufficient inducements. It appeared to him to be the greatest possible absurdity to hold up large tracts of country in a wild state, when legislation might be so directed as to induce the investment of capital in the purchase of those lands, and labor to make it productive. Under this Bill, there would be a great deal of waste land kept in a condition by which it would yield nothing whatever to the Treasury. There would be twenty-five millions of acres, it was said, which would yield no return to the Treasury, except by being sold. Now, a great deal of the land might be sold by auction, by which its fair value would be ascertained, and under such a system as would not prevent the progress of settlement, or facilitate the picking out

the eyes of the country. He thought those lands might be put up in lots of from 2,560 acres, in square blocks, according to the survey regulations. There would be no harm in having the lands alienated in that way, if sold by auction, the upset price being five shillings to fifteen shillings an acre, leaving the market value of the lands to be ascertained by competition, and allowing the capitalist to put the lands to whatever use he liked. The homestead part of the question, however, would have to be dealt with differently. There was no doubt, that if the State gave anybody a present of a piece of land, obligations might be imposed as to the use to which such lands should be put. He found, with regret, that there was a great want in the Bill in that respect. A very great deal had been said about agriculture not paying; but, he thought it was a most unfair thing to make such statements, which, though made in the Parliament, were really not the truth. Those statements went beyond the colony, to persons who had not the local means of testing their value; and as there ought to be no better authority than the Parliament as to the introduction of labor, they were calculated to do great injury to the colony. Now, what were the real facts of the case? Had nature not bestowed upon this part of the world an excellent climate, and did not the colony contain abundance of excellent land, sufficient to induce millions instead of thousands to come to the colony? It had been said, in another place, that in the matter of wheat, the colony would produce nothing but empty cars; but, granting that, for the sake of argument, to be correct, could it not be asserted, and with perfect truth, that in the matter of cotton, the colony had obtained the golden medal at the Paris Exhibition for the best sample produced? Now, this colony was very young yet in cotton growing. That industry had been in active existence for only about five years, and yet the colony had equalled the whole world in the quality of the cotton it had produced. Then, again, he could produce as fine a sample of sugar grown in this colony as could be produced in the Mauritius; and he might say that the returns that had been obtained from this industry had, so far, been of a very satisfactory nature—good enough to be remunerative, and, indeed, to lead to the expectation that, at no distant day, the export of sugar would surpass all the other important exports of the colony. A great deal that was not altogether correct had, as he had already observed, been said of the unsuitableness of the soil for agricultural purposes; but honorable members should remember that it was not the richness of the soil alone that was the great requisite for the material prosperity of an agricultural community. The selection of the products, and the suitableness of the climate to them, were equally, if not more, important considerations. Why, he could mention instances

where even on barren rocks industrious families were in comfortable, if not affluent, circumstances. This might seem somewhat paradoxical, but if honorable members would only turn their thoughts to the Pyrenees, and the high rocks along the Rhine, up which the people had actually to carry the soil upon their backs in the first instance, all doubts as to the truth of what he stated would speedily vanish from their minds; for it must be known to honorable members that on those elevated rocks the finest wines in the world were produced. The possession of a small rock there was looked upon as the foundation of a good fortune. Now, this colony was too young yet for any decision to be come to as to what agricultural pursuit—taking agriculture in its widest sense—would be the most profitable either to the colony or the individual. They were, in fact, only experimentalising as yet. But this much they knew, that in the case of every product that had been attempted in the colony, the best quality had been produced; and, no doubt, both quality and quantity would improve according as capital and enterprise were encouraged, and knowledge and skill were acquired and developed. Some honorable members had spoken of “miserable little farmers.” Now, as far as he was acquainted with the little farmers around Brisbane, and elsewhere, they were very happy—far more so than some members of other classes in the community; and he thought that they should take every means to foster these small farmers. It was none of the business of honorable members to judge of the happiness or miserableness of those persons, as they were quite capable of being their own judges. He could tell honorable members that in all cases where he had spoken with any of those small farmers as to their position and circumstances in the colony, the answer he almost invariably received was that they were very happy on their twenty or thirty acres; and he felt sure they were as happy as many who were fighting for the favors of fortune, and never securing them. He could not agree with those who said that farming should not be fostered in the colony. He did not mean to say that it was only the man who brought with him £500 that should be encouraged to settle on the land. The strong and industrious laborer who came to this country, and having remained in it for two or three years, and earned by his steadiness and industry £50 or £100, might safely be encouraged, as much as a wealthier man, to settle upon some piece of land he might desire to call his own. Such a person, when he invested his money in the land, knew perfectly well what he was about, and was likely to turn out a valuable member of society. On the other hand, it was very often the case that the man who came to the colony, bringing with him several hundreds of pounds, idled away his time, and dissipated his means, till his family perhaps had to seek the aid of the benevolent asylum. It was not the amount of individual wealth so much as

the amount of energy and industry it possessed that made a colony great, and prosperous, and happy. He did not intend to refer to any particular clauses of the Bill now before the House, and as to principles, he did not think the Bill had any to be dealt with; but if there were any principles in it, he doubted very much, judging by the conflicting opinions that existed on the land question, whether, by the time the Bill had got through committee, there would be the vestige of a principle left in it. However, when the Bill got into committee, he would render every assistance in his power to improve it where he thought it might be improved, so that it might be made a measure that would be workable for the benefit of the country; but he would reserve to himself freedom to act, on the third reading, according as he might consider whether the House, by its remodelling skill, had or had not rendered the Bill a desirable one to be passed into law.

The Hon. W. Wood said he had compared this Bill and the Pastoral Leases Bill of the present Ministry with the two Bills of the Macalister Ministry, and that he liked none of them. His own idea was that they should always have a sufficient quantity of land surveyed and put up to auction at any price they liked—the price was of no consequence, for good land would always fetch its value, and he would let the purchaser do what he liked with his land. At the same time, as he saw there was a chance of a measure—which was regarded as a compromise—being passed, and as he agreed with its principles as such, he would accept it; and would, therefore, support the second reading of this Bill. He thought it was better to leave the administration of the lands to the land boards than to the Surveyor-General. He denied that the present Minister for Lands had dealt unjustly with the Darling Downs squatters. The people required that the land on the Downs should be thrown open, and the Minister for Lands threw it open. Some few had been sacrificed, but that could not be avoided. If the land boards were to cost as much as was estimated by the honorable member opposite, Mr. Fitz, it might become a question as to whether there should be any at all. There were, no doubt, great difficulties in the way of carrying out this Bill as regarded the land boards. But, unless some better arrangement was proposed for administering the lands than the administration of the Surveyor-General, who would be controlled by the Minister for Lands, he should support the proposed land boards. He agreed with the honorable member, Mr. Fitz, that the principle of deferred payments might possibly lead to unpleasant consequences; and that, when the population became very large, the selectors might rise up and refuse to pay the rent for the remainder of their lease. He only hoped that nothing of the kind would happen while this Bill

was in force—and it was only intended as an experiment. He intended to vote for the deferred payments, because he would support almost anything that would bring about a reduction in the price of land. He was opposed to the homestead clauses, in so far as they allowed persons to select land where they liked. He would only permit them to select the rich scrub lands, or lands of equal quality, and would endeavor to concentrate them in particular localities. If they allowed a man to select a homestead where he pleased, they would be offering a premium to every discontented bullock-driver or shepherd to quarrel with his employer, and settle down close to his run. He disagreed with the honorable member near him, Mr. Norton, as to the quality of the land around Rockhampton; and believed that none but Chinamen, and they by extensive irrigation, had ever been able to make anything out of it. The same honorable member had objected to the proposal to divide the runs in the northern districts. Now, he would remind the honorable member that at present the holders of those runs were liable to be turned out at any time. They need not make so much of their runs being taken away, because the resumption would be merely nominal. No free selectors would go near them for years to come. There was one respect, however, in which he (Mr. Wood) objected to the Bill; and that was, the proposal to make the squatter pay double rent for the half that he might be allowed to retain of his run. The fact that the pastoral tenants had had their runs for a long time at a farthing an acre, was nothing to the purpose. When they paid that rent, nobody else would have given more. It was their occupation of the land which had made it valuable. He would, therefore, support a proposition to reduce the rent for the leased half; or else insist on the tenant receiving an indefeasible lease for ten years; and there were some other amendments of a minor character he would like to see made in the Bill. He quite felt for those gentlemen who were being victimised by their runs being interfered with, and could quite understand their desire to insert such clauses as would prevent further injustice. But it must be remembered that the Bill was a sort of compromise; and that it was not a Government measure. All parties had given up something to secure the passing of a Land Bill at all. He was not a seeker of the *aura popularis*; and he did not care whether a measure had been passed in another place or not. He supported the Bill, because he did not think that, under the circumstances, they would get a much better one. He strongly advised honorable gentlemen not to reject the principle of the Bill, as they might possibly fare worse. He believed that they were all actuated by a desire to forward their own individual interests, and that was generally a very correct principle to go upon.

He would not detain the House with any further remarks, but simply state his intention of voting for the Bill and against the amendment.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ said he should have given a silent vote upon the amendment of the Honorable Mr. Norton, were it not for the remarks of the honorable gentleman who last addressed the House, and who had laid great stress on the fact that the land boards, being appointed by the Governor, were removable by the Governor, and were therefore responsible. Did the honorable gentleman not know that the Legislative Council were, according to the constitution, appointed by the Governor? Yet, the Governor had, in certain instances, refused to exercise the power vested in him, and left it in the hands of his responsible advisers solely. If the Bill should pass in its present shape, when the land boards came to be appointed, the Governor would turn to his Ministers and say he had nothing to do with their appointments. The boards would not be independent of ministerial influence.

The Hon. W. WOOD: He had meant to say that five or six men would not be so likely to be guilty of turpitude as one man.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ contended that they would be as much so as the Minister for Lands and the Surveyor-General. If the business could be carried on with the present machinery, it would be an advantage to the country in point of economy, and in regard to efficiency it would not suffer. The Honorable Mr. Wood had taken up the cause of the Ministry so strongly, that he (Mr. Fitz) was almost inclined to think that the House would have to look upon him, before long, as the fifth wheel of the state coach. The action of the Government was most unjust. When a party of men condemned—as he had read their speeches—the policy of their predecessors, and then adopted that policy, what could be expected of them? What would they stick to, when they disregarded their own professions? It was on the question of the illegal resumption of lands that the late Ministry had gone out of office; but, when the present Ministry succeeded, they issued a proclamation that did more harm than the action of their predecessors. The Minister for Lands was, only a short time before, in a subordinate position in his department; and, on suddenly becoming the Ministerial head, he issued a proclamation for free selection as a popularity dodge. Six or seven individuals had by it been most shamefully sacrificed.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he should not have risen, but to answer what was last said by the honorable member, Mr. Fitz, who condemned the Minister for Lands for the action taken by him, and considered that all the odium of the late proclamation rested on him. He (the Postmaster-General) formerly stated—and the Honorable Mr. Fitz knew it—in the Council, as the Minister

for Lands had in another place, that whatever was done by that honorable gentleman was concurred in by the Government.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ: No credit to you.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: And, not only that, but he trusted that, whatever the Government had done, and whatever they might do, they would act together, and look only to the good of the country, and not to retaining place. He might refer to certain allusions that had been made by an honorable gentleman, who formerly held the position in the House that he now held, as representative of the Government; but, really, they were unworthy of notice, and he would not further notice them.

The question was then put, and the original motion was carried, on a division, as follows:—

Contents, 10.	Not-Contents, 2.
Hon. St. G. R. Gore	Hon. A. Norton
" W. Wood	" J. Gibbon.
" D. F. Roberts	
" W. Thornton	
" H. B. Fitz	
" J. F. McDougall	
" T. L. M. Prior	
" J. C. Heussler	
" G. Harris	
" F. E. Bigge.	