

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 26 MAY 1869

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the unsettled districts, said that, perhaps, no Bill ever came before the House that required fewer introductory remarks than the one he now proposed for the consideration of honorable members. They all knew that, at the last election, both country and town members declared it to be their solemn opinion that it was absolutely necessary some measure of relief should be granted to the outside squatters; and the Government, knowing that, and sharing in the opinion so expressed, had brought forward this Bill. This measure had caused the Government a great deal of anxiety before it arrived at its present shape. A very great deal of care had been taken in the framing of the Bill, and he could say that the Government were unanimously in favor of it. It was considered by the Government, clause by clause, as carefully as it could be considered by a committee of the whole House; and, finally, it was agreed to unanimously, in its present shape. No doubt the Bill would not meet, by a long way, the wishes of a great many inside the House, and, also, a great many outside the House; but he believed that every honorable member, without exception, would agree with him, that it would be impossible to bring in a Bill on this subject, that would meet the wishes of every one, either inside the House, or out of it; and of this he was fully convinced, that any ministry that would attempt to do so, would not be able to hold their position very long. Now, he might be allowed to refer to a petition that had been forwarded to the House, on this subject. It was only one of many, and he took it as being the most moderate. It was from the Mitchell, and was described in the paper which he held in his hand, the *Courier* of the 29th March, as setting forth—

“That the great difficulties with which the squatters had to contend, viz.,—distance from port or market, high rates of wages and carriage, prevalence of severe droughts, scarcity of permanent water, &c., all greatly aggravated by the present low and unsatisfactory state of the wool market, and consequent depreciation in the value of stock and station property, combined to render the profitable carrying on of pastoral pursuits impracticable, should the land remain either in the hands of the present lessees or pass into those of others, unless the Government should afford speedy and liberal assistance.”

That was a very comprehensive statement to begin with. The petition was based on a series of resolutions, the first of which was as follows:—

“That the urgent difficulties of the pastoral tenants of the Mitchell district, as set forth in this their petition, demand immediate relief from the Government.”

Well, no one would object to that. The next one said—

“That any concessions made by the Government must be large and liberal, otherwise they will be worse than useless.”

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Wednesday, 26 May, 1869.

Pastoral Leases Bill.

PASTORAL LEASES BILL.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS, in rising to move the second reading of a Bill to consolidate and amend the laws relating to the Pastoral Occupation of Crown Lands in

Now, he did not know what that was; and he supposed it would be very difficult for honorable members to arrive at a unanimous opinion, as to what was large enough and liberal enough. The third resolution was as follows:—

“That to meet the requirements of the pastoral lessees of the Mitchell district, indefeasible leases of their runs should be granted for twenty-eight years, the rent for the first fourteen years to be at the rate of five shillings (5s.) per square mile for available country, the rent for the second fourteen years to be determined by valuation, and in no case to exceed ten shillings (10s.) per square mile.”

That was very good indeed. Indefeasible leases for twenty-eight years at their own price. The fourth resolution was—

“That to encourage the introduction of capital into the district, it is necessary that a measure be passed, granting to the pastoral lessee a fee simple of an equivalent in land for all improvements exceeding in value the sum of twenty-five pounds (£25), such land to be valued at two shillings and sixpence (2s. 6d.) per acre, and to be contiguous to and include the site of each improvement, the Government reserving the land surrounding permanent waterholes, which may be required for public use.”

Then the fifth resolution said—

“That it is imperative upon the Government to place upon the Estimates certain adequate sums, to be devoted to the improvement of the main roads leading from the various ports into the district; and your petitioners request that such moneys should be placed under the control of local road boards, and be disposed of at their discretion.”

He thought there could be no objection to that. The sixth resolution was as follows:—

“That owing to the severe losses and inconveniences sustained by the lessees, added to the fact that many of them had only the use for four months of country for which they paid twelve months' rent in 1868, a portion at least of that rent be considered as an overcharge and placed to the credit of the lessees in the ensuing year's rent; more especially as many runs had come under the second period of lease, involving a double rental.”

That he thought was demanding a good deal too much. The last resolution was—

“That the resolutions now passed by the meeting be embodied in the petition and forwarded by the Chairman to the Member for the district, to be laid by him before the Legislature.”

Which had been done. Now, those resolutions showed he thought, that gentlemen outside the House knew very little as to how matters were managed in the House; and he would ask honorable members if they thought a Government could stand, for one instant, if they were to bring in a Bill in accordance with those resolutions? He was satisfied they would not stand one moment. Many resolutions, of a somewhat similar kind, had been sent into the House, and also to the Lands

Office; but, as he said before, he quoted those from the Mitchell, as being the most moderate. He and his honorable friend and colleague, the Colonial Secretary, had been frequently attacked about being squatters, and the Ministry had been attacked, because they were members of it—that was because it was a coalition Ministry. In the *Courier* of the 7th of May last, he found the following passage, in a leading article in that paper:—

“They were beginning to experience the delightful existence which all coalition Ministries enjoyed. As individuals, they may be respected, and some of them admired and trusted; but as a Ministry, nobody believes in them, and consequently they have no staunch followers.”

Now, the Ministry being in that delightful position that they were not trusted by either the outside squatters or the townspeople, were, he maintained, the very Ministry to bring in a Bill of this kind. Some honorable members had no faith in the way in which the Land Act was being administered at present; but he would ask honorable members to say if there was any one else in whom they had more faith. Did they not have the honorable member for the Mitchell, Mr. Lamb; then the honorable member for Port Curtis, Mr. Palmer; and afterwards the honorable member for the Eastern Downs, Mr. Macalister; and they were equally dissatisfied with all three. Now, he had been in office for only a few months, and in that short time he had already been pretty frequently attacked. Why, some people talked altogether without reason. The honorable member for West Moreton, Mr. Forbes, said in the course of one of his speeches, that he would sooner trust to the town members for benefit to the outside squatters than to the inside squatters. Well, he only wished that the honorable member had had a little more experience of the benefits that were to be got from the townspeople. Then Mr. Miles said that the administration of the Land Act at the present time was driving capital away from the colony. Now, he must tell the honorable member that the Government could not administer the Act in any other way than was provided by the Act. Therefore, if the honorable member thought the Act was wrongly administered, why did he not try to amend it? The honorable member said that the land was not to be obtained on application. Well, there were half a million of acres to be disposed of, and he would like to know how that quantity of land could be surveyed in two or three months.

Mr. MILES rose to order. He considered the honorable member was travelling altogether from the question.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: He did not think he was travelling from the subject. The honorable member had attacked him for his administration of the Land Act, because he could not get certain lands on application. Now, he was only showing that that was not his fault. There were half a

million of acres of land called for, and because the whole could not be surveyed in two or three months, he was attacked for the way he was administering the Land Act. The honorable member for East Moreton, Mr. Francis, had also said that he had no faith in the present administration of the Land Act. Well, he did not care whether he had or had not, for he was determined to do what he thought was right. Then the honorable member said he was suspicious about what the Government were doing with the lands, and he wanted to know what had become of the lands that were withdrawn from selection. Well, let him be suspicious. The lands were still there. They were not gone. But he could tell the honorable member this—that there were people came up from Melbourne who would have taken up the whole of the lands on the Downs that were open for selection, and it was only by the action he took that they were stopped; and he prided himself on having withdrawn those lands, and thereby saved to the country some thousands of pounds. Now, as to the Bill before the House, it was framed upon a principle which he had always advocated, and that was security of tenure as far as possible—and every one knew that security of tenure was a great benefit. But there never had been security of tenure by any previous Bill. Now, the Bill before the House provided for security of tenure; but it did not propose to interfere with the present rents. The Government had to consider the interest of the public as well as the interest of the pastoral tenants in dealing with a question of this kind; and if they were to let the pastoral tenants have the lands for one-half what they were paying for them now, what would the public say? He had seen far worse times in the colony than the present, and less outcry made about distress. Formerly a comparatively trifling sum was sufficient to keep a squatter's family; but now-a-days they must have carriages to ride about in, and town-houses to live in, and all the like of that extravagance. Some years ago they lived as suited their circumstances; but now it was all extravagance, and that extravagance had been brought on by temporary prosperity. Now let squatters fall back upon their old style of living, and put on blue shirts and moleskin trowsers, and they would soon find prosperity come upon them again. If they were to pass a Bill giving twenty-one years' leases, on the easy terms that some people demanded, what would the country say, he would like to know? Why, that the Lilley Government had sold the country; and particularly that would be the case, if the country became prosperous in a few years, and the demand for wool increased, and a higher price was obtained for it in consequence. He could not, therefore, agree to a re-appraisal clause being in the Bill. If honorable members did not pass this Bill, or something like it, in 1869, they would not get a Pastoral Relief Bill for years to come. He

therefore earnestly implored honorable members to think twice before they determined to throw this Bill out. But, as far as his opinion went, he believed the House would accept the Bill, with, perhaps, some alterations that would be made in committee. He would now proceed to go through the clauses of the Bill. The first of any consequence was the fifth clause, which allowed owners of squatting property to come under the provisions of this Act—that was, outside squatters—on surrendering existing leases, or promise of leases.

Mr. PALMER: How very kind.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Yes. The honorable member said, "How very kind;" but he had no doubt that, as soon as the Bill passed, the honorable member would take the benefit of it. The sixth clause stated the amount of rent that was to be paid for twenty-one years. For the first seven years the rent was to be the same as at present; and, at the end of seven years, there was to be ten per cent. added. That was—if a man paid £500 rent for the first seven years, he would have to pay £550 for the second term of seven years. Then, at the end of fourteen years, there was to be ten per cent. added to the rent of the second term of seven years. That was a small increase, and he did not think that any one could grumble at that. For himself, he thought that it was very liberal, seeing the occupier was to have security of tenure granted to him for twenty-one years. The seventh clause referred to new leases, that was, for lands that had never been taken up, and he thought no one could grumble at the terms stated in the succeeding clauses. He would like to draw particular attention to clause nine, because he found that one squatter suffered great hardship from want of such a provision. The portion of the clause he wished to call attention to was as follows:—

"Provided that if the said commissioner shall estimate the area of the lands applied for to be greater than that on which the fee shall have been paid then a further sum of five shillings for every square mile estimated by him to be in excess of the area paid for shall be paid into the hands of the said commissioner within ninety days."

In the case that he alluded to that was done, but the Government afterwards came down upon the squatter for £1,100, as arrears of rent for the excess of area. Now, that was a very large sum of money for a man to be called upon to pay at once, and it behoved the Government to see that such a thing should not happen. For that reason the Government had introduced this provision into the Bill. He next desired the attention of honorable members to the twentieth clause, which proposed the amount of rent that should be paid for new runs; and, he thought, honorable members would agree with him that for a new run the amount of rent proposed was moderate. The amount stated in the clause was five shillings per square mile, for the first seven years. Now, he thought that those were very liberal terms, and that they

could not fail to induce people to take up new country. They had plenty of new country to take up yet, and he believed this Bill would operate well for the taking up of new country. The next clause of importance to which he wished to call attention, was the thirty-eighth. That, he thought, was a clause which would also work well, for a great deal of the best country was very badly watered. If honorable members would read it and the following clause, he thought they would agree with him that their provisions were very favorable indeed, and would operate greatly to the taking up of much valuable land, though unwatered. He now passed on to the fortieth clause, which provided for a further extension of lease, and made the full term of lease thirty-five years. The next clause he considered to be of importance, was the fifty-fourth clause, which was as follows:—

“For the purpose of securing permanent improvements it shall be lawful for the Governor to sell to the lessee of a run without competition at the price of ten shillings per acre any portion of such run in one block not being more nor less than two thousand five hundred and sixty acres and the boundaries of any such block shall as nearly as the natural features of the country and adjacent boundaries will admit be equilateral and rectangular.”

He thought that was a kind of pre-emption that was liberal, and should be acceptable to all parties. He recollected that the Darling Downs members, at one time, were very much abused because they would not concede to the northern and outside squatters the right of pre-emption. He must say that he did not see the use of such right to the squatters in the outside districts, for there was not the remotest chance of their runs being interfered with for very many years to come. However, this clause gave the right of pre-emption, and though it said only 2,560 acres, he had no doubt the quantity might be extended. He now came to the most important clause of the Bill—the fifty-fifth. It was the resuming clause, and provided as follows:—

“The Governor in Council may by notification in the *Government Gazette* resume from lease any portion of a run not exceeding in the whole two thousand five hundred and sixty acres provided that if it shall be deemed expedient to resume any further portion or the whole of a run the Secretary for Lands shall give six months' notice of such intention in writing to the lessee and after the expiration of said term shall lay before both Houses of Parliament a schedule of the lands to be resumed from lease and if the said schedule shall not have been dissented from by resolutions passed by both Houses of Parliament within sixty days during a session of Parliament the said reservations shall take effect.”

Now, he could see no harm in that; and he did not see there could be any difficulty in dealing with such a provision. Any honorable member who did not approve of the lands specified

in the schedule being resumed, could table a motion to the effect that they be not resumed. A great deal had been said about “assent” and “dissent,” but he did not see that “dissent” was not as good as “assent.” This clause might affect a few stations near the settled districts, but he did not see that it could affect the outside squatters at all. Then the fifty-ninth clause provided that horses, cattle, and sheep might be depastured on Crown lands within the distance of half-a-mile of the road along which they were being driven, although the lands were leased for pastoral purposes. Now, that was the Bill. He thought he had drawn attention to the most important features of it, and he hoped it would receive the careful consideration of the House; and that honorable members would think twice before they threw it out. There had been a great deal said about legislating against capital, but he thought this Bill proposed legislation in favor of capital; and he firmly believed that it would operate greatly to induce capital to come to the country. He believed it would induce capitalists readily to advance money on runs on easy terms; and that it would have a most important and beneficial effect upon the future of this colony. He had no doubt that capitalists would, under the provisions of this Bill, come to the colony, and would willingly advance money upon runs, because they would feel they could do so safely. He did not believe there was one member in that House who had not, on the hustings, stated it as his decided opinion, that there was a pressing necessity for some such measure as this, and now the Government gave them the opportunity of proving their sincerity. If the House should think fit to pass the Bill they would do so; but if they did not, he was sure they would not be able to pass another. The Government had framed this Bill in full view of their responsibility on the one hand to protect the revenue, and of their duty on the other to provide for the relief of the pastoral tenants.

Mr. ARCHER said that in some respects he was favorably situated as regarded the consideration of a Bill of the kind now before the House, inasmuch as his interests were confined to a district that no Pastoral Leases Bill would affect. He was not in any way personally connected with the outside or unsettled districts; but still he had that interest in the unsettled districts that every one must have, for he did not believe that any part of the colony, or any interest in the colony, could be benefited without his sharing in the benefit. So far, therefore, he had an interest in the Bill now before the House. One of the duties he was sent to that House for, was to advance and not retard the progress of the colony. It was the duty of the House not only to induce poor men to come here in the hope of their becoming wealthy, but it was their duty, also, to do what they could to induce wealthy people to come here to provide labor for the poor man. They

were all aware that at the present moment the country was anxiously expecting that legislation should take place on a great many important questions. One of those was the question of immigration; and he thought that if the House—or he should rather say, if the Government were to persuade the House that immigration was at the present time not only a necessity, but that it would be of great advantage to the country, and not an advantage more than a necessity, it was the duty of the Government to try and find employment for labor, not only when labor came here, but to induce such an amount of capital to come to the country as would enable those who were industrious, in every branch of labor, to obtain such security of employment, and such encouragement in the matter of remuneration for their labor as would induce them to settle in the colony. Now the Bill before the House was purposely for the benefit of the outside squatter; but he did not think it was much matter whether they legislated for the outside squatter or not, for most of the outside squatters were, to use an expressive phrase, “sewed up.” Five out of every six of them were in a state of hopeless insolvency; and unless the House was actually to vote money to relieve them from their present embarrassments, which of course would not be right, they could not in any way relieve them. But it was the duty of the House to try and find out what was the best means to secure those who would occupy the places of the present lessees—who would have to leave—in the spending of their capital in the country, to improve the country and place it in a better position than it was now in. He remembered that when the honorable Colonial Treasurer was bringing in his estimates last session, he stated that he had great hopes for the country; that he did not believe the late depreciation in the price of wool was to be looked upon as so serious as some people imagined it to be. Probably the honorable gentleman had been led to change his opinion since then by the continued bad advices that had been received from England as to the price of the staple product of Australia. The honorable member had been stating several things that showed he had been attending to one matter; and to which they must all attend who wished to meet the times. He had been told by a gentleman who possessed great experience in this subject, that it would be necessary, not only to improve the article which the wool-growers of this colony had to export, but to cheapen its production, so as to make the sale of it profitable. Well, that was really the important question to consider. Would the Bill now before the House enable them to improve the article which was the main export of the colony as yet; and, also, enable them to export it at a lower rate? He was sorry to say he did not think it would have that effect, and he would proceed to give his reasons for holding that opinion. He was willing to go as far as any town

member—for he was a town member himself—in admitting that the want of skill, the want of capital and experience, on the part of many persons who had taken up country in Queensland, particularly in the northern and western portions of the colony, had operated, to a great extent, in bringing about their present unfortunate condition. He knew personally, that many persons had gone up, and formed stations, who hardly knew a sheep from a goat; that others had gone to work entirely with borrowed capital, for which they paid such a high rate of interest that it was impossible for them to succeed. He did not wish to underrate these facts; but, allowing for all those things, there was such an amount of depression, he might say insolvency, among the squatters to the north and west of Queensland that it was necessary to look to other causes than those he had mentioned, to account for the position in which those persons now found themselves. There were many among those squatters who had come up from New South Wales, bringing with them both capital and experience, who had, for a number of years, exerted themselves with great industry and perseverance, to whom those causes did not apply. Many of them had been under the impression that portions of this colony, which were only fit for cattle, were well adapted for fattening sheep, and had been greatly disappointed. He had been riding, some time ago, with a gentleman, an experienced squatter from Victoria, over some country which he knew was only capable of keeping bullocks in ordinary condition, yet that gentleman considered it an excellent country for fattening sheep; and, if he had not been assured to the contrary, he would, no doubt, have gone away with that conviction. That was one cause. Then there was another; the climate of Queensland, indeed, of the whole of Australia, was one which could not boast of much stability, and he doubted if the climate, in any portion of the country, was so variable as that of Queensland. In fact, when he considered the many and great difficulties with which squatters had to contend in the interior of Queensland, he could only come to the conclusion that, in addition to the ordinary skill and intelligence necessary for pastoral pursuits, a person embarking in them in this colony would almost need the gift of prophecy. Any one not experienced in the climate of Queensland, would fancy the land in the interior, and especially to the northward, much better adapted to stock-growing than it really was, in consequence of the adverse effect of the climate, especially during the last few years. There were also other reasons which might be taken as causes of the embarrassed condition of the outside squatters. Some time ago, he had had the honor of presenting a petition from some persons in Sydney, largely connected with squatting pursuits; and they gave in one part of their memorial a very fair reason

for the position they had taken up. They stated that the Queensland Crown Lands Occupation Act of 1860 rendered it imperative upon them to stock their runs within a given time, and that this provision bore very heavily upon persons who took up large tracts of country, and especially those who held their runs by right of purchase from the original lessees, because, in order to comply with the Act, they were obliged, instead of obtaining stock from the neighboring colony, to put upon the runs any rubbish they could get from neighboring stations in this colony. Taking all these things into consideration, as well as the want of a previous experience of the country and climate, he thought the squatters in the interior had some claim on the Legislature for liberal treatment. He was not going to blame the Darling Downs squatters for passing the Act which had in a great degree led to this state of things; although there could be no doubt that it had enriched them considerably, for the price of sheep had risen to nearly double the price; and even in the North, such miserable stock as he had at the time had gone up in value. He did not think the persons who passed that Act were aware at the time that it would have that effect; but it was the case, nevertheless; and from all these causes combined, the squatters in the interior had become nearly ruined; and now that the country, climate, and culls from thin flocks, had enriched the Darling Downs squatters, they came down with a Bill like this, which they called a Pastoral Relief Bill. That was the real state of affairs; and the question was, did the Bill now before the House offer sufficient inducements to those who would take the place of the present outside squatters—for he did not think any measure that could be passed would save the present occupants of country in the interior—to take up the runs, and afford them any prospect of improving the quality of the article they grew, and, at the same time, lessen the cost of production? One principle, in every pastoral Bill, must unquestionably be the rent which the squatters paid for their runs. It was scarcely worth while to rake up old memories; but he really did not see why the Legislature of Queensland and the Government of New South Wales, having granted at nominal rates the finest portions of this country, should, the moment persons came out here and took up runs in the far interior, in face of all the difficulties of communication, and other drawbacks, ask them to pay a higher rent than had ever been demanded before. The squatters on the Barcoo and Belyando were now paying a higher rent than ever was paid for the best runs on the Darling Downs; and they were now required to pay an increased price before they could come under the operation of the new Bill. The thing was an absurdity. They had always been under the impression that their burdens were about to be removed. For his own part, he did not care; the sooner

the outside squatters boiled down their sheep the better it would be for him, and perhaps for the honorable member who had brought in this Bill. But he spoke on behalf of those who would be affected by it. Let the honorable member who had brought in this Bill go back five years, and compare the rent which the Darling Downs squatters had then to pay, with the rent the squatters who would come under this Bill would have to pay, and say if he were not ashamed of the measure. It had been termed a Pastoral Relief Bill, but did it afford any relief to the outside squatters, who had been struggling with difficulties and ruined by floods and droughts, for so long? Why should they be asked to pay a higher rent than was asked in 1860? Was it fair? He thought not. Well, there was another reason why he thought this Bill was not one which would enable persons to produce a finer quality of wool at a cheaper rate, and that was because it offered no security at all to the holders of runs. Every one who read the Bill, must agree with him in that. He must confess that when he first read it, and saw the twenty-one years mentioned, he was greatly taken by its apparent liberality, but he soon found something in it, which greatly astonished him. Why, there was not the same security offered as existed at present. Of course it was well known that when a run was wanted for actual settlement, it must be given up; that no one would deny, because it was not to be questioned that if twenty persons settled upon land, which had been before occupied by one person, the country would be the gainer. The settlement of the country must not be obstructed, and land must be found for everyone who wanted to cultivate it, and any pastoral Bill introduced into the House must necessarily contain clauses empowering the Government to resume land when it was wanted for that purpose. But there were several ways of doing this. This Bill did it, by placing before the Legislature a resolution, stating that such runs would be wanted for public purposes, and if there was no dissent it would be carried. He did not care how it was resumed, whether the power of resumption vested with the House or with the Government, but he thought the runholders ought, at least, to have some security given to them for the improvements they made upon some portions of their runs. Let the Government survey and divide the run, but let them give the tenant a secure lease of some portion of it which was not wanted for public purposes. But this Bill contained no clause providing any compensation for improvements, and he could hardly have supposed that persons, who had ever been engaged in squatting, could have introduced a Bill into that House to deprive the outside settlers, who were suffering under much greater difficulties than they had had to contend with, of the privileges they themselves had exercised in the same country. That, he

considered the worst feature in the Bill—there was no clause providing compensation for improvements. Under this Bill, if any person were foolish enough to give up his title to the land, and come under the provisions of the Bill, the Government might resume his head station, and turn him out, without giving him one sixpence for his improvements, unless prevented by a resolution of both Houses of Parliament, which was not likely to be the case. He should have said nothing on this subject, if the gentlemen who had brought in this Bill had not received the privileges themselves, which they withheld from the outside squatters. Any squatter who accepted the Bill as it stood would sign his own fate. He did not mean to say that the Government would turn him out at once, but they would possess the power, and could exercise it if they chose; he had failed to see any clause to prevent them.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The honorable member would find that improvements were provided for.

MR. ARCHER: Yes, there was the preemptive right, but what was it? Certainly if a person had a fine station he might take up a block of good ground, if he could find it, in a portion of his run. But the honorable member who brought in this Bill must know very little about the subject if he thought a sheep-farmer conducted his operations in one place only; and that it would be of any great advantage to him in return for the dams and reservoirs, and other improvements at his different stations, to be allowed to purchase 2,560 acres in one block by giving 10s. an acre cash for it.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: He would have a right to buy 2,560 acres for every 15,000 acres upon every run.

MR. ARCHER: He knew very well that there were plenty of people who would make a very good thing of that provision, but he maintained that it would be of no benefit to the outside squatters who had not the money to pay down. Why the holders of runs on the coast, where the land was of more value, could take up land under the Alienation Act of last year, at the same price per acre, and even if it was agricultural land it was only 15s. an acre, and they had ten years to pay it in, while the poor fellows in the interior were compelled to pay cash down.

MR. LAMB: And no land orders taken.

MR. ARCHER: And no land orders were to be taken. Now he believed that the only means by which it would be possible to carry out the objects upon which the Colonial Treasurer had laid so much stress would be to enable the present holders of country in the unsettled districts, or those who came after them, to produce a better article of export, at a cheaper rate, by giving them a lower rent and greater security than this Bill offered. He did not think that in doing so any injustice would be done to other persons

in Queensland. He had heard a good deal about class legislation which he had thought was absurd. If the money now expended in the production of wool were taken away it would be found that every person in the colony would suffer; while, on the other hand, a Bill to encourage the continuance of that industry would do good to all classes. It was therefore absurd to call this class legislation. The Bill ought to be prepared in such a way as to induce capital to come to the colony and to employ labor. He did not see that the Bill before the House held out any such inducements; and he had been exceedingly sorry to hear the Minister for Lands say that the Government intended to oppose strenuously any amendments upon it. ["No, no," from the Secretary for Public Lands.] He was exceedingly glad to hear it, because he thought it might be possible to make a good Bill out of it, though in its present form it would benefit no one, while it would take away the only security the squatters possessed, and be the means of checking honest industry by repelling the introduction of the necessary capital. After what he had said he need hardly tell the Minister for Lands that he could not at all agree with him in his opening remarks, and he was sorry to hear from that honorable gentleman that the Bill had been agreed to by all his colleagues. He had hoped it had been the produce of a single brain, and that the Government would be glad to see it improved. Of course honorable members looked upon it as a fulfilment of the promise on the part of the Government to bring in a measure of Pastoral Relief, and they certainly expected to find something in it of that character. But instead of giving increased security it took away that which is already possessed by the persons whom it proposed to assist. The honorable member who moved the second reading of the Bill had given as one reason for the present unfortunate position of the outside squatters, that many of them were riding about in their carriages instead of attending to their business. He did not think that was the case, or that there was anything at all in such an argument. No doubt there were some squatters who were able to ride in their carriages, and it would be very hard if those who had devoted twenty or thirty years of their lives to that pursuit should not reap the reward of their industry, and be able to realize an independence. There was no country in the world where people could not, by exercising prudence and economy, do the same thing in that time, and he thought, therefore, it was a piece of clap-trap altogether to talk of squatters ruining themselves by riding about in their carriages. The honorable member had only to look about him and he would see a great many persons doing the same thing who had arrived much more recently in the colony than most of the squatters. It was also quite a mistake to suppose that those who spent their money freely injured

the colony, because the very reverse was the case. The fact was, the successful man rode in his carriage, and the unsuccessful man went on foot, and that was pretty well the case everywhere. Then the honorable member had said that supposing wool were to rise in price in four or five years' time, what would the country say if such favorable terms were given to the squatters? Well, they could only legislate in accordance with the lights they possessed, but he did not think there was any likelihood of a rise in wool for some time, simply because the present depression was the result of an overstocked market. The supply had largely overtaken the demand, and there was comparatively no demand for it just now. Queensland had now to contend with wool-producers in many other parts of the world, and thus competition naturally had the effect of lowering the price of the article. He did not think there was any probability that this state of things would soon be changed. In many other countries the price of land was much lower, and labor was cheaper, and the competition was likely to be continued with success in those places. He did not mean to say that wool-growing in Queensland, if carried on with economy, and under favorable circumstances, might not be rendered profitable, but he had very strong doubts whether it could be made to pay in the interior for some years to come; and he thought it was very probable that many of the inland runs would be turned to other purposes, probably used for cattle. There was one part of the Bill in which he really thought the Minister for Lands had shewn great judgment, and that was in making very liberal provisions for those who took up unwatered country, and he was only surprised that the same liberality had not been shewn towards those who had been holding similar country for the last six or seven years, and who had nearly ruined themselves upon it. He thought that while great liberality was shewn to new comers from Melbourne and elsewhere, who took up this class of country, some advantage in the shape of reduction of rent or otherwise, should be offered to the present holders. He would not take up the time of the House any longer; but he must again say that he was ashamed to see a measure like this brought forward and called a Pastoral Relief Bill. It was an insult to the squatters on whose behalf it was framed, because it gave them no security of tenure, upon the strength of which they could obtain capital to carry on their operations, and it compelled them to pay an increased rental for their runs. Still, though he held that opinion of the Bill as it stood, he should not oppose the second reading, but should lend his assistance to improve it in committee, in the hope that it might be so amended as ultimately to become of some service to the country.

Mr. RAMSAY said it appeared to him that, in the discussion of any measure, especially one so important as the Bill before the House,

honorable members should clearly understand the object for which they were legislating. The honorable member who had just sat down had referred to this Bill as a Pastoral Relief Bill. The honorable member who moved the second reading said something to the same effect; and out of doors, at public meetings and elsewhere, the same term had been used. In fact, it had even been stated that it was hardly worth while to legislate at all on the subject, because, the persons for whom the relief was sought were already ruined, and that it would benefit only their creditors. It appeared to him that, to legislate for this object, was to legislate in a wrong direction altogether. What they had to do was to deal, as fairly as possible, with the enormous territory entrusted to their care for the good of the colony generally, and it was only in that light he could consent to regard the question. If, in doing so, they were enabled, at the same time, to assist the pastoral tenants, in the interior of the colony, he was sure every honorable member would be gratified. All their sympathies were with those persons, who were their fellow-colonists, and had been struggling with difficulties for a number of years, with great energy and perseverance. He did not think the honorable member who brought in this Bill had spoken at all fairly of that class of squatters; at any rate, he had spoken of them very differently from people in Sydney, who were largely interested in their undertakings, and ought to know them well. The gentlemen who had signed the petition referred to by the honorable member for Maryborough, must surely know them better than the honorable Secretary for Lands, seeing they had invested large sums of money in their runs, and they did not speak in such harsh terms. He thought it was very hard to talk about these squatters riding about in their carriages. It was only those who could afford it—and were perfectly justified in doing so—who spent money in that way. Now he would address himself to town members especially, and ask them if they ever visited the wharves during the wool season, when ships were loading for England, and noticed the activity and life which prevailed then, in comparison with other periods in the year. They must be aware that it would be much better for the towns if the same bustle and activity lasted all the year round. He found, from a return he had obtained from the Collector of Customs, that last year the wool exported to England, direct from this colony, was 5,800,000 pounds, while the quantity sent to New South Wales amounted to 13,000,000 pounds. Now, there was hardly any benefit derived by the colony from the wool sent to Sydney, but a great deal from that shipped direct to England. It was estimated that every hundred bales shipped direct to England benefited the colony to the extent of £80, and every ton of tallow and hides to the extent of ten shillings; and, at this rate, if

all the produce exported from this colony were shipped direct to England, a sum of £30,000 would be saved, which was now entirely lost to the colony. There was also the expenditure upon the return cargo of a vessel going direct from the colonies, which would be a further benefit to the colony, to say nothing of the insurance. Of course, the ultimate destination of all wool grown in this colony was the London market, and the growers of this article of export, if they were their own masters, would naturally prefer to send it home in the cheapest and most expeditious manner, which was by direct shipment. If, therefore, the owners of these pastoral properties were placed in an independent position, they would not be compelled to send their produce to Sydney, and this colony would be by so much the gainer. He could even recollect the time when wool was shipped from Melbourne to Sydney, and he only hoped that very soon Queensland would ship a little in that direction as the people of Melbourne did now. So long as the wool growers of Queensland were in the hands of Sydney merchants their wool would find its way to Sydney. The first questions to consider should then be—What were the causes of the present depression, and was it in the power of the House to remove them? He did not entirely concur with the honorable member for Rockhampton in the reasons he had given for this state of things, and he did not think he had done justice to the present holders of runs in the outside districts. He believed the opinion of almost every one who was asked the question would be that the condition in which these gentlemen now found themselves was due principally to the fact that they had embarked in pursuits which they had not the means to carry out. But that was only one of the causes of their present state. Many of them were men of large experience, who had shewn great perseverance and energy, and had not been wanting in means. He believed that the rapid change in the culture and growth of wool had a great deal to do with the depression. The competition in the production of this article of export had been much more vigorous of late years; the price of their surplus stock had fallen in the market, and their expenses had been very heavy. And, in addition to that, wool could not now be produced of a quality sufficiently good to compete with other markets without a large outlay of capital. Perhaps he should astonish some honorable members when he told them the expenditure which was made in some stations for improvements, when he said that there was hardly a first-class station in the colony on which the expenditure was less than £10,000, and, in many cases, £20,000. He did not in this estimate include the purchase of stock; he referred to the necessary outlay for fencing, dams, and reservoirs. Could men be expected to lay out such large sums of money on improvements unless they had some reasonable

prospect of getting their money back again, and of doing some good for themselves? Residents in the towns or settled districts of the colony would hesitate to lay out even a few hundred pounds in building a house, unless they had security in the shape of a fee simple of the land on which they built it; and it was preposterous to suppose that squatters could improve their runs at such a heavy expense without some proportionate security—some security which would, at any rate, enable them to obtain capital to carry on their operations. He must say that he was at issue with the honorable member for Rockhampton upon several points. He thought the Bill might be made to answer the purpose for which it was intended, but it would require a good many alterations—but alterations not in the principle of the measure but in its details. He thought that honorable member had contradicted himself when he said that no security was given because the power of resumption was retained; but he admitted that the Bill gave twenty-one years leases and allowed the lessees to come down to the House and ask for a renewal of their leases. But why not place the holders of these runs in a more independent position? He was aware it was stated that the mere holding a title to occupy was sufficient, but yearly leases were not enough. The holders of runs required some security upon which they could raise money. It was very difficult indeed to make people out of the colony understand the tenure upon which these runs were held; they could not understand how people could hold them upon such slight tenure. He had lately had an opportunity of talking with a gentleman from Sydney, who had assured him that, if good security could be obtained, there would be no difficulty in getting up a company to lend money upon pastoral property in this colony at a low rate of interest, and that was what the squatters required; so that they would not be bound to the Sydney merchants, and send their produce to the best market. Now the only real objection to this Bill which he had been able to trace was, that it would have the effect of locking up the land. That, of course, was an objection; but it should not receive more weight than it was entitled to, and they must remember that they were now dealing with some 300,000,000 of acres, and it was important that they should exercise a liberal spirit in legislating for an interest of so much importance—especially as only a very small fraction of the land was likely to be required for other than pastoral purposes. Another objection was, that the number of persons employed at the different stations might be decreased. Now, supposing a station to carry 50,000 sheep, and sufficient money were laid out on that station to improve it so as to make it capable to its fullest extent. If a certain amount were laid out upon it for fencing, for reservoirs, and other improvements, he did not think he would be saying too much

in stating that its capabilities might be doubled. There were thousands and thousands of acres now entirely useless, which might, by the expenditure of a little capital, be rendered available. Supposing, for instance, a station at present carrying 50,000 sheep, divided into 25 flocks. This would take say, in all, 35 shepherds and hut-keepers, at an average, including wages and rations, of £60—£2,100. Now, if 50,000 additional sheep were carried on the same station owing to the expenditure of capital, the cost of washing and shearing them would be at £25 per 1000—£1,250; carriage of 300 bales wool, at 12s. each, £180; cost of 100,000 sheep in paddocks; say ten men at £60 each, £600—£2,030; besides the outlay of capital, say, perhaps £5000 for fencing, and a sum impossible even to approximate, in consequence of the great difference in various parts of the country for the formation of artificial sheets of water. The expense would be very nearly the same in both cases, while the encouragement given to the squatters, which he advocated, would bring about a system of progress which would benefit the whole country. As he had already stated, he did not intend to oppose the second reading of the Bill. But, although he was prepared to uphold its main features, he should suggest several amendments in committee, and especially that, in case of the runs being divided, and a portion of them resumed, the holder of the runs should know where to make his improvements, and what portion he should be able to retain. He did not, however, intend to go into any further details, which might be discussed at greater advantage in committee. Though he did not intend to enter into the details of the measure, yet he must say, that, in his opinion, it was absolutely necessary that a clause should be inserted in the Bill providing that compensation should be granted for improvements on lands resumed. That was of so great importance that he was surprised such provision had been omitted; and, unless it were introduced, the Bill could never entirely meet the case the House had to deal with. It might not be desirable for the lessees to purchase the land on which their improvements were made; but it was possible to make such arrangements as, that they should be paid for their improvements—and, may be, that the compensation should be in land, and not in cash; but that was a matter for after consideration. He should vote that it must be *bona fide* compensation. He did not suppose that any section of the House was willing to rescind the farce which was legalised by the Crown Lands Occupation Act of 1863, which gave leave to the pastoral tenants to purchase their improvements, but coupled with such conditions as must prevent their doing so. As that Act now stood, any man purchasing the improvements made by the outgoing lessee must pay the money into the general revenue. That was ridiculous. The House having made such a

mistake, once, would not, he felt quite sure, make it again. With regard to the remarks of the honorable member for Rockhampton, he must say one word. That honorable member said, the Bill would not have the effect of cheapening the cost of production. Well, if it did not, the measure would be a total failure, for to cheapen production was the very object of the Bill—to enable the outside squatters to produce their wool at a rate that would make their pursuits remunerative. He (Mr. Ramsay) believed that the Bill would have that effect; and he could show it very conclusively. By the statement which he had read to the House, he endeavored to show that the owner or lessee of an outside station would not save in absolute wages, though he would make his profit in this way—that he would double the capabilities of his run by improvements. And, if he could thus double the amount of his produce, that was actually a reduction of the cost of production. Suppose he produced only seventy-five bales of wool at the same rate as he formerly expended for the production of fifty, that would make all the difference in his profits, and would enable him to carry on his station; whereas, now, he could not afford to carry it on at all. But the present question must be regarded in another and a rather different light. He (Mr. Ramsay) considered the Bill was a part of the general policy of the Government. It appeared to him that, in such a colony as this, there were three great elements necessary to ensure prosperity: land, labor, and capital. Of land, there was plenty—a superabundance—in all its different qualities. How a very large proportion of it was to be employed was the subject of the present discussion. Labor, the Parliament was hitherto constantly legislating for, and, it appeared, rather ineffectually. A very large number of people, for whom the colony had paid heavily, had come; but Queensland never benefited by their services. They left almost as fast as they came. It was not only those who went by the steamers, but a very large number went overland; persons living on the border said there was not a day that numbers did not go over to the sister colonies. All that was owing to the manner in which the Parliament had legislated against capital—not only not legislated for it, but absolutely ignored it, and absolutely excluded it from Queensland; and that was done by those who pretended to hold principles contrary to such a course of action. When the Land Act of 1868 was under discussion the subject cropped up, and he endeavored to state his views to the House in the way he now did; he stated that he, for one, believed that capital was necessary for the prosperity of the colony, and he held that the reason of the existing depression was the want of it. Honorable members had told him that they agreed with what he then said; yet those very gentlemen opposed the course of

action which would have given effect to his views. Yet a very trifling alteration would have made the Crown Lands Alienation Act effectual for the introduction of capital to the colony. It would not be sufficient, in the discussion of the second reading, to enforce those views. Before the Immigration Bill went into committee, the House ought to see how the question, as affecting the introduction of capital under the Pastoral Leases Bill, was treated in committee. He, for one, would not take any steps for the introduction of immigrants till he saw how capital was to be introduced—what encouragement was to be given for its investment. If the House excluded capital, they must exclude immigrants. Those two elements must go hand in hand. If it were necessary to make a choice, and take one, they would do most wisely to choose capital—to make arrangements for capitalists to come to this colony; because, if capital were attracted, labor would follow for a certainty. There were honorable members present—the honorable member for Leichhardt, Mr. Sandeman, and others—who remembered quite well when they introduced all their own laborers from Sydney. And, later again, when the gold fields broke out—there were no panics at that time, though native dogs were more numerous than now—what did they do? They chartered two ships, making the captains their agents, and sent for Chinese. He did not say Chinamen were the fittest sort, but they enabled the squatters and capitalists of the country to tide over their difficulties, until the time when other men returned from the diggings. The Chinese all went South to the diggings subsequently. He (Mr. Ramsay) felt that he had kept the House long enough; what further he desired to say could be said in committee, and he should conclude by stating that he would support the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. DE SARGE said he wished to make a few remarks upon what he viewed decidedly as the most important Bill of the session. He considered the manner in which the honorable the Secretary for Lands introduced the measure was certainly shabby; for, were it a Bill for building the Parliament House, or the Brisbane Bridge, the honorable gentleman would have warmed upon the subject—as he had not done upon the Pastoral Leases Bill, which affected the interests and the welfare of three-fourths of the colony. This, he believed, would be admitted. The Bill was meant to apply to such districts as Maranoa, Balloon, Mitchell, Warrego, Alice, Paroo, Bulla, Comet, Nogo, Belyando, Peak Downs, the Plains of Promise, and the Flinders, which were all black-soil countries, and, at any rate, as good as the Darling Downs. The resources of those districts could not be known to the Ministry. They could not be known to any one unless he travelled through the country named. He had had that pleasure; pleasure, now, though not at the time he first made his acquaintance with those districts.

No member of the Ministry had the slightest idea of the extreme importance of what the House were now called on to legislate for. To a certain extent he (Mr. DeSarge) was in favor of the Bill; but it must be amended considerably in committee before they could pass it. Some classification was necessary. He did not believe that the Mitchell should be placed in the same category as the Burnett; nor could the Belyando or Peak Downs be classed with the Burnett. All the country would have to be classified, if the Government desired to give full relief to the outside squatters. As was observed by the honorable member for Western Downs, Mr. Ramsay, he considered that the omission of the compensation clause showed, if not very great neglect, very little care, in the preparation of the Bill. Honorable members should look at those small matters, which showed the careless view the Government took of the subject upon which they were asked to legislate. With regard to the districts which it was proposed to relieve, he might mention that in Mr. Gordon's last report, the number of sheep, there, in 1868, was stated to be 5,489,221. Estimating the increase from the ensuing lambing, the number of sheep in the unsettled districts could not be estimated at less than 7,000,000, which, together with the value of the country held on lease, represented £3,500,000. The enormous interest on that amount was something like £300,000 a year. In legislating upon the subject of the Bill, it must not be approached in a petty way; it must be dealt with on broad grounds, and intelligently. Otherwise, they would be like the fabled ostrich, which stuck its head in the sand and fancied it was not seen. The present condition of the outside squatters was owing to the fault of past government, and to legislation for the Darling Downs and not for the whole country; yet the outside districts he had mentioned were every bit as fair to look upon as that favored one. The Government and the House were not, however, to look at what those districts were now, but at what they would be in a few years' time; and, in legislating for twenty-one years' leases, they should endeavor to give a spur to the introduction of capital, and not lock up the land. The Bill was not comprehensive enough for the wants of the outside districts, and, unless the Government were prepared to attract capital by allowing half of the runs to be held under inviolable lease, they could not achieve the object they had in view. Separation would never have been thought of in the quiet pastoral districts, but for the wrongs they had suffered. The outside squatters had a great distance to travel with their sheep, which, with the high price of labor, as compared with the coast and settled districts, placed them at a great disadvantage; they also suffered from the want of representatives, to force upon the consideration of the Parliament their wants, and their claims for justice.

The condition of the northern and western squatters in 1860-1-2 was very little worse than it was now; they had still to contend with exactly the same difficulties, with a falling-off in the value of wool, tallow, and stock. There was little diminution in the cost of carriage, and labor was much the same as then. He held that a squatter who, in 1865, was worth £20,000, was now worth only one half, his property had so much decreased in value. That was the situation of nearly the whole of the northern squatters; many of them were virtually paupers. He (Mr. De Satge) trusted that legislation would ameliorate and change that state of things; but that could not be done with the Bill before the House. A measure must be passed comprehending the varying circumstances of the whole of the unsettled districts—their geographical position, distance from ports, and other peculiarities. If it were contended that, for Burnett, twenty years' leases were necessary, something like thirty or forty years' leases must be given to Mitchell and other outlying districts: they could not be all classed alike. He was certain that every dweller in the North—every man who had experience—would agree with him. Previous speakers in this debate had neglected to consider what inducements were or could be offered to capitalists to come to this colony, compared to what America offered at the present time. He had taken the trouble to analyse many letters and articles on the latter point, and, with the leave of the House, he would read some extracts, to show how very much better it was for men with even a very small amount of capital to go to South America than to come here. In Buenos Ayres—

“The public lands are divided into four different classes, and vary in price from 3s. to 10s. the acre. The sheep runs are known as camps. A league of land—9 square miles, or 6000 acres—is considered to be the general size of a camp, and is capable of carrying from 20,000 to 30,000 sheep”

The expenses of those small areas were not very great. The holder could fence in his land for a trifle. If a man came to Queensland, he would have to pay the enormous rent that was now paid for land, and have to go to the cost of water supply where water was not naturally accessible, as on the Peak Downs, and he must be distant from a market. Unless the Government were prepared to offer very much greater inducements to capital than were offered by the Bill, not a single sixpence would be secured from without. In the province of Buenos Ayres, as elsewhere in the Argentine Confederation, the climate was good.

“A good supply of water lies within from twenty-five to fifty feet of the surface, and sheep sell at 6s.”

He believed all the outside squatters would be glad to sell their sheep for 6s.

“The graziers of Entre Rios are English gentlemen, who have acquired possession of admirable land for 4s. 3d. an acre, or have obtained leagues or camps of 6,000 acres, on a six years' lease, the annual payment being from £30 to £80. The average price of land is from 1s. to 2s. per acre; the maximum price for grazing purposes, 10s.; and the price of a sheep, whose wool would fetch 7d. a pound, is 10s.”

There could be no doubt that there were attractions, there, to rival those of Queensland, unless a very great change was made in the Bill before the House. He now came to another part of South America—

“The province of Santa Fé, containing some 400 square miles of excellent land, is fast being occupied by English gentlemen, who are acquiring possession of a square league of well watered country, by the payment of £250. The British Secretary of Legation, at Bueno Ayres, makes a very flattering statement of the productiveness of capital invested in these parts. His details show that, upon an eight years' transaction, capital judiciously invested would return a net profit of 53 per cent. at the end of the term, in addition to an annual interest at the rate of 9 per cent. What is wanted to develop the pastoral resources of the Republic of Uruguay is peace.”

Well, no doubt, Queensland had that—he wished to show both sides of the question—and the squatters did not require many policemen; while a standing army, almost, was required in Uruguay. He would give a little information respecting transactions in sheep-farming in that Republic—

“For instance, one sheep-farm on the Uruguay River, numbering 54,000 sheep, produced in 1866 167,000 lbs. wool, which sold in Antwerp for 20d. to 24d. a pound. Another, ‘the Estancia of Los Altos, Pudidos department of San José, belonging to Messrs. Drabble Brothers, and Co., consists of 40,000 English acres of fine grazing land, and for the last twelve years has proved one of the most flourishing sheep-farms on the River Plate. On the 1st of January, 1867, the total count of sheep was 52,585. The sales since the commencement have been 62,502, making a total of 115,087. Deducting the original stock placed there in 1854 (7,868), there is an increase of 107,219 in about eleven years. The quantity of wool received since the commencement has been 1,038,854 lbs., partly washed and partly unwashed. The clip of 1866 was 207,500 lbs., and was delivered for an American manufacturer free on board at 10½d. per lb., including locks and bellies.”

Now, it seemed to him that he might fairly ask, what was offered by this colony to tempt such men as were there spoken of, or any men with capital, to come here? In reference to the question of locking up the land for twenty-one years, about which so much had been said, what was to be done with the land in the northern districts unless it were grazed upon? Much of it was black-soil country, and equal to what the Darling Downs were twenty-five years ago. The Darling Downs had been the means of making Brisbane what it was now—giving the city the Parliament House, and the railways.

What was to prevent those outside districts of the North having a Parliament House and railroads of their own, if they were managed as well as they ought to be? The Darling Downs squatters—and he spoke particularly to the honorable the Secretary for Lands and the honorable the Colonial Secretary—had taken care of themselves;—the Colonial Secretary rolled in his carriage when many a northern squatter could not do so, but was content to take “shanks’ pony.” He thought it would interest the House to know the difference between the wages paid on the Darling Downs, and those paid by the squatters in the northern districts. On this he could speak decidedly, for, he believed he was the only member of the House who could do so with authority—except his honorable friend, the member for Mitchell—coming, as he did, from the northern outside districts. Since 1854, on the Darling Downs, shepherds were paid £30 per annum; the squatters had, say, one hundred miles of carriage, and the average cost, up, was £7 per ton, down, £3 per ton, for wool. In the whole of the unsettled districts, except Burnett and Wide Bay, the average was—shepherds’ wages, £52 per annum; carriage, up, £14, and down, £10 per ton, on an average—owing to the great and varying distance of those districts from the seaboard. Those facts might help honorable members to understand what was necessary to make the Bill a liberal measure for the outside districts; and to appreciate the difficulties that the pioneer squatters had to contend with. He was very sorry to hear the Secretary for Lands, in introducing the Bill, say that he did not care for the opinions of those persons who had petitioned the House on the subject of relief for the pastoral tenants in the outside districts; for, he felt sure, that their petitions expressed the opinions of right-minded men. They might not have a voice in the House, but still their statements were of value—their reasons should be considered—in coming to a decision upon a question which affected them so intimately. If their views were not known—if they held their peace, as the honorable gentleman seemed to think they ought to do—the House would not know the wants of the great northern and western districts, and a Bill would not be passed suited to their circumstances. He (Mr. de Satge) was astonished at hearing the Minister for Lands talk about the security of tenure which he had advocated for years. He was glad, as one who purposed to get relief from the Bill—he had no hesitation in telling it—that security of tenure was to be given. The honorable gentleman had also talked about there being no finality in the matter—that there was no finality under responsible Government;—but it was that finality which the squatters wanted to give them security of tenure. There might be no finality in responsible Government, but there must be finality in the law for the occupation

of the country, in order to have capital introduced, to make the occupation remunerative. If not, there would not be one pound spent here by foreign capitalists—whether coming from Sydney or anywhere else. Capital could not, it was clear, be supplied by Brisbane as it now stood; it must come from elsewhere; but to get it, there must be finality—finality, that was, in the inviolability of lease or tenure of one-half of the runs. He could speak from experience in support of this view. The country he took up was, first, occupied by ten thousand sheep; now, there were half-a-million of sheep on it. Two capitalists in his district had spent £100,000 upon their runs, believing that they were safe in so doing, and that a right-minded Government would give them that security of tenure which they had a right to expect, and which they were now waiting for. He did not say that was a singular case; there must be hundreds of men in the Mitchell, Barcoo, and other outside districts, in a similar position to those two, who were waiting for the passing of a Pastoral Relief Bill before they could feel justified in increasing their outlay by investing fresh capital in their undertakings. The Government could not do less than give them half of their runs on an inviolable lease, for they certainly deserved to be encouraged, so that they might get some return on their capital. He should like those gentlemen who had done their work on the Darling Downs to give the outside men some chance; not to trump up a Bill that would afford none. They should be ready to give such a lease as he asked for, and at a less rental than the present; a peppercorn would be ample for some of the country, which showed that it ought to be classified. No Bill could be passed which deserved to be regarded, for one moment, as based on justice, unless it included provision for classification. Should land that was five or six hundred miles from the seaboard be classed with that which was only a hundred and fifty miles distant from port? Yet it was so in the Bill, and that was the fallacy of the measure. Then, again, there was no compensation clause. He understood that, in the first draft of the Bill, there was such a clause: its omission was a clerical error.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: He might as well correct the honorable member, at once. The original draft of the Bill contained no compensation clause.

MR. DE SATGE: The honorable gentleman had rectified his first statement on the subject of the land which the lessee had a right to select for purchase on his run, and a lessee was now to be allowed to select and purchase 2,500 acres out of every block of 16,000 acres. That was understood, he (Mr. De Satge) supposed. He would say, again, with regard to security of tenure, that it should be the great and important point of the Bill. There were many persons who had taken up runs

in his neighborhood, at Nogoia, and who had something like seven years' leases to run, perfectly inviolable under the Orders in Council. Would they barter their perfectly secure tenure for the twenty-one years' leases which were offered under the Bill, and which were insecure, because, upon six months' notice, the Government could resume what portion of a run they thought fit? A twenty-one years' lease, he admitted, was a very great matter; but it must be understood that that lease could not be taken away. To do thorough justice, not only to those who were forming new runs, but to those who had runs that were, from the first, unwatered, the House should take into consideration the desirableness of re-valuing that country; and a clause ought certainly to be introduced in the Bill with that object. The old holders of runs ought to be encouraged, as well as the holders of new runs. Therein was the great inconsistency of the Bill. A re-valuation of runs, on a liberal basis, should be made for all those who were dissatisfied. Before the debate ended, he hoped to see made clear, by those who were better able to speak on the subject than he was, the vast importance of the subject on which the House were about to legislate; and honorable members should be counselled that it was not a subject to be dealt with in a hurry, but one to be most carefully discussed now and in committee. The great point was, to give the unsettled pastoral districts full and complete justice; but this was impossible without an equitable re-valuation of the runs which were being abandoned, and which would have been abandoned ere this, but for the expectations raised by the promise of a Pastoral Relief Bill; secondly, there must be compensation for all improvements on the resumption of the land by the Government; and, thirdly, inviolable leases must be granted for at least one-half of the runs held by the Crown lessees who were to be brought under the Bill, as it was necessary for those who were prepared to introduce capital to carry out improvements, which were necessary to make pastoral pursuits profitable now-a-days. Those who made improvements must have perfect safety—they must work in the full knowledge that their improvements would be respected. Unless that were effected by the Bill, the Government would not have accomplished what any honest Government should strive for—the relief of the pastoral tenants in the North, who were now groaning under burdens of which they could not relieve themselves.

Mr. LAMB observed that any one who travelled in the interior of this colony previous to the late rains, could not but have felt, as he must have seen, that unless very great inducements were held out to the Crown tenants, very much of the country must necessarily be abandoned. He had travelled over some four or five hundred miles to the west of Rockhampton, and he could assure the House that the scenes he witnessed were

most heart-rending and distressing. On one occasion, he went at least forty-five miles without water, and then the water he was able to procure was supplied by artificial wells. All the intervening holes—the natural sources of water supply—were filled with the carcasses of dead cattle, which had perished of thirst. Now, he had been from twenty to thirty years in this country, and he never before saw anything like what he described: that was, the kangaroo, the emu, the native dog, all coming together in peace, to get a drop of water at a hole that was all but dried up. The very nature, the instincts, of the wild animals, were altered by the drought. The Bill was said to be one that would give relief to the parties occupying such country as he now spoke of, that it would introduce capital—because it provided for an extension of lease to the runholders; but, when he came to examine it, he found that it gave virtually only a six months' lease, and that the lease hitherto granted to and held by the pastoral tenants was very much better than what the Bill offered. The present lease was a real lease, and the leaseholders would have compensation for improvements when any portion of their runs on which such were made was resumed. The omission from the Bill of the compensation clause was a matter on which he could not think with the honorable the Secretary for Lands. What was the Bill without such a clause? He knew the arguments which would be used in favor of the omission; that if, at the end of his present lease, the Crown tenant renewed his lease, he could not have compensation for his improvements under the favorable tenure given by that renewal. But suppose the tenant was turned off his run? He (Mr. Lamb) contended that no Pastoral Relief Bill should be brought in without a compensation clause; and, notwithstanding all the arguments used by the honorable gentleman, it should be inserted in the present Bill in its entirety. It was the most vital part of such a measure; because it was a protection against oppression—a safeguard against the lease being taken away by the Government before the land was wanted. If a squatter had laid out £5000 in making dams on his run—which was no undue estimate, because he (Mr. Lamb) could point to one dam on the Peak Downs, within a few miles of his own property, which cost £1,700—was that run to be resumed by the Government without compensation for those improvements? He looked upon such a thing as nothing less than downright robbery. Although the Act of 1860 was worded in such a way that, only if a squatter was turned out, could he claim compensation, but he could not if he took a renewal of his lease; yet he (Mr. Lamb) contended that the provision was inserted in the most insidious way, to blind the squatters. He maintained that the first thing the House should look to was a secure tenure. Such a thing as an indefeasible lease

was, he knew, impossible. He never introduced a Bill to give that. But, in legislating on the pastoral question, they should regard their experience of the colony. Did any honorable member know what was paid for the Darling Downs country for twenty-six years, or what encouragement was given to pastoral industry during that period? The northern country was in the same primitive state, now, as the Darling Downs country was in the early days of settlement. In fact, it was not so advantageously circumstanced; for there was, then, a large garrison of soldiers here, to escort the drays up the Main Range, with many privileges in the way of protection and otherwise. He had in his mind's eye a Darling Downs run of nearly three hundred square miles, which, from 1840 to 1847, paid £10 a year to the Government, or ninepence a square mile; from 1847 to 1857, it paid £60 a year, or four shillings a square mile; and, from 1858 to 1865, it paid £240 a year, or sixteen shillings a square mile. In contrast to that, take the Mitchell District, where carriage was four or five hundred miles to and from a port, and see what had to be paid for the first fifteen years of the lease of a run of the same area: the lessee would have to pay £4,480, as against something less than £1000 for the other, for the same period. In the face of that, the outside squatters were asked to pay so enormously. When the gentlemen of the Darling Downs were legislating for the outside squatters in 1860, no doubt they were led away by the idea that everything was to go on smoothly—that wealth would roll in—that difficulties would not arise to mar the fair prospect then before the colony; but, at all events, they did not legislate for the interests of the pioneers who succeeded them in opening up the country. When he looked back on the Act of 1860, he found that instead of that £4,480, which the outside squatter had to pay, under his (Mr. Lamb's) calculations, it would originally have been £5000 or £6000, for his first fifteen years' occupation. Some concession was made by those Darling Downs gentlemen in 1864; but they did not go far enough. He was very much surprised to find that the Bill under consideration was so worded that very many of the runs would have to pay, in the third period of the lease, at the rate of £1 per square mile. He would here point out that there was an error in the Act of 1864: whereas on a block of twenty-five miles the lessee paid £1 8s. per square mile, on every mile over that arrear, he must pay £1 15s. per square mile. He hoped the honorable the Secretary for Lands would take that into consideration when the Bill was in committee. Taking the run on the Darling Downs to which he before alluded, for twenty-six years up to the 31st December, 1865, the payment per square mile was six shillings and ninepence. Yet, the squatters on the Warrego district would be called upon, in the second period, for a payment of £1 2s. per square

mile; while the great bulk of the runs on Peak Downs and Nogoia must pay £1 8s.; or, as he stated before, for an extra area, £1 15s. He was quite sure that the honorable the Secretary for Lands, when he stated that the next payment should be the commencement of the leases for twenty-one years under the Bill, must have presumed that the existing leases were under the second payment, whereas some of them were under the highest payment. Those runs, with the sheep, actually sold now, for half the price asked for the sheep alone, in 1860, on the Darling Downs. Though black-soil country, the price was four shillings and eight-pence a head, a price which was really paid for old crawling ewes on the Downs. Under the Unoccupied Crown Lands Act, 24 Victoria, No. 12, there were many runs which must come under the third payment. The lessees of those runs had been cruelly and illegally used. Under the Orders in Council, they had fitted out expeditions, at considerable cost, to look for country; they had inspected the land, improved their maps, and tendered for the land. Their tenders had been opened in New South Wales, when an edict was issued by the Minister of the day, in this new colony, to the effect that their tenders would not be accepted, only under legislation that was to take place in the Queensland Parliament. Could anybody show him (Mr. Lamb) any authority by which a Minister could so act? Such a thing was done, however; and he would now show, by the very preamble of the measure which was passed, that it was illegal. He pointed that out for the purpose of showing what was the kind of legislation when the Darling Downs squatters had command of the government of the country; and how unjustly in every way they treated the outside squatters. The Secretary for Lands seemed to him to have assumed that the runs, for the most part, would come under the second term of payment; and it was quite clear that the honorable gentleman had lost sight of the fact that a whole series of runs came under the 24th Victoria, No. 12, which would unfortunately come under the third term of payment. Now, he called attention to this fact because the Secretary for Lands made no allusion to that Act at all; but he could tell the honorable gentleman that there were a great many leases made out under that Act, and, therefore, that Act should have been mentioned in this Bill. He could see that it was an omission; or the honorable member might have intended that they should all be classed under the Orders in Council—and he (Mr. Lamb) knew that in all cases that had been brought before the Supreme Court it was the Orders in Council that were quoted, and not the Act he had referred to. However, he would now proceed to show the illegality of the treatment the outside squatters received at the hands of the Darling Downs squatters, when they had the command of the government in their own hands.

The first clause of the Act, 24 Victoria, No. 12, was as follows:—

“1. The Order in Council of the ninth of March eighteen hundred and forty-seven and all regulations made in pursuance thereof so far as they in anywise affect or are inconsistent with this Act and the Act of Parliament of New South Wales made and passed in the twenty-second year of the reign of Her Most Gracious Majesty and numbered seventeen intituled ‘*An Act to impose an assessment on runs in the unsettled and intermediate districts and to increase the rent of lands for leased pastoral purposes within the settled districts of New South Wales*’ so far as the same affect the provisions of this Act shall be and the same are hereby repealed. Provided that nothing herein contained shall prejudice anything already lawfully done under the said orders and regulations or commenced or contracted to be done thereunder respectively.”

Now if any lawyer would tell him that the setting out of a large expedition was not something begun, and that the terms of agreement should not be observed in their integrity, it would be the first time he had heard such an interpretation. Now, as he had said, the Act was not quoted, still many leases were made out under it. Under this Act the inside squatters forced the outside squatters to buy their stock at thirteen shillings a head. They passed the Scab Act, and closed the border trade, and in that way started the outside settlers on the highway to ruin—compelling them to buy up their stock or forfeit their runs. However, if the Government had carried out the forfeiture in any case there would have been a very strong action against the Crown. Though the Darling Downs squatters paid only ninepence a square mile for their country for ten years, they called upon the outside squatter to pay 10s. per square mile for the first five years; 22s. for the next five years, and 28s. for every subsequent year. That was a specimen of the way the outside squatters were treated by the inside squatters. With respect to the word “dissent” in the fifty-fifth clause, which provided for the resumption of lands, he looked upon it as the greatest delusion possible, to say to the squatters that their runs would not be resumed if the schedule should be dissented from. The idea of not getting a schedule passed for the resumption of runs was absurd. To submit such a schedule would fortify a minister in his position; and the squatter would be placed in a false position. Another absurdity was, to say that the Bill gave a lease for twenty-one years. Why it only gave a lease for six months! He might be told that there was no probability of the land being resumed; but he maintained there was every probability of it. There was every probability of the Government running into extravagance; and then what would become of their only asset. Their only asset was the land, and they would have to sell it to meet their liability. He was not disposed to ask for anything that he knew it was im-

possible for the Government to give, and, therefore, he could not concur in the provision about indefeasible leases, for he knew the Government could not give an indefeasible lease; but if the squatter could be compensated for the full value of his improvements, he would then be protected against interference by this clause. Again, why should the outside squatter be asked to pay ten shillings an acre, cash down, when the squatters on the Darling Downs could buy their runs at ten shillings an acre, with ten years to pay it in. It seemed to him to be most extraordinary, for the Government to require that they should have to take up the whole run in one block. Why not have it in three? He also contended, that if the runs in the intermediate districts were placed in the second term of payment, those in the outside districts, such as the Barcoo, the Warrego, the Mitchell, the Cook, and a portion of the Kennedy should be placed in the first term of payment; and that, he thought, would only be fair, considering the immense amount of land carriage the settlers in those districts had to contend with.

Mr. WALSH said he had not been able to make himself so thoroughly acquainted with the Bill before the House as to enable him to meet some of the arguments that had been advanced in support of it. But more than that, the country, he thought, had not had time to consider the Bill, and say whether it was a measure that should be allowed to go to a second reading. He must confess that, from the extent he had perused the Bill, he did not see any prospect of benefit to the country by this Bill passing into law, and he, for one, would, as long as he could, raise his voice against its going into committee. Without going further into the matter at present, he desired to enter his protest against the principle of the Bill, in so far as it proposed to lock up the land from the people for thirty-five years. He entered his protest on that ground against the Bill going into committee at all; and he would strongly recommend to the Government to allow the debate to be adjourned for a week, that the people in the country, and honorable members, might have an opportunity of fully considering it. With that view, he would now move the adjournment of the debate.

Mr. HALY said he was sorry the honorable member for Maryborough should make such a proposition. He thought there had been sufficient time for the question to be considered, and that business should be allowed to go on. One honorable member found fault with the Bill because the leases were, as he said, only for six months, and now the honorable member for Maryborough found fault with it because it proposed to lock-up the lands for thirty-five years. Now, how were they, in the course of a week, to make themselves so much better acquainted with the Bill than they were at present, as to be able to correct such a wide difference as that.

For his own part, he thought they should let the Bill be read a second time, and go into committee. The honorable member for the Western Downs, Mr. Ramsay, had made some remarks about the depressed condition of the squatters. Now, the real question, as every honorable member knew, was the fall in the price of wool, which was not attributable to anything in the colony, but to the competition in the English market from all parts of the world. That being the case, it became the duty of the House to legislate so as to enable the wool-growers of this colony to compete with other colonies and other countries, and especially with South America, which was their greatest opponent. As to indefeasible leases, he should be very sorry to see anything of the kind; but they might guard against the resumption of runs, except for the more beneficial occupation of the country. He knew that, some years ago, when he formerly had a seat in the House, he was alone in advocating yearly leases and sale by auction; and he was sure that, if those two principles had been carried out, there would not have been that ill-feeling that existed now between the townspeople and the squatters. He saw no difference between the squatters and the townspeople, and he never did. When the first land Bill that was brought forward was under consideration, two shillings an acre was mentioned as the price that should be paid for lands in the agricultural reserves; and the Bill provided that, if a man bought forty acres, he should be allowed to rent other two hundred acres. Now, at that time, he got up and proposed that the price should be reduced from two shillings an acre to sixpence an acre. Though he was a squatter, he was not to maintain squatting unreasonably. If cotton should go a-head he would go into cotton-growing, or anything else that he saw most likely to pay. Now, they must give up talking about townspeople and squatters, as if there was any difference. They were all Queensland people, and that was the fact they should keep in view in dealing with a measure like the one now before the House; and they might depend upon it, that if, in dealing with such general questions, they did not legislate so as to enable the colony to compete with other parts of the world, they would fall behind other countries. When the land Bill he had referred to was before the House, he got the second reading postponed in order that an occupation clause might be introduced. Dr. Challinor and Mr. Cribb, and other town members, supported him; but not a single squatter supported him. The Downs people opposed the Bill—and for very good reasons, so far as they were concerned—because they thought that there were a great many people waiting for the passing of the Bill to take up their lands. Shortly afterwards, the scab broke out in New South Wales, and he was a member of the board appointed by the Governor, relative to that

disease. This was after the occupation clauses were passed; and as a member of the board, he did what was right, and insisted upon New South Wales sheep being kept out of the colony. But he did not do that from any personal motive; he did it because he considered it was absolutely necessary for the welfare of the colony as a whole. He was a very narrow-minded man indeed that would legislate for his own pocket. Now, what they should do at the present time was this: They should legislate so that those squatters who were in difficulties would get a sufficient benefit to tide them over the crisis. He did not think the crisis would last a very long time; and he had such belief in the pluck of a British subject that he believed it would carry them over this crisis. He was a squatter, but he should be sorry, indeed, if any one thought he would not legislate for that which was for the benefit of the whole colony. The grand thing of all—and far above indefeasible leases—was to get compensation for improvements. Now, the Bill was deficient in that respect. The squatter could not make a washpool for his sheep except at a cost of at least £1000, besides labor; and yet, if his run was resumed the day after he had finished the work, he received no compensation. Now, what he wanted to see was, that in such a case the squatters should receive compensation for such an improvement. The 2,700 acres would be no good to him; but if he received £1000 it would be of some benefit to him. The great thing this Bill should do, was to encourage squatters in competing with other countries. If the House would do something of that kind, Queensland squatters would not submit to their wool being under-sold in the English market. If they were to give way to cotton, he was afraid that before they could export as much cotton as they now did of wool, the colony would be in a worse position than it was in at the present time. It would take a long time before the colony was raised by any other product to the position it now occupied as a wool-producing country. He hoped to see the Bill, when it was brought into committee, so amended that it would suit all parties. He did not expect that any Bill that could be brought in, would give entire satisfaction to all parties; but he hoped that in committee they would bring the Bill at least nearly up to that; and he would do his best to assist to bring the Bill out in a better shape than he thought it was in at present. He hoped the debate would not be adjourned, but that they would go on and get the Bill read a second time.

Mr. WALSH conceiving it to be the wish of the House that the debate should go on, withdrew his motion for the adjournment of the debate.

Mr. FRASER said that though the Bill now before the House affected one interest in the colony more than it did any other, it at the same time affected every interest in the colony in a greater or less degree. It was

not to be wondered at, therefore, that honorable members on his side of the House should wish to hear the opinions of those who were connected with the squatting interest, respecting the Bill. As a town member, he desired to take that opportunity of reciprocating the sentiments expressed by the honorable member for the Burnett, Mr. Haly, with respect to the oneness of feeling that ought to actuate town and country members when called upon to deal with a measure which, as he had observed at the outset, more or less affected every interest in the colony. It could not be denied that squatting was, and must for many years be, the most important interest in the colony; and therefore any measure passed by the House that was calculated to place it on such a secure footing as would render it more successful than it had latterly been, deserved the attention of every honorable member. He did not now propose to discuss the Bill in detail. That he would have an opportunity of doing in committee. But there was one thing that struck him in the course of the debate, to which he would like to refer. The honorable member for Rockhampton opposed this Bill because it did not seem to him to hold out sufficient inducement for the introduction of capital. Now, he expected that the honorable member, in the course of his speech, would have called attention to the portion of the Bill that was defective in that respect; and have shown by what means the defect might be supplied. But he must say that, for his own part, he failed, throughout the whole course of the honorable member's address, to see any indication of the means he would wish to see provided for the introduction of capital. There had also been some very contradictory opinions expressed respecting the Bill by those honorable members whose interests it most nearly affected. They were told that, in the particular portion of the country to which the Bill would apply, five-sixths of the squatters were in a state of irretrievable insolvency. Now, if such was the case, he did not see that the Bill could be of any value to them, in the way of affording them present relief. There was another view of the question that had not been touched on, and it was this—that the burdens on squatting property altogether, or nearly so, consisted of foreign capital, and consequently, there was a large drain upon the colony for interest. Now, therefore, if this Bill was to benefit any particular class at all, by enhancing securities, it was the foreign capitalist whom it would chiefly benefit, and not those who were directly concerned in the property. He had no wish whatever that the foreign capitalist should suffer; but if it could not be shewn that, by enhancing the securities of the foreign capitalist, they would also enhance the interests of Queensland, he did not see that they should trouble themselves so much about the measure. If, as had been said, five-sixths of the squatters for whose benefit this Bill was intended, were in a state of

irretrievable insolvency, the best thing that could happen to those station-holders would be to be delivered, as speedily as possible, from their present position. If they would take the stations, and put them into the market, and sell them at once, they would do much good to Queensland. It was the interest of the colony at large they had to look after, and not the interest of Sydney or English capitalists; and if they could advance the interests of Queensland without injuring others, it was their duty to do so. Honorable members had had presented to them, by the honorable member for Clermont, the great advantages afforded to wool-growers, by South America, the enormous rate of increase that took place, and the great inducements that were held out by the Government, for capitalists to go there. He could not help thinking when the honorable member was drawing such a favorable picture of South America, that it was "distance lent enchantment to the view." He was not going to dispute that much of what the honorable member said was correct—that was as regarded the inducements offered by the Government, to capitalists, to go there, the cheapness of land, and the large increase of flocks;—but he wished to remark that he understood that statements were made in England with respect to Queensland stations, that were equally flattering and promising. He found in the "Statistical Register" of last year, that in the article of wool, the increase in 1867, over the yield of 1866, was actually fifty per cent. Now, he held that they could scarcely find any country that could show a more favorable rate of production than that. The same might be the case in South America, but there was this difference, that here they were living under British laws, where every possible provision was made for the safety of life and property; but the converse of all that was the case in South America; and the anxiety of the South American Government to get Englishmen into the country, was to consolidate society, and by such means make life and property more secure. With respect to the question of compensation for improvements, he did not think there need be much opposition to the Bill on that ground. The honorable member for Clermont insisted upon clauses being inserted in the Bill providing for compensation for improvements, the re-valuation of runs, and inviolable leases for a certain period. For his own part, he must say that he did not see there was any necessity for inviolable leases if there was to be compensation for improvements. The honorable member besides informed the House that the land was not fit for agricultural purposes. Well, if it was only fit for squatting purposes, that circumstance itself provided an inviolable lease, for the Government would not resume such lands for agricultural purposes. In that view, therefore, there was ample guarantee and security provided, with a twenty-one years' lease, to induce the

introduction of capital. But it seemed to him, after all, that that would be a very questionable advantage to the holders of runs. If he understood this question aright, it was the facilities the squatters had had for the borrowing of money on their runs that had mainly contributed to bring them into their present condition. Now, what would be the advantage to them of passing a Bill that would extend those facilities. According to fair reasoning, it would not be an advantage but a disadvantage, inasmuch as to improve their securities would only be to increase their facilities for sinking deeper and deeper into ruin. Were he disposed to be captious in this matter, and object to the Bill, or the House rendering any special advantages to the squatters, he could find ample grounds for doing so. He could adduce many reasons to show that it was owing to their own conduct the squatters were in their present position. If they found those people, with more cash than brains, giving enormous prices for runs, living extravagantly, and finding in a few years they were involved in difficulties, he did not see they were entitled to much sympathy or consideration. Now, there was no undertaking in the colony, whether squatting, agriculture, or trade, but was more or less in the same position; and if the squatter, under such circumstances, was to be considered as having a fair claim to relief from his difficulties, every undertaking in the colony, in a like position, had an equal claim to relief. He was ready to give every consideration to this Bill, and he was prepared to give it his support in such a form as was calculated to carry out the object it was intended for. He was open to conviction, and was willing to be guided to a great extent by those who were most interested in the matter; and he sincerely hoped that, whatever conclusions might be arrived at, would be arrived at in a dispassionate manner; and that in the consideration of this measure they would avoid those class distinctions that always produced so much unpleasantness. He would be glad if, in committee, they could so amend the Bill as to bring it out in such a form as would answer the object of the Government, and be for the benefit of those for whose benefit it was intended. He would say, again, that in respect to this matter, he did not profess to give a decision, as he was not so conversant with it as he was with some other things; but he could assure honorable members opposite that the town members, and his honorable colleagues, and others, were prepared to give a fair consideration and support to the Bill.

Mr. JORDAN said it was not his intention to occupy the time of the House in making any remarks on this debate on the second reading of the Bill, because he did not feel himself competent to do so. Indeed he felt some hesitation in addressing himself to the question at all, and he would not have

addressed himself to it but for the remarks that had been made by the honorable member for Maryborough. It seemed to be only fair that after those able speeches that had been addressed to the House by honorable members opposite, some of the supporters of the Government should address themselves to the subject. He had been very much gratified in listening to the various speeches that had been addressed to the House during this important debate; and he would like to have listened the whole of the evening to the speeches of honorable members on the other side of the House, who were better acquainted with the question than he was. But he just rose to say that he was confident that honorable members on his side of the House, a great proportion of whom were not interested in pastoral occupation, felt an interest, as deep almost as honorable members on the opposition side of the House; and he was confident there was a strong disposition on the part of the population generally to deal fairly and honestly with this important question. They all knew that the exports of wool from Queensland had been the main-spring of the prosperity of the colony, and that hitherto almost everything had been dependent on the prosperity of the pastoral interest. He did not agree with the remarks of the honorable member for the Western Downs, Mr. Ramsay, that hitherto legislation had been adverse to capital than otherwise. He thought that legislation had been generally in favor of capital. In the first session of the Parliament of Queensland, though they passed an Immigration Bill, and a Land Bill, they also confirmed the lessees of Crown lands in their tenure of the Darling Downs; and those lessees also obtained preemptive rights over vast tracts of land in the colony. Then it must be remembered that they passed, in a subsequent session of Parliament, a Bill to allow capitalists to take up vast tracts for growing sugar and cotton on nominal payments. Therefore he thought they had gone far enough in behalf of capital, and of squatting, on the Darling Downs; but not for the outside squatters—those who were anything but wealthy men, and of whom, they were told, nine-tenths were on the brink of insolvency. He heartily agreed with the honorable member for the Burnett, that they need not import anything like an antagonistic spirit into this debate, as between the town, the agricultural, and the squatting class—a spirit that had, in the past, greatly marred legislation. They all knew that the depreciation of wool and stock had placed the outside squatters in painful circumstances; and if, by passing such a Bill as the one before the House, they could render material assistance to that interest, they should do so. If he were to take everything that had been said about the ruinous condition of the outside squatters, as altogether correct, he could not help coming to the conclusion that no

Bill the House could pass could possibly meet their case. The honorable member for the Mitchell had drawn a most dreadful picture of the condition of the country in the outlying districts, and he must say that no other honorable member could be more successful in painting a picture than the honorable member for the Mitchell. The honorable member had told the House of all the water in certain districts being wholly dried up, and that so far had the emu, the kangaroo, and the native dog, forgotten their natural instincts, that they had come together, in search of water, to dried-up waterholes, and there they died of thirst, and their remains were found heaped and mingled together. The description the honorable member gave of the country, and also when he spoke of the hardship to man and beast, because of the long rides between waterholes, he presented a painting that was equal to anything ever attempted by the late Agent-General in England. (Laughter.) If that description, and the description given by the honorable member for Rockhampton, were correct, the House must come to the conclusion that they ought to pass a Bill that would give the squatters an indefeasible title, at a nominal rent, for thirty-five years, otherwise they could not recover. But the question arose, taking into consideration the fall in the price of wool, and the statement made by the honorable member for Clermont, as to the great quantity of wool grown in South America, and which was inexhaustible, so far as land was concerned—whether they could pass a measure of relief—any measure that would so enable the squatters to compete with South American wool-growers as would enable them to retrieve their position. Now, he was inclined to question, with the honorable member for North Brisbane, Mr. Fraser, whether the description as to the facilities for raising wool in Buenos Ayres and South America were not a little overdrawn; and whether, on the whole, Queensland might not be able to compete successfully with South America. They had seen how much could be done, in the way of reducing expenditure, by the fencing-in of runs; and he was sure that, by a variety of other ways, the wool-growers could reduce the cost of production, and also improve the article; and if those two things were accomplished they would do more to enable the squatter to compete with other countries, and so retrieve his position; than could be done by any Bill the House could pass. He had been informed, on good authority, that the loss by a squatter, in one year alone, had been £3000, only £500 of which was rent; so that, if the rent had been remitted, there would still have been a loss of £2,500. It was clear, therefore, that it would be necessary to adopt a totally different system. The question of rental was, no doubt, of some importance, because it was the last straw that broke the camel's back, and, under the trying circumstances in which the squatters in the

outlying districts were placed, he thought the House was bound to meet this question as well as they could, and to afford those persons as much relief as they could possibly give. But he was informed that a great many of them, while paying this rent, had ruined themselves, by taking up more country than they could make use of. He did not think any change in the amount of rent would exactly meet the case, nor did he think that the twenty-one years tenure would be very valuable to the outside squatters, and he should hesitate to give them these long leases with the object of enabling them to borrow more money. It appeared that, on the one hand, some honorable members objected to give them twenty-one years' leases, or, in some cases, thirty-five years' leases; and, on the other hand, it was argued that the Bill gave no security at all. For his part, he thought the real security which these squatters possessed, lay in the fact that their land was not likely to be required for public purposes for a number of years. If it were absolutely essential to the revenue that the Government should continue to receive rent from them, they had, in point of fact, as much security as they wanted. No doubt the twenty-one years' leases would enable them to go into the market and borrow capital; but he thought if, instead of the pre-emptive right, which it was proposed to re-establish under this Bill, the compensation given under the old Act, were restored, and the pre-emptive clause done away with altogether, it would be much better. That provision was liable to be greatly abused, and he did not think that, by allowing these squatters to buy 2,560 acres, at ten shillings an acre, making them pay cash down, any good would be done to them. He must say it did not look at all liberal, when squatters in the settled districts could get the land for the same money, and have ten years to pay it in. It would be much better, in his opinion, to retain the valuable principle of compensation, which was enacted under the Act of 1860. He believed, however, that the Bill before the House, in other respects, would afford a very liberal measure of relief. The fact had not been sufficiently dwelt upon, that the Bill gave great advantages to those who took up unwatered country; and, taking into consideration that it gave a long tenure of the land, he thought it might be made a liberal measure. He should watch the remainder of the debate with great interest, and, in committee, of course, it would be considered in detail. He would not occupy the time of the House any longer, as he was himself, at present, but imperfectly informed on the subject.

Mr. PALMER said he did not intend to speak at any length on the Bill before the House, at its present stage, but would wait until it went into committee. But, before the vote for the second reading came on, he wished to offer a few remarks. He must

congratulate the House on the good temper which honorable members who had taken part in the debate, had displayed. The tone they had adopted was very different from that which was shewn when a similar Bill was discussed three years ago, when he first joined the House. He could only regret that a better example had not been set by the honorable member who introduced the Bill. If that honorable member had only addressed the House in the same courteous and gentlemanly way which other honorable members who had followed him had done, it would have been much more creditable to him. He looked upon the way the Bill had been introduced as most insulting to the House. He should like to know what the country would think of an honorable member, who, in bringing forward a measure of this sort, took the opportunity of lecturing the squatters on the way in which they dressed. Just fancy the honorable Secretary for Lands holding himself up as a model of dress and deportment. It was a complete farce, and the whole of the honorable member's lecture was delivered in the same spirit. He believed the honorable member was just about as capable of lecturing upon the Bill as upon dress, and that was not saying much. Now, he was resolved to vote for the second reading, but he did not in any way commit himself to the Bill as it stood; for, although he agreed with the Minister for Lands that it was impossible to bring in a Bill of this sort which would go through committee without alterations, he thought this Bill would require a very great deal of amendment before he could accept it. If the object was to give the outside squatters a fixity of tenure, which was promised in one part of the Bill, it would be found that that was absolutely wiped out in another clause. The idea of giving twenty-one years' leases, with six months' notice of resumption, was an absurdity on the face of it. It was absurd to suppose that any man of common sense would spend his time in improving a run, the tenure of which was entirely at the caprice of a minister. He held the same opinion he had always held, as to the tenure on which a squatter should hold his run. He wanted no lease; he did not think any security was given by a lease; he had always considered that a yearly tenure of the grass on the run, until the land was required for other purposes, was the best. But other persons, who were more interested in the question, held a different opinion. They thought a longer tenure would enable them to obtain capital to improve their properties; and that it was absolutely essential there should be security of some sort, some tenure extending over a number of years, which would give them a chance of recouping the money they had expended. He was not going to set up his own opinion against a number of experienced financiers; and, therefore, if some fixity of tenure could be given, which would make the lease a document upon which

money could be advanced, the House would be legislating, not for the relief of the outside squatters, but the colony at large. For it must be remembered that the success of the colony depended, in a great measure, upon the growth of wool, and that the outside districts of the colony must be used for that purpose only, for many years to come. He was not going to affirm that the land in those districts would grow nothing but wool. There might be a change of seasons, and the time might come when it might produce crops of different descriptions; but he did not think the Legislature of the present day need trouble themselves about that, for such a state of things was not likely to occur during the term of the twenty-one years' leases proposed, or even in the fourteen years' renewal. They were legislating for what? The introduction of capital, and that capital was to save certain persons who were nearly ruined. That might be difficult in some cases; but, if a proper fixity of tenure were given, a good many of them would be saved; and, as the capital would all be spent in improving the runs, he thought it would be as well to extend the present tenure considerably, and make it as fixed as possible. He was informed that a great improvement in this direction had taken place of late years in the old country. Landholders were now enabled to borrow money for drainage and other improvements, and the same principle might be adopted to advantage in this country, for experience had shewn that, without capital, the struggling squatter could not make his run pay, or keep himself out of difficulty. He believed that, from the disposition shewn by the town members, and, indeed, throughout the House, there would be little difficulty in putting the Bill before the House into a proper shape, and he should assist, to the best of his ability, in producing that result; for it was clear that, unless relief of some sort was not speedily afforded, a great many of the runs in the outlying districts would be abandoned. It was impossible for the squatters in those districts to go on paying the rents now asked. It had been shown that ever since the Act of 1863 was passed, they had been paying a much higher rental than the Darling Downs squatters had paid for years and years after they took up their runs, and they were now paying more than was paid for some of the best runs in New South Wales; and, taking into consideration the difference in the cost of carriage, and the price of labor, the comparison was greatly in favor of New South Wales. Except in a few instances, they had not the advantage of water carriage, and the price of labor in the outlying districts was enormous, while many of the runs were so distant from any seaport, that the cost of cartage was something terrific. With the command of capital, borrowed though it might be, the squatter would be able to make arrangements to overcome many of these difficulties. He might, for instance, by putting on drays of his own, bring down the

expense of carriage, and in other ways make his pursuits more profitable. Some honorable members had stated that they could not see their way to any reduction of rent, and the honorable member for East Moreton had stated that, in one case, as much as £3000 had been lost in one year, of which only £500 was rent, in order to show that the rent was not the cause of failure. But that honorable member must recollect that, if the £500 rent had been remitted it would have paid the interest, at ten per cent., of a much larger sum than the remaining £2,500, and that would be a great consideration to a struggling man. He thought that, as a matter of justice, it was the duty of the House to reduce the rents of the runs in the outlying districts. He might possibly be told that he was personally interested in this question, and he confessed he was; but if honorable members were only to speak on subjects in which they had no interest, very few of them would be able to speak at all. He took an interest in every question which came before the House, but he would never vote for any measure which he did not think was for the benefit of the whole country. The Bill before the House did not propose to give leases at the rate of rental which the squatters were now paying; but the lease was to be computed "from the first day of January or July preceding the expiration of the license" in virtue of which it was granted, by which time many of the runholders would be in their third term of payment, and he did not think that would be affording any relief at all to the pastoral tenants of the Crown. The Crown was, after all, only a landlord; and he thought experience should have shewn that rack-rents would not pay, and that if a landlord insisted upon keeping up his rents when the exigencies of the times demanded a reduction, the result was his houses were abandoned, and he got no rent at all. He could state positively that if the rents in the outlying districts of this colony were not lowered, a great many runs would be abandoned and thrown upon the hands of the Government, to be taken up by other persons who would pay no rent at all; and he would defy the Government to put those persons off the runs when once they had got possession of them. Everyone was aware that the police force was barely sufficient to do the ordinary work of the colony, and it would take an army of policemen to eject such persons as he alluded to. There was one objection made by the honorable member for North Brisbane, which he did not think was exactly correct. That honorable member stated that if increased facilities for borrowing were given to the squatters, the interests of foreign capitalists would be advanced, but not those of the people of Queensland. He thought a little consideration would show that honorable member that in encouraging the introduction of foreign capital, the Legislature would be advancing the interests of the colony, since

the capital was only required to improve Queensland property. That seemed to him self-evident. Of course, it would be a very nice thing to be able to say that all the stock in the colony was owned by Queenslanders; but as that was not likely to be the case, it would be better to introduce foreign capital on the runs, than to say to the present occupants—we can do nothing to help you, and you can go about your business. He looked upon a compensation clause as of immeasurably greater importance than a pre-emptive clause; for the permission to purchase 2,560 acres at ten shillings an acre, cash payment, was not in reality a boon, especially as land orders were not to be taken in payment, although all the best lands on the Darling Downs were purchased with land orders. That showed, he was afraid, that a little of the old feeling of antagonism was still entertained by some members of the Government, at any rate, and it was a very one-sided policy to have. If they were to have one law for the Darling Downs squatters, and another for squatters in other parts of the colony, there would be such a storm throughout the country as the Government would not greatly relish. He hoped the Secretary for Lands would take an opportunity of assuring the House that no such course was intended by them; and with regard to this Bill, looking to the temper of the House, he believed that if honorable members and the Darling Downs squatters would pull together, this Bill might be made into a good measure. He could only repeat that a very large number of persons were entirely depending upon the result of their legislation on the subject.

Mr. MILES said he rose for the purpose of moving that the debate be adjourned, as it appeared that honorable members required a little more time to consider the Bill. He himself would certainly like to hear some member of the Government speak on the subject, and inform the House whether they were prepared to accept amendments on the Bill. He had had some conversation with the Minister for Lands, and that honorable gentleman had distinctly informed him that he would not. He did not feel inclined to agree to the second reading of the Bill, unless he received an assurance from the Government that they would accept amendments.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said he was exceedingly gratified with the excellent temper in which the House had dealt with the Bill before them. It was to him a great proof of the good temper of the House and their determination to make a good measure of it, that even the honorable member for Maranoa was anxious to hear the Government praise their own document. He did not think it was necessary for the Ministry to enter into any elaborate reasons in support of the Bill. It seemed to be agreed that it was to pass its second reading, and he thought it was desirable, for the despatch of business, that

it should go into committee as soon as possible. Every one who knew his opinions was aware that he was not an enemy to the squatters, and he was, of course, prepared to accept reasonable amendments upon it; but he was not prepared to surrender to any unreasonable demand. He must make that reservation. He would receive in an open, candid, and fair spirit, any amendment that might be offered by any honorable member, which commended it to his judgment; and, if he thought it would have the effect of fostering honest enterprise without damaging the interests of the country, he would give it his support.

Mr. WALSH said he did not understand from the Premier that he objected to the adjournment of the debate. The question before them was one of the most important which had been brought before the House for years, and he must object to any attempt to hurry through the House, in one evening, a measure of such a character. He thought it was unprecedented—more than that, it was indecent. He had no hesitation in saying that he was not going to allow the Bill to be fought over in committee, for he had too painful a recollection of the degrading scenes which took place during the passing of a previous land Bill. He objected, *in toto*, to the statement of the honorable the Premier, that, in discussing such an important question as the alienation or holding of the lands of this colony, he would be prepared to accept from honorable members amendments of a reasonable nature. The construction he put upon that admission from a Government who brought forward a measure of such vital importance was that they had again a Ministry who would accept any amendment made in that chamber which would keep them in their seats. He had seen it before, and he was sure he should see it again. But he was not blind to the intentions of honorable members on this question, and he was convinced that it would be perfectly impossible for them to agree to the passing of this Bill in committee in such a shape as would be either creditable to the Government or to the House. He thought the suggestion of the honorable member for Maranoa was a reasonable one, and he hoped, for the credit of the House, the Government would not oppose it. To show that he was justified in the remarks he had made, he would just read a few remarks addressed to that chamber nine years ago by the present Premier, when the Occupation of Crown Lands Act was being discussed. He hoped the honorable member would not compel him to endorse those sentiments which he uttered when he took up the position of a patriot. It had been proposed by, he believed, Mr. Raff, that on such an important question as the occupation of Crown lands, there should be an adjournment after the Colonial Treasurer had made his speech. He believed those who supported the amendment were defeated. How-

ever, this was the language of the honorable member on that occasion—

“Mr. LUTLEY said he had certainly anticipated more courtesy to the House on the part of the Government in allowing honorable members the opportunity of giving to such an important measure the consideration to which it was entitled. He understood thus, the request made for an adjournment would have been acceded to, and was surprised at the opposition now manifested by the Government and their forces. (Oh.) He thought the least mark of courtesy the House had a right to expect from the Government was, that a brief period should be allowed to enable honorable members to see what it really was they were called upon to vote for; and he hoped the Government would clearly understand that honorable members were not prepared on such short notice, to consider such a measure as a Land Bill. He should move that it be taken into consideration that day six months. He could assure the Government that the Bill was far from suiting the taste of the public and the country. He thought the trickery and chicanery (Oh! Oh!)—to say the least—that had been manifested by the Government, was disgraceful. (Cheers, and cries of order.) It was merely a repetition of the old dodge practised with regard to State-aid. (Laughter.) They (the Government) had gone about gently feeling the pulse of honorable members before they could muster up sufficient courage to introduce any measure at all. (Oh, Oh, and laughter.) The Grammar School Bill, and several others were introduced in precisely the same way. First came the Governor’s speech, which contained nothing; then the Colonial Secretary’s Bill and speech, which were equally void. (Laughter.) Thus was the House tickled and entertained for the profit of an incapable and powerless Government. He had heard it whispered that it was his ambition to sit on the Treasury Benches opposite;”——

Never!

—“but all he could say was that they might be filled by better men than the present Government. (Laughter, and cheers.) He thought their conduct positively indecent”——

Why, that was the very term he had just been called to account for making use of.

—“when they actually demeaned themselves so far as to solicit honorable members in the street and sound them as to their views and intentions. (Interruption.) He could repeat what he had said. He himself had been invited to a private conclave, at which only a few select members were to be present to discuss the present question.”——

Then, the honorable member, in speaking of the Bill which was then before the House, called it

“a cool trap, cleverly concocted to blind their eyes, and deceive their judgment. It was nothing more or less than an attempt to foist upon the people of this colony the iniquitous tendering system for ten years to come. They would find several gross blunders in the Bill, and then would follow nineteen or twenty Bills, each to rectify the other, and all could be contained in one or two. The Government had descended to meanness in its Ministers meeting members in the street to canvass them.”

That was the language which the honorable member used precisely nine years ago, when it was attempted by the Government of the day to pass the second reading of a Land Bill through in one evening. He said again it was positively indecent to press the second reading of this Bill upon the House; and he hoped now the honorable Premier was reminded of what he did, when he did command the confidence of the liberal portion of the community; when he was not primed by the squatters to bring in a Bill to satisfy them, he would not oppose the adjournment of the House. He thought he was perfectly justified in asking for sufficient time to allow honorable members to consider the Bill before it went into committee.

Mr. BELL said he hoped the House would not follow the advice given by the honorable member for Maryborough. He thought it had been sufficiently shewn that there was not the slightest intention on the part of a large majority of members to oppose the second reading of the Bill before the House. That being the case, and the principles of the Bill being accepted by the House, nothing further could be done at this stage, and the only practicable mode of making it into a good Act, was to go into committee upon it as soon as possible. It was unfortunate that the honorable member for Maryborough had no intention of assisting to improve the Bill in committee, because his recollection was so vivid, of scenes which had occurred in the passage of a previous Bill through the House, and because he recollected that the honorable the Premier had taken a similar stand nine years ago. But it must be recollected that the Land Bill brought in nine years ago, and the Bill brought in now, were introduced under very different circumstances. The subject was very differently understood now, and if the Premier had then occasion to suspect chicanery, he had since been able to discover that governments did nothing of that kind. He had now actually joined a Government, and, of course, had become convinced of his errors. He (Mr. Bell) hoped the Bill would be allowed to go through its second reading that evening.

Mr. FORBES said that, as one of the constituents of the honorable member for the Warrego, he should like to hear some of that honorable member's opinions with regard to the Bill, and to see whether he would substantiate the course pursued by the Minister for Lands in introducing it to the House.

Mr. FRANCIS said he thought the request of the honorable member for Maranoa was perfectly reasonable. He, for one, should extremely like to hear the history of the various measures which had been adopted by the Queensland Parliament in connection with the pastoral tenants of the Crown, and the alienation of Crown lands. He should regret, if a debate of so much importance

should close before the House had heard the opinions of so eminent a member as the present Minister for Works; and he confessed he should like to have an opportunity of comparing this Bill with the Bill brought in by the late Government, and discussed in that House eighteen months ago. He should like to see in what respect it differed from that measure, and from the Act at present in force. He was as much disposed to give full justice to the pastoral tenants as any member in the House; but he should never be reluctant to allow a reasonable delay in the passing of a measure, especially in any legislation upon such an important subject as the public lands of the colony. He was more and more persuaded, the more closely he watched the operation of every Land Act, that they could not be too cautious and deliberate in considering these measures, and especially with a Bill which was intended to deal with such a vast area of country, and to alienate it for a period of twenty-one, and in some cases thirty-five, years. He was persuaded that no loss would accrue from one day's delay. He would suggest to the honorable member for Maranoa that he should ask for an adjournment of the debate until the next day, the question to take precedence of all other business. He should like to join in the debate; but he must say he should prefer waiting until he had heard the views of more experienced members, who were connected with pastoral pursuits. Besides, it seemed to him not only to be good fun, but it was also instructive, to hear squatter attack squatter, as they had heard them do that evening. And he would say, in reply to what fell from the Minister for Lands, that in the view of town members there were squatters and squatters, and it must not be supposed that they were opposed to the whole squatting fraternity. Though not a town member himself, he was intimately acquainted with the representatives of towns; and he could assure the honorable member that there was a feeling of brotherhood between the small settlers in the neighborhood of towns and the outside squatters; but those persons looked with very different feelings on the Darling Downs squatters, who had brought the colony into its present difficulties; and if there was supposed to be on his side of the House any feelings of animosity towards a certain class of persons, it was because they insisted upon identifying themselves with all classes of squatters. As he had already stated, he wished to go as far as possible in doing justice to the outlying squatters. That was the desire of his constituents; he had never heard any other wish expressed. But he looked with great suspicion at a measure of relief from a Ministry which was made up of such heterogeneous materials as the present Ministry was composed of, and did not clearly see what was meant by it. He thought those gentlemen who were outside squatters ought to be very

suspicious of a Bill brought in by a Ministry, two members of which were Darling Downs squatters, whom they had to thank for their bad stock, and for the general course of legislation they had attempted to pursue. With all these reasons before him, he thought the request for a little delay was not unreasonable. So far as he could see, he was disposed to think at the first blush that this was a very fair and reasonable measure, and that it might be desirable to admit of its second reading; but he wanted to know why it was not taken in its proper order, and dealt with upon its merits. There were a great many mysterious things going on. There were the cotton bonuses, which were to have been considered; there was the immigration question; and altogether there seemed to be a jumble—a sort of give-and-take system decided upon—"If you will support my little scheme, I will support yours." That style of politics did not suit him, and on that ground he should support the motion for adjournment.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he would take the opportunity of saying a few words. The honorable member for East Moreton, Mr. Francis, had commenced his speech by saying that as he knew very little of the subject, he wished to hear some honorable member who had practical experience address the House upon it; but, as far as he could see, the honorable member seemed to know a great deal about it. He had talked about squatters in the town and squatters out of the town, where the bad stock came from and where it was going to, and a great deal about squatting generally; in fact, he appeared to be a squatter in disguise. He thought the honorable member for Maranoa had rather distorted the remarks of his honorable colleague, the Premier, in reference to amendments on the Bill before the House, during its passage through committee. What he had understood his honorable colleague to say was, that if those amendments did not affect the principle of the Bill, he would support them, and he thought nothing could be more reasonable. What had they met in that House for? Why was the Bill on the table of the House, if it were not to invite discussion upon it?—to give honorable members an opportunity of exchanging their ideas on the question it proposed to deal with, which he considered one of the most important questions they could have to discuss. They were there to debate that question, and he sincerely hoped that, with the collective wisdom of that House, something good would come out of it. After it had passed its second reading, they would go into committee upon it, and discuss its merits and demerits in detail. What they had to do was to pass it in such a shape that it would do credit to the Legislature, and advance the best interests of the country. For his part, he was not going to speak to the main question that evening, and he hoped there would be an adjournment.

He had no desire to shirk this question; and he could assure the honorable member for West Moreton, Mr. Forbes, that he had very strong feelings in connection with this measure. He had the honor of representing the distant district of Warrego, and he was glad to find that the honorable member was one of his constituents, and would keep him up to the mark. He was proud of him, and he hoped the honorable member would be proud of him before he had finished. He thought that, as it was now rather late, and the question was a very important one, and as he was one of the oldest squatters, if not the oldest, in the House—not in years, but in squatting—and should have to address the House, it might be advisable to adjourn the debate. A good deal had been said about a coalition Ministry, but he believed it would be found that the present Ministry were perfectly sincere and honest in introducing this Bill.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS said it seemed to be the wish of a portion of the House to adjourn the debate until the next day. The Government were perfectly willing that it should be adjourned until next day, to take precedence of all other business. He would like, however, to caution the House that it would be wrong to delay the business of the session more than they could possibly help, because he knew that many honorable members must go away before very many weeks were over, and then there would be the same rush to get through it as there had been on former occasions.

Mr. ARCHER said he thought it was rather hard that this debate should be brought on the next day before any other business on the paper. Several honorable members had resolutions to move. He had two motions which, although they might not be of any great importance to the Government, were very important to the people in the part of the country he represented. He thought this debate might be adjourned until an open day—say Tuesday next. There was plenty of business to occupy the House until that time. He was not going to put himself in opposition to the Government, and if they pressed their intention to bring the question on to-morrow he should give way. But he did not think he ought to give way so frequently, and therefore he asked the honorable member at the head of the Government if he would consent to adjourn the debate until Tuesday next?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said he was sorry to deprive the honorable member of the opportunity of bringing forward any motions he might have; but this was a very important question, and he thought it was desirable to dispose of it as soon as possible. He had no right to ask any honorable member to give way in such a case; but if this question were postponed until next week, there would be some further delay, and he hoped the honorable member would accept

the suggestion to give it precedence of all other business on the following day.

Mr. ARCHER said he was sorry to break the rule of debate, but he might remind the honorable member that there were several Bills on the notice paper, all of which would be debated on the second reading, before any measure which had been brought before the House would be considered in committee. He thought that, under the circumstances, the House had better stick to the order that had been made, and that honorable members ought to have a day for general business, if possible.

Mr. THORN objected that general business had been delayed ever since the House met, this session, and that private members had not had one day to themselves. The honorable members who asked for the adjournment, and that the debate on the Pastoral Leases Bill take precedence, to-morrow, were those who voted for the recent adjournment. Referring to what they had just heard from the honorable member for East Moreton, Mr. Francis, it was a speech that he (Mr. Thorn) had heard a dozen times since his entrance into the House. If they were to go on adjourning from day to day, the session would be spun out till after Christmas.

Mr. LAMB declared that he could not see what was to be gained by the adjournment. The House had formerly spent five months and a half over the consideration of a Bill with the same object as the present one.

Mr. THOMPSON said he did not complain on account of any matters he might have in hand; but there was a very important question which had been postponed for some time, the cotton bonus resolutions, and he asked if the Government would appoint a day when they would bring it forward? If they would not, he would object to any interference with the order of general business.

Mr. BELL: It was very plain that the sense of the House must be taken.

HONORABLE MEMBERS: Spoke, spoke.

Dr. O'DOHERTY: He, for one, must protest against the adjournment. In presence of the statement that was made by the Minister for Lands, that a very few weeks must see a very large number of members leave the House, he could not conceive why, at so early an hour of the evening, they should adjourn. The honorable members for East Moreton and Maryborough were the only two members who wished to adjourn.

Mr. WALSH: He had protested against the debate taking precedence, to-morrow; a suggestion that came from the Government.

Dr. O'DOHERTY: The debate could proceed, to-night.

The question was put and negatived, upon division:—Ayes, 4; Noes, 22.

Mr. WALSH said he was sure there was not an honorable member in the House, who wanted to bring the debate on the Bill to an untimely close; and he knew that there were several honorable members who felt it their

duty to address the country on the subject. There were members of the Government who felt it their duty to address their constituents in regard to the Bill. If the debate were ended, to-night, to-morrow honorable members would regret it. The Government could not possibly force the Bill, except at great inconvenience; and he was not disposed, spite of the large majority that the Government had at their back, to allow it. He should have no consideration for what he thought was wrong, and he would on no account be led from what he considered the strict line of his duty. He now moved the adjournment of the House.

The SPEAKER said he was not clear that the honorable member could move the adjournment of the House, after moving the adjournment of the debate.

Mr. WALSH said he had not spoken on the original question.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said he did not know whether the honorable member was aware of the consequences of his motion; because, if he carried it, he would get rid of the question altogether, and the night's debate on the Bill would be lost.

The SPEAKER cited the following authority on the point raised:—

“A member who has already spoken to a question, may not rise again to move an amendment, or the adjournment of the House, or of the debate, or any similar question, though he may speak to these new questions when proposed by other members. So also, a member, who has moved the adjournment of a debate, may not afterwards rise to move the adjournment of the House, having already spoken in the debate.”

Mr. WALSH: He thought, by the Speaker's ruling, that he could move the adjournment of the House, to give some other honorable member the opportunity to move the adjournment of the debate?

Mr. SANDEMAN said he had not spoken before. One strong reason why he voted for the adjournment, was, that he thought the Government had not acted in good faith. The honorable the Colonial Secretary had stated that he wished for the adjournment—and he was followed by the Minister for Lands, who had also approved of the proposed adjournment. As to the question of adjournment or not, he (Mr. Sandeman) would not go at any length into that at present, but he would say that the conduct of the Government in such a matter, was not much to their credit. They stood committed to the adjournment, and it was not their place to vote as they did. They should have let the House decide it. One strong reason for the adjournment, was, that the present question was a very important one, upon which nearly every honorable member desired to speak. Some honorable members who were absent had expressed a desire to speak upon it. The only member of the Ministry who had spoken was the Minister for Lands, and great objection was taken to what the honorable gentleman had said.

There was not much in the remarks of the Premier, who had not committed himself; for in his little speech there was not a point that bound him to the question under debate. The honorable the Secretary for Works, whose experience on the question would give him some weight, had not spoken. For himself (Mr. Sandeman) and other honorable members, he said he felt that there ought to be some expressions of opinion from Ministers as to the points of the Bill. It was all very well to say, let them go, at once, into committee on the Bill; but what he asked for, should be said and done before the House went into committee. He was not one to delay the progress of business; but he felt that some little delay would be beneficial for the settlement of the present question. His time was valuable for his own personal and private business, and he should like the session to be over as quickly as possible.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: He was not aware that the members of the Government had committed themselves to any adjournment. When the adjournment was spoken of, it was conditional, so far as they were concerned, upon the discussion of the Bill being ended to-morrow night. Of course, the Government were free to take any action they liked; but, on the ground that precedence was not to be given to the debate, next day, he voted against the adjournment; and, he should do it again. No sufficient reason had been given for an adjournment at all. If any honorable member had asked for it on the ground that he was not prepared to speak on the Bill—or if honorable members had been hurried, or had not had time to read the Bill—that would have been a good ground for asking for the adjournment. The case which had been quoted by the honorable member for Maryborough was on the night the measure he had referred to was placed before the House.

Mr. WALSH: It was on the second reading.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It was on account of the hurry with which it was attempted to carry the Bill through. He thought the honorable member for Burnett, Mr. Haly, unfair in making a charge against the Government in the way he had done; the only object the Government had in view was to consult the convenience of the House. All the points raised this evening, in debate, could be discussed over and over again in committee. With regard to the objection, that none of the Ministers with the exception of the Minister for Lands had addressed the House, their opinions were recorded in the Bill; and they would be perfectly prepared to defend their opinions when the Bill was in committee.

Mr. MILES: One very good reason why the debate should be adjourned was, that he represented perhaps as important a pastoral district as any in the colony; and he had a very strong objection to several clauses in the Bill, and he wanted to speak upon it.

He had spoken privately to the Minister for Lands, and asked him if he would allow a clause to be introduced, providing for a re-valuation of runs; and the honorable gentleman said he would not. Since entering the House, this evening, he found that the Government were prepared to accept amendments. Before the Bill went into committee, he should express his views. The Government saw reason for the late adjournment for a week; why could they not give way on this matter? They would not adjourn for one day, now.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Yes; for one day.

Mr. MILES: They would resort to trickery to have the House adjourned for a week. It came with a very bad grace from the Government to oppose the adjournment, now. All he could say was, that with the assistance of his honorable friend the member for Maryborough, he could compel the Government to give way.

Mr. FORBES said he should take this opportunity to express his views on the Bill, for fear he should have no other. He was at liberty to do so, according to the rules of the House, on the motion for adjournment. He felt deep interest in the measure, for the welfare of the colony was much dependent upon the relief of the pastoral tenants of the Crown. As the Bill came out of committee, it would tend either to the fostering of the pastoral interest, or to its annihilation. When, in the outside districts, the squatters were laboring under difficulties that almost overwhelmed them, it behoved all men to stretch forth their hands to assist them. It required the exercise of every energy to raise that interest to such a position that it would be progressive. In looking at the Bill, he did not think it possessed those qualities which were requisite to effect the object in view; it did not afford that relief which the Government pretended it did, but it promised to help on that annihilation of the pastoral interest which he apprehended. He advised honorable members to consider well the course they intended to pursue with regard to the Bill. The House had, to a certain extent, agreed to the principle of a measure of partial relief—he did not say this measure, because he did not know but that the Bill would be an entirely new one when it came out of committee—and the debate showed that they recognised a somewhat different principle from that of the Government. When he looked at the difficulties under which the colony was laboring—when he found that, generally speaking, those difficulties were owing to the over-production of wool—it was necessary, under those circumstances, to meet the production of other countries by fostering local industry, and by giving every encouragement to it. Let not the revenue to be collected from the settlers in the far interior be thought of—that consideration should not be allowed to bias the minds of honorable

members in providing for the care and protection of the pastoral interest of the colony—the well-being of those who inhabited the wilderness and made it productive.

Mr. FRANCIS called attention to the state of the House.

A quorum having been formed,

The SPEAKER: He might tell the honorable member for West Moreton, that he did not hear, when he commenced his speech, the remark he made; but he believed the honorable member said he was going to speak on the main question. It was hardly allowed to the honorable member, on the motion for adjournment, to say that he was going to speak on the main question. The only way he could speak upon it was to show the necessity for adjournment.

Mr. FORBES: It was to show that there was no necessity for an adjournment. Perhaps he would be allowed to proceed?—

The SPEAKER: He would read the following authority:—

“On the motion of adjournment of the debate, a member may address the House on the main question. On the motion of adjournment of the House, the main question may be discussed on the ground of its importance and urgency.”

Mr. FORBES: He was about to remark that for many years the runs on the Darling Downs—as had been explained by the honorable member for Mitchell—were held for nine-pence per square mile; while, at the present time, under the second portion of the lease, the runs in the Warrego district paid a rental equal to four-pence three farthings per head of the sheep they carried. Taking that into consideration, with the difficulty of obtaining labor, and the high price paid for it, also the great cost of carriage, it must be obvious to every member of the House that the rent was far too high, and that to continue to exact it from the Crown tenants would be nothing less than utter annihilation to the pastoral interest in that district. He would go to that portion of the Darling Downs, on the Condamine: he unfortunately had a station there, the rental of which was seven-pence halfpenny per head of the stock on it. Honorable members residing in town had no knowledge of the difficulties the squatters had to contend with under existing circumstances; and the action of the House in reference to them was a matter of serious moment to all connected with the pastoral interest. He assured the House that the hard earnings of a long lifetime had been lost in a struggle with the difficulties which led up to the present crisis. When he found that a million of acres of the finest land in the colony would not support 75,000 sheep, was he to be told that the outside squatters did not pay sufficient rent? Was he to be told that, with the uncertainty of the seasons, and the difficulties arising therefrom, which they were unable to control, they did not pay enough? He considered that if they had no rent to pay—if the runs were held under license, as in the early days,

and assessment made for police and other purposes, as required—the system would be far more equitable than at present. The commencement of the season might be good, the waterholes full—fifty feet deep—yet, in the course of four months, from the great evaporation in the western district, disaster would impend; the water, for miles around, would, in that time, be dried up entirely, and the grass withered and dead. One matter was entirely neglected in the Bill, and that was the right of the tenant to remuneration for improvements, to make the country attractive. A large expenditure was necessary to provide water out west; and, he believed, portions of the Mitchell were the same, though he had not been over that district. The Government should act towards the Crown tenants in the west as the New South Wales Government acted to the squatters similarly circumstanced in that colony. When the present Minister for Works, on a former occasion, brought forward his Bill dealing with the squatters' tenure, he (Mr. Forbes) had some amendments to propose; but the Bill was thrown out for the reason that it did not accomplish everything. But, at that time, things were prosperous, wool was high, and circumstances were favorable for the squatters doing without the relief that it was then proposed to give them. The course of legislation which had been pursued by the Parliament, ensured, as the honorable member for East Moreton had put it, the getting rid of the rotten sheep of the districts near the seaboard to the outside squatters. It was well known to him (Mr. Forbes), that even the sheep of gentlemen who now sat on the Treasury benches, had gone from the Darling Downs to Warrego, and that they had not benefited that district in any way. He could not conceive it to be true, though it was stated in the last report of the sheep inspector, that there were 8,000,000 of sheep in the outside districts. If 2,000,000 were taken off it would be nearer the actual number. He knew of one station on which, as he had said before, 37,000 were lost. It was known very well, from the progress reports received, that in South Africa wool was being raised which was coming up to the production of this colony. A short time ago he found, in running over one of those reports, that labor was to be had at the rate of £6 per annum, which, with cheap pastures, would enable the South Africans to outdo Queensland in the London market. Again, South America was a great competitor with us at home. In the face of those facts, it behoved the House to consider well how far present legislation would tend to retard or annihilate the pastoral productions of this colony. They knew that every device was used, now, for the purpose of supplying the world's market with the meat of other countries. It would be impossible for this colony, at the distance of eighteen thousand miles, to compete with

South America, which was distant only six thousand miles, from England; the latter country having, in addition to its geographical position, the advantages of cheap labor and cheap pasturage. He could only look forward to one gleam of hope, and that was—owing to the peculiarities of the soil and climate of Queensland, this colony might be enabled to produce wools of a superior quality to any other country, as had already been shown by the catalogue of sales. At this time, Queensland wools obtained the highest price in the world's market, London. Still, he could not look forward and believe that the profits which would be derived from the production of wool of the finest quality would be sufficient, with labor at the price which had to be paid for it in the outside districts. Labor cost from £1 to £1 10s. a week; and, at that rate, it would be impossible to make pastoral undertakings remunerative. But, as he before observed, there were the enormous rents, and the distant carriage—three hundred miles from the nearest terminus of the railway, which had cost so much money—which presented other difficulties to profitable investment or industry; and they stood in the way, if even the question of boiling-down the stock was entertained. But, to finish all, there was the Land Act of 1868, which gave a monopoly to those gentlemen who had a monopoly of everything heretofore. For instance, in a season when it was found impossible to drive stock to market, the Darling Downs squatters offered their brethren in the outside districts three-and-sixpence a head. They were not very amiable gentlemen by that evidence of their treatment—nothing but the direst selfishness marked their whole career. The legislation of the past showed it; they could not even allow a sheep to cross the border at the time they had everything in their own hands. When he, on a former occasion, presented a petition to the House to have the restrictions removed which were imposed on the introduction of sheep overland, he was almost annihilated by those very gentlemen. Scab was the pretext for excluding sheep from the other colonies. Yet, after all, he did not know that he had a right to blame gentlemen for looking to their own interests in the way they had done. He appealed to the town members—not to the Downs members—to legislate so as to make the pastoral interest in the outside districts progressive and productive. He wanted no more Darling Downs legislation. He said to the representatives of the large centres of population that, if they did not foster production now, that great interest which was involved in the measure under consideration would not recover from its great present depression, and would die out. If the exports of the colony became reduced one-half, what was to become of it? The people now in the colony could not live; they would have to leave. It was known very

well that legislation had, heretofore, taken a wrong direction—that it had brought upon the people the existing heavy taxation, for the sake of one favored locality. He had heard an honorable member, now on the Treasury benches, describe humorously to the House the system of “log-rolling” which had been carried on, to get the railway to the Downs constructed, when it was the general policy to squander the public funds; but that kind of thing must end. There must be no favoring of a particular district. If the Parliaments acted right at this juncture of affairs, the colony would recover its condition of prosperity in a few years. But every man must put his shoulder to the wheel. There must be a new system of pastoral management, which could only be brought about by the fostering of the interest in the outlying districts. The changes that would be made in the next few years, properly directed, were almost inconceivable. The labor that would make the pastoral interest productive in the far west must be brought from another quarter than that presided over by an Agent-General for immigration, or any one sent hence by the House. It would be secured by private enterprise; and, when private enterprise was thus set in action, there would be five times the produce of wool from those distant districts that was now realised, and of finer quality than the present produce. It was only under such circumstances that he could expect this country to compete with other countries. He had a good deal more to say on this subject, but he thought honorable members were tired of it, now. He should be prepared, when the Bill was in committee, to move two or three amendments, which he must get into the Bill somehow. He had not lost sight of the subject since the question of pastoral relief was formerly under consideration in the House. By benefiting the producers, every other class in the colony would be benefited. Though he did not approve of the Bill in its present shape, it was desirable to pass the second reading. Ere it went into committee, honorable members would do well to consider the Bill in all its bearings, so that when they came to deal with it in detail, they could so amend it as that it would be a measure acceptable to the people, generous to the outside squatters, and beneficial to the colony at large.

Mr. WALSH: As he did not wish to see the general question debated on his motion for adjournment, he would therefore withdraw the motion.

Motion for adjournment, by leave, withdrawn.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said he thought it would be acceptable to the House if the debate were now adjourned, and that the present question should take precedence of other business, to-morrow.

There being no objection, upon motion made and question put, the debate was adjourned accordingly.