Queensland

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[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

FRIDAY, 29 MAY 1874

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Friday, 29 *May*, 1874.

Crown Lands Sale Bill (Resumption of Debate).—Adjournment.

CROWN LANDS SALE BILL.

[RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.]

Mr. IVORY said, on the last occasion this Bill was before the House, he listened with great attention——

The SPEAKER: On the last occasion the Bill was before the House, the honorable member spoke.

Mr. BAILEY would support the second reading of the Bill. He thought it was unnecessary for honorable members to enter into its different clauses, as there was no doubt they would be well worried, and, perhaps, amended, to a considerable extent, in committee; but, he must say, it required no prophet to foretell what the effect of the measure would be. It would have the same effect as all previous Land Bills which had been passed in this colony: it would hit very hard on the small selectors; while the land monopolists would soon find a way to evade it, as they had done with previous Acts of the kind, and secure what they wanted. He would, however, vote for the second reading, if it were only to show the country the utter uselessness of passing Land Acts on this principle. It was just like a farmer whose fence was broken down, attempting to stop the gap with a few bushes; it did very well for a short time, until some unusually greedy beast came along, saw the opening, and forced its way through; its example demoralised the whole herd, and in a few days the place would be just as bad as if there was no fence at all. It would not be a very difficult thing to introduce a Bill which would be dummy-proof, but he did not believe the Government had the moral courage to bring in such a measure. He considered they had brought forward this Bill as a kind of makeshift; and as it was, perhaps, the best makeshift they could get, he was perfectly willing to support it on that ground. He was sure the Government were fully aware of the right—and, in fact, the only—way by which the abuses of previous Land Acts and the abuses of the present Act might be remedied; and he hoped to see the day when the lands of the colony would be recognised as the capital of the colony, which would produce good interest, and not be treated in the way they were likely to be treated.

Mr. THOMPSON said this Bill contained many new principles; but, before proceeding to go into those principles, he would state that he did not intend to follow some speakers in their remarks with regard to the last Government. He thought the last Government were well able to rest upon their laurels, and need not fear the comments of adversaries. With regard to the assertion that under that Government dummying took place to a large extent, he denied it entirely. The dummying which had taken place in this colony, of the most hurtful character, was under the Act of 1866; the dummying which took place under the Act of 1868 had been comparatively harmless; and the dummying that occurred during the period the late Government held office was less than that which took place previously. They stopped it where they could, and where it did take place, it was only in isolated instances and in small transactions, which it would be impossible for any Government to stop. There were no large dummying transactions during their tenure of office that they were aware of, and none had been brought to light. In fact, he could say, that during the existence of the last Government, there were more *bona fide* settlers settled on the land than during any previous time; but he did not say there was more land taken up, which was quite a different thing; but there were more *bona fide* men settled in East and West Moreton and on the Darling Downs. In the outside

districts also, the late Government were the first to open the land under the Act of 1868. He would not refer further to these matters, because it was now of no consequence to anybody what the late Government was;—the members of that Government were perfectly content to abide by the verdict of the country, and these things could not be of interest in discussing a new Land Bill. They must all admit that abuses had occurred under the Land Acts of the colony, and now an attempt was made to remedy those abuses, and the Bill professed to throw open more land for selection. The first principle of this Bill appeared to be that they were to resume the remaining halves of the runs; and while that might be perfectly correct in itself, he contended that if they did it in the way proposed, it would be an illegal way. It was not the way that the leases provided for, and even if the Bill were passed, it would be an unconstitutional Act, inasmuch as it would be in violation of pre-existing contracts. Now, with regard to the power of resumption, it happened that a very material part of the clause recited was left out, namely, "tracts of not less than eight square miles in one block." That might be a mere accident on the part of the draughtsman, but still he said the proposal in this Bill was not in accordance with the Act under which the resumptions were to take place; and that if such resumptions were to be made, it must be done, as it was done before, by resolutions of both Houses of Parliament. This resumption was said to be the grand feature of the Bill, but he could not see that it was so great a feature; neither could he see that the throwing open of all this land would do very much good. He thought it would be far better to throw it open where it was wanted, which would have the effect of massing settlement in certain localities, instead of scattering men broadcast over the country, under the extraordinary provisions of the Bill, and having the eyes picked out of it, and leaving the rest never, perhaps, to be settled on. He believed the ultimate effect of this would be, that these lands would pass into the hands of the runholders, which was the very thing they were trying to contend against. And in addition to this, a scattered population would have a demoralising tendency, and would not lead to that which was the real and desirable settlement of the country, namely, the settlement of a large and well-to-do population—not a population scrambling for existence, and having no time to attend to education, decency, or anything else. He, therefore, contended the provision for throwing open the whole of the rest of the halves of runs was not a wise one, but he supposed something of the sort had to be attempted by the Government, because their promises had been so lavish that they must make some show of effort to perform them. Another principle tending in the same direction was that there was to be no classification. Now, he contended that was not only unjust but impolitic. If there was to be no classification, the inevitable result would be that no one would take inferior land, and it was another piece of machinery by which the eyes would be picked out of the country. The only recommendation or justification of this system, of no classification and uniform price, was, that the first comers were entitled to first choice; but he contended they were not; but the proper principle to go upon was, that he who took the best should pay the best price. That was the ordinary principle in all commercial transactions; and if it was good as such, he thought it might also be taken as a guide in the administration of the public lands. Then there was another new principle introduced—the principle of compulsory personal residence, the effect of which would be simply this: that an employer of labor who did not choose to reside on his land could not employ that labor, and the capitalist who was desirous of spending his money could not do so without going to auction, and taking his chance of getting isolated pieces now and again. In short, it amounted to this: that anybody who selected land must select it under the homestead condition of personal residence; they abolished the conditional purchaser, and the only concession they made to the homestead selector was, that he might have a lesser area, and at a smaller price; and although they called him a homestead selector, still he was the same as a conditional purchaser. He thought it highly impolitic and unjust that the employer of labor should not have the same chance as the man who was able to reside on the land. What they wanted was population, and the expenditure of capital on the soil; and to say that a man should only employ his capital and labor on land he actually resided on, was coming down to a very narrow and retrograde principle. The excuse was that it would prevent dummying, and of course they all deprecated that there had been such a thing as dummying; but it only showed that these conditions, from first to last, were vicious. This had become more evident from year to year, and he contended the only proper system, and the only system which would give satisfaction, would be the auction system, with a low upset, which could be so worked as to prevent a monopoly, by adopting the principle of putting alternate blocks up for sale. Wherever the Government considered it advisable, they could put up land in alternate blocks in any district where it was desirable; monopoly would not take place, and the country would also have the benefit of the advance in price of the alternate blocks which were not sold at first. There was no doubt—for the land bailiffs appointed by the present Government had shown it, and it was not known before—that the acquisition of land in violation of the Land Acts, and the scandals that had taken place by large monopolies, was wide-spread among the small farmers—there was hardly a

farmer who had not dabbled in it more or less—and he held that if they gave land to the small farmer, they would also have to give it to the large man. This was a most difficult position, and it was a difficulty which had been foreseen and predicted. When the Government were dealing with the people by deferred payments and the performance of conditions, and pressure came on, the payment and the conditions must be given up. They had had experience of that here, and also in New South Wales, in connection with the quit-rent. The difficulty began by the Crown grantees declining to pay; concessions had to be made, and ultimately the quit-rent had to be given up altogether. Again, in that colony, the Government gave credit on land, receiving so much as interest, and a popular cry had been got up that what was considered as interest should be taken as payment of the principal; and considering the enormous voting power which was in the hands of the free selectors of that colony, they would probably get this carried out—they would get the land for the interest of the principal, instead of the principal price at which they bought it. Under the Act passed in this colony in 1860, a man could take up land at sixpence per acre in agricultural reserves; but after a few years, pressure came, and in passing the Act of 1868 they had to give those who took up land under that Act the right to acquire the fee; and so it would be always, for once they settled a large population on the land they were practically at their mercy. He knew some of his constituents were forcing this very strongly on him; they said all they now wanted was their deeds. It appeared these bailiffs had frightened them to such an extent that they would have nothing else now, and the voting power that class possessed was so large that the Government—whatever Government was in power—would have to do something for them. That was really the land difficulty of the present day, and he should be delighted himself to see a way out of it; but at present he must confess he saw none, except a compromise which he should very much deprecate. He should like to see the men who took up land really *bona fide*, and who tried honestly to perform the conditions, assisted in some way out of their difficulties; but the difficulty was to deal with those who took up land in fraud of the law, and knowing they were violating the law, and he should be sorry to see them get through their difficulties. But how was the honorable the Minister for Lands to pierce the consciences of these people? He must give that honorable member credit for not being inclined to shirk responsibility; for one of the great principles of the Bill was, that the Minister for Lands should have supreme control, and was to do everything. But there could not, he contended, be a more vicious principle than that of the political head of the Land Department, the landlord of the free selectors, having the yea or the nay in all matters connected with the administration ot the lands of the colony—to give or refuse them their deeds as he thought fit. It was, in fact, empowering him to exercise judicial functions; and there could not be a worse person to exercise functions of that sort than the political head of the Lands Department. That was really the great objection to this Bill; the whole of the other objections he thought small in comparison with that. The evil of it had been seen ever since they had a Land Act; and he contended the Minister for Lands, instead of having judicial functions, should have mere administrative power. And yet by this Bill, he was to have judicial functions; he was to be satisfied whether the land had been dummied, and all matters of that sort, and in reality, there was no end to his power. He was, in fact, the most powerful man in the colony, with the greatest power of teasing, which, in the hands of a Minister, was most enormous. There was the fawning, the waiting, the putting off; and the way he could bring his power to bear on those he disliked was one of the greatest powers he possessed; and here it was proposed to invest the Minister for Lands with full power. It seemed to him to be monstrous, and any one looking at it must see it was a most dangerous power to entrust to any political Minister. This was no new doctrine with him; he had always held that a political Minister should have no judicial power; and it was on this ground he had always objected, and tried, when in office, to enforce upon his colleagues that the Attorney-General had no right to try prisoners by being the grand jury of the colony. He had, perhaps, greater faith in the present Minister for Lands than most members of that House, at any rate, than most members on the Opposition side of the House; but they must contemplate the possibility of having far worse Ministers than that honorable member.

Mr. PALMER: Impossible.

Mr. THOMPSON: And if honorable members only looked at clauses 39 and 40, they would see that the powers proposed to be given to that Minister were something perfectly enormous. He must first, under clause 39:—

> "Every conditional purchaser shall reside on the selection continuously and *bonâ fide* during the term of his conditional holding Provided that if at any time during the currency thereof it shall be proved to the satisfaction of the Secretary for Lands that the selector has failed in regard to the said condition of residence during a period of three months it shall be lawful for the Governor in Council to declare the land absolutely forfeited and vacated."

Now, there could be nothing worse than that, because the satisfaction of the Minister for Lands was just what he chose to think; he decided accordingly, and there was no appeal. There were numerous cases in law deciding on the very words "to the satisfaction of So-and-so," and it had been held, as was no doubt common sense, that they could not step

beyond the mind of the man who was to be satisfied; whether he was rightly or wrongly satisfied no one could question, and if he had the power, he had the right to exercise it. In the next clause they would find the same thing again—the selector had no power to transfer until he had satisfied the Minister for Lands. All this power, he maintained, was extreme, and bad in principle, and ought not to be supported by the House. Another new principle on the Act of 1868 was, that even after a man had got a certificate of the performance of conditions, he, or his transferror, must still continue to reside up to the end of the ten years, unless he chose to pay up at once. He was not prepared to say that was bad in principle, or that something of the same sort might not be gathered from the old Act; but the principle was clearly laid down, and he thought it right to direct the attention of the House to it. Then there was a clause which he considered was a good and fair one, although he believed it was not satisfactory to his constituents, or to some of them, namely, that previous selections should be counted as against the total amount which could be taken up under this Bill. The next new provision was the mining clauses, which were quite different from any they had previously had. The Bill only provided for the leasing of mineral lands, unless the person exported or sold £10 worth of minerals, in which case he might, under the sixty-fourth clause, purchase the fee-simple at £2 per acre. He had always been of opinion that it was a good thing to offer inducements to the purchase of mineral lands; and he thought it was worthy of the grave consideration of that House, whether they should put the obstructions which the Bill proposed in the way of a man acquiring the fee-simple of mineral lands. Another point was the reduction of the area proposed to be granted to a selector, which was susceptible of great difference of opinion;—his own opinion was, that in the rich districts small areas should be allowed, and that in the larger and distant, and comparatively inferior districts, large areas should be given. In the sugar-growing districts in the far North, for instance, he did not think it would be worth a man's while to settle down on an area of 640 acres; and, in committee, he would introduce a clause re-adjusting the sugar clauses in the Act of 1868, which provided that anyone going on land could take up a larger area if he proved that in three years he had expended a certain amount in the cultivation of sugar or coffee. Now, in regard to the prevention of dummying, he thought a good principle to adopt was that which had been adopted in Victoria;—that until the man had had the land for three years, during which time he held it simply under license—he could have no title, and at the end of three years he could only obtain a title on proof that he had performed certain conditions. He thought that would be a good clause to introduce, and, seeing that the Government were so very amiable with regard to the matter of alterations in the Bill, he did not see why it should not be embodied in committee—if the Bill got so far. In addition to these leading features, there were several matters of detail which would require to be mentioned. There was the power for seekers after minerals to enter other people's land, which was bad in principle, and was likely to lead to the clashing of interests, which should be avoided as far as possible. With regard to the policy of the Government on the Bill, he thought they had enunciated that they had no policy, because the honorable the Secretary for Lands had indicated his willingness to give up some principles; and the honorable the Colonial Secretary, also, announced his willingness to give up others; and he would therefore like to know the principle by which they were prepared to stand. In fact, he would like to know what distinctive policy the Government had on any subject—because, as yet, he had failed to discover it.

Mr. W. Scott said he was very glad, the other evening, to hear Ministers characterise the Bill as a Squatting Bill, and after hearing such an announcement from the liberal side of the House, he would certainly support the second reading. In the first place, the Bill proposed to cancel the Act of 1868, and it should be remembered that there was at the present moment 35,000,000 acres open to selection, which it was proposed to bring under this Bill, at the same time bringing the price up to ten shillings per acre. Now, under the Act of 1868, this land was offered at five shillings, ten shillings, and fifteen shillings per acre, according to classification; and, he thought, if the public were going to be gulled in this way into paying ten shillings an acre for land they could now get for five shillings per acre, they must be greater fools than the honorable the Minister for Lands took them to be. As to the limitation of area, he thought 1,280 acres was remarkably small, but that could be remedied in committee, and he would certainly support the Bill on the understanding that the area would be enlarged. To the condition of personal residence he strongly objected, because he believed it would have an effect quite contrary to that which was expected—of settling an industrious population on the land. He believed that, under this Bill, they would never get people to settle on the land; and what would become of the 35,000,000 acres now open? In fact, sooner than fix the price at 10s. per acre, he would bring it down to 2s. 6d. per acre, in order to induce settlement; and he would support a measure to that effect, classing the land as it was now, but at 2s. 6d., 5s., and 7s. 6d. per acre. In throwing open the whole of the land in the settled districts, he believed only two or three squatters in the House would be affected by it; but he thought the arguments brought forward in regard to the settled districts

also applied to the unsettled districts. It appeared that the honorable the Minister for Lands proposed to throw all the land open, in order that the people might judge what was best themselves, because he was not able to judge. He would oppose the throwing open of more land in the unsettled districts, because there were sufficient powers for that purpose in the Act of 1869. He moved the adjournment of the debate.

Mr. IVORY hoped the House would oppose the adjournment of the debate, because the question under consideration was a very important one, and it was premature to suddenly call for an adjournment. There could be no doubt whatever that the honorable member at the head of the Government had tried to burke inquiry into the question. By inadvertence, being a new member, he said a few words in moving the adjournment of the debate the previous evening, when honorable members appeared to be exhausted; and in consequence of that, that honorable member tried to burke inquiry and shut his mouth from giving expression to the views he held on this important question. Now, the honorable the Colonial Secretary and the honorable the Secretary for Lands had both informed the House that the grand principles of the Bill were resumption and residence; and with regard to this first principle—or rather the want of principle—he must say he considered it the most unprincipled thing he had ever heard of—that when the Government of a country like this made a bargain, and not merely made a bargain, but made it for a consideration, they should even attempt to repudiate that bargain. They were bound, even if they were not the Government which made the agreement, to carry out the agreements of their predecessors. He looked upon it in this light: Supposing he was a member of a firm which had made large contracts in advance with other people, he would like to know what people would think of that firm if they repudiated their contracts, because two or three of their partners had died in the meantime, and new partners had taken their place. He looked upon the Government in much the same light. They were bound in honor to carry out the agreements made with the holders of the ten years' leases. He held there was no sufficient demand for land at present which would justify the Government or the House in resuming this land. They had ample power, under the Act of 1869, to resume whatever land might be shown to be required; and he maintained that the true principle was that a *bona fide* demand for land should exist before any resumption should take place. The honorable the Minister for Lands said the Act of 1869 gave sufficient powers of resumption to satisfy places such as Clermont, Roma, *et cætera*; and there was no doubt whatever that if a demand for land could be proved to exist, as was the case when the last Goverament was in power, they had ample power to resume what was required; and yet they wished to upset the general policy of the country upon a question involving the alienation of lands in East and West Moreton and the Darling Downs districts. The honorable the Minister for Lands was reported to have said, and from his recollection of what he said, the report appeared to be correct:—

"For instance, there were numbers of runs in the Port Curtis and other districts where not a single selection had ever yet been made on the resumed halves, and it was probable that this would continue to be the case for a long time under this Bill. He could not see how any person could oppose this scheme without putting themselves on the horns of a dilemma; for either the land was wanted for settlement or otherwise it would not be occupied, and if it were not wanted there could be no harm done in allowing it to remain open for selection when the pastoral tenant was in no way deprived of the use of it."

Now, that was one of the most hair-splitting arguments he ever heard in his life. The honorable the Minister for Lands resumed, and he told the House he did not resume; but he did worse than resume; he threw the whole of the land open for selection, so that—as had been said by the honorable member for the Bremer—the eyes might be picked out of it; the best pieces would be picked out here and there until the runs would become actually valueless. It would be far better for the lessees, if the land were absolutely required, that a further portion should be taken away from them altogether, so long as they had some portion left entire. There could be no doubt they would be harassed by people being dotted all over their runs; and as the honorable member for the Bremer pointed out, it would lead to the scattering of population, which was calculated to have a demoralising tendency. He thought, if they carried out the principle that a man was the best judge of where he ought to take up land, they ought, in common justice to all, to have free selection over the whole colony. The honorable the Minister for Lands quoted from a letter he received from a squatter, which, he said, contained this very cogent argument:—

"That, having been informed that a portion of the leased part of his run had been thrown open for selection, he had the honor to lay before the Minister for Lands certain reasons for this not being done, unless all the other lands in the neighborhood were thrown open also; he argued that if the other runs were also thrown open this would give him a chance, as many of them contained much better land than his."

But the same argument applied to the unsettled districts, and unless the honorable the Minister for Lands was prepared to carry out free selection all over the colony, he could not see that he was in the least degree justified in proposing to throw open the remaining portion of those runs where he admitted himself no land had been selected, even on the resumed portions. So much for

the question of resumption, which he considered a most improper proceeding, inasmuch as it was unnecessary, and it was a breach of faith with the holders of ten years' leases. He had no interest in the question himself, but, as a mere matter of right, he maintained that until a clear demand for land was shown to exist, the Minister for Lands, or the Government, had no earthly business to make further resumptions. With regard to the principle of residence, he objected to that also; it seemed to him to be about the most thoroughly class legislation it was possible to conceive. It was the agriculturist—and as they had had the pure merinos, he presumed they would soon have the pure agriculturist—the agriculturist pure and simple—who was to have solely and entirely the right to select the country lands of this colony; for, under the restrictions imposed in this Bill, it was not possible for any other man to acquire country lands. He certainly must say that was the most monstrous proposition in the whole of the measure; and, as the honorable member for Port Curtis had well remarked, it was trying to shut the lands cry up in place of opening them. Hitherto the had been, Unlock the lands; but now they were to have a new lock which would lock them up entirely. With regard to doing away with classification and the alteration in price, he objected to these also. This classification might have been badly carried out, but that was not the fault of the Act, but of the officers whose duty it was to administer it; and he thought, if very little attention were paid to the matter, it would be very simple to arrive at a satisfactory classification. That, he thought, was one of the best features in the Act of 1868; and, as for taking land twenty miles from the railway, the thing was absurd, and he would not listen to it for one moment. Now, with regard to the consistency of the honorable the Minister for Lands, he said in his speech:—

"The effect of this classification had been very bad. It had been as irregular as it could be, and the tendency had always been downward. Land that a few years ago would, perhaps, be classified as agricultural would now be called first-class pastoral, and he had even seen second-class pastoral that would have, at one time, been called agricultural."

There the hononorable member contradicted himself.

Mr. PECHEY: Not at all.

Mr. IVORY: He submitted that he did, because he said he had seen second-class pastoral land that would have, at one time, been called agricultural. However, as the honorable member for the Bremer remarked, the effect of the Bill would be simply and purely to have the eyes picked out of the country; and he was glad to see that the honorable the Minister for Lands took the same view, for he said:—

"He had himself seen selections referred to him, consisting of good black soil rolling downs classed as second-class pastoral. They must recollect that by no system could they secure the worst land being taken up first. The first comer would very properly select the best land he could find."

Now this Bill actually offered facilities for picking the eyes out of the country. He did not suppose it was the intention of the Government to do so, because he believed the fact of the eyes being picked out of the country had been the foundation of every Land Bill that had been previously introduced into the House; and yet here was a measure brought in which actually offered a premium to persons to do so. They had been told that East and West Moreton, and the Darling Downs, were the gardens of the colony; they had these lands already largely settled upon, and now what were they going to do? They were going to throw the whole of these lands open, and the first comers would, of course, take up the best at 10s. per acre, although it had been previously classed at 15s., and there was to be no remedy for it. The present Bill applied equally to the North and the South, although no man could say the value of land relatively was as great in the North as in the South; and why, therefore, have a measure which applied equally to the whole colony? But as far as he could see, this Bill was not applicable to the whole colony, or to any portion of it. They were further told by the Minister for Lands that land had increased greatly in value, and

"To illustrate this he pointed to the instance of Dalby, surrounded by holders of forty, fifty, and sixty thousand acres, as compared with Warwick, Drayton, Toowoomba, and Allora. In the latter place, where settlement had progressed, the price of land had increased to £3 and £4 per acre, and the result would be that those who had acquired large areas of land under the pre-emptive right and another way at £1, would be induced to part with it."

These parties, forsooth, were to make their pile by selling land, which they purchased at £1 per acre, at £3 or £4; but under this Bill, the best land in the colony could be obtained at 10s. per acre. He considered that the Government should now stand, as they should have hitherto, in the position of a large holder of land who was anxious to increase the value of his property; he had parted with a portion at a very large figure to promote settlement—as he had known owners of land to give it for a term for nothing, on the condition that the party should build a house upon it—and as he considered, under the constitution, the Government were the trustees of the public estate, and as they had effected this settlement, and alienated a large portion of it, they should now endeavor to make use of that land for the benefit of the public. Instead of doing injustice by resuming the remaining halves of the runs, they should get them surveyed and cut up into blocks of various sizes, and at the expiry of the term of four or five years, they should be sold by auction

to the highest bidder. With regard to the Darling Downs, they would be simply decreasing the value of land by passing this Bill. They were told, on the one hand, it was worth £3 or £4 per acre in certain places, and on the other, the Minister for Lands proposed to alienate it at 10s. per acre: the thing was preposterous. On the whole, he considered the present Act worked very well, and with a few amendments, it would be decidedly better than the present Bill. He did not see any necessity for the Bill, or that there was any use for it; it would upset agreements which had been entered into with perfect *bona fides* in the settled districts, and he, for one, would not support it.

Mr. PECHEY would oppose the adjournment of the debate, and his reason for doing so was, that they had heard very little, in the way of argument, against the Bill, up to the present time. Honorable members who had spoken against the Bill, as a rule, commenced with the line of argument they might expect to hear from pastoral tenants; but before they finished their speeches they turned round and took up the cudgels for the poor selector; in fact, some of them appeared almost heart-broken on this account. He thought they had better go on with the discussion of the Bill, which had been in the hands of honorable members for about six weeks; and he did not think they would get on any better with it if an adjournment took place. The objections raised by the honorable member for the Burnett told, he thought, rather strongly in favor of the Bill. That honorable member had endeavored to lead the House to suppose that the honorable the Minister for Lands, in making this suggestion, made a suggestion of repudiation; but it was nothing of the kind, as that honorable member must know. The ten years' leases were granted on the distinct understanding that when any portion was required for settlement, it could be resumed by resolutions of both Houses of Parliament; and he took it, if they passed this Bill, including the clauses having reference to the resumption of these lands, that would be a resolution of the two Houses. How on earth that honorable member could make it out to be repudiation, if they merely took back what they had distinctly reserved for themselves, he could not understand. It was absurd, and puerile, and unbecoming the dignity of honorable members on the other side of the House, many of whom were engaged in pastoral pursuits, to make use of such an argument. He believed there was no member of that House who would sanction anything like an act of repudiation. The next objection of the honorable member for the Burnett was in regard to the non-classification of land; and he was of opinion that all they had heard about this portion of the Bill was simply words lost; for he took it that the best possible classification of land was by the people who took it up. They had heard a great deal about the pioneer squatter, and the benefit which should accrue to that class for having been the first to settle in the country; and he thought the pioneer agriculturist, or selector, should have some benefit of a similar kind to that claimed by some honorable members who spoke so often of what was due to the pioneer pastoral tenant. Honorable members who argued against the principle of non-classification appeared to lose sight of one of the most important matters to be considered in any colonial Legislature in dealing with a Land Bill, and that was that the value of the land did not exist in its particular richness, but in its nearest population; that was what he conceived made the land valuable. There was no doubt, as was said by one honorable member, if they did not wish the colony to become prosperous and rich, but to make Queensland a sort of Tommy Tiddler's land, they had only to drive population away, and to prevent it from increasing, and the land would remain as valueless as Robinson Crusoe's island was to him, of which he used a very small portion. But if they introduced population, those lands would immediately increase in value, and the present holders of large blocks were the very men, above all others, if they desired to increase the value of their property, who should be the first to support immigration to the colony; and who should see more clearly than any others that the principle proposed in the Bill was the one that they should look to more than any others—that it was population that made the land valuable, and that it would not be valuable without population. There had been a great cry against another groundwork of the Bill, that was, personal residence, which he took to be one of the keystones of it. Honorable members, as he had mentioned, shifted their grounds upon the Bill—they knocked it down on one side, and then made it stand up again on the other; but he believed personal residence was one of the best features of the whole Bill. If they desired to see a million and a-half acres of land monopolised by ninety persons, then by all means let them continue the present system; but if, on the other hand, they wished to see 50,000 people settled on fifteen million acres—and he hoped to see that that would be the effect of the Bill—then by all means let them support the residence clause in the Bill. They had been also told by an honorable member, that the Bill applied only to the Darling Downs and the Moreton districts, and that it should have been more comprehensive and give more scope; but it was generally understood to apply only to the settled districts, of which he held the Darling Downs and the Moretons were the principal parts. It was true, as they had been told by the honorable member for Port Curtis, that the settled districts extended northwards, and that the lessees of runs there had been put to an immense deal of useless expense in subdividing their runs, because, as the honorable member said, no

one had gone to settle upon that resumed land. But, in passing a Land Bill, they could only consult the interests of the Darling Downs and the Moreton districts; for how was it possible to legislate for a demand for land that did not exist in the northern districts? They could not "make fish of one and flesh of another," and therefore all had to be included in the one Bill. The honorable member had cut the ground from under his own feet, when he said that the land was not inquired for. Again, they had been told by the same honorable member that the preamble of the Bill should have been, "That whereas it is expedient to lock up and prevent all settlement on the lands of the colony;" yet the honorable gentleman who told them that, told them, a few sentences afterwards, that they were pandering to a craving for land, and that he did not consider that earth-hunger should be pandered to. What, he would ask, were honorable members to understand from those remarks? In the first breath, he said the Bill was to lock up the lands from settlement, and in the next, that it was pandering to earth hunger; the honorable member evidently contradicted himself. There was one point referred to by the honorable member for Bremer, namely, the closing of roads, and the honorable member said he was very sorry to see that there was nothing in the Bill to perpetuate the system under the Act of 1868. Now, he entirely disagreed with the honorable member, as he considered that one of the greatest curses of that Act was, the power given to close up roads, and that the system of monopoly would never have been carried out to the same extent if it had not been for that power. Again, if the honorable member had properly considered the question, he would not have proposed the system of having only alternate blocks put up for sale, as being the only way to prevent monopoly; for he (Mr. Pechey) considered that the system proposed in the Bill was just as good. He should oppose the motion for adjournment.

Mr. W. Scott said, that by permission of the House, he would withdraw his motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn accordingly.

Question—That the Bill be read a second time.

Mr. Bell said that, upon a former occasion, when he had attempted to read to the House certain resolutions which were passed at a meeting held at Dalby, on the 29th April last, he was ruled to be out of order, and was not permitted to read those resolutions. He imagined, however, that he was now in order, and that he might carry out the instructions he had received from that meeting, which was composed principally, if not entirely, of his own constituents. The resolutions were:—

"That in the opinion of this meeting, great disappointment is felt on reviewing the new Land Bill, entitled, '*The Crown Lands Sales Act of* 1874,' inasmuch as the maximum area allowed to be taken up under the new Act is grossly insufficient for the requirements of this and all other pastoral districts.

"That with a view to the permanent and profitable settlement of this pastoral district, selectors should be allowed to select to the extent of five thousand acres; twelve hundred and eighty acres, as proposed by the present Land Bill, being totally inadequate to the requirements of this district.

"That this meeting is of opinion that the resident clauses in the new Land Act are far too stringent, and require amendment.

"That in the opinion of this meeting, the action of the present Government in respect to the framing and reading of the Land Bill now before the House, is looked on with an amount of suspicion, as calculated rather to retard than advance the settlement and progress of the colony.

"That the Chairman be requested to forward the foregoing resolutions to our Member the Hon. J. P. Bell, requesting him to lay them before the House at once, also that he (the Chairman) correspond with the various Municipalities, requesting their co-operation in this important movement."

The resolutions he had just read, and the opinions which he entertained himself on the subject of the Bill now before the House, would induce him to vote against the second reading of it. His own objections to the Bill were—First, that it was not wanted; secondly, that it contained no provision for the classification of the districts of the colony; thirdly, that there was no provision made for the classification of the land in the different districts; fourthly, that the area proposed was unsuitable to some of the districts of the colony; fifthly, that it proposed to give no compensation to Crown tenants; and sixthly, that it proposed to give too much power to the Minister for Lands. The first objection was, that the Bill was not wanted, and he took it that it was the first principal objection he had, because it more affected his constituents and the neighborhood to which he belonged more than any other; the fact of the Bill having failed to make any provision for the classification of the districts of the colony, it could have no regard to the difference of climate and quality of land in the various districts. He contended that the portion of the Bill which gave only one area for districts all over the colony was particularly objectionable to his neighborhood, as he would endeavor to show. The present Act of 1868, if it was carried out properly, contained powers by which the Government could resume all lands that were required, when or where they were required; his district would be better served by it, and the western districts also would be better served, as the small area proposed by the Bill was not suitable to them; he, therefore, could not but particularly object to the measure on that ground. If the Bill passed in its present form, there could be no doubt that all the western portions of the settled districts would suffer most materially, in the permanent

settlement of that portion of the colony. His next objection was, that there was no classification of the land in the various districts, but the Bill limited the area to the same quantity of agricultural land in all parts. Now, there was nothing more obvious than that the area which would be sufficient for an agricultural selection in one part of the colony—in the Moretons and along the coast, where there was good agricultural land, would not be sufficient in the drier districts of the interior. He believed, also, that the effect of having only one classification would be, that the best land in the districts would be taken up first: it was quite clear that the worst lands could not be put on the same par with the best, and, in that case, the absence of a power to decide between the most valuable and the least valuable, would be a great want in the Bill, if it became law. At that moment there were, on some of the resumed halves of the runs in the settled districts, blocks of 40,000 and 50,000 acres not taken up, presumably, on the ground that they were not as good lands as selectors would wish to take up; and yet, under the proposed Bill, those lands would have to be paid for at a higher rate than under the present Act—in fact, at the same rate as the best land in the colony. Now, that the area proposed in the Bill was not suitable to all districts of the colony, was clear from the fact that in one portion of the colony—on the coast board—where most of the agricultural land existed, for a few miles westward of the Main Range, a small area only was available; but in the northern districts that same area would be utterly insufficient. He thought those were sufficient reasons why the Bill was not suited to the present requirements of the colony, in comparison with the present Act, which gave the Government power to give sufficiently large enough areas to meet the requirements of the different districts. Another very great objection to the Bill was, that it proposed to give no compensation to the Crown tenants. That objection was one which involved a principle of great magnitude. He believed that when the Act of 1868 was passed, there was an absolute pledge then given that the leases then issued were to remain intact for ten years, unless there was some distinct necessity for taking away those leases. He admitted that the honorable Minister for Lands had made an attempt at something like compensation in his Bill, by his proposal to issue fresh leases; but it was not intended by the Act that there should be free selection all over the settled districts, as was now proposed. Those leases had been a most valuable safeguard to the Crown tenants, and, in fact, were the most valuable provision in the Act of 1868; and yet that right was to be taken from them, whilst what was proposed in the Bill as compensation to them was in reality no compensation at all, for the breach of faith which would be committed. Of course, it would be said that under the Act, both Houses of the Legislature had power to resume the land by resolution; but it must be remembered that it was not intended that the land should be resumed for such a purpose as that proposed by the present Bill. The Bill was merely introduced as a matter of necessity—to stop a cry which had been got up in the country which the Government could in no other way stop. There had been no special cry for that land, and the leases proposed by the Bill would be no compensation for the leases given under the provisions of the Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1868. If there had been any pressing necessity for throwing open more land than was now open, then nothing would have been more easy or more equitable than for the Minister of Lands to have come down with a measure for giving fair compensation to the pastoral tenants. Had the honorable Minister for Lands done that, he would only have been meeting the wishes of the country. He was confident there was not an honorable member in that House, and that there was not a man in the country, who did not believe that it was the first duty of a Government to keep faith in all public matters; and he would repeat that if the honorable Minister for Lands had come down with some measure to compensate the pastoral tenants for having free selections over their runs, that measure would have been approved by the public. Another objection he had to the Bill was, that it placed too much power in the hands of the Minister for Lands, and he believed that objection had been admitted by honorable members on both sides of the House. That was obviously in opposition to the spirit of the Act of 1868, which legislated to keep out of the hands of that Minister the great powers which he had previously possessed. He was surprised that, in the face of that opinion, the Government should have come down with a measure which was of so very opposite an intention to the feelings of the Legislature as represented in a former Parliament. As had been represented by honorable members who had preceded him, there was nothing more dangerous than to give to Ministers power to coerce voters of different constituencies to act exactly in accordance with the wishes of the Government of the day, and yet the Bill would be a step in that direction; the temptation was too great to be vested in the hands of any Government, and there were few Governments in whom the House would desire to place such power. With regard to the residential clause, which was very important, he considered that the question was, whether the land policy hitherto expressed by the Legislature was to be one opposed to the land jobber, or whether it was to be one for the encouragement of a scramble for land?—that was the question to be decided, by the rejection or acceptance of the compulsory residence clause in the Bill now before the House. He did not deny that there were many advantages in having the residence

clause, so far as regarded the policy of the Bill; but he believed that a great deal more land would be selected, and that more people would be satisfied, if there was no compulsory residence clause. He was satisfied that if it was thrown out of the Bill, and residence was not necessary, an amount of land would be taken up that, in the first blush of the trial of the Bill, after it became law, would seem to be most favorable. The effect, however, would be, that a great deal of land would be taken up under similar circumstances to those under which it had been taken up before. People could so readily take up land, and there were so many plausible reasons with men to induce them to evade the law; there was, in fact, no doubt that, without personal residence, dummying would, to a greater or less extent, follow. The Bill, as it was at present, was outside the question of a party vote. He had stated his intention to vote against it, not with the hope of any party effect, because he knew it would pass its second reading; but because it did not come within the scope of what he considered should be a Land Bill to suit the requirements of all classes of the community. He did not think it was impossible to bring down a Bill that would comprise the various interests of the colony, but he could not say that he was in hopes of any such measure from the present honorable Minister for Lands. He had, however, been in hopes that the Government would, instead of coming forward with such a Bill as the present, have administered the Act of 1868 in such a manner as to throw open all the land which was required for settlement at the present time in the colony.

Mr. Macrossan said he believed he was able to regard the consideration of the subject under discussion from a different and more favorable stand-point than most honorable members who had spoken; as he neither owned nor was interested in a single acre of land in the colony, nor had he any desire to own any at the present time. At the same time, he had the strongest desire to see men settled upon it. The Bill had been very unfavorably commented upon by the Press, and no influence against it had been spared by wire-pullers, who, in accordance with the feelings of human nature, could hardly be expected to support it; and he might say, that although he was prepared to support the second reading, he did not approve of all the principles of it, as it at present stood, and thought it would require considerable amendment when in committee. Objections had been taken to the residential clauses, the classification proposed, and the extent of area; but he had a considerable objection himself, which had not been touched upon by any honorable member, and that was in regard to the price to be charged. He thought that that was far too high, in the first place. He believed it should be the object of every Government to encourage settlement as much as possible, and it should not be so much a question of the price they got from the land that they should consider, but the number of people they could get to settle upon it. It was not the wealth of a country that constituted its prosperity, but it was its population; and if they wished to encourage people to come from Great Britain to settle amongst them, they should hold out inducements to them equal to those held out by other countries and colonies. In America, people could get land for a dollar and a quarter an acre, or one-half of what it was proposed should be charged by the Bill; and taking into consideration the short distance across the Atlantic to that country, he thought this colony could not expect to attract people on the terms proposed. He believed that they should reduce the price—two shillings and sixpence per acre would be sufficient, with ten years to pay it in. As to classification, taking into consideration the manner in which land had been classified lately, it would be impossible to get people to settle upon it; but by reducing the price, the best land would be taken up, and that would be so improved as to increase the value of the second-class land afterwards. It had been said that there was no demand for land in the North; but he could assure the House that there was a demand for agricultural land all over the colony at the present time; and, as regarded the North, he had been written to by some of his constituents, requesting him to support the Bill, so that land should be thrown open for settlement there. Although he thought the proposed area was sufficiently large for the rich lands on the Darling Downs for the coast lands, and perhaps for the rich alluvial frontage of the northern rivers, still there was no doubt that in some districts it should be doubled. The residence qualification, in his opinion, was rather stringent, but he believed, from what had fallen from the honorable the Premier, that the Government would be quite willing to accept any reasonable amendment. If honorable members looked at the way in which the Land Acts had been administered, and how the best land had fallen into the hands of those for whom it was not intended, he thought they could have no serious objection to any clause the effect of which would be, by any means whatsoever, to give land to those who required it for actual settlement. If honorable members thought that the residence clause would be a prevention of dummying, they should not object to it; but if they believed it would not have that effect, then he thought it would be best for both sides of the House to agree to a land tax. He believed that, if residence restrictions failed, and improvement restrictions failed, a land tax would have the desired effect. He was sorry to hear, on the previous night of the debate, an extraordinary statement made by the honorable member for Port Curtis—one which, if the honorable member had con-

sidered, would not have been made—namely, that he deprecated any Government pandering to a craving for land. He would ask, whether there was any craving so strong in the human breast as that for land? Was it not that craving which had done more than anything else to create the greatness of the United States of America, and which had made the colonies of New South Wales and Victoria so prosperous? The honorable member had deprecated forcing land into the market, as he termed it, because he said it prevented people from going into other pursuits that would be more profitable to them. But the same argument might just as well be used in regard to squatting, or mining, or anything else in which men had been unfortunate. Objection had been taken to the great powers proposed to be vested in the Minister of Lands by the Bill, and he must say that he perfectly agreed with a great deal that had been said by the honorable member for the Bremer upon that subject. The honorable member had said a great deal, but he would ask that honorable member to point out how what he had recommended could be done. There was no doubt that there was a great deal too much power vested in all Ministers, but they must trust power somewhere, and they must have confidence in the honor and honesty of their Ministers, and rely upon the fact that those Ministers were responsible to the House, and could be turned out of office for any misuse of their powers. There was one thing in which he thought the honorable member for the Bremer was scarcely serious: he said that the effect of the Bill would be to place a great voting power in the hands of the Ministers of the day. To that he would say, that if the settlement of the people on the land would have that effect, he should be glad, as it would be one means of breaking down that monopoly, the power of which had been felt for so long in the colony.

Mr. THOMPSON said that what he did say was, that selectors under the Bill would become so numerous, that they would exercise the same power as in New South Wales; he did not deprecate the power, as he believed it would be a good power.

Mr. MACROSSAN would accept the honorable member's explanation. He did not think the Bill went far enough in throwing open land; for although he did not believe in free selection all over the colony, he thought it might be extended further than was proposed. He saw no reason to extend the line of the settled districts, but he thought that twenty miles on each side of every proposed railway line should be reserved, so that when they were made, the line should go through settlements—in fact, settlement should precede their construction. He also was in favor of having reserves of thirty miles in extent around every township in the interior, and around each gold field; reserving in the latter case the right to go upon such land to search for minerals. With those remarks he should support the second reading, reserving to himself the right of proposing such amendments in committee as he might think proper.

Mr. BUZACOTT said he was sorry that he could not support the second reading of the Bill as it stood. The honorable Minister for Lands, in moving the second reading, said that he believed very great scandals were attached to the administration of the Act of 1868; but the honorable member had given no reasons to the House in proof of that assertion. He believed that there had been very grave scandals on the Darling Downs, but he had never heard of any scandals in connection with the Act of 1868 in the district which he had the honor to represent. He believed that the operation of the Act in the northern and central districts had been entirely wholesome, and he did not see any reason why those districts should have their land laws disturbed simply because an exigency for legislation had arisen in the Darling Downs. So far as he could understand the Bill, he believed it was a desirable measure for East and West Moreton and the Darling Downs, but not beyond them; and he might say that its extension to the northern and central divisions would have the effect of doing very serious injury to them. He maintained that there was no honorable member more anxious than he was for the extension of settlement; but, at the same time, he was of opinion that the demand for settlement in the North had been amply provided for by the Act of 1868; and, if not, it had been from a defect in carrying out the provisions of that Act, more than from any defect of the Act itself. He might say that if all the land within thirty miles of Rockhampton had been resumed, as the Government had the power to do, there would have been no necessity for the measure before the House. He thought it was a very great hardship that members representing other parts of the colony should attempt to force upon the North a measure which was as distasteful to them as it was unnecessary. There were other objections, however, to the Bill. There was one portion of the Act of 1868 which had not been referred to during the present debate, which was that, when lands were resumed under it, they were entirely resumed; but that was not the case in the Bill before them, and the result would be that constant collisions would occur between the pastoral tenant and the free selector. They would find that a selector would take up a few hundred or so acres in the centre of a run; and, as his stock would sometimes stray outside the boundary, they would be driven off to the pound, and the same ill feeling would be caused which had existed elsewhere. But, under the Act of 1868, when half of a man's run was taken away, a selector need not confine his stock to his actual holding, as the whole of the land was resumed and open to anyone; under the Bill, however, he would have to do so, because the land not

absolutely selected still was held by the squatter. Again, if the five years' leases proposed by the Bill were issued, every man who took up a selection would be compelled to confine his stock to it, and that would be a hardship of which his (Mr. Buzacott's) constituents would very seriously complain; and if he did not protest against such a measure he would certainly be open to the imputation of having neglected their interests. With regard to the condition of residence, he thought it would be very desirable as respected the Darling Downs, but it was not at all required in the northern or central districts, where no serious evils had attended the operation of the present Act. He might say that persons living in towns, who had taken up selections, had found it a very great advantage to be able to employ persons to look after them until they had enough money to go and look after them personally. If it could be proved that there had been dummying in the northern districts, then he would at once say, impose those residence conditions; but as he had not seen or heard of that evil, he did not see why the people there should be restricted by such a condition as that proposed. He thought if the honorable Minister for Lands had proposed a system of discount, as it were, in regard to the quantity of land, it would have been much better. By that he meant, that supposing a man could, in certain proclaimed areas, take up only 640 or 1,280 acres for the first twelve months, after all the best land had been selected and any remained vacant, he should be allowed to have his quantity extended to 2,000 acres; and so on, till he could take up 12,000 or 15,000 acres, unless anyone came before him to take up a smaller area. He thought that, if such a system as that was established, they would not hear the complaints they had heard—that, on the Darling Downs, where land was worth £4 an acre, a man should be able to take up as large quantities as in other districts where it was not worth one-quarter the price. He believed the Bill was only intended for the southern parts of Queensland; and he trusted that, as it had been stated that the Ministers would consent to any reasonable amendment, they would consent to the proposed areas being confined to the Darling Downs, as also the compulsory residence clause; as they were not wanted at all in the northern or central districts. At any rate, he should protest against them being forced upon his constituents.

Mr. J. Scott said it was his intention to oppose the second reading of the Bill, for the reason given by the honorable member for Dalby, that it was not required, and inasmuch as the provisions of the Act of 1868 were quite sufficient for all purposes. The principles of the Bill had been so fully discussed that there was very little use saying more about them, and it was of no use going over the same ground again and again. Still, however, he had one or two remarks to make upon the Bill. One thing he wished to say was this, that it was an absolute breach of faith on the part of the Government, as, under the Act of 1868, the pastoral tenants gave up one-half of their runs on a distinct understanding that the remaining halves were not to be disturbed for ten years. But the Bill proposed to take those lands without any compensation whatever. It was true that it was proposed to give them a fresh lease extending to the year 1879, but he took it that all leases extended to about that time, so that it was really no compensation to those whose runs were taken from them. The effect of the Bill would be, that it would lower the price of land in those places where now it was most valuable, and would raise the price where it was least valuable. The price proposed to be charged was not certainly very high; still he considered it was not right to place the same value on all lands. He considered the residence clause was objectionable for many reasons; in fact, it was an infringement of the liberties of the subject, as it would prevent a selector from becoming a member of that House, as he could not attend to his duties there.

The Colonial Secretary: Yes; he would have his wife and children on his selection.

Mr. J. Scott: It was all very well for selectors on the Darling Downs, or East and West Moreton, who could run down to Brisbane every week; but a member residing in the North could not possibly go backwards and forwards to his selection, so that he would be positively precluded from ever being a member of that House. Should the Bill ever get into committee, he had several amendments to propose—for instance, the fifth section of the tenth clause left a power in the hands of the Minister, which was altogether beyond reason, and would open the door to oppression and favoritism. With regard to the land orders clause, he thought it would be as well to make it apply to land orders, not only under the present Act, but also under the former Act, as they were practically of no value at present.

The Colonial Secretary: There is a Bill before the House for that purpose.

Mr. J. Scott: Then again, clause 42 was rather peculiar: it said:—

"If a conditional purchaser shall die or be adjudged insolvent before he has completed the conditions of his purchase the Secretary for Lands may allow the transfer of the land comprised therein to any other person who would be competent to select the same as a conditional purchase under the provisions of this Act and such transferee shall continue to fulfil all and every condition in regard to residence or improvement as would have been required of the original selector."

It would be seen that that clause precluded altogether children from succeeding in any way to the selections of their father; but, no

doubt, under clause 23 of the Homestead Act some provision was made to meet such cases. He should oppose the Bill.

The Hon. B. B. MORETON said he did not wish to take up the time of the House for any length of time; but, still, he would not like to give a silent vote on a measure of so much importance as that now before them. He should support the second reading, for although he did not consider the Bill was altogether framed on proper principles, still it was a step in the right direction. He thought they might forecast for the future what had taken place in the past, and that the Bill would not be passed in another place; they might waste a few days in discussing it in committee, but it would not come to anything at all, and on that account he felt a certain amount of carelessness in the matter. He would like to make a few remarks on the land question, and in doing so he should refer to a concluding remark of the speech of the honorable Secretary for Lands, that—

"If he had a clean sheet and could commence *de novo*, he might be prepared to let lands go in unlimited quantities and without conditions over the whole country, simply putting an annual payment as a charge upon them."

That, he believed, was the true principle on which they should frame a Land Bill; and, if they could do so, he thought they could very successfully frame a measure both for the present and the future. On looking at the question now before the country, what they had to consider was that the settlement of a prosperous people on the land should be more their object than the mere alienation of land; and although he was a pastoral tenant of the Crown, he hoped that he would throw aside all personal considerations, and would strive to deal with the subject simply in a manner that would conduce most to the prosperity of the country. There were many portions of the Bill which were unsatisfactory to him at the present time, but he should not attempt to go into them that night, but when the Bill was in committee. The only remark he had to make was with regard to classification. He thought, for instance, with regard to the lands on the Darling Downs, which had been improved so greatly by the construction of a railway at a large cost, for which all the colony was taxed to pay, that the country should get the best price they could for them; and yet they were to ask only ten shillings an acre for them, or the same as was to be charged for land which had not been improved at all. He would prefer to see that land which was so improved, put up at auction, if that could be done; at any rate there should be some distinction made between lands which were improved and lands which were not improved. He did not see why they should pay interest on £3,000,000 for railways, unless some benefit was derived from the lands through which they passed. He was, for one, inclined to go in for free selection, if the necessity for it were proved, although he thought it was better and cheaper for the colony to condense its population as much as possible. Still, as he said, if it could be proved that free selection all over the colony was the best thing for it, he should, for one, be prepared to support it. Although he was a Crown tenant, he did not agree with what he had heard some honorable members who resided in the garden of the colony say —that if the Darling Downs was to be thrown open they would vote for free selection all over the colony; he had no doubt they would do so, as they would then consider that they had been ill-used. He hoped, however, that a better spirit would bias the minds of honorable members. He had not heard that mentioned in the House, but only outside of it. He knew that his constituents, to a certain extent, felt the want of more land thrown open; and although to some extent there had been a small amount of what people called dummying, there was a large amount of valuable land which was at present lying idle; and that had decreased the amount of land at present available for agriculturists. In regard to the residence clause, he thought there was no doubt that such a provision would be very valuable to prevent dummying. Still, at the same time, he considered that some modification should be made, so that those who lived in towns and wished to take up farms, should be able to do so, without the necessity of having to reside upon them. With those remarks he would say that he should support the second reading.

Mr. LORD said that, when he first read the Bill, it was his intention to vote against the second reading of it; but since he found that the Government were not wedded to any principle in it, except, perhaps, the resumption of the ten years' leases, he should be able to vote for the second reading. As regarded the resumption of the ten years' leases he was perfectly willing to vote for it, but at the same time he could see very little use in offering the land unless they offered some very liberal terms to induce people to take it up after it was resumed. He was sorry to see that the classification of the land was to be abolished, for he believed there were several different classes of land in this colony, and that, if, under the Act of 1868, classification had gone before selection, there would not have been so many complaints of favoritism or the reverse. If all the land in the colony was to be of the same class and price, it struck him that they would find that only the best was taken up, and that the worst, which was left, would be hardly of any use to the colony or to the revenue of it. In regard to personal residence, he certainly did think that it would be a most effectual means of stopping what was called dummying; but, at the same time, he thought that if the laws were properly carried out, it might be prevented without imposing that great hardship. When he

thought of the number of persons that personal residence would prevent from taking up lands, he was compelled to vote against such a clause, for he could not see why ninety-nine persons should suffer because there happened to be one black sheep in the flock, who chose to dummy. Had the Bill been really a liberal measure and offered a sufficient area to induce a man to spend the best part of his life on the land, he should have been better pleased; but the idea of offering a man 1,280 acres to spend the best part of his life on——why, if they were to give him the pick of it, and he had to live upon it for ten years, he would not accept it. He believed that if the Bill passed, in twelve months time they would require a new one; he thought no one knew that better than the honorable Minister for Lands himself. He contended that the fault of the land laws of the colony was not so much in the laws themselves, but in their administration, and that, if the Land Act of 1868 had been carried out in its integrity, there would have been no necessity for the present Bill. It was said that every man was mad in his way, and he thought that the framer of the measure, having in view only a few nice spots on the Darling Downs, had framed one for the whole colony. As the Darling Downs was the pick of the colony, he contended that no law made to apply to them would suit the rest of the colony.

Mr. GRAHAM said, in dealing with this Bill, he thought there were several provisions it would be quite unnecessary to comment on. For instance, there was the provision for sale by auction, which was substantially the same as was in the first Land Act passed in the colony; and the portion of the Bill which related to the surveying of land, and land orders, and mineral selections, he thought might also be left out of the discussion on the second reading, as being matters of detail which would be more properly dealt with in committee. In any observations he might make upon the Land Acts which had gone before, he would not, therefore, touch upon any of these subjects. They were told by the honorable the Premier of the colony, sometime ago, that the land question would be the great question of the day, and they were told the night before last that the only principle in this Bill was the resumption of certain leases; and, if this were the case, he thought the country should be congratulated upon the great question of the day being one of slight importance, and one which the Acts at present in force were quite ample to deal with. He believed the statement that the great principle of the Bill was resumption of the ten years' leases was merely an attempt to escape from the position the Government had taken up—by simply bringing in Bills for the House to deal with as honorable members thought proper. In fact, it appeared that the Government had no principle to go upon, and they said a certain clause, which they knew would be carried by a large majority, contained the principle of the measure, and everything else could go with the run. If they looked upon the land question as a great and important question, he maintained this Bill could not be said to deal with it at all. It was a half-and-half measure for the resumption of runs in the settled districts, but one would have supposed the whole question was going to be dealt with in a statesmanlike manner, and in a way which would have settled it satisfactorily for many years to come. He maintained that if they attempted to deal with the land question at all, they must deal with it as a question of how the lands could best pass from a leasehold to a freehold tenure. He knew the Minister for Lands said that was not his object, but that his intention was to settle the people on the lands; but he held the opinion that, in order to effect this, they should adhere to the principle now in force, of resuming land as required, and settling the people upon it; for there could be no doubt that under the Acts now in force a great many people had become settled on the land; and if those Acts were allowed to remain in force, that settlement would be very largely increased. If they went beyond that, they must start with the great question of the means of passing land from a leasehold to a freehold tenure; and he believed nothing had done more to settle people on the land than a measure of that kind. For the purpose of supporting his argument, he would allude briefly to the Land Acts which had gone before, and which dealt with the land otherwise than by sale by auction. The first Act passed in the colony was the Act of 1860, which provided for agricultural reserves, maintaining the price at £1 per acre, and with the right of leasing adjoining lands at sixpence per acre. The total gross area was 320 acres; and it also imposed conditions, one of which was occupation within six months, and another was that the whole of the leased land should be fenced within eighteen months. So far as these ideas were concerned, it was not a bad Act. The ideas of the time were, that those who used land for pastoral purposes should not use it for agriculture, and those who used it for agriculture should in no way interfere with pastoral pursuits. There was then a greater gulf between the two classes than existed at any other time, and he believed an Act, or an Order in Council, was in force at that time, which provided that the pastoral lessee should not be allowed to grow and sell agricultural produce; he might use what he produced, but he was not allowed to sell it. The result was, that those engaged in grazing pursuits had to occupy vast areas on which they could only pay a very small rent; and the agriculturist, on the other hand, was supposed to confine his operations to a few acres, for which he had to pay large sums, and which must be situated in the neighborhood of a town. This Act, like all the Land

Acts of the colony, had one great fault, and several smaller ones, and its great fault was that it depended entirely—not partially, but entirely—on administration. The theory was that the choicest lands should be proclaimed agricultural reserves, so that the persons practising agriculture could occupy them; but the administration of the Act was bad, and it was a complete failure. What he considered another great defect of the measure was the imposition of conditions, which were not fulfilled, and the Act worked so badly that only two years had elapsed when an amending Act was brought before the House. The Act of 1863, following the leasing system, made a new provision, namely, selection before survey, which had not existed before. It imposed conditions, however, which it would be absolutely impossible for any selector to fulfil; they comprised residence, fencing, and within one year one-sixth of the whole holding was to be brought under cultivation, which, of course, was utterly impossible, and the conditions were again not fulfilled. It also introduced what he considered the most pernicious system ever introduced into the colony—the system of signing a statutory declaration as proof of the fulfilment of conditions. It offered an inducement, and, in fact, a premium for perjury—one of the greatest crimes a man could commit. This Act failed because it made no provision for throwing land open; that was left in the hands of the Government of the day, and, as he had said before, it imposed conditions which it was impossible to carry out. The result was that *bona fide* selectors were not able to fulfil the conditions; and, in 1865, the Government came down with a Selectors Relief Bill, and he might here remark that this was by no means the last Selectors Relief Bill that House would have to deal with. The relief granted was the necessity for fencing, which was entirely done away with; the classification was reduced, but residence was at the same time retained. It was apparent in this case, also, that the imposition of conditions was a failure; and, when he came to the Act of 1868, he would point out why it was likely they would have to pass some more Selectors Relief Bills by-and-bye. There was another discovery made about that time, which was one of the reasons why the Relief Bill was brought in, and that was that those who were the real sufferers were the poor selectors. The few wealthy men who selected land under that Act performed the conditions, and it was really the poor *bona fide* selectors who suffered, owing to the heavy conditions imposed. His object in referring to these matters was to show that the imposition of conditions had always proved a failure, and always would prove a failure. He then came to the Act of 1866, and the first part of that was, he thought, the very best law they had passed yet. It offered all land for sale by auction in the first instance, and after it was passed at auction it was offered for sale on the principle of deferred payments; but still it had a fault—it depended entirely on the Minister of the day whether it succeeded or not. If the Minister put plenty of land up to auction, plenty would be open for selection; but, if he did not, the Act would be practically inoperative. It established, however, the best and the only true principle—that the only condition required of a man should be the payment of the price demanded from him, and if he did that, nothing more should be required. That was a thoroughly sound principle, and so far as that portion of the Act had been in operation, he believed its effect had been most salutary, not the least advantage being that the Government obtained the handsome price of £1 per acre. He believed that very little land which passed the auctioneer's hammer was not taken up while that Act was in force. The other part of the Act provided that land in the agricultural reserves should come under the operation of the Act, and that selectors should be subject to all the conditions imposed by the previous Act; and this part had been a complete failure. From this had arisen all the scandals about dummying, and its deleterious effects on the colony. Had the agricultural reserves remained as they were before, the second part of the Act would have had no operation; but, soon after the passing of the Act, a large portion of the Darling Downs was proclaimed an agricultural reserve, which was going outside the spirit of the Act, and under that proclamation nine-tenths of the dummying in the colony had taken place. He might say, further, with reference to this dummying under the Act of 1866, that some who dummied under that Act did not deny it; they contended, and with justice, that the Act allowed them to do so—that they simply acted in accordance with the Act, and were perfectly justified by that Act in getting persons to take up land and transfer it to them. The question as to how far this was legal or illegal was not now a matter for discussion. One point about these dummy selections which supported his argument that all these conditions were a failure and oppressive to the poor man, was, that almost every selection which had been taken up under the Act of 1866, ought to have been forfeited. The condition was that one-tenth of the land taken up should be brought under cultivation; and he believed that in no case, certainly very few, was this condition fulfilled; and after proper examination by the officers of the Government, a list of those who had failed in the performance of these conditions was drawn out for publication in the *Government Gazette*, in order that selectors should be called upon to show cause why their selections should not be forfeited. But at the last moment it was recalled and never was published—at least, that in connection with the Darling Downs, although recalled, was published, and the selectors in the neighborhood of Warwick, and between the railway

line and the range, were called upon to show cause why their selections should not be forfeited at the end of the year. But no further action was taken, and the rent was received as it had been previously. Whatever effect that might have on the question, it proved his argument, and also that of the honorable member for the Bremer—that the Government of the day found they could not carry out the Act in reference to those conditions. The sufferers would be the *bona fide* selectors. Whether they got the land legally or not, they did not carry out the strict terms of the Act; and the selectors bringing influence to bear on the then Government—of which the present Premier was Minister for Lands—they found the pressure so great that they did not enforce the express stipulations of the Act. In short, the first portion of the Act of 1866 was good so far as it went; but the result of the second part was, on the whole, a failure. This Act proving unsatisfactory, he next came to the Act of 1868, which had proved the most successful Act they had yet had. It introduced four entirely new principles; it made provision to reduce the price of land; it provided for classification of land; it opened very extensive areas for selection, which had never been done before, although there had been a great deal of talk about it; and it provided for very heavy pre-emptive rights. These were the new principles it introduced, and he might explain, with regard to the system of pre-emptive rights, that it existed previously in the Orders in Council, but it never before existed in any Queensland Act. Its other leading features were: it applied to the whole colony; it limited the area which each selector could take up; it imposed two conditions, one of residence and the other of fencing; and it also went a great deal further than any previous Act in that very injurious and lamentable system of making a statutory declaration at every turn. There was scarcely a step taken in the Act which was not accompanied by a statutory declaration, and he believed one of the results of this had been to make people look upon the signing of a statutory declaration as nothing more than writing their names upon sand. He certainly thought one result ought to be, that the House would never allow statutory declarations to be provided for in any other Act of the kind. This Act had the effect of settling a large population on the lands of the colony from one end of it to the other. It was true they heard a great deal about the dummying that had been carried on under it; but he agreed with the honorable member for the Bremer, that the dummying under this Act had been comparatively trifling. He believed it was carried on in this way: that under some understanding, not an agreement, the particulars of which he had no idea of, persons of repute who resided in the towns of the colony had gone to the land offices and had taken up sections of land which were occupied by other persons, on which the improvements had been carried out by other persons, on which the residence conditions had been fulfilled by the servants of other persons, and the title of which, as soon as granted, would no doubt be transferred to other persons. This was a difficulty he did not see how they could remedy by anything they could do. If they could prove that a person perjured himself, or paid another person to perjure himself, of course they would know how to deal with it; but, when there was nothing to show that a crime had been committed, but that there was something in the nature of a tacit understanding that the person taking up the land should transfer it, he thought it was a matter of conscience, with which the Government could not interfere. Besides the dummy question, there were several other matter which would arise. The operation of this Act was to extend over ten years; the first conditional purchase taken up would not—except in cases where the conditions were fulfilled and the rent was paid up, in which event there was an end to the matter—be finally dealt with until the end of ten years; and he believed that when the ten years elapsed, it would be found, in the majority of cases, without the slightest imputation of dummying, that the conditions were not fulfilled. From his experience of the Land Office, and he was sure the honorable the Minister for Lands would bear him out, one-half of his time was taken up in dealing with cases of hardship, where men, and even women, had taken up selections, chiefly under the homestead clauses, and, after expending every farthing they possessed on it, and working like slaves to fulfil the conditions, they at last found it absolutely necessary to go away and take a job to raise means to further improve their selections. These were real *bona fide* selectors who, from no fault of their own, were unable to fulfil the conditions. He ordered a record to be kept in the office of all such cases, with the intention, had he remained in office for any considerabe length of time, to come down to the House and ask for relief to be granted to these persons; and he was sure the Minister of the day, whoever he might be, would soon have to come down to the House on behalf of both homestead and conditional purchase selectors. And he ventured to predict that the great difficulty which would then arise would be in dealing with this dummy question. They would have to find out, if possible, where these dummied selections were, because they would find that the *bona fide* selectors had been equally unable to fulfil the conditions. There was another feature in connection with the Act of 1868 which had only turned up recently; he alluded to a celebrated judgment of the Supreme Court, which was to the effect that it was left in the hands of the Governor in Council—practically the Minister for Lands—to issue titles even when the conditions were not fulfilled. He believed some of

those who took a strong view of the dummy question approved of this, thinking it would give the Minister for Lands a despotic power to deal with dummies in any way he pleased; but he thought it very undesirable that he should have power to withhold titles, when the conditions were fulfilled. That a Bill should have been brought in to remove these excessive and very disagreeable powers, and at the same time to correct a few errors that might be found to exist in the present Act, he readily admitted; but that there was any demand in the country, or any necessity whatever to bring in a Bill altering the whole system of land selection, he utterly denied. If the Government exercised their powers under the Act of 1868, so far as related to the settled districts, and under the Act of 1869 in relation to the unsettled districts, they could have satisfied every legitimate demand for land that had been made by the people of this colony. But if they were not satisfied with that, and were determined to disturb the land laws of the colony again, and to change the principle altogether, he maintained they should deal with the whole question at once, and deal with it in a comprehensive manner that would be something like permanent. He saw no good reason for going on with these little makeshift land laws, which might last for two or three years until another law was introduced, according to some Minister's hobby, as to how the land should be selected. If such a large and comprehensive measure were introduced, there were some leading principles respecting which they should be guided by past experience. He believed the pre-emptive right was thoroughly bad in principle, and he would explain why. In the first place, it was simply shirking a just claim. The Parliament had passed the Act giving a pre-emptive right as compensation to the pastoral lessee, where the Government saw there was a legitimate demand for compensation; but, at the same time, they found they had not the money with which they could readily pay him, and, consequently, they had given enormous pre-emptive rights, which had been made use of to monopolise the lands. The lessee could select as many acres as the Act gave him power to select, and he had the pick of the run before anybody else. This encouraged him to make very heavy purchases—as the Orders in Council did—the commercial desirability of which might be very doubtful. He therefore maintained that it would be far better to estimate all claims of this nature in cash, and pay them in cash. Another objection was that they could be taken advantage of by the rich man, but not by the poor man. The poor man might not be in a position to buy more than 5,000 acres, while the rich man might take advantage of the system to invest spare capital he might have lying by. He thought the system had a bad effect on the lessees themselves, and on the country as a whole. The Act of 1869, under which the pre-emptions had been made in the settled districts, was being carried out to the utmost, and he believed the effect on the country was very bad indeed. Supposing a lessee held eight or ten blocks of country, and he took advantage of his privilege, he had the opportunity of picking the eyes out of every block he held. Would it not be far better, if they were to give him such a right at all, to give him the land in one block, which would, no doubt, be not only much more convenient and profitable to him, but also more beneficial to the country? One large block would no doubt embrace a considerable extent of inferior land, and the best pieces would not be picked out here and there all over the runs. He thought, on the principles of economy, this system was utterly bad, and he hoped that in any future Act that was passed, whilst they recognised the claims of the lessees for compensation, they would pay that compensation in cash and not in pre-emptive rights. The great origin of dummying—which he might here observe was not heard of in any part of the country except the Darling Downs and East and West Moreton—arose in this way: They had hitherto kept the land locked up until it had increased to a higher value than they put upon it when it was offered for sale. If they kept land, and did not allow it to be sold until it got up to about 30s. or £2 per acre, and it was offered at 10s. per acre, they offered a temptation to persons to commit crime to obtain it. They, in fact, bribed persons who were altogether unsuited to the occupation of land for either agricultural or grazing purposes to take it up by offering it to them at 10s. per acre, while the market value was £2 or £3 per acre. They said, here is land that will fetch 30s. an acre, at least, and you can take it at 10s. Was not that sufficient to make a man leave his ordinary occupation, take up land, and reside upon it, and do whatever else he was obliged to do in order that, as soon as he obtained his title, he could go into the market and sell it at a considerable profit? and that, he believed, would be the effect of the Bill now before the House. It was a well-known fact that a large proportion of the best land now leased on the Darling Downs was worth from £1 to £4 per acre; and, in fact, a few years ago, an immense amount of good land in that district was bought under pre-emptive right at £1 per acre, before the railway was constructed, or other improvements were made which raised the value of land. He thought there could be no doubt the whole of the remaining good land on the Darling Downs was worth from £1 to £3 per acre; and was it not, therefore, a capital investment to take up whatever area might be allowed, say 2,000 acres, at 10s. per acre? That would cost the selector £1,000; and, after residing for two years, fencing it, and doing all things which were absolutely necessary, he would be able to sell to the

squatter, or anyone else who was prepared to buy, at £2 or £3 per acre. He therefore believed, if this Bill were passed, that for one *bona fide* settler they would have a dozen who would merely settle to sell the land afterwards. That would not, of course, be the case in districts where the actual value of the land was only 10s. per acre; in those places they would have no selectors at all; and he maintained, by offering the lands of the Darling Downs at 10s. per acre, they were offering an enormous premium for perjury and obtaining land by surreptitious means—by dummying, or whatever other improper means it could be secured, in order that the party taking it up might get the profit between 10s. per acre and £1, £2, or £3 per acre, for which he could sell it. Then he thought that any Land Bill, to be at all satisfactory, must not place such very extreme power in the hands of the Government; and if the Bill went into committee it would be infinitely better, he thought, and infinitely more agreeable to the Minister for Lands, to deprive him of the very large powers proposed to be vested in him. Although the honorable the Premier repudiated it altogether, yet the House must feel that the imposition of the condition of residence, and the condition of improvement, were very important principles of the Bill. He would ask the House to consider what had occurred in connection with previous Acts, which he thought clearly showed that all these conditions failed in every respect. They were fulfilled by the wealthy, but could not be fulfilled by the poor; they could also be evaded; and the end would be that, in a few years, if they persisted in their being carried out, the Government would have to come down with a relief Bill. They had had to do so before, and if they adhered to this pernicious system, they would certainly have to do so again. He should now point out, having gone rather fully into the subject, what he considered should be the leading principles of a Land Bill, which would be satisfactory to the country as a whole, and which would have a permanent effect. He considered, in the first place, it should affect the whole colony. If they went on as they had been doing, simply leaving it to the Government of the day to resume land where it seemed to be most required, that was one thing; but if they went beyond that, and resumed land in the settled districts, why should they stop there? Why should not the Act apply to the whole colony, and not merely to the settled districts, which were bounded by a purely accidental line? He was certainly of opinion that any Land Bill worthy of the name must be a comprehensive measure, dealing with the question in a permanent way, and applying to the whole colony with one exception, namely, the lands in East and West Moreton, and on the Darling Downs. He thought the honorable the Minister for Lands would have shown great foresight on this occasion if he had brought in a Land Bill professedly dealing with East and West Moreton, and the Darling Downs alone. These districts were totally distinct from every other portion of the colony, and stood in a very different position; they were different in fifty ways, because the land had been very considerably improved and increased in value. They had railway accommodation; good road accommodation; they were in the immediate neighborhood of large towns; and he believed they were the best lands in the colony, and therefore any general Act which might be introduced for the purpose of changing the tenure from leasehold to freehold could not apply to those districts. He believed that these lands, which were worth a considerable sum per acre, ought to be offered to public auction, and that the other districts of the colony—the districts outside those highly favored districts—had a right to demand that those who obtained those lands should pay their full value. The whole colony had been taxed for the construction of the railway and other improvements, which had assisted to increase the value of those lands; and they had, therefore, a right to demand that they should fetch the whole amount they were worth. With that exception, the Act ought to apply to the whole colony. In the next place, having provided for those lands which had acquired a greater value than the ordinary price, the Bill should allow that all lands—except, of course, such lands as might be reserved for townships, roads, railroads, and anything of that kind—should be purchased by settlers at the value placed upon them. Then every clause in the Act should be compulsory and executive. He thought it was very hard on the Minister himself, and very injurious to the country, that he should be left with any voluntary powers that could possibly be avoided. He believed in making all their Acts of Parliament as clear, concise, and compulsory as possible. In the next place, he was of opinion that the Act should have no condition whatever except the payment of the price, whatever that might be. He had shown how conditions had failed in times past, and he was perfectly satisfied that as long as they were imposed they would fail. He believed an Act applying to the whole colony, without any conditions whatever, would have an excellent effect on the colony as a whole. He was also of opinion that they should not confine the operations of purchasers to a small area. It was evident they had not succeeded so far in confining them to small areas; where they wished for large areas they got them in one way or another—either by dummying, by purchasing from others, or by some other means. On the Darling Downs, and in other parts of the colony, those who desired to do so had managed to secure enormous areas; and if they removed restrictions altogether, he did not believe, on the whole, they would find the areas taken

up much larger than they were now. With reference to this Bill, such being the views he held, it could hardly be supposed he could vote for it. He looked upon it as bad from beginning to end; that its tendency was to continue what had been proved to be the bad features of their previous Acts; and that, while it was trying to put an end to an alleged evil, it would introduce a much greater one—assuming that dummying had taken place, the remedy would be greater than the evil. He looked upon the provision of ten years' personal residence as a perfect farce. What man in the colony could bind himself down to live in one place ten years? A hundred things might arise to prevent him from doing so, however *bonâ fide* his intentions might be, and however desirous he might be of fulfilling the condition. It might be urged that, at the end of two years, he could transfer his land; but then the hardship would be merely transferred to another. It had been said that the land could be occupied by a man's family; but what was a man to do who had no family?

An HONORABLE MEMBER: Get one.

Mr. GRAHAM: Perhaps the honorable the Minister for Lands intended this as a premium on matrimony and for increasing the population, so as to save the great expense of immigration. He looked upon compulsory personal residence for ten years as a hardship that the House could never dream of adopting; and he did not believe that anything like a majority of honorable members would consent to it. The difficulties in connection with the Bill did not end with the principles of it, or what he considered to be the three principles of it—namely, the resumption of land in the settled districts, compulsory personal residence, and limiting the areas to be selected;—but, of course, these were not matters the Government were wedded to, and the House might do what they pleased with them. With regard to the area proposed, that was a matter that could be dealt with in committee, and no doubt some amendments would be moved. Another point he might notice was with regard to the proposed system of leasing lands, and yet having them open to selection; and that, he thought, had been well dealt with by the honorable member for Rockhampton. There could be no doubt, that it would be utterly impossible for a selector, having taken up a selection on land thrown open in this way, to turn out his cattle at all; he must confine them to his selection, or they would be certain to go to the pound. This difficulty had already been experienced in connection with township reserves, and in some places there was the greatest difficulty in keeping the squatters and the towns-people on decent terms. How it would be when a man could not let his horse in the street without the permission of the lessee, honorable members could quite understand. The system was simply ridiculous. Then, again, the Bill made no provision for throwing land open for selection in the unsettled districts, although it repealed the Act of 1869, which gave that power; and if it were passed in its present shape, it would not be possible for the Government to throw open any land in those districts. In fact, this had been done under the Act of 1868, by a side wind, in proclaiming reserves; and if these Acts were repealed, and this Bill was passed, that power would pass away from the Government, and it would be impossible to throw open lands in the unsettled districts. There was another most important question he had not yet heard dealt with, namely, the claims of lessees of runs for improvements. The ten years' leases provided that the leases could be resumed by resolution of both Houses of Parliament, and probably this Bill, if passed, would be sufficient resolution; but still, he maintained that an Act of Parliament could not deprive them of their claims for improvements, which existed under the Act of 1868. If this Bill were passed, they would probably be called upon to pay in the first year something like £50,000 for improvements. In fact, it was likely to be a great deal more than that, because, although the Bill gave a pre-emptive right in lieu of improvements, which he thought a most pernicious principle, yet, if the lessees did not choose to exercise that pre-emptive right, it appeared to him they could demand the value of their improvements, and he had not the slightest doubt they would do it. Of course, the present Bill was supposed to be principally an anti-dummying Bill; but one moment's consideration would show that dummying under it would be quite as easy as under any previous Acts. It would only require a little understanding between half-a-dozen men and a monopolist, who would arrange with them to reside upon the land and fulfil the necessary conditions, and then, if they felt inclined to sell, he was ready to give them a better price than they had paid for it. Of course, that would be done wholesale; there would be nothing to stop them. If it was seen that that sort of thing could not be stopped, it would be better to sweep away all restrictions, and say, "The price of the land is so and so; if you want it you must pay for it." He thought the Bill was bad in every respect; he did not see one good point about it, except, perhaps, the classification clause, and on that point he must say he had great difficulty in coming to any conclusion. He could not agree with the honorable Minister for Lands that there had been much bad classification under the Act of 1868, but he thought perhaps a fixed price would be better. He thought that the evils which that honorable member had so much complained of—and the re-classification which had to be made, had arisen principally from the Act of 1868 not having been properly carried out in that respect. That Act provided that the commissioner should sit in court on certain days, and that the rest of his time should be spent in going

about his district seeing that the conditions of the Act had been complied with; but that had never been done, whilst the district surveyors had had their time well occupied with making surveys. He knew that the classifiers had latterly been irresponsible licensed surveyors; and, without impugning the honesty of those gentlemen in any way, it could not be expected that they would trouble themselves to go out and ascertain the value of the land, when they got nothing for so doing. They were told that they must survey certain land, and give a classification of it; but, in nine cases out of ten, they took the classification given by the applicant as being the most easy course to pursue. He thought that the Government would be best consulting the interests of the country by withdrawing the Bill, for they had heard enough outside and inside that House to convince them that, as it stood, it could never pass. Whether it got into committee, or, if it did, whether it would come out, after the worrying it would receive, a better Bill, he could not say; but he could never give his vote to the second reading of a measure, the principles of which he could not endorse.

Mr. MORGAN could not allow the Bill to go to a second reading without making a few observations upon it, and he meant to preface his remarks after the good example which had been set him by the honorable member for Dalby. That honorable member had been at a meeting of his constituents at which certain resolutions were passed condemnatory of the Bill; he, too, had some resolutions which were passed at a meeting of his constituents which was presided over by the Mayor of Warwick, and he would read them.

The SPEAKER: The honorable member is out of order in doing so.

Mr. MORGAN thought as the honorable member for Dalby had been allowed to read some, the same privilege would be extended to him. He recollected most distinctly that, when the present measure first made its appearance, it was pronounced a squatting Bill. He had heard honorable members on his side of the House say that it suited them, and honorable members opposite also say it suited them; and he would ask, how it had been altered since, or whether honorable members' opinions had not altered? He should have contented himself with simply stating his intention to vote for the second reading, were it not that he felt bound to reply to the remarks of some honorable members opposite. First of all, there was the question of compensation; but he would like to ask, compensation for what? Was it compensation for holding for fourteen years a large number of acres at a halfpenny per acre per annum, which it was now proposed should be held at 1s. per acre per annum? There was not a particle of reason in such a demand. He was surprised that gentlemen who had held the country for the last twenty years and upwards, with the understanding that when required for settlement it should be given up, should now have the audacity to come and ask that House to give them compensation. He agreed with the principle of the Bill, and that was why he should support it. It was an anti-dummying Bill; it proposed to throw open large areas of land to selection, which the country demanded, and the Government were compelled to give; but they did not propose to extend the settled districts, as there was quite enough land within Schedule D to last for years, and thus it would be ruinous to extend the provisions of the Bill to beyond those districts. They said: Leave the rich districts northwards until they are required, and then let the Government take them, but without compensation. Then, with regard to the areas, it was well known that when the Bill went into committee the Government had decided to increase the maximum to twice that now proposed. He considered that the views put forward as to confining the area of the Bill to the Darling Downs and Moreton districts were very right, as they were exceptional districts; for there were others, such as the Burnett, in which there was not the same extent of agricultural land, and he would be glad not to see them brought into the same category as the Moretons and the Downs; but that could be arranged when the Bill was in committee. The honorable member for Clermont said that all the dummying had been done under the Act of 1866, but some had to his (Mr. Morgan's) knowledge been done under the Act of 1868. He would mention one instance: There was a reserve of 10,000 acres in a district map in the Warwick Land Office, and over it was in pencil, neatly written, "not open for selection." That map was hanging up for six weeks before the Act of 1868 came into operation, and what was the effect? Why, that a gentleman coming from Victoria to take up some land saw that pencil notice, and immediately said, "I can see there is nothing for me," and went away; but, on the very day on which the Act came into force, a gentleman, his son, and a stockman, took up half of that reserve. He would not mention names, nor did he blame those persons for what they did; but he did blame the Minister who had charge of the Act for not seeing that there was no dummying carried on under that Act. It was well known that the administration of the land laws of this colony had been disgraceful up to the present time; from the Act of 1863 it had increased in disgrace until it had culminated in that most disgraceful of all transactions—the exchanges of land on the Darling Downs. The honorable member for Clermont, before concluding his remarks, said that the Crown lessees under the Act of 1866 had confessed to having employed dummies, and had even stated that some of those dummies were respectable people. Now, he doubted the correctness of his hearing

when he heard a gentleman holding the position of an honorable member of that House term a dummier a respectable person;—connecting subornation of perjury with respectability was something that beat him entirely. The honorable member also said that he hoped the Government would withdraw the present Bill for the purpose of introducing another that would give free selection all over the colony. Now, he thought that was not wanted; he thought they should take land as they wanted it. He did not wish to tire honorable members with any further remarks, but he meant to support the second reading of the Bill, and support it through all its stages, as he firmly believed it would be a very good Bill.

Mr. DE SATGE said he had only a very few remarks to offer to the House, and those would refer to a more general principle than those which had been made the subject of discussion that evening by honorable members, and a principle which was much higher than any Bill the Government could bring in; it was whether repudiation should be recognized by that House. He considered that those honorable members who voted for the second reading of the Bill would show themselves in favor of establishing resumption without compensation. If they passed the second reading, they knew that the unsettled districts would follow piecemeal by separate pieces of legislation. He should have thought that they would have seen ranged in that House those who would have set their faces against anything that would damn the colony in the eyes of capitalists, of men who might wish to employ their capital in the colony. He had seen, and he had noticed with a considerable degree of surprise, that the Government had thrown down their Bill to be worried, without standing in any way by the principles contained in it. The honorable member who moved the second reading said himself that he would not stick to any of its principles, but would submit to any alterations the House saw fit to make; and the honorable the Premier, in alluding to the residence clause, said that he would be prepared to receive any amendments the House thought fit to make in committee. They saw that the Government were, in fact, willing to have the Bill altered in any way. It was now very hard to arrive at what was to be considered a party question in that House during the present session. He should have thought that that long-promised measure—the long-promised liberal land law—would have been a question on which the Government were prepared to stand or fall. But it was nothing of the sort; it was a measure that would give satisfaction to nobody, but would admit a principle that would damn our land laws in the eyes of all the neighboring colonies. They were asked to pass a measure that would do little or no good, which had been found fault with by every honorable member from one standpoint or another, and which had nothing to recommend it at all except the principle of resumption without compensation. If they had a Land Bill at all, it should be one that would establish the people on the lands in an honest way. In the first place, however, they were to establish a system of resumption without compensation; then free selection before survey; and then, when the settled districts had been dealt with in that way, the unsettled districts would follow. They would find squatting, the principal interest, as it had been termed, ruined and damned, without there being anything to take its place. The principles of the Bill, if it had any to recommend it, were the extinction of dummying, small areas, and no classification. He contended that, as far as dummying went, it had been a gross scandal to the colony, and they had been told that the Act of 1868 was so incomplete that it gave cause for that scandal. He considered that it would have been the first duty of the Government to establish compulsory residence in order to do away with dummying; with that part of the Bill, therefore, he could not find any objection, and there was no doubt it was their duty so to amend the Act of 1868. But in dealing with the great question of the land, if they were to change their ever changing Land Act, they should endeavor to bring in such an Act, one of so complete a character, that it would require no alteration for years to come. From all they had heard that evening they could very plainly see that the Bill before them would do nothing of the sort—that it would not last any length of time without amendment. He considered that the honorable Minister for Lands should have been the author of the speech which had been delivered by the honorable member for Clermont (Mr. Graham) that evening; he should have gone through all the various Land Acts of the colony; in fact, he had expected that the honorable gentleman would have done that, instead of leaving it to an honorable member of the Opposition to do. He could only say that after hearing the speech of the one and reading the speech of the other, there was an impression left on his mind that the Bill would do nothing that was fair. It would destroy the tenure of the pastoral tenants without giving fair compensation; it would be an interference between the Crown and its tenants, and give no *quid pro quo* in return. The honorable Minister for Lands concluded his speech by saying that if the Bill became law it would be for the benefit of the squatters, and would give them satisfaction. Now, that statement had rather surprised him. He, as one who had lived on the waste lands of the colony for the best part of his life, could say that as regarded satisfaction to the squatters it would give none. There was one feature of the Bill which was evidence of that—that, because none of the land had been taken up on the resumed halves of the runs in the settled district along the coast under the Act of 1868,

it was proposed to take up the remaining halves of runs in other districts. He had never heard such an unfounded argument in his life: that because no land had been taken up on some runs, other runs were to be ruined. He would speak now more especially in connection with the constituents whom he represented. They were, for the most part, owners of cattle stations on the coast; they considered they had some fixity of tenure, as they had the remaining halves of their runs, and they had made many improvements; and they had a feeling of security that they would be able to hold them for some years to come; but the effect of the Bill would be, that if any man had a spite against one of those gentlemen, he could go and settle down on his cattle camp, take up 1,280 acres of the best land along a watercourse, and, in fact, actually ruin the run. He had received letters from gentlemen, to whom he had submitted the measure, saying that, if it passed, they would find themselves in the position of being ruined men. That would be the effect of the Bill, should it pass, as regarded his constituents.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The Bill does not apply to your district.

Mr. DE SATGE: It did apply to his district—its provisions would extend throughout his district, which comprised the chief cattle stations in the colony, namely, the Broadsound district. He would repeat that the action of the Bill would utterly ruin gentlemen holding runs in that district; their improvements would be ruined—and all that in the face of the admission of the Government that no land was required for settlement in that quarter. He considered, therefore, that the Bill, as regarded his portion of the colony, was highly unjust and unwarranted. He expected the Bill would pass, and he supposed that he and other honorable members could not offer any opposition that would be of any moment; but a more incomplete measure than it was he could not imagine. He had one remark to make in reference to what had fallen from the honorable member for the Kennedy—that it would be highly necessary to have a reserve of thirty miles round all townships in the North. He might tell that honorable member that there was almost a township every thirty miles; so that, actually, the resumption he proposed would be one of the whole colony. In fact, the Government might just as well at once proclaim the whole colony open to free selection. He could only state, with regard to the Bill, that there was at present enormous distrust in the other colonies with regard to the Land Bills of this colony. He knew many persons, both in New South Wales and Victoria, who asked what our next Land Bill was to be like;—was it to have any finality? as they were waiting to invest money in the colony. But he saw nothing in the Bill which could hold out inducements for the investment of capital. If they wished to protect the chief interest of the colony, they would allow the squatter to preserve his property on that portion of his run which had been promised to him for a term of years—that was the only way in which he could be protected. He could state what his district was when first he formed it in conjunction with some others, and what it was now—it was then a huge unwatered waste; but now, after it had had thousands of pounds expended upon it in supplying water, &c., it was becoming more valuable every year; yet, after all their expense, all their losses, and all their labor, they were now just on the balance to know what the Government intended to do. They were told that the unsettled districts were not to be touched now, and he did hope they would not be, as they had had many bad reasons, and had only quite lately begun to realise any interest upon the large sums of money they had expended. Yet, they had nothing before them except a guarantee that the leases in the settled districts would be resumed, and that they would be told in time that the same course would be pursued towards them. He spoke as one residing in the unsettled districts, and he was in the position of having ruin staring him in the face, by the passing of another Land Bill similar to that now before the House.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that he quite agreed with the honorable member for Normanby, that the legislature of the colony should not do anything in the shape of repudiation; and he intended to say something about that, and the conduct of the present and past Governments. But he could not understand how the honorable member could characterise the resumption of the ten years' leases as repudiation. Why, he considered they were the only good thing in the Bill. The repudiation amounted to this—that the runs were to be resumed by Act of Parliament with compensation given to the Crown tenants, instead of being resumed by resolution of both Houses of Parliament without any compensation being given. That was the repudiation complained of. It was very easy to talk about injustice, but those gentlemen were, in fact, in the position of tenants-at-will, and were liable to be turned out at any time at a moment's notice by a resolution of the two Houses; that was all that was required. He thought there was nothing so bad as to be constantly altering the principle of tenure and the land laws, unless they introduced something that would be really advantageous to the colony. He did not intend to say, that evening, that the lands should be sold out and out, or that there should be a perpetual rent in the form of a land tax; at present there was no use in advocating his ideas upon that subject.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Hear, hear.

Mr. GRIFFITH: He saw that the honorable member did not approve of it, although, no doubt, some of the honorable member's successors would be very glad if such a tax had

been imposed. He believed that when the colony was younger would have been the proper time to grapple with that question, but it was not now too late to start some plan by which the land revenue of the colony would be constantly increasing; and perhaps he might say something more on the subject when the Bill was in committee. So far as he knew, the only cry that had been raised in the country was to throw open more land for settlement; but he did not think it was desirable that, because a little more land was required, they should go and repeal all the land laws that existed, which the people understood, and some of which were very good, for the purpose of introducing some variations that would be no improvement. Now, a portion of the Bill was to do away with dummying, of which they had heard a great deal during the last five or six years; since the passing of the Act of 1866, in fact. There had been a large amount of talk about it, on both sides of the House, and a great deal of political capital had been made out of it; but he would like to see the Government, or even the Minister that would have the pluck to come forward and act in the matter. It had been said that no Government or Minister would be strong enough to deal with the dummiers; but he ventured to say that, if a Government did come forward with that avowed object, they would be backed up, not only by an overwhelming majority of that House, but also by the country.

HONORABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

Mr. GRIFFITH: Now he would not say that there had been any dummying, but supposing there had been—by which he understood that land had been acquired in contravention of the law—the remedy for it was very plain. It must be understood that he did not blame the present Government specially for not taking action in the matter, because he believed that all Governments were equally to blame. He took it that there were three reasons why they had not taken any action—either because they did not know how to go work, or they were afraid, or they did not wish to proceed because they were not sincere in their professions; he would give them the credit of being sincere, then they must either have been afraid, or did not know how to proceed to work. Every session there was a proposition of some new-fangled kind of court to deal with the question, whereas, the existing law was ample to deal with every question that was raised. It was a singular thing, but he believed that there was a measure which had passed to its second reading during the present session, which proposed to repeal the most simple and effectual means of dealing with it, without any provision being made in it for re-enacting those clauses. He trusted that had been done by accident. He alluded to the Audit Act, a new Bill on which subject he noticed had been read a second time. In the present Act there was a provision by which the Government could attack any lease which had been obtained by fraud, and set it aside. All that had to be done was for the Attorney-General to file a bill against the person said to be in fraudulent possession. As all the lands were Crown lands, all the defendant in such a case would have to do would be to prove his title, and if he could not do that and there was fraud, then the title was set aside, and another dummy was disposed of. That process was not only more simple, but, he ventured to say, it would be less costly and more satisfactory in every way, than any of the schemes which had been introduced by honorable members on both sides of the House. If there was any dummying and the Government believed there was, why was it that they had not set to work at once to remedy such a scandal? They had heard the honorable member for the Bremer talk, when he was Minister for Lands, in the most deplorable manner of the dummying that had been going on, and the information that he had received on the subject. But where was that information? It was not given to the honorable member as a private individual, but as a Minister of the Crown; and why had it not been used? No doubt the same information was still in the possession of the Lands Department, and why in the name of goodness should there be any hesitation in taking action upon it? If frauds had been committed, let them be proved and the people punished; if they had not been, then let the reproach be taken away from the colony at once. They should not go on day after day taking money in the name of Her Majesty from those persons, waiting until the time arrived when a Government came into power which was strong enough or plucky enough to take away the land from those persons. He contended that the honorable member for Bremer and his Government were guilty of fraud as much as the selectors were, because, if frauds had been committed when he went into office, and was made aware of them, it was his duty, at at the earliest possible moment, to have inquired into the matter, set aside the leases, and resumed the lands. Now, the principle of the law was that, if a man granted a lease to another, and the lessor had obtained his lease by fraud, and the lessee went in and improved the property for some years, the law would allow anyone to go in afterwards and say that that lease had been obtained by fraud, and put out the lessee. In the present instance, he said that, if leases had been obtained by fraud, they should at once be set aside, and if not, they should be continued. The honorable member for Bremer said that there had been no dummying under the Act of 1868, and he (Mr. Griffith) would explain how it was impossible there could have been, although the law might have been evaded. There was no legislation to prevent a man from taking up land, and, after complying with all the conditions, making a present of it to another. He thought, however, that,

without going so far as to compel personal residence, which, he agreed with the honorable Premier, was not desirable, a little alteration in the present law would meet the difficulty. If it was provided that there must be a servant, *bona fide* in the employment of the selector, and in the employment of no other person, that he thought would meet the case. Compulsory residence meant that no persons should select lands but farmers who intended to live upon them. He did not see why, if he chose to live in a town and to take up a piece of land, he was not doing as much good to the country by having his servant to reside on that land as if he lived upon it himself; he did not see, because there had been fraud there should be compulsory residence. If that condition was, however, imposed by law, let it be enforced in all cases, whether a man took up 1,000 acres, or whether a digger took up one acre on a gold field—there was no difference between the two cases. He took it that if a commissioner under the present Act were to have his power increased, and all applications for certificates had to be made in open court, it would be a safeguard, as certificates could not then be granted unless all conditions had been fulfilled. He would go further, and say that, if the conditions were not fulfilled, any other person should be entitled to claim the land. If that was worked honestly, and the decision was left to the commissioner, he thought no harm would be done, and that all the cry about dummying would be at an end. He believed that the cry of dummying and insecure title had done immense harm to Queensland; and, in fact, he had heard it said in New South Wales that no one knew the tenure under which land was held here—that was entirely owing to the late Government not having taken any steps in the matter, and if the present Government pursued the same course, they would justly share the blame attached to their predecessors. He could not understand why there should be the two systems of conditional purchasers and homestead selections; they were identical except in the price of the land and the length of the tenure; he certainly could not see the advantage of having the two systems. He would have preferred seeing a Bill that would have dealt with the difficulties he had mentioned—one opening up more land, and amending the condition of residence. As regarded classification, he did not see why it was desirable, when there were large districts of land not taken up, which had been resumed for years, that the price should be doubled. He thought, if the Bill passed, it would not by any means be the settlement of the question, and so he thought it would be better to have instead, a Bill that would simply remove the defects of the present system rather than one to throw any more uncertainty upon tenure.

The COLONIAL TREASURER thought that, if the honorable member for Oxley had been present on the second reading of the Audit Bill, he would have heard that provision had been made for re-enacting the clauses having reference to the recovery of Crown debts. It appeared that there were some general clauses in the Audit Act which had no business to be in it, and when the Government were preparing a new Audit Act, it certainly appeared to him that it would be better to have the clauses referred to by the honorable member put in a separate Bill. He believed that their existence was not known even to the profession until a year or two ago, when they were discovered, or, rather, stumbled over, by accident. Now, a great deal had been said about the Bill, and he did not therefore intend, at that late hour of the evening, to occupy much time; but he wished to say a few words in reply to some observations made by the honorable member for Dalby. He could not help thinking that that honorable member, in first adverting to the resolutions which were passed at a public meeting of his constituents, and in the last portion of his speech referring to the want of compensation to be given to Crown tenants, had, somehow, "put the cart before the horse." He had been glad to hear the honorable member refer to compensation, for he believed that the whole ground of the opposition arose from the fact that they considered no compensation was to be given to Crown tenants. If the Bill had provided for a handsome compensation to be given to those honorable members whose leases were to be resumed, it would have passed that House with very little trouble; but, as it had not done so, it was opposed by honorable gentlemen opposite on all sorts of grounds. It was opposed by the honorable member for Port Curtis on one gound, namely, that it would impede progress; and by the honorable member for the Burnett on another, that it would cause all the valuable lands of the colony to be swallowed up; how it could have both effects he did not know. The honorable member for Oxley had said that an amendment of the present law, throwing open land for settlement, would meet the requirements of the country. It would be, however, agreed, that with the experience of the last few years before them, it was a recognised fact, known to every honorable member of that House, that resolutions resuming land would scarcely have gone through that House, and would certainly never have gone through the other. They knew, moreover, that the great objection against the Act of 1868 was allowing areas of 10,000 acres to be taken up by one person, and thus allowing leasehold land to be turned into freehold, to be used for exactly the same purpose. It had been said also, that there was no principle in the Bill; but if honorable members considered what it proposed to do, he thought they would see that it not only contained a principle, but a very good one. By it, it was proposed that any person desirous of taking up land should have a choice out of sixty

million acres, with power to select a block of two square miles, which, after living on for ten years and paying an annual rent of one shilling per acre per year for that period, would be absolutely his own freehold. He believed it would prove a better Land Bill for settling the country than any measure ever passed in that House. Now, it had been said, when the present Act was passing through that House, and large areas were proposed, that there would be a number of young men who would come out from England with a few thousand pounds capital to take advantage of that provision, and commence squatting on a small scale; instead of that, however, he did not think that one of those young men had come to take up land. The returns on the table would show that large selections had been taken up by squatters themselves, their relations, or their stockmen and shepherds, but not by any of the class for whom those large areas were intended. He would like to know one of those young men who had taken up country.

Mr. PALMER: Mr. Davenport.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Well, that gentleman was rather an unfortunate selection to make. Then again, the honorable member for Dalby said that the Bill provided for no compensation to be given to those Crown tenants whose land would be resumed; but, as he read the clause, there was provision made for compensation, by which they were really treated very liberally. Then it was said that, if the Bill passed, they would shortly require another one. Well, he would grant that. As the colony increased, as population increased, there might be a necessity for new legislation—there would be no finality in the land laws. That, however, was no fault if it was required, and he thought that if a Land Act ran for five years, it did very well; the Act of 1868, which it was now proposed to repeal, had already been amended four or five times. The classification proposed by the Bill had been objected to by the honorable member for Port Curtis and others, who said it would be very unfair, as it would allow the first comer to get the best land. The honorable member for the Bremer said it was opposed to commercial principles; that, however, had been answered by his honorable colleague, the Minister for Lands. Supposing a new comer wanted a piece of land, and purchased a piece for 10s. an acre, he did not mean the worst land, which, under the Act of 1866, was reserved for agricultural reserves; he, by his improvements on that land, would enhance the value of all the surrounding land. The honorable member for Clermont had said the Government ought to take land where it was wanted, and that they ought not to take it in the wholesale manner that was proposed. The principle of the Bill was applied in the Act of 1868, under which half of the runs in certain districts of the colony had been taken; and in the Homestead Areas Act of 1872, under which land was not taken only where it was wanted. The honorable member for Port Curtis knew it would be too invidious to step in on one particular man's run and say, "We want all your land; we leave your neighbor's untouched." No Government would take up such a position as that. The principle of the Bill was that the public was the judge of the land which it required. If the public required run A, for settlement, the public should get it; and the other runs, which were not required, would not be interfered with or jeopardised in the slightest degree. The Government were, it appeared to him, carrying out the correct principle in the Bill which was never applied before. Referring to the remarks of the honorable member for Kennedy, who advocated the reduction of the price of land to half-a-crown an acre, he wished to say, without occupying the time of the House long, that before honorable members talked of giving the land away in that manner, they ought to consider how to make up the consequent deficiency in the revenue. The adoption of such a policy as that would necessitate the introduction of some new method of taxation for about £100,000 a-year. He did not see why the other classes of the community should be taxed so excessively as the House would be compelled to tax them in order that the land might be given away, as required by the honorable member for Kennedy. The clause of the Bill relating to homesteads would be sufficient for the poor man, who had found suddenly an advocate in the honorable member for Port Curtis; and when he could get a hundred and sixty acres at ninepence an acre for five years, he would be right enough; if he wanted anything else, or more land, he could afford to pay a shilling a-year for ten years on a conditional purchase. With regard to the residence qualification, he (the Colonial Treasurer) believed that that was the most essential part of the Bill. Unless there was some stringent condition like that insisted upon, the House might just as well legalise the dummying that took place under the Act of 1868. Although the honorable member for Port Curtis pretended to doubt it, he was the only man in the country who was not satisfied that dummying was one of the acclimatized institutions of the colony. Unless some provision was introduced into the Bill for compelling residence, the law might as well be allowed to remain as it was. The way in which the clause was framed had very naturally created some alarm on the subject. He had not read the clause carefully, but he believed that his honorable friend, the Minister for Lands, desired it to be understood that by residence was meant a man's usual place of abode—that it meant the place where he and his family usually lived;—not that he should be tied down to the soil in the serf-like manner that the honorable member for Port Curtis complained of.

Mr. PALMER: That was what the Bill said.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: He could understand that there might be circumstances which would take a man away from home—and illustrations had been given in the course of the debate—for longer than "three months;" but the clause was intended to prevent a man who happened to own land in town and country taking up thousands of acres and erecting thereon only a bark humpy, in which he could not live, and would not, and saying that that was his residence. That was the kind of abuse that the clause was intended to check; it was to prevent a man sleeping on his selection two or three times a year and saying that his so doing constituted residence. There was no hardship in the clause. No person who took up land for cultivation or settlement would be interfered with by it. If he wished to take it up for speculation, he would get it on too cheap terms. The House gave the land at a low price—at less than its value—for the purpose of ensuring, or at any rate, encouraging settlement; and in doing that, they had a right to demand some conditions in exchange. Some persons, like the honorable member for Oxley, who thought they had a right to country residences and estates, could well afford to go into the market and pay for them, and give the fair value for the land. When the Parliament proposed to give people land on specially favorable terms, to allow them ten years to pay for it, the Parliament had a right to demand certain things in exchange; and one of those things was, that the land should not be selected for the purpose of speculation, and that it should not be taken up under a cloak to swell the large estates of wealthy men, but that the land should be used for better purposes than merely putting sheep and cattle on it.

Mr. STEWART observed that so much had been said on the subject of the Bill, that at so late an hour there could be scarcely anything for him to add to the debate. He agreed with the honorable member for Maryborough, and with the Colonial Treasurer, that settlement was what the country wanted. It was a matter of small moment whether six pounds or six pence an acre was paid for the land, so far as the revenue was concerned; or whether the land was given away for nothing, so long as there was *bona fide* settlement on all land fit for cultivation. He sympathised with the Minister for Lands in bringing forward a Land Bill; the honorsble gentleman had so many different interests to consult, that there was not the slightest doubt if he tried to please one, he must displease some other party. He had to stand between the squatters and the farmers, and also between the capitalists who wished to invest in land for the purposes of speculation and the *bona fide* selectors. The several classes of the community looked at the question in different lights; and it seemed to him that every man in the country—certainly, so far as the debate showed, every member of the House—had a Land Bill of his own. It was well that the Colonial Secretary, in addressing the House on the question, stated that there was only one principle in the Bill. He (Mr. Stewart) took it, that principle was residence. Everything else depended upon that. Judging by what had fallen from honorable members in the course of the debate, there was little chance of anything else coming out of committee, as compared with the state of the Bill when it should go in. But there were other principles in the Bill, although Ministers might not wish to stand by them. The resumption of the runs was a principle, and it was one that met the case very fairly. Resuming the lands as proposed and allowing the lessees to retain their runs until they were wanted for settlement, was the real solution of a difficult part of the question; and he (Mr. Stewart) hoped that that part of the Bill would remain untouched. As regarded the residence clause, he was inclined to support it. There could be no doubt that dummying had become acclimatised; certainly, the House heard a great deal more of it than of cotton or coffee cultivation, showing that it must have taken hold of the soil. Classification was a necessity, for several reasons. There were different districts of the colony where the land was of much more value than it was in others, from proximity to centres of population, and from other causes; land on the banks of creeks, rich scrub land, fine downs land, as against stony ridges. A man who had 180 acres of rich soil could get produce from it which would enable him to undersell the man whose land was on a stony ridge; in fact, the latter would not have the slightest chance against him, if he would ever be able to bring anything to market to compete with the rich soil settler. On those grounds there ought to be a distinction drawn between the different districts and the different classes of land, and there could be no objection to such a system. Any difficulty that might arise could be met by a scheme which he had not heard propounded; which was, to take the classification out of the hands of Ministers altogether. Classification had been used as a political engine in the hands of Ministers, and that should not be. If Commissioners were appointed as the Auditor-General was, and were responsible to the House, as the Auditor-General was, leaving the Ministers or any one else to appeal against the commissioners' classification, the system would be very different from, and a great improvement on, the present. So long as there was selection, with classification afterwards, there would be ill feeling. Where a man who applied had any influence, as an elector or as a member of the House, pressure was brought to bear; and, in fact, the pressure was sometimes too great for a Minister, who had not the power to resist, perhaps not to move, but had simply to yield to it. If that suggestion were well considered, something might be

done to provide for classification. He (Mr. Stewart) admitted that the classification which had gone on had not been satisfactory, so far as he had heard inside and outside of the House; but, of course, he had not the opportunity of knowing so much about the land as some honorable members who had spoken. But he thought that, instead of repealing the law that had been evaded, the House should enforce its provisions. It was too common a system to go in for repealing clauses that were evaded. If the Minister for Lands would set his mind on trying to enforce the conditions, and to insist upon the proper classification of land, there would be less chance of dummying, and less chance of favoritism in the selection and classification of land. He (Mr. Stewart) objected to the provision of the Bill that subsequent selections must be conterminous with the original holding. There was some amendment to be proposed with which he understood the Minister for Lands agreed. When a man found out that he could take up more land than he selected at first, but was surrounded by neighbors, he could not avail himself of the provisions of the Bill if that provision remained. Referring to clauses thirty-eight and thirty-nine, and to the forfeiture and penalty imposed for not fairly carrying out the conditions, he felt that the case might be met by a fine per acre. There would arise cases which it was impossible for any honorable member to foresee, in which the conditions might not be complied with, and which would be best met by a fine per acre extending over two or three years longer than the terms of conditional purchase or homestead selection. And, there was not the slightest doubt that anyone who went into land speculation would find it very inconvenient to pay a fine per acre;—he would very soon sell his land. That would be something like a land-tax on unimproved land. However, when the Bill was in Committee of the Whole, that could be dealt with. With reference to clause forty, he could not see how the Minister for Lands was to enforce conditions after a deed of grant was issued. The issue of the deed of grant was an end to the business:—

"If after two years and before the expiration of ten years from the date of any selection as a conditional purchase being confirmed the selector shall prove to the satisfaction of the Secretary for Lands by two credible witnesses that he has resided continuously on the land from the time such selection was confirmed and that in addition to such residence he has expended a sum equal to ten shillings per acre on permanent improvements on the said land or that he has cultivated one-tenth part of the land or that he has fenced in the whole of the said land with a good substantial fence the Secretary for Lands shall issue to such selector a certificate that having so far complied with the conditions of this Act he may at any time thereafter pay the balance of the ten annual payments and obtain a deed of grant in fee simple;"—

the conditional purchaser resided two years on his selection, paid the whole of the purchase money;—

"but the issue of such certificate of the performance of the conditions of improvement shall not relieve the conditional purchaser from the condition of continuous residence on the land during the remainder of the time such land is held on conditional purchase."

There was a proviso further. But the fact was that two years', not ten years', residence was a condition under that clause; and he (Mr. Stewart) fancied that that would open the door to dummying, unless all the conditions were complied with fully. As was seen under the existing law, some of the conditions were simply a farce, because they were not enforced. He fancied that ten shillings per acre, at auction, was too low a figure, if the land was to be sold without conditions at all. The upset price ought to be one pound per acre. At all events, there ought to be some classification in order that the best land of the colony should not be alienated at ten shillings per acre. He should point out how it would act:—Any Ministry that desired to meet the wishes of some Crown lessee or capitalist in a particular district, had only to put up large blocks of land—say, fifty square miles—to auction. They knew that it would not be taken up by the lessee; no small settlers could get it; and that they could not sell it in the auction room;—there would be only purchasers of one or two square miles, as arranged before the land was put up. The clause was a very dangerous one, and would lead to what the House were anxious to do away with. He hoped it would be amended in committee. There was another objectionable clause, the sixty-fifth—

"During the currency of a lease for mining the Governor in Council may grant permission to any person to enter on such land and to search for mining and remove any gold or other mineral containing gold."

It was well known that in the Stanthorpe district, gold was to be found in tin. There had been instances up there where the fossickers had taken out a large amount of tin on the plea that they were searching for gold. Under that clause such persons would be allowed to carry off the tin if a speck of gold was found in it. That would be quite sufficient. The gold would not pay for taking away, but the tin would. That clause must be altered in committee. Any other remarks he had to offer on the Bill he should reserve until the Bill was in committee. The Colonial Treasurer said that nearly everyone had spoken against the Bill because it did not provide for compensation. He (Mr. Stewart) did not speak against it on that ground. He should vote for the Bill on account of the principle of resumption, and also that of residence, which last he hoped would put a stop to dummying.

Mr. FRASER was understood to say that he spoke in the interests of the agricultural

community, to justify the action of the Ministry, which was in accordance with the wishes of his constituents, who, during the late general election, desired that their representative should vote for throwing open the remaining portion of the Darling Downs for agricultural settlement. For that one reason, if for no other, he should support the second reading of the Bill. It seemed to be an idea of some honorable members that alienation and settlement meant the same thing; but that was a completely fallacious idea, indicative merely of confusion of mind. The leading principle of the Bill was calculated to settle a large industrial population on the lands of the colony. He cordially agreed with the views advanced this evening by the honorable and learned member for Oxley, as he always regarded the alienation of land by the State as a great mistake. He called the attention of the House to the fact that this question was beginning to occupy a very prominent position, indeed, amongst the public questions that were now agitating the mother country, where land had been so long and so indisputably in the possession of private owners; and that it was the opinion distinctly of that very eminent man, John Stuart Mill, that it was a mistake. One of the ablest writers of the present day, Professor Keys, held precisely the same view as the honorable member for Oxley expressed this afternoon. It might be said that it was too late to deal with the subject. He (Mr. Fraser) should not attempt to weary the House with statistics at so late an hour, but he might say that there were 434,000,000 acres of land in Queensland. Only 4,000,000 or 5,000,000 acres were as yet alienated. The great balance still remained. It was not at all too late, he maintained, to attempt to initiate a wiser and better system than existed of dealing with the public lands of the colony. If a Bill had been presented to the House, in which the Admirable Crichton could not find a fault, he ventured to say that it would not give satisfaction to the House or to the colony. To talk about final legislation, as applied to the land in the North, South, and West, was an absurdity. Honorable members must look the question in the face, as it was immediately before them, and deal with it. Repudiation had been talked about. He could see no sign of it. It was competent, by resolution of both Houses, to resume the runs of the Crown tenants. The proposed resumption, under the Bill, was much better for the pastoral tenants than the existing legal mode; because they would now be left in the enjoyment of the land until it was required for actual settlement. It had been said, that by adopting the plan of selection proposed by the Bill, the eyes would be picked out of the country. Well, as far as the Darling Downs were concerned, the eyes of the country had been picked out long ago. He need only point to the plan on the table of the House, showing the exchanges of land on the Darling Downs, which illustrated how studiously and effectually all the water frontages had been taken up, and proved that there was nought of the eyes of the Darling Downs to be picked out now. The House had been told, again, that many selectors under the Act of 1868 had repeatedly appealed to the Minister for Lands of the day to extend their time, because they had failed in complying with the conditions, and could not claim their titles. He granted that it might be so. He ventured to say that there was not an interest connected with the land in the colony that had not failed; and he had come to the conclusion that the failure had been general. But look at the results, and it must be admitted that small settlements on the land of East and West Moreton and Darling Downs were eminently successful. But supposing that it were otherwise, there were many reasons for failure. Honorable members on the opposite side of the House would confine selection to defined areas. Still, a great many failures must inevitably result. One of the best features of the Bill was that the selector could go and select for himself what he might think would suit him, and the exercise of that right would be no practical injury to the squatters. Honorable gentlemen opposite knew that very well. He was surprised to see northern men sympathise with the Darling Downs squatters, now, knowing that they had a great down on them before. The honorable member for North Brisbane was hardly conversant with the classification of lands, which was not in the hands of Ministers, but in the hands of commissioners. The Bill met with his (Mr. Fraser's) approval, because it dispensed with that feature of classification. He did not want to interfere with the gentlemen who classified the land, but he stated fearlessly that their classification did not give satisfaction. He came into contact with the question every day, and he could say that from one end of East Moreton to the other dissatisfaction existed with the classification of the land; and, in confirmation of that, there were the plans of the exchanges on the Darling Downs, to which he before alluded. He had it from one of the most experienced and intelligent farmers on the Darling Downs, who distinctly stated, and who was prepared to stand by what he said, that 7,000 acres of the land which was given by the Government in exchanges were equal to any agricultural land that was classified as such in the district, and yet only fifty acres of it were allowed as agricultural by the commissioners. That showed that the classification was a perfect farce.

HONORABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

MR. FRASER: The late Minister for Lands, the honorable member for Clermont, had stated that the best plan would be to put the Downs land up to auction. What would be the effect? How many industrious men in the colony could compete for it at auc-

tion? An instance occurred the other day, where a capitalist ran up the price of land to £7 an acre. How much would fall to the lot of the "poor man"? He repudiated that term altogether, as he believed there were no poor men in the colony, properly speaking. He must express his surprise at the absence of all sound or practical argument in the opposition to the Bill. The country was threatened with terrible consequences—men would be ruined, if the Bill passed. He contemplated no such consequences. Respecting that industry which was recognised as the all-important industry of the colony, he should say little. But, when it was found that thirteen farmers, out of 300 acres of land, produced 6,060 bushels of wheat, which, at a low calculation, was valued at £1,650, he should like to ask, what the grazier or the squatter would produce from the same extent of land? The residence clause of the Bill seemed a very stringent one. The House had heard so much of dummying that it was perfectly nauseous; but reference to returns before the House would show that a great deal of land had been alienated under what he should call questionable arrangements. A very important and flourishing agricultural district was that of Redbank Plains, where the farmers were settled down on restricted areas of forty and fifty acres. They had sons growing up around them, and he (Mr. Fraser) did not see why they should not be allowed to go up to the Darling Downs, or anywhere else, to extend their operations; and the Bill should enable them to do so. He hoped that the Bill would meet such cases, and, at the same time, prevent dummying. He should not go into the details of the Bill until it was in committee. It was, he feared, a waste of time to say anything about the Bill. It might pass its second and its third readings; but he had a strong impression that the labor of the Assembly to-night, and on other nights, would turn out to be—as in the case of other Bills—labor in vain.

Mr. FOOTE said he should not trouble the House with many remarks at so late an hour, but as most honorable members had expressed their opinions on the Bill, it would be well if he said something indicative of his views. The first matter he should allude to was with reference to the large powers to be conferred on the Minister for Lands, which he thought it would not be wise or right of the House to sanction. These powers would be best vested in commissioners as at present. When the Bill was in committee, he should move an amendment in reference to that part of it. Various remarks had been made with reference to free selection. He did not believe in an absolute measure of free selection all over the colony. The Government should resume what portions of land they might find necessary, and allow free selection over certain areas. The residence clauses were calculated to prevent settlement. The various Land Acts had been passed with the view of promoting settlement; and it was the duty of the House to promote it by the best possible means. It was admitted that population was the basis of a nation's wealth, and that without population the land of the colony could not possibly be of value. He believed that even if the land were given away for the purpose of being utilised and fertilised by a great population, the country would be considerably benefited, inasmuch as population would create a vast revenue. He should vote for the second reading of the Bill; but he had several amendments to move in committee, which he hoped would be carried. One had reference to the area which it was proposed to allow a conditional purchaser to select. It had been argued that 1,280 acres of land was quite a sufficient area for a person to settle down on in certain districts, for instance, Darling Downs and Redbank Plains, where, indeed, parties were doing pretty well on 50 to 150 acres. But honorable members should be aware that those parties had rich first-class land; and if the holders could not do well on that, they could not do well anywhere. He was prepared to admit that 1,280 acres of first-class agricultural land was as much as a man should have; but there were districts where first-class land could not be got, and a man required, there, more land than the Bill would allow him; and he should move that a far larger maximum be allowed to a selector. Notwithstanding what the Treasurer had said, that the double of 1,280 acres was too much for a man to have, he hoped the Minister for Lands did not intend to enforce the clause. Parties who settled on the land must have something to live on. He maintained that the greater portion of the colony, as far as he knew it, was only fit for grazing sheep and cattle; and it would be many years, and the population must increase greatly, and labor must be very much cheaper than now, before it could be utilised in the way contemplated.

Question put and passed.

ADJOURNMENT.

On the motion for the adjournment of the House,

Mr. PALMER complained that honorable members had been prevented from coming to a division on the Crown Lands Sales Bill because somebody had got hold of the wires and rung the bell three or four times. After coming into the Chamber, and finding that they had been "fooled," honorable members paid no attention to the subsequent summons, and remained in the refreshment rooms, and were absent from the Chamber when the second reading of the Bill was put and passed. The question would have gone to a division, if honorable members had been present. He expressed a hope that some method would be adopted to pre-

vent any person getting hold of the bell-wires again.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that his attention had been called to the ringing of the bell; but he did not know how the bell was rung. It must have been by somebody outside the House. He trusted that there would be no repetition of such an occurrence.

HONORABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear.