Queensland

Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 24 AUGUST 1882

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, 24 *August*, 1882.

Church of England School Land Sale or Lease Bill.—Petition.—Question.—Formal Motion.—Pharmacy Bill—first reading.—Conterminous Selections Bill—second reading.

The SPEAKER took the chair at half-past 3 o'clock.

CHURCH OF ENGLAND SCHOOL LAND SALE OR LEASE BILL.

Mr. DICKSON brought up the report of the Select Committee appointed to inquire into and report upon the Bill to enable the Corporation of the Synod of the Diocese of Brisbane to sell or lease three allotments of Land in the town of North Brisbane, and to apply the proceeds or the rents to Church purposes, and moved that it be printed.

Question put and passed.

PETITION.

Mr. BLACK presented a petition from certain sugar-planters on the Johnstone River, praying for relief from certain conditions imposed by the Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1876.

Petition read and received.

QUESTION.

Mr. H. PALMER (Maryborough) asked the Minister for Lands—

1. At what probable date will the lands lately withdrawn from selection in the Settled Districts be again thrown open to Selection?
2. Is it contemplated to alter the terms or conditions of selection in regard to said lands before again placing them before the public for selection?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (the Hon. P. Perkins) replied—

No decision has yet been arrived at. Inquiries are being made as to the character and value of the lands referred to.

FORMAL MOTION.

Mr. BUCKLAND moved—

That there be laid upon the table of the House, copies of all correspondence in reference to the suspension and reinstatement of Mr. Rich, the Police Magistrate of Gladstone.

Question put and passed.

PHARMACY BILL—FIRST READING.

On the motion of the HON. S. W. GRIFFITH, the House resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole and affirmed the desirableness of introducing a Bill to establish a Board of Pharmacy in Queensland, and to make better provision for the registering of Pharmaceutical Chemists, and for other purposes.

Mr. GRIFFITH, in moving that the Chairman leave the chair and report the resolution to the House, said he would take that opportunity of saying that he hoped to get the assistance of the Government in carrying the Bill through. He believed it would entirely meet their views.

The PREMIER (the Hon. T. McIlwraith) said he understood that the Bill was the same as left the House last year.

Mr. GRIFFITH: With some alterations as to the constitution of the board.

The PREMIER said as the Bill left the House last year he had no objection to it. Of course it was not a measure on which the Government expressed any opinion whatever. However, since the Bill had been spoken of as being likely to be brought forward this year, the Medical Board had asked him to print a Bill at the Government Printing Office, and it had been done; and although he had not examined the Bills he had been informed that there was a clashing of opinion between the Medical Board and the projectors of the Bill now introduced. What the points of difference were he did not know, but in order to give time to examine the Bills he would suggest that the hon. gentleman would fix the date for the second reading as far off as he could. He knew of no objection to the Bill, but the longer the time they had to consider it the better.

Mr. GRIFFITH said the Bill, with some verbal alterations, was the same as when it left the House last year, with the exception that in deference to the wishes of the medical profession and of others he proposed that the Government should have power to appoint some members of the board always, and that such members might be medical practitioners. He believed that would meet the views of the chemists, and it ought to meet the views of the medical men. He understood that the views of the medical men were that they alone

should have the supervision of the chemists, but he did not see how he could reconcile that with any scheme that he was willing to bring before the House.

The PREMIER said that he did not wish to discourage the hon. gentleman at all in bringing forward the Bill. His only reason for asking if it was the same as the Bill that was before the House last year was that he believed a Bill containing antagonistic principles was being printed; but after the explanation given by the hon. member he thought it likely that the two would agree. At any rate he hoped so.

Question put and passed.

The House having resumed, the resolution was adopted.

The Bill was introduced, read a first time, and the second reading made an Order of the Day for Thursday, September 7.

CONTERMINOUS SELECTIONS BILL—SECOND READING.

Mr. ALLAN said he rose to move the second reading of a Bill to relieve selectors from certain conditions provided by the Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1876 and other Acts. In doing so he was not attempting to move the insertion of any new clauses in that Act, but simply to modify some of those which already existed, in such a way as would to a certain extent remove the disabilities and burdens under which selectors now suffered, and at the same time assist in the settlement of the lands, which appeared to be the desire of all hon. members of that House. It might be objected that a private member had no right to bring in a Bill of that kind, but he did not see that. He believed that if any private member saw a wrong existing he was not only right to endeavour to remedy it, but it was his duty to do so if he conscientiously believed it; and he did believe it. The constituency he represented—the electorate of Warwick, which was not the town of Warwick, but comprised Leyburn, Allora, and other places—contained within it about one-fourth of the acreage of the colony that was under cultivation. He found by the Surveyor-General's report that they had in that electorate 12,000 acres under cultivation, or a proportion of 8·94 per cent., larger very much by many degrees than any other portion of the colony, even in proportion to the area selected. Next to that came Toowoomba with 3·76, and of all the other electorates in the colony not one arrived at 2 per cent. Representing as he did such an important agricultural district, he thought he had a right, if anyone had, to bring forward a measure for the relief of selectors of that class. In addition to that, he might state a more wonderful thing still, and that was that in the constituency he represented the price paid for land for conditional and other purchases exceeded that in any other portion of the colony by two to one, or more than that. In that district the average price of land conditionally selected during the last year was £2 4s. 10d. per acre, the next being Port Douglas, £1 per acre, and all the others were under £1. Therefore he thought he had a strong claim, representing a constituency so much interested in agriculture and selection, to bring forward the Bill. He regretted that it had not fallen into better and abler hands, but he could not help that. He would do the best he could, and if the Bill was not likely to meet with the approval of the House he hoped that that opinion would be given straight out at once. He was quite aware of the gravity of the subject dealt with by the Bill, as it would touch upon two very important clauses of the Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1876, and several other Acts—the Railway Act, the Exchange of Land Act, and others; but if he did not think honestly that it was for the benefit of his constituents and the colony at large he would not have attempted to introduce it. He believed it would afford great relief to the selectors, and it might be, as one of the newspapers of that morning had said, "the four-leaved shamrock which would scatter bliss around." That was exactly what he wanted to do. Twenty thousand selections had been taken up in the colony since the Act of 1864 onwards, and out of those more than one-half had not been completed. He knew personally of many that had been thrown up from the inability of the selector to comply with the improvement and other clauses, and who had thereby been ruined. The 1st clause in his proposed Bill was as follows:—

"For the purposes of this Act, the word 'family' shall include any two or more of the following members, namely:—Father, son, daughter, brother, sister, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, son-in-law, and daughter-in-law."

He might say that since the Bill was in type his opinion on that point had materially altered. It seemed too complicated, and if the Bill was allowed to go into committee he would propose to strike out all the words after the word "sister." If the words were retained, they might go on *ad libitum;* and, perhaps, some hon. members might want to have "mother-in-law" included in the clause. He had no intention of playing into the hands of large holders and dummiers; his object was simply to benefit *bonâ fide* selectors. It had always been a matter of wonder to him why, in the Queensland land laws, a man's wife should not be included in his family. A single man might take up so many acres of land, and a married man could not take up more. Such a system seemed to him to have an immoral tendency, which needed no explanation. A good deal had been said during recent debates about the land laws of America, and he had taken the trouble to look up the law in America on that particular point. In a recent work called "Through the Light Continent," by Mr. William Saunders, in the chapter headed "Land and Land Laws," it was stated that—

"After lands have been surveyed they are proclaimed by the President as ready for sale by public auction. The upset price per acre is 1¼ dollars, and they rarely yield more. Settlers filing claims have the first right to purchase. Before it is sold the land is subject to private entry, but the squatter must take his chance in respect to the lines of the survey coinciding with his claim, which is good for 160 acres (if a married man), or 80 acres (if single). For a payment of 5 dollars down the purchaser gets an incontrovertible title, and five years in which to pay for the land. * * * In America the title to the land is fee-simple, and the purchaser has everything free from the sky to the centre of the earth. There are no United States taxes levied on land. As long as the fee is in the United States there are no taxes whatever."

The simpler their laws were made the more likely they were to have settlement on the land; and in the States, as would be seen, there were no conditions. He admitted that the position of the two countries was dissimilar, because there the land was brought under cultivation, while here the squatter got a revenue from the land by other means. Clause 2 provided that—

"Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in the Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1876 and other Acts, it shall be lawful for persons belonging to one family holding conditional purchases or homestead selections conterminous to each other, but not otherwise, to fulfil the condition of residence on any part of the conterminous selections, and such residence shall be deemed sufficient as if carried out on each individual selection."

In subsection 4 of section 28 of the Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1876 it was provided that—

"The lessee shall occupy the land continuously and *bonâ fide* during the term of the lease; and such occupation shall be by the continuous and *bonâ fide* residence on the land of the lessee himself."

A similar condition was made in the same Act with regard to homestead areas for the term of five years, and it was also provided that the selector should during that term expend a sum at the rate of 10s. per acre in substantial and permanent improvements on the land. Section 50 of the same Act provided that homestead selectors might select conterminous land only. His object was to extend that provision a little further. The only member of the House he had consulted on the subject was the hon. member for Dalby (Mr. Jessop). They were both new men, and probably undertook too much, for "Fools step in where angels fear to tread"; but they thought they were doing the right thing by their constituents, the majority of whom spent their lives on those selections. It was well known that the residence clause was a continual matter of trouble in every part of the colony where selection was permitted. The law allowed a young woman of eighteen or twenty-one to take up a certain selection; and to fulfil the conditions she might have to live two or three miles away from her family. In whatever way that was looked at it seemed immoral. If the girl was conscientious enough to live on the selection away from her family, it was, to say the least, improper; and if she did not do so she had to commit perjury or the selection would be forfeited. He wished to make the law so that people could legally, honestly, and uprightly fulfil the conditions without being placed in so anomalous a position. His next neighbour, Mr. Andrew Patterson, took up a homestead selection next to a conditional selection; and, being a conscientious man, he resided upon it in a little hut for five years. That term expired about three months ago, and he (Mr. Allan) was present when his friend burst up his hut previous to returning to his own home. By the proposed clause a family need not be split up and sent all about to fulfil the conditions, for those conditions would be fulfilled by residing on any part of the conterminous selections. The word "conterminous" might appear slightly ambiguous, but he meant it to apply not only to selections actually adjoining each other, but even to cases where they were separated by a river or a road. Clause 3 was as followed:—

"Nothwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in the Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1876 and other Acts, the erection of a substantial fence around the external boundaries of conterminous selections as aforesaid, held by the members of one family, shall be deemed a sufficient condition to entitle the holders of the said selection to a certificate of the fulfilment of the condition of improvements on each individual selection, subject to the condition of residence, as provided by the said Acts or this Act, being also fulfilled."

In the particular part of the country where he resided the land was very poor and unfit for cultivation; and it was so thickly timbered that the cost of clearing alone would be enough to buy a proportionate amount of the best arable land that was untimbered. The people around his own residence held from 2,000 to 8,000 acres. They were all men with families, and not one of them could afford to employ labour, but did their work with their families only. It was very hard that such men should be required to spend so much per acre upon improvements that were absolutely unneeded. Subsection 6 of clause 28 of the Crown Lands Alienation Act provided that—

"The lessee shall, during the term of the lease, expend in substantial and permanent improvements on the land a sum equal to the amount of the whole of the purchase money thereof, but so that in no case shall such sum exceed the rate of 10s. per acre of such land."

A similar condition was imposed on the homestead selector by section 43 of the same Act. Section 6 of the Crown Lands Alienation Act Amendment Act of 1879 provided that—

"The amount required to be expended by conditional purchasers on exchanged lands in substantial and permanent improvements shall be at the rate of 20s. per acre of such land, anything contained in the 6th subsection of section 28 of the Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1876 to the contrary notwithstanding."

That was the provision which the proposed section was intended to modify, and for many reasons it would be a remarkably good clause to pass. He did not want to take away from the Treasury receipts, but he wanted to induce people to settle on the land. When people were settled on land they would not go out of the country; they would stay there and spend their money in improving it, when they had any. Under the existing law, while the selector was still struggling he had to spend his money on the land. Take the case of an ordinary selection of 640 acres: Four miles of fencing at £40 a mile would be £160; improvements at the rate of 10s. per acre would be £320; and the cost of a hut, £40. That would leave the selector with £120 to spare, and with it he could put on the land 400 or 500 sheep. With the wool and the annual increase of his flock he would be able to carry on and pay his rent; but under the last clause he had read that was not allowed. Supposing the selector to be worth £640, he was compelled to spend the whole of it, and more. A man must spend so much money on his land whether it was requisite or not; and he had seen a man erecting a dam, although he had plenty of water, simply to fulfil the requirements of the clause. It had sometimes been asked why the operation of the Bill should be restricted to fencing and not extended to cultivation; but the answer to that was that the man could not well cultivate his land until he had fenced it in. Another objection urged was that the measure would only benefit the large selector, and small selectors would derive little or no advantage; but that argument broke down when tested. It was said that a man having a selection of 320 acres required to expend £160 to fence in his land and put up a hut upon it to live in; but that presupposed that the selection was quite in the bush and had no frontage to any creek or river, whereas, as a matter of fact, the selector usually had some water frontage and received some assistance from his adjoining neighbours in sharing the expenses of fencing. A large selector was often in a worse condition than a smaller selector in a more favourable locality. In the district which he represented there were many men holding from 3,000 to 4,000 acres who were in a position not nearly so good as others who held only 100 acres. On one occasion he had himself been offered 40,000 acres of freehold land, fenced, improved, and provided with huts, at an average of 12s. 7½d. per acre; while at the same time land in some parts of Allora was worth from £5 to £8 an acre without a stick on it. The cases, therefore, were not analogous. It depended upon the judgment of the Minister for Lands what lands were thrown open, and at what time; and it did not follow that a small selector was necessarily in a worse position than a large selector. The 4th section merely extended the benefit conferred on families by the 3rd section to any ordinary selector. He would not detain the House with any further remarks on the subject. Of course, many hon. members who conscientiously disagreed from him would state the reason for their objections to the measure. He hoped he had said sufficient to give the House a slight idea of the scope and intention of the Bill. If passed into law it would carry joy to 10,000 homesteads in the colony, and show to the selectors that the Parliament and the country had done their best to save them from a burden which, without benefiting the State, was hurting and crushing them.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (the Hon. P. Perkins) said the same question, with variations

of one kind and another, had been brought forward for discussion every session since he had been in Parliament. In 1878 the hon. member for Fassifern had succeeded in passing a somewhat similar measure to the present one, and the hon. members for Burnett and for Rosewood had tried their hands since at Bills of the same nature. The hon. member for Darling Downs was now determined to make another attempt. Since the subject was last discussed the aspect of the question had not changed in any way; if anything, the reasons for supporting a similar measure in former years were stronger now. The scope of the measure introduced by the hon. member for Darling Downs differed somewhat materially from that of the Selectors Relief Bill of last session, and, as the hon. member expressed his willingness to submit to a considerable amendment of the Bill in committee, he (Mr. Perkins) was just as free as on the former occasion to promise his support. The Government would in the present case, as formerly, regard the question as an open one, and every member would take his own course. The measure was not regarded as of sufficient importance to be made a party or Government measure, seeing that it was not a land Bill, and if passed would not disturb the financial arrangements of the country in any way. The Government did not consider the time had come to introduce a land Bill of a comprehensive nature, the present facilities for the acquirement of land in the country being great enough. A conflict of opinion existed, he knew, between some members of the Government and some of their supporters as to one or two clauses in the Land Bill. It was considered by some that the facilities for acquiring land were too great, and that the parties who availed themselves of those facilities abused their opportunity. He did not, however, think that any Government would have the temerity to abolish that particular clause, and he had no notion of inviting his colleagues to do so. He could find no fault with the way in which the hon. member had introduced the measure, the hon. member having no doubt had an extensive and varied experience of the working of that clause; and he quite sympathised with the hon. member in his effort to relieve the small selectors in his own electorate and in other parts of the colony from the operation of the cruel clause complained of. At the time when the Acts of 1876 and 1869 were passed there was a great difficulty in getting employment, and the Legislature in passing those measures was, he believed, actuated by a desire to force those who availed themselves of the privileges of the Land Act to give employment to those who required it. Happily that state of things had passed away, and there was now no necessity to force employers to take more labour than they required, as anyone desirous of earning an honest day's wages could always get it without having his services forced upon anyone. For that reason, and because his experience taught him that it was preferable that a selector should spend his spare capital in buying cattle and in other useful and beneficial ways, he for one considered the time had come when that provision of the Act should be repealed. The objection always raised was that such a measure would only benefit the large selector and not the small one. That argument was correct so far as it went. A selector of 360 or 380 acres, however, derived no benefit from being allowed to make fencing a fulfilment of conditions. A selector of 320 acres spent £192 on fencing alone, and he could not properly utilise his selection until that fence was put up. The hon. member for Darling Downs desired that, where several members of one family having adjoining selections put up a fence all round the selections, fencing should be regarded as a fulfilment of conditions. If the large selector derived any benefit from that provision, the small selector must derive a corresponding benefit. He (Mr. Perkins) had pointed out from time to time, especially during the debate on the Immigration Bill, the desirability of allowing families from the same nations to congregate together, and not forcing them to separate and seek fresh fields and pastures new. The only danger likely to arise was that the condition of residence might be evaded where the members of a family were numerous, and he should in committee draw the hon. member's attention more particularly to that point. The actual result of allowing the mode of fencing proposed would be a reduction of about 50 per cent. in the cost of fencing such selections. Settlement had now been established on such a secure basis that there was no necessity to dictate to people how they should spend their money; and it might be fairly assumed that those who took up land were going to fence it, and that they were the best judges as to the way in which they would spend their spare capital. Clause 3 would require some alteration and if the hon. member did not himself propose an amendment he should make a suggestion in committee. Hon. members would no doubt vote according to their opinions, and if the Bill went to a division the division list would probably be an extraordinary one. From his experience and from conversation with selectors he was convinced that there had been a growing desire among all classes of selectors, since the subject was first introduced, that some relief in the proposed direction should be given. For that reason, with the reservation he had made, he should vote for the second reading.

Mr. GROOM said he was quite prepared to give the hon. member (Mr. Allan) every credit for being actuated by the best and most patriotic motives. The hon. member had not, however, perhaps thought out, in that intelligent way of which he was quite capable, the full effects which the Bill would have on the general land administration of the country. The hon. member must bear in mind, when he asked the House to revolutionise the entire land policy of the country in favour of a particular district—the granite ranges in the neighbourhood of Stanthorpe—that the alteration would affect the entire colony—east, west, north, and south. The hon. member could hardly have taken that into consideration in drafting the Bill. He (Mr. Groom) was one of those who thought that for a private member to introduce a Bill of that kind was a direct interference with the duties of the Executive. Any important alteration of the public policy of the country should proceed from the Executive, and the House had almost invariably been exceedingly jealous of any interference with ministerial administration. The Ministry accepted the responsibility of their own acts, and if any alteration of public policy were necessary they were the proper persons to bring the proposals to effect that alteration before the House. Judging by a return from the Department of Lands for 1881, which had been laid on the table, it would appear as though some contemplated amendment of the Land Act must have been under the consideration of the Government. The report contained an appendix giving the observations of the different land commissioners throughout the colony on the working of the Land Act. Before proceeding he would point out a very remarkable fact shown by the report. In the first place, the Minister for Lands must have been under a misapprehension when he said that the reason why the conditions were imposed when the Land Act of 1876 passed through the House was that there was a scarcity of employment in the colony. The hon. gentleman was quite in error in that supposition. The price of land up to 1868 had been fixed by the House at £1 per acre, and the Land Act of 1868—of which an

hon. gentleman now on the Treasury benches was the author—reduced the price of the land to 10s., but imposed a condition requiring that another 10s. per acre should be spent in improvements, that expenditure being considered as part and parcel of the price of the land. In 1876 that condition was re-imposed, experience having proved it to be exceedingly beneficial. Had those conditions been very harsh and oppressive, retarding rather than encouraging settlement, the figures in the return just laid on the table would show a very different state of affairs from what they did. According to the report, there were in 1876, when the Act was passed, 132,415 acres selected under the homestead provisions, and 443,001 acres under conditional purchase; in 1877 there were 76,819 acres selected under the homestead provisions, and 792,459 acres under conditional purchase. In 1879 there were 67,723 acres selected under homesteads, and 210,886 under conditional purchase. In 1880, 75,171 acres as homesteads and 350,999 conditionals. Now he came to 1881—and it must be borne in mind a Selectors Relief Bill was under the consideration of the House, and the country had every opportunity of judging of the oppressiveness of the Act, supposing it was oppressive;—the returns for 1881 showed these remarkable facts: that there were 105,623 acres selected as homesteads and 640,280 under conditional purchase, making a total of 745,909 acres, or nearly double the quantity selected in any preceding year, notwithstanding what were called the oppressive and harsh conditions. Did those returns show that the people thought the conditions were harsh and oppressive? It was generally understood that where there was a cry for relief there was distress; but who was asking for that relief Bill? Were there any petitions lying on the table of the House asking for the Bill? He did not know of any.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Yes; there is one.

Mr. GROOM said he understood there was one from the sugar-planters of Mackay, but none from selectors. As there had been one petition——

Mr. BAYNES: That is not the only one; there was one last session.

Mr. GROOM said he was speaking of the present session. As there had been one petition, he would just refer to the reports of the various commissioners on the working of the Land Act. Mr. J. G. O'Connell, the Acting Land Commissioner for Mackay, reported as followed:—

"With regard to the working of the Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1876 in this district, I beg leave to state that in my opinion it is most satisfactory. Settlement is on the increase, and is, generally speaking, of a *bonâ fide* character. Large areas continue to be applied for at the monthly land courts; selectors as a rule evince a noteworthy readiness to fulfil the conditions imposed by the Act; and they are without exception in a prosperous and well-to-do condition."

It was very extraordinary, in the face of that report, that a petition should be presented to the House asking for relief for people who were in such an exceedingly prosperous and well-to-do condition. To proceed further: In a district in which there was probably the largest number of selectors, and where, he believed, the conditions were as well carried out as probably in any other district—he alluded to Ipswich—there were last year 60 applications for homestead outside areas; 187 homestead applications, representing 23,967 acres; and 51 conditional selections, representing 19,234 acres. In no other portion of the colony had the drought during the last four or five years been so injurious as in the Moreton district, and yet Mr. Smith, the Land Commissioner, said:—

"The great increase in the number and area of selections as shown by the returns, and the general progress of settlement throughout the district, may, I think, be accepted as satisfactory evidence that on the whole the Act is working smoothly and well."

Some hon. members had been, he believed, invited to go to a place known as the Rosewood Scrub—a familiar district to a great many members, and which, within the last ten years, was an almost impenetrable scrub, yet now there was a population of 4,000 settled down there; the land had been put to exceedingly good use, and the district was as prosperous as they would find in any part of the colony. Did they find those men asking for that Bill? No; they did not hear a single word of complaint from them. In the district of Darling Downs, out of the commissioners' reports submitted to the Lands Department with regard to the working of the Land Act, the only one that made anything like a complaint was that by Mr. Hume. And what was it:—

"I again beg to draw attention, as I have on previous occasions, to the fact that the present land laws are powerless to bring what are commonly called 'dummies' to justice. Though acquiring lands by fraud and evasion has been carried on in the most flagrant manner, on no single occasion has a conviction ever been obtained."

Although he was quite sure that the hon. gentleman in charge of the Bill did not advocate or approve of dummyism—and he said that because he should greatly regret if he uttered one word that would grate on his feelings—yet he was sure that the Bill would be a stronger incentive to dummyism, not only on the Darling Downs but in other parts of the colony, than any measure that had ever been introduced, and would do more mischief as far as dummyism was concerned than anything attempted under the present administration of the land laws. Mr. Giffin, the Acting Land Commissioner at Cardwell, had reported similar to others; and in fact, without being tedious at all, he would say that the whole of the commissioners, with the exception of Mr. Hume, said that the working of the Act was satisfactory, and not one of them said that the selectors had complained of any harshness at all in carrying out its conditions. The Bill reminded him very much indeed, he was sorry to have to say, of a Bill that was introduced into the Victorian Parliament in 1867, known under the name of the Quieting of Titles Bill; why it reminded him he would just inform the House, because the circumstances were almost parallel. It was part of the provisions of the Victorian Land Act that when land was taken up there should be certain conditions attached to it. He took it that the Legislature there, in dealing with the public lands, had been exceedingly liberal as far as most areas were concerned, and one of the conditions imposed was improvements as part of the price of the land. In place of the Crown getting the money it was to be spent in improvements. One clause of the Act provided:—

"If any selector of an allotment in an agricultural area under this Act shall not, within one year from the time of his having become the selector of the same, cultivate at least one acre out of every ten thereof, erect thereon a habitable dwelling, or enclose the said allotment with a substantial fence, he shall forfeit a penalty at the rate of 5s. for every acre comprised in such allotment."

The only difference between the Queensland Act and that was simply this—that in Queensland they did not impose a penalty for non-fulfilment of conditions, but they forfeited the land; and in Victoria a penalty of 5s. per acre was imposed. Some of the lessees were of opinion that the conditions were arbitrary, could not be legally enforced, and they appealed to the Supreme Court. The result was that the Supreme Court concurred in the opinion held by the then Attorney-General, Mr. Higinbotham—one of the best lawyers in Australia—that the conditions must

be fulfilled, and that the Crown was perfectly justified in forfeiting the land if they were not fulfilled. They were not fulfilled, but a Bill was introduced something similar to that now before the House. Mr. Grant, the then Minister for Lands, in speaking on the subject, used words that might be used by anyone opposing the Bill now under consideration. He said :—

"It is a social question of the highest importance, and one which affects very closely the members of this House. What are the objects of the Bill? It is entitled 'A Bill to quiet the titles of selectors of land under certificates,' but I am not aware that any question involving the title of lessees under certificates has arisen which requires to be quieted. The true object of the measure is to relieve the members of a small, but a very rich and powerful, class from the obligations which the law has imposed upon them—obligations which they ought to respect, and which the highest judicial tribunal in the colony has decided they must fulfil."

He did not think that he could use stronger words than those with regard to the Bill before them. Those who selected land did so with their eyes open; they knew exactly the conditions under which the land was thrown open. That House had been consistent throughout on the subject. It had strenuously set its face against relief Bills from 1863 up to that moment, those measures almost invariably meeting with non-success. The only member who had been successful in passing a measure of that kind was the hon. member for Fassifern, in 1878; and he (Mr. Groom) thought that the political confusion which prevailed in the House at that particular period had more to do with the success that attended the passing of the Bill than the intrinsic merits of the Bill itself. In 1880 they started with these conditions—that the payment for agricultural areas should be £1 per acre, and a selector was entitled to take up not less than 40 acres and not more than 320. If within six months he commenced to improve and cultivate the same, then the Crown was in a position to give him a title. He had also the privilege of leasing an adjoining piece of ground, to the extent of 320 acres, for five years at 6d. per acre per annum, and if within eighteen months he fenced it with a substantial fence he applied for it and got it at £1 per acre. In 1863 the Agricultural Reserves Bill was passed, which provided that if twelve months from the date of selection the selector made a declaration that he had resided on it for six months, had cultivated not less than one-sixth, or fenced it in with a substantial fence of not less than two rails, then the commissioner would certify that he had a right to get a certificate. In 1866 they did away with the Agricultural Reserves Act of 1863 so far as to repeal the clause referring to residence and improvements. The Leasing Act of 1866 was about the most mischievous Act ever assented to by Parliament, although at the time it was passed he did not think they saw the extent of the mischief that was likely to accrue from it. They knew that during the present session they had heard that 20,000 acres had been taken up under that Act; and 20,000 acres was but a drop in the bucket compared with the tens of thousands of acres that had been taken up under it. In that Act they repealed the 7th clause of the Agricultural Reserves Act. But, to make matters worse, in 1867 a new Government came into power, and though it only lasted sixty hours, in that short time it did more mischief than any other Government would have done in sixty years. It proclaimed Darling Downs one great agricultural reserve, and all the scrambling and squabbling then took place. And what took place in 1868? Why, all that had been abolished in 1866 was re-established, and re-established by the hon. gentleman at the head of the Treasury benches. There was to be *bonâ fide* and continuous residence, and there was to be an expenditure equal to 10s. per acre. He thought the hon. gentleman would bear him out in saying that that was the intention of the party he supported at that time. In 1872 there was another change—Sir Arthur Palmer being then Premier and Mr. Thompson Minister for Lands. The homestead area was increased, and the price was increased from 6d. to 1s. 6d. per acre for agricultural land, and 9d. for first and second-class pastoral land. There was to be continuous and *bonâ fide* residence and also an expenditure of 10s. per acre either by cultivating a portion of it or by putting up a substantial fence around the land. In 1876 the Land Act now in operation was passed: the price was reduced from 20s. to 10s. per acre, and 10s. per acre had to be expended in improvements. With regard to the conditions of the Act of 1876 they had heard no complaints whatever. He had talked with a great many selectors on the Darling Downs with regard to the Bill, and he had found that they were of opinion that it would give very little relief at all. In dealing with a question of that kind, when the hon. gentleman spoke of the Homesteads Act of America he should have gone further than he did. It was perfectly true that every possible assistance was given in America for obtaining land, but he ought always to bear in mind what the conditions were in the United States and Canada. In fact, there was no British colony;—they could take New Zealand, South Australia, and Victoria; he would speak of New South Wales directly;—but what they would find conditions imposed upon those who selected land under liberal provisions. In America they had conditional homesteads for five years; and all a man had to do was to put up a log hut and to bring fifteen acres under cultivation. That was also the law in Canada. In America, he was under the impression that directly an immigrant became a homestead selector he became an American taxpayer. The Minister for Works would bear him out in that.

Mr. ALLAN: That is the case only if it is under the law of a particular State. As long as the fee-simple is obtained from the Government of the United States he has no taxes to pay.

Mr. GROOM said he was prepared to submit to the hon. member's correction; but he understood that immediately a man became a homestead selector he came under the land tax, and that a very heavy land tax was imposed. They might at the present time take a lesson from New South Wales, where a great deal of agitation was now going on. Even in that colony some queer operations in land had lately taken place. He remembered reading not long ago of a large banking corporation who wanted a particular piece of ground. The manager of the station was instructed to apply for it; but, prior to that, two decrepit old men, one aged sixty-nine years and the other seventy years, were sent to the particular district to make applications for the land in their own names. If the applications were not in the names of those men, it was singular that the names of the selectors should correspond with the names of those men. They also had knowledge of six or seven erysipelas hospital patients taking up land in the same colony. All travellers from Ipswich to Warwick saw how the land had been alienated between Gowrie Junction and Hendon. In place of 20,000 or 30,000 people being located on the land, which might very well be the case, what did they see? Land lying waste, and a mere sheep-walk the whole of the distance! Anyone could see that there must be something rotten in the land laws of the colony to allow those lands to be in the position they were, and that was only for a distance of fifty miles. When the railway was opened from Junee to Hay, in New South Wales, a distance of 160 miles, the whole of the lands through which the line passed

were found to be in the hands of fourteen individuals; and those lands were described by some of the people who went there—some of the largest merchants in Sydney—as land better than which they had never seen. They were perfectly staggered when they ascertained that it was in the hands of only fourteen persons. And how had that state of things been brought about? Simply because the conditions which the hon. member proposed to abolish had not been imposed in the land laws of New South Wales.

Mr. ALLAN: They are all put up to auction.

Mr. GROOM: No. At the present moment the agitation was not confined to one particular part of New South Wales, but was general; and the people were convinced that there was something rotten in the land laws, and that there must be a change. Before six months were over a great change would come over public opinion—it had begun already; and that change would influence the Legislature in effecting a remedy. At the risk of being considered tedious he would read from a speech delivered by a member of the New South Wales Parliament, Mr. H. L. Heydon, a young solicitor and member for the county of Argyle, and one of the numerous band of young Australians who were coming to the front in New South Wales, and finding their way into the Legislature. His reason for troubling the House was that what had been done in New South Wales would be intensified in Queensland under this Bill, simply because there was nothing like the land available in New South Wales there was in Queensland. In describing the working of the land laws Mr. Heydon said:—

"In 1871, 31,500 men held 8,600,000 acres of land in the colony. In 1880, 39,918 men held 22,700,000 acres; but out of that number of men there were 327 men who held more than the whole 31,500 men held ten years before. Because while in 1871 31,500 men held 8,500,000 acres, in 1880 327 men held 9,500,000. The next year was still more striking. In 1880, 39,918 men held 22,700,000 acres. The next year 39,992 men—an increase of 74—held 27,800,000 acres—an increase of over 5,000,000 acres. And instead of 327 men holding 9,500,000, 279 held 12,000,000 acres. (Applause.) This was equal to a third of the whole area of England and Wales, held by 279 men. People talked about the large overgrown estates of the old country; but the condition of things here was far worse than it was in England. (Hear, hear.) In England 874 of the largest estates comprised only 9,000,000 acres, while here 279 estates comprised 12,000,000 acres. And see the change that took place in one year. From 327 men holding 9,000,000 acres, the figures changed to 279 men holding 12,000,000 acres. If this thing went on for even five years more, where would the colony be? (Applause.) There was no time for delay. (Applause.) While the quantity of land alienated increased in the one year 5,000,000 acres, the number of people who held it only increased by 74. Practically, there was no increase in the number of people, and while there were 5,000,000 acres going from the country it did not settle one man on the soil. That meant that by auction sales, by dummying, by the buying out of *bonâ fide* men, the enormous overgrown capitalist had been sweeping away hundreds of men who had been trying to makes homes of their own."

Now, what had been the practical result of this wholesale alienation of the land? He would tell the House Mr. Heydon's researches, gathered from the Census returns; and he must confess that when he read the figures he was rather startled himself, because he had always believed that free selection was doing marvellous things for New South Wales—settling a large population on the soil, and being the means of their becoming highly prosperous. He firmly believed that the more people were settled on the soil the more prosperous a country would become. But what did the Census returns of New South Wales reveal? Why, the extraordinary fact that there were more tenant farmers in New South Wales than freehold farmers. Mr. Heydon said on that subject:—

"The Census revealed that there were many more tenant farmers in New South Wales than freehold farmers. There were 26,800 people returned as farmers in this colony, of whom 21,300 were tenants, and only a miserable 5,500 were freehold farmers. The same thing was true with regard to all the other industries of the soil. Take, for instance, gardeners and nurserymen, of whom there were only 162 freeholders, while 1,764 were tenants. The same thing held good as to vine-growing and to sugar-growing, so that the bulk of the people engaged in those pursuits were tenants to other men."

And was it not lamentable that in a young country like Queensland, when they knew that it had been proposed to spend £160,000,000 of money in buying back the land from the landlords in Ireland so as to establish a peasant proprietary;—was it not lamentable that they should attempt to perpetuate the very evil British statesmen were trying to obliterate? He did not want the colony to become like New South Wales. He did not know whether the Queensland Registrar-General had gone into the matter with such *minutiæ* as the Registrar-General of New South Wales, who had supplied the colony with figures relating to the working of the land laws which were unanswerable. Even Sir John Robertson, when waited on by a deputation lately, was really unable to combat the arguments; and the only fact he communicated to the deputation was that a sum of no less than £50,000 had been forfeited to the Crown by persons attempting to dummy. That showed the extent of the evil, and he did not wonder at the indignation which followed Mr. Heydon's exposure of the facts. That was how large areas had been acquired in New South Wales, and how large areas would be acquired in Queensland if the Bill proposed passed into law. Mr. Heydon further said:—

"There was another idea which the squatters had been very successful in spreading, and that was that the interior of the colony was a perfect Sahara, a desert; that a man could not live there without droughts and other ills occurring. But it was a remarkable thing that sheep lived there, and that these men buy the land at a pound an acre as fast as ever they can. (Cheers.) It was not only with erysipelas patients that the squatters dummied. He could speak of what he had himself seen. In the morning you would see a venerable old gentleman in seedy clothes come up for a tot of rum, and in reply to your inquiries the lady of the house would say, 'What a faithful old creature he is.' (Laughter.) Of course, when he (Mr. Heydon) came to think over it, it was exceedingly useful to have people about a station who had no objectionable independent qualities. (Cheers.) Such people as the old gentleman he had spoken of could not not do without the 'boss,' and they could be used to dummy five or six times over, as long as they had their tot of rum in the morning. (Laughter and cheers.) There was another advantage about this arrangement, and that was, it was not necessary that these gentlemen should reside on the dummy selections. He was riding along with two of his supporters—one a bit of a squatter, and the other a thorough selector—when they passed an extraordinary building about 10 feet long, 5 feet broad, and 7 feet high, composed entirely of corrugated iron. It had no fireplace, no chimney, no nothing. He asked what it was, and the selector replied with a laugh that it was an 'improvement'—(applause)—while the squatter, with a half-blush, said that 'it was right enough, that the land was for a deserving fellow of his who had been in the shearing shed.' (Hear, hear.) These improvements came in very useful, after the time had expired, for roofing in the shearing shed, or for making 'improvements' on other dummy selections, because the iron was as good as new afterwards. The squatter had the advantage of the selector in regard to dummying. When the inspector of conditional purchases visited the district, the former was informed of the fact, in one way or another, and had time to dig the grass out of the floor of his 'improvement,' and light a fire in it, and make the place look smoky before the officer arrived. (Laughter and cheers.) On the other hand, the selector was generally away when the inspector came, and the consequence was that his selection was forfeited."

The House could very well understand how it was that the lands of New South Wales got into the hands of those men. In place of the yeomanry population that ought to have been settled there, the land was being occupied by a tenantry population; and the proposed Bill

would bring about precisely the same thing in Queensland. Had it not even already commenced? The hon. member (Mr. Allan) could not deny that in the district he represented the tenantry business had already started. Men were paying 10s. an acre as tenants, because they were unable to get the land they thought they ought to get in any other way; and he considered that in a colony not a quarter of a century old it was the greatest burlesque they could have on land legislation for a system of tenantry to be already initiated. The facts quoted by Mr. Heydon to the colony of New South Wales had aroused public opinion, and he (Mr. Groom) did not at all wonder that the Ministry of the day were compelled to come down and say in their Opening Speech that, in consequence of the discoveries made as far as dummying was concerned, it was their intention to introduce a new Bill. There was no doubt, from the facts quoted, that a new Bill was needed; but the very thing the hon. member proposed to abolish was the very thing Mr. Heydon said must be resorted to in order to prevent dummying. His words were—

"The most important difference, however, was that in the other colonies the settler had to cultivate and reside on the land."

Those remarks, the reporter said, were received with cheers. Was it not a parody, as it were, on the legislation of the colony to talk about abolishing those conditions, while in an adjoining colony they were absolutely agitating to have them imposed to prevent the wholesale alienation of land in that colony? The best class of persons they could have in the colony was a democracy bound to the soil by the tie of proprietorship. Such a class would be the backbone of the country, and those were the men who, in times of difficulty or danger, would rally to the defence of their homes and be a tower of strength to the Government. They usually associated the idea of relief with distress, and he had seen outside agitation in the colony. He had seen 3,000 men standing in a street of Brisbane, and the steamer "Kate" lying in the river opposite Government House ready to take the Governor away in case of attack. Those were the times when it might have been necessary to come to the House for a Relief Bill; but what was the necessity for a Relief Bill now? Was it not a parody on the Opening Speech of the Ministers who had told the House and all the world that the colony was never more prosperous than now, possessing as it did a surplus revenue of £245,000? Was it not strange that, in the face of that, when they had been only a month in session, they should be asked to pass a Selectors Relief Bill?

Mr. BAYNES: The present Act is a mere sham.

Mr. GROOM said the hon. member might call the Act a sham as much as he pleased, but that had no effect on him (Mr. Groom). The hon. member would soon have an opportunity of showing how it was a sham. He did not think it was a sham, and was prepared to give the gentleman who introduced the Act of 1876 credit for having been actuated by patriotic motives. They might differ on his cash price theory, but that gentleman yielded to none in that House or outside in a sincere desire to settle people on the lands of the colony, and he believed he had been successful. It was that gentleman's Act they were working under now, and the figures supplied by the Lands Department showed that under that Act much settlement had been effected—much to that gentleman's credit rather than to his dishonour. So that he did not think the hon. member's remark about the Act being a sham was borne out by facts; and facts could not lie. The figures he referred to were substantial facts which could not be got over. He hoped the House would not consent to the second reading of the Bill; if it did so it would open the flood-gates to dummyism wider than ever. The Land Commissioner on the Darling Downs was an acute gentleman, and when he wrote to the head of his department and said he was utterly unable to stamp out dummyism, how would it be when the conditions were abolished, and men were enabled to take up lands with ring fences? He had seen walking fences on the Darling Downs, and he knew the injury they had done, and he had seen sham buildings. It was not ten days ago that he was asked to sign papers where some selectors applied for certificates. He looked at the value of the improvements effected, and what struck him as being very singular was the fact that the houses of six of the number were put down at the value of £5 each. Every hon. member knew what kind of hovel that would represent as a residence in accordance with the Act. Those were not *bonâ fide* men, but men holding land for purposes of speculation, intending to sell it as soon as they got their titles. That was not the settlement intended by that House. The object of legislation should not be to encourage that gambling spirit in regard to land, but to encourage settlement in the way it was done in America, Canada, and in New Zealand also, at the present time. But, as he had said, the Bill porposed by the hon. gentleman (Mr. Allan) would open the flood-gates of dummyism to a greater extent than they had ever witnessed before; it would reinstate the walking fences on the Darling Downs and elsewhere which had already cost so much to the colony, and no material benefit would accrue to the general classes of the community. To the small selector it could not possibly be of any benefit.

Mr. PERSSE: It can.

Mr. GROOM said he defied the hon. member to show how it could. If a man selected forty or eighty acres, and wanted to make a living out of it, he must fence and cultivate it. What advantage would the Bill be to such a person? But it would be of advantage to another class—men who had selected as much as 5,000 or 6,000 acres.

Mr. BAYNES: They cannot do it.

Mr. GROOM asked if the hon. gentleman had forgotten that they could select through their uncles, cousins, and aunts?

Mr. BAYNES: That is not the individual.

Mr. GROOM said perhaps it was not the individual. The primary selector could not select so much, but he could get others to select for him; and someone had to find the cash. The Bill might give relief to such men as those. He did not know whether there were such men in the House, but he knew there were such men in the colony, and they were the only men who were applying for the Bill. He thought he had a right when the Bill was asked for to address to that House exactly the same words which Mr. Higinbotham addressed to the Victorian Parliament during the debate upon the Titles under Certificates Bill. That gentleman said—"We are asked to confer a boon upon a large number of persons. Is it unreasonable to ask who they are?" He (Mr. Groom) should like to know who were the people to be benefited under the Bill. Where were the petitions emanating from the general public of the whole colony asking for the Bill? There had been only one; and it had been said by the Land Commissioner at Mackay that the selectors there were the most prosperous class of people in the colony. Was that the class of persons to give relief to? He believed the hon. gentleman

(Mr. Allan) could not point out any grounds for introducing the Bill. He knew the hon. gentleman did not mean it to have the effect it would have; but it would have an effect injurious to the best interests of the colony. If there was any need of such a measure the Government themselves should bring it down; and the very fact that they had not done so was sufficient for him, and he thought should be sufficient for every hon. member of the House, to say that the Bill was unnecessary and uncalled for.

Mr. BLACK said the hon. member for Toowoomba had expressed extreme amazement and astonishment at his having presented a petition that day——

Mr. GROOM said perhaps the hon. gentleman would pardon him for interrupting him for a moment. He had intended to conclude his remarks with an amendment, but he forgot it. If the House would permit him he would conclude with an amendment.

Mr. PERSSE rose to a point of order. He did not think the hon. gentleman could do so now.

The SPEAKER: I will put it to the House. Does the House consent to the hon. member for Toowoomba going on with his amendment?

Mr. PERSSE: I dissent.

Mr. BLACK said he did not know what the rules of the House were in a matter of that sort; but he had not the least objection to sit down while the hon. member moved his amendment.

The SPEAKER: One hon. member objecting, the amendment cannot be put.

Mr. BLACK said the hon. gentleman (Mr. Groom) had made a great mistake in referring to him. He no doubt had not done it intentionally, as, if he had been sitting near him (Mr. Black), he would have heard that the petition he presented was not from the selectors of Mackay at all. It was from selectors on the Johnstone River. At the same time, he was quite prepared to admit that if the necessity arose he would present a petition from the Mackay selectors, and he believed that he should have done it, but for some reason the selectors had not sent him down a petition. The hon. gentleman said that a relief presupposed a distress; but a relief, in many cases, he considered might mean a more rapid development of the district. The arguments the hon. gentleman seemed to lay most stress upon were that because they had a certain Act they should adhere to that Act, and never amend it. The hon. member had spoken with considerable ability, and no doubt had advantages which many hon. members did not possess. The hon. member had a pair of scissors and a lot of newspapers to clip extracts from, and had favoured them with a large number of very amusing anecdotes; but as to the veracity of those anecdotes and the effect they should have upon the House he (Mr. Black) was not so sure. The hon. gentleman seemed to think that a Selectors Relief Bill meant an encouragement to dummying.

Mr. GROOM: Hear, hear!

Mr. BLACK said that if he thought it would have that effect he should decidedly oppose any Selectors Relief Bill; but he believed it would have quite a contrary effect to what the hon. member predicted, and for this reason: It would enable the selector to spend his own money to the best advantage, instead of being compelled to spend his small capital in improvements which were in many cases unreproductive. To show what he meant, he would take the instance of a selector who had the maximum area allowed of 5,120 acres, and that was a pastoral selection. According to the present conditions that selector would have to spend £2,560 in improvements; but were he allowed to fence it in he would require only an expenditure of some £576, leaving the balance of his capital to be invested in proving something upon which he could live after he had fenced in his selection. In the case of a pastoral selection, what possible reason could there be advanced beyond the fact that it was in the Act, to say that a man must spend £2,560 before he could claim the certificate of fulfilment of conditions? The money was not to be spent in reproductive works. If a man was told he was to spend it by putting stock upon the land he would not object to it; but he had to spend it, and in many cases that meant the ruin of the selector. It was owing to that, that after having frittered away his means, at the end of the three years when he got his certificate he fell a prey to the land speculator, or land shark, who was always on the lookout to get his selection from him. He maintained that if the selector was only compelled to spend £576 in fencing, and spent the balance in purchasing stock, he would remain a selector and would be enabled to support himself and his family, and would not be obliged as soon as he could to sell his selection to the land speculator. That was a very serious objection to the present Land Act, and one reason why relief of some sort should be devised to prevent that sort of thing taking place. Amongst other things the hon. gentleman referred to was the report of the Under Secretary for Public Lands on the work of the Lands Department. As a rule, he (Mr. Black) objected to quotations from other people's papers. It was a very easy thing for a member to get up in the House and to come furnished with extracts not emanating from his own brains. He then made a very lengthy speech, which appeared in *Hansard*, and was very often congratulated by his constituents upon his very long speech, as if it were of great credit to him. The reason he objected to it was that there were two sides to a question, and hon. gentlemen who quoted from reports only quoted that portion which suited their own particular case. Notwithstanding his remarks objecting to quotations, he would quote what Mr. R. J. Smith, the Land Commissioner of the Moreton district, said upon that very same subject. He said:—

"In a former report I recommended a short Act retaining the present provisions as to expenditure, but allowing the selector the option of substituting the fencing in of the whole of his selection with a good and substantial fence as an equivalent."

So that they had a land commissioner who was entirely in accord with the views of the hon. gentleman who brought in the Bill. Then a little further on there was an extract from the report of Mr. H. T. Macfarlane, Acting Land Commissioner at Roma. He said:—

"You will, I am sure, be surprised at the small amount of land under cultivation at present leased. This, of course, to a great extent is owing to the exceptionally severe season we have experienced; but, independent of that, the people here do not seem inclined to follow agriculture as a means of livelihood, and the majority of homestead selections in this district, I regret to say, are merely held as places to keep their cattle and give them a footing until they can get their title-deeds, when a great many of them sell, and in some instances, though rarely, apply for a fresh selection."

When they found that the homestead selectors here who were able to acquire land under the most favourable conditions in the colony were only holding on until they got the right to transfer or sell it, what was the good of talking to the House about the yeoman class of the colony? They should sit down until they could show how the selectors were to get a livelihood. Let them get the selectors where they could get a livelihood out of the land, and then they would

do some good; but where they found districts unable to support a farming population they should not try and force them into that channel. Let them get rid of that condition of improvement, and if they could not do anything else with the land let the land speculators get it, and they would do something with it which those poor people were unable to do. He thought one reason why an amendment in the Land Act in the shape suggested by the hon. member for Darling Downs was necessary was that the condition of improvements at the rate of 10s. an acre necessary for the fulfilment of conditions was never intended and could never have been held to apply to agricultural as well as pastoral lands. He hoped the Bill would get into committee in order that he might have an opportunity of suggesting an additional clause. The Selectors Relief Bill that he would suggest would be that the condition of 10s. an acre should still be retained in agricultural districts; but that in pastoral districts fencing should be substituted for it. It seemed to him unreasonable that land out of which a man could only make about 1s. an acre—that the selector who held such land should be compelled to fulfil the same amount of conditions as the agricultural farmer in the North was required to fulfil on land from which he made from £10 to £15 an acre. Therefore he thought it was quite compatible with a Bill of that sort that a second clause embodying his suggestion should be added, allowing the Northern agriculturist to secure his certificate as soon as he had complied with the condition of expending 10s. on every acre. That was not asking too much, and it was the tendency of the petition he had presented that afternoon. It should be optional with the selector to complete his conditions any time he liked, and having completed them he could raise money on his selection. It was well known that tropical agriculture was an industry requiring a greater amount of capital than ordinary agriculture; but that was no reason why a *bonâ fide* selector, having fulfilled all the conditions with the one exception about the three years' residence, should not be able to utilise his farm for three years. The House had that idea in view last year when it passed the Colonial Sugar Refining Company Act, and the hon. member for Toowoomba had said there was no precedent for the present Bill. He (Mr. Black) maintained there was. The Sugar Company Act last year was an exemplification of the fact. Why should not the principles of that Act be extended to the present Bill? By the Act he had referred to, areas of land amounting to about 10,000 acres, belonging to eight or ten different selectors, were allowed to be embodied in one. Those selectors were actually allowed to sell their land before complying with the conditions, the company undertaking to relieve the selectors by fulfilling the conditions, and at the same time undertaking to spend £200,000 on the land acquired before they got their certificate of fulfilment of conditions. He could, from his own knowledge, say that that had been one of the most beneficial Acts ever passed in the House. In a district that at that time did not support twenty men there were now 200 Europeans employed, without taking into consideration the tradesmen of the towns in various parts of the colony who had benefited by the Act. When it could be shown that such an advantage had been derived he thought they were perfectly justified in suggesting a further improvement by passing another new Act which would extend the benefit of relief to the whole of the selectors of the colony. There was one point in the Bill now before the House that he could not help noticing—namely, that the larger the selection the more unprofitable the expenditure must necessarily be upon it. There was no reason that he could see why 10s. an acre should be demanded for improvements on pastoral selections. He agreed that on small selections it was not a bit too much, but on pastoral selections—to which he took it the Bill specially referred—it was unprofitable to the selector, and consequently to the country. He had noticed on several occasions that the remark had been made that they should do all they possibly could to settle people on the land, and he quite agreed with that; but they could not do more than settle them where they would be profitable. It was no use for the sake of mere sentiment settling people on the land for the mere sake of settling them. Unless they could be profitably employed it was worse than useless to attempt to settle them. What were they doing in the North to assist settlers? A man came out and they settled him on the land. He possessed, say, £300, sufficient to fulfil the conditions on 600 acres of land. They settled him on the land, but all the time he was there they kept dragging at him. They said, "Do not spend your money too quickly; you have conditions to fulfil, but you cannot get your certificate for three years, and you will want your money for the support of yourself and family during that time." He said let that man fence in his selection, which he could do for about £200; let him fulfil the conditions in twelve months if he liked, and then see how much better a position he would be in. The *bonâ fide* selector should be protected, and if it was necessary to check dummying let them legislate specially for it; but the good, *bonâ fide* selector should not be kept back because dummying might be the result of any piece of legislation. He hoped that when the Bill got into committee the hon. member in charge of it would allow him to add a further clause, such as he had suggested. Other hon. members proposing amendments having the same object might do the same; and he hoped between them they would be able to frame an Act which would be useful and beneficial to every selector in the colony.

Mr. JESSOP said he thought that after the arguments brought forward in favour of the Bill it was almost unnecessary to say anything. If the Bill passed it would be a benefit to the selector; and there was no doubt that where a selector was hampered with conditions that he could not fulfil, and they could relieve him with little difficulty, they would do him good and good to the country. The hon. member for Toowoomba had made a very forcible speech from his view of the Bill, and had stated that to bring in amending Bills was useless; but amending Bills had been continually introduced. A Bill was now before them to amend the Divisional Boards Act; and Bills were often brought in to relieve other portions of the community. Why, then, should not a Bill be brought in to relieve selectors? They knew the selectors were suffering from the conditions they had to fulfil. The advantages of the Bill were very great, and anyone who had lived in a district where there were a large number of selectors would see that the Bill would be a benefit. In his district there were a large number of selectors, and three-quarters of them had not completed their conditions. He knew very well that many selectors did not know about the condition of 10s. an acre, and they found after a time they could not fulfil the conditions, and the result was that there were many forfeitures taking place every day. It was only a short time since that he had sold a piece of land of 640 acres for £800. That land had been paid for at the rate of £1 an acre and all the conditions fulfilled, but the owner had got into difficulties by borrowing money, and, the mortgagee foreclosing, he lost

all and became insolvent. A great deal had been said about offering inducements to Victorian and New South Wales selectors to come here. He had known a great many who had come to Queensland, and, having looked about them and made inquiries, went back again. They found that the land in most districts was not good enough for agricultural purposes, and the seasons were not certain enough for farming; in addition to that the amount of money at their disposal was not enough to enable them to take up grazing areas. He had known many men who would make good colonists come here and go away again as he had said. Reference had been made to large and small selectors, but he maintained small selectors would be benefited as much by the Bill as the large selectors. The selector who took up 1,280 acres wanted very good land indeed to be able to make a living out of it, but if he had a family he wanted very much more, and he had to work very hard to be able to live on 2,000 acres. A great many people did not care to select, being by no means certain that they would be able to fulfil their conditions. When the Immigration Bill was on the paper a week or two ago hon. members opposite had a great deal to say about putting immigrants on the land, inducing them to settle, and giving them land orders. One hon. member—he believed it was the member for North Brisbane—said he would give the wife of an immigrant a land order. But why should the wife of an immigrant have a land-order and the wife of a colonist not be able to select? Why should they pay for immigrants to come out to Queensland to earn a living—from a country where they could not do a quarter as well, and where they were living on 10s. a week—and also pay for their families and give both husband and wife land orders, so that they might settle and take up land, and yet not give their old colonists any advantage? Why should they come and usurp the places of the old colonists—men who had lived in Queensland for twenty years and fought the hard battle they had? Why should they, when better times came, give away that land to new comers who would not know how to utilise it when they got it? It was not right, when they had selectors in the colony who had been there so many years, and knew how to utilise the land, that they should not be allowed the same privileges. Because he was on the spot and had been paying taxes for years was no reason that he should be taxed to pay taxes on land that new arrivals could have for nothing. The selectors were very heavily taxed now, and he thought that 10s. per acre was a very good price for a pastoral man to pay, especially when he had to pay divisional board rates and marsupial rates and other items in connection with his holding. If they compelled a selector to expend 10s. per acre in improvements on his land, it left the way open for a great deal of—he would not call it swindling, but it was tantamount to that. A man he met from New South Wales, who was talking about the matter, said he was very glad there was a Bill of that kind coming in, as he had known people in New South Wales who had had to fulfil such conditions actually making reservoirs on the top of sandhills and letting them at 4d. per yard, and they were valued by the Government agent at 1s. per yard. The Bill had been introduced for the relief of people who were suffering, and he should certainly have liked the hon. member for Darling Downs to have gone a little further than he had. To encourage settlement he would allow children of twelve instead of eighteen years of age to select. Such an advantage would enable them to take up land, and the conditions could be fulfilled while the children were receiving their education. In his own district there were scores and scores of selectors struggling along and borrowing money to carry on, and the result was that before the time had expired, or by the time they had become entitled to their certificates—three years—they were head and ears in debt, and had to sell out, and, as the hon. member for Mackay had said, the speculator, or the squatter, or the large wealthy man, became the owner of that land. Over and over again that land got into the hands of land sharks and never got out of them. Further than that, if the Bill would at all injure the state of the Treasury, or if it tapped the Treasury in any way, either by drawing out or stopping the inflow of money into it, he thought it would be wrong to bring it forward—especially for a private member to do so; but as the Treasury would not suffer, and the selector would gain, he thought that hon. members should support the Bill with all their power. It did the Treasury no good if the selector had to pay 10s. per acre on the ground, but it did the selector a good deal of harm. It drove him into debt, and he had to pay an exorbitant rate of interest if he went for money to the storekeeper, who had power to charge whatever he liked. The hon. member for Toowoomba had been quoting from various reports of land agents and land commissioners; and, although the hon. member for Mackay objected to quotations, he (Mr. Jessop) would read a report of Mr. Tully's which had been quoted by the hon. Minister for Lands when the Improvements on Selections Bill was introduced by Mr. Persse in 1880. Mr. Tully said :—

"The other papers which have been handed to me for perusal refer to the difficulty of fulfilling the conditions on selections under the Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1876, where 10s. per acre has to be expended on each selection. In many instances this sum is in excess of the selector's requirements for working and utilising the land. It is clearly no advantage to the community that money should be uselessly expended by selectors on their holdings. It is very often the case that a selector finds it difficult, through want of means, to erect what may be considered necessary improvements, and in such instances the additional expenditure required by the Act is found to be a crushing burden. There is also the dissatisfaction of having to spend money without any remunerative result in prospect. The subject is one that demands attention. As the law stands, the condition of expenditure is an imperative one. The selector cannot obtain his certificate without proving that he has spent the required amount.

"So far as I can form an opinion, I believe that the fencing in of the land with a good substantial fence is the best condition that can be enforced. That should be insisted on in all cases. The erection of any other improvements should be left to the discretion of the selector. He will be the best judge of what is necessary, and will be enabled thus to husband his resources instead of wasting them on unremunerative expenditure."

He thought that was about the strongest argument they could place before that House for passing the Bill. That report came from, he supposed, one of the most practical and able men in the colony in land matters—Mr. Tully, the Under Secretary for Lands. He supposed that no man in the colony was better able to interpret their land laws, as he had reports from the various commissioners coming half-yearly or yearly, and therefore better understood the working of their Land Acts, and what was wanted by the people. When a gentleman made a statement like that, he thought it was an argument that might be safely brought forward; and that report had been reiterated on several occasions. The residence on conterminous selections would be a very great boon to selectors. It was very hard that they should have to reside away in a house by themselves. He thought no hon. member would like his sisters or daughters or sons to be living in a house in the bush at a distance from anyone else. If they did not do so

they would have to perjure themselves when they went before the commissioner to ask for their certificates; and besides that they had not the advantage of being with each other and spending social evenings together. He thought it would be quite sufficient if the external boundaries of conterminal selections were fenced as provided in the 3rd clause, which said:—

"Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in the Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1876 and other Acts, the erection of a substantial fence around the external boundaries of conterminous selections as aforesaid, held by the members of one family, shall be deemed a sufficient condition to entitle the holders of the said selections to a certificate of the fulfilment of the condition of improvements on each individual selection, subject to the condition of residence as provided by the said Acts or this Act being also fulfilled."

When there were three or four members of one family selecting 160 or 320 acres, or whatever it might be, one fence would be quite sufficient, and if they wanted to subdivide their land they were sure to fence for their convenience—not, perhaps, where the divisional fence would run, but that did not matter so long as they had the fence. Other hon. gentlemen had a great deal to say on the matter, and he thought there were many members who would probably explain the matter to the House a great deal better than he could. He wished that some hon. members living in Brisbane would go and stop with him a month and let him drive them round the country, as he had often undertaken to do, as he would show them that the Bill was necessary. He could show them land that had been lost, some that had been forfeited, other land that had been sold by the bailiff, and other land that had been closed on and sold on account of debt that holders had incurred in trying to fulfil the conditions. That was very hard. He had known many men in his district to work for four or five or even eight or ten years to save a little money so that they might make a start in life, as every man should do, and after struggling along through some bad season they had to relinquish all their hopes and lose their money and labour besides. Some hon. gentlemen thought that it would not benefit the farmer——

HONOURABLE MEMBERS of the Opposition: No.

Mr. JESSOP said it would benefit every farmer. It was no reason that a man could not be a farmer because he had more than 80 or 120 acres of land. It was a great misfortune for selectors who had fulfilled their conditions that the Bill under discussion had not been brought forward far sooner. It did not depreciate the value of their land, and did not make it harder to sell; therefore he maintained that a Bill of that kind would be a benefit to both large and small selectors. Referring to large selectors, supposing a man had 5,120 acres, why should he be compelled to spend £2,580 on it? In concluding his remarks on the question he wished to make a few observations with reference to the views expressed by the hon. member for Mackay (Mr. Black) in regard to improvements. That hon. member said he would like to see a clause introduced that would allow selectors to complete their improvements if they liked within a shorter period; and he would like to ask the hon. member if he would allow them to get their deeds if they completed their improvements, say, within six months? If they were not allowed to get their deeds, but only to borrow money to carry out their ideas as regarded farming and what not, he did not see so much to object to in that; but he should not like to see a clause introduced into the Bill that would allow a selector to complete his improvements within six or twelve months, and get his certificate, and then be allowed to select again. If such a thing were provided for it would have to be so worded that he should not be allowed to select again within three years, as was the case at the present time. Some hon. members had spoken about the proposed amendment of the law as being calculated to assist dummying, but he looked upon it as just the very thing to prevent dummying.

Mr. GRIFFITH: Oh!

Mr. JESSOP: If any member of that House would show him how it would assist dummying, he should be very glad to withdraw all he had said in favour of the Bill. But he would want it shown so plainly that it could be seen. He did not want a mere statement to that effect, but he wanted facts. It was very easy for hon. members to ejaculate "Oh, oh," but that did not show that the Bill would assist dummying; and he maintained that it would prevent it, and at the same time prove of greater assistance to *bonâ fide* settlement than any measure they had yet had. The suggestion of the hon. member for Mackay with regard to selectors getting their certificates within a shorter period would be very well if they were bound down to only borrowing money or transferring; but they should not be allowed to transfer and become free agents again. That would be no benefit at all, and would probably assist dummying to some extent. It would also keep men out of the power of wealthy speculators and land sharks—men who accumulated lands from the bad luck and misfortune of other people. There was no doubt a very great difference between the value of land in pastoral and in agricultural districts. For instance, there was a very small portion of pastoral lands, even with improvements, that was worth more than £2 per acre; whereas sugar land and rich agricultural land in various districts was worth a great deal more—possibly from £10 to £20 per acre—and the returns per annum from those lands were at the same time very much greater. He had been informed on very good authority that sugar lands gave a net return of from £10 to £15 and £20 an acre per annum; while they all knew that if land in its natural state, with natural grasses, fed a sheep to the acre the year round it was extraordinary good land. At that rate, if any owner of sheep got 3s. 6d. or 4s. per acre per annum he would do very well. Therefore he maintained that the proposed benefit should be allowed to the holders of pastoral lands as well as to people holding agricultural lands. Though the areas might be a little larger they had considerably more to pay than homestead selectors—they did not reap the same benefit, and the land was not so good by far. He defied anyone to take up 4,000 or 5,000 acres without getting in it a considerable quantity of scrub, sandy ridges, or swamps, or other land that would be perfectly useless; and he had never yet found anyone who had been able to grow cattle with a profit on freehold land. One thing he wished to call the attention of the House to, and that was that in advocating the Bill he was doing so entirely as a free agent. The hon. member for Toowoomba had told them that there had been nothing brought forward in the shape of petitions to encourage the House to pass the Bill. But it must be remembered that it had been before the House on former occasions, and that the hon. member for Burnett brought in a petition in its favour last year; the hon. member for Mackay did the same that day; the hon. member for Fassifern had also done so; and his (Mr. Jessop's) constituents had asked him if they should send in a petition, and he told them he did not think it was necessary. If it was a matter of canvassing for petitions, he was sure there was hardly a member of the House who would not have had strong and influentially

signed petitions to present. Possibly there were members in the House who did not care whether selectors were left to sink or swim; but he thought it was the duty of any member, representing selectors or anything outside Queen street, to consider their interests as well as the interests of others. If the Bill passed there was no doubt that it would be a great relief to thousands. Thousands of people were now lying back, waiting for the passing of the Bill. He could give names if he chose, of townspeople as well as country people. He had a list of all the selectors in his district who had their certificates and of those who had not, and he found that the latter were in a very large majority. If the Bill was passed it would do away with the waste of capital in unnecessary improvements, and prevent the selector from being made the prey of land speculators. He hoped the House would allow the Bill to go into Committee, where, with some alterations, it might easily be made into a good and workable measure.

Mr. HORWITZ said that as the junior member for the Darling Downs had brought the Bill before the House, it was his (Mr. Horwitz') duty to make a few remarks upon it. He was at a loss to know why the Bill had been introduced by the hon. member. The hon. member said he represented the Darling Downs, and that the measure was required there. He would tell the House that nothing of the sort was required on the Darling Downs, nor in the district of Allora. He had lived in that district much longer than the junior member for the Darling Downs, and not a single selector had ever told him that he wanted relief from the Government. The misfortune of the Darling Downs was that all the land had been given away in areas which were far too large. If all the land could be resumed and settled in smaller areas, it would be the greatest blessing that could happen to the district. Areas of 160 to 300 acres would be quite large enough. The hon. member had referred to a selector named Patterson. He (Mr. Horwitz) had known Mr. Patterson, and he could say of him that he was a very good selector, and all his selections were paid for. Nearly all the land where the hon. member lived was freehold, and the settlers there had no reason to complain. He was at a loss to know why the hon. member should ask for relief to selectors, for all the selections were fenced in, nearly all were paid for, and most of the selectors had got their deeds. They required no relief. What was the hon. member's object? Had he himself taken up sugar land, and come down to the House to ask to be relieved from the conditions? He (Mr. Horwitz) had some land which he did not take up from the Crown, and was parting with it on terms much easier than those offered by the Government. It would be as well if the Government offered land for settlement on his terms—namely, no payment for the first two years, and after two years to pay the first year's rent. What they wanted on the Downs was more land and closer settlement, and that could be achieved if the Government would bring in a Bill founded on the motion which the late member for Darling Downs (Mr. Kates) introduced last year. He was also surprised that the hon. member (Mr. Allan) had brought such a motion forward without consulting him, as he ought to have done if he expected to get his support. He need only tell the hon. member that he should oppose his motion.

Mr. PRICE said that while travelling in his electorate he had been asked to support certain clauses of the Bill. As he should like to see the principle introduced, he intended to support the motion, for, with a little alteration in committee, the Bill would be satisfactory to the farmers in his electorate.

Mr. NORTON said he did not intend to say much about the Bill, for it was one of those the scope of which was very limited; and if they were to discuss at length every land question that was raised they would have to sit there till Doomsday. He had listened to the remarks of the hon. member (Mr. Groom) with much pleasure; and, although some might feel inclined to doubt the statements made by the hon. member with regard to the state of affairs in New South Wales, he (Mr. Norton) believed they were true from what he had himself seen and heard in that colony. The hon. member spoke of the way in which the evasion of conditions was managed. He might tell hon. members one way in which that was done. A selector took up land, and, as he was supposed to reside there, erected a hut upon it. Every now and then the inspector had to pass through the district to see whether the selections were resided upon or not. The selector generally got wind as to the time at which the visit would be made, and he went up beforehand, taking with him his dog and a cock and two or three hens. Then he swept the hut and lit a fire in front of it. The fire was kept burning. When the inspector got there he found the door of the hut locked, and he could not enter; but on looking around he saw evidences of habitation, for there was the man's dog tied up, and his fowls running about, showing that he was fulfilling the conditions of the Act. The inspector then went away and, although he had not actually seen the man, he concluded that the man had been living on his selection, and made his report accordingly. They had every reason to believe that many of the statements made by the hon. member were absolutely correct, especially with regard to the erysipelas cases. That all tended to show that in New South Wales there were many ways of evading the Land Act. The hon. member then went further, and showed that evasions of the Act had taken place in Queensland also. He stated that he had seen what he called the "walking fence" and the "travelling hut"; at any rate, he told them that quite recently he was asked to witness some papers with regard to fulfilment of conditions, and he found that the value of the hut was about £5. The inference from that was that a man who intended to reside on his selection would not live in a hut which was only worth £5. All that tended to prove that, however stringent the conditions were, dummying could not be prevented. There were even many men who were strictly conscientious and honourable in other things who thought they had a right to get the better of the Government where land was concerned, and with that idea evaded the conditions of the law. That was all that hon. member's argument tended to prove. Although he (Mr. Norton) listened to the hon. member with great interest, he had come to an entirely opposite conclusion. The hon. member also read statistics to show that a very large number of the farmers of New South Wales were not freeholders, but tenants. He did not think that had much to do with the matter, for the cause was easily explained. Hon. members knew that many years ago all the best lands of that colony were sold or granted. The best lands in the Hunter, the Hawkesbury, and the Illawarra districts were taken up many years ago, and ceased to be Crown lands long before the Land Act came into force. Those were the best agricultural lands in the colony, and farmers were willing to give a very high rent indeed for land in those districts rather than go further away and select land of their own—not, perhaps, quite so good—in other parts of the colony where they were not so near a market,

where the means of getting to market were not so easy, and where the population was much more limited. That accounted for the fact that many of those farmers were tenants and not freeholders. Even on the Hawkesbury River, where floods took place two or three times in a season, where men had to leave their houses time after time and year after year, and where their crops were often swept away three seasons in succession, the lands there were greatly sought after by farmers, who were willing to give a very large rent for them rather than go back and take up land of their own. All those best lands were, as he had said, parted with by the Crown, chiefly in the shape of grants, and many years before the Land Act came into force and enabled people to take up land for themselves. Some few years ago the farmers and millers of Maitland were sending grain and flour to Tamworth, and thence to Armidale, a distance of seventy-five miles, and were there underselling the millers who were grinding corn grown on the spot. Owing to the richness of the lands in the Hunter district, the storekeepers of Armidale were able to supply stations with flour from Maitland at a lower rate than they could sell flour grown on the spot. There were just two points in the Bill that should be referred to—the provision to make a surrounding fence a sufficient improvement, and that relating to conterminous selections. He had always held it to be the greatest possible mistake to compel a man to spend more money in improving his selection than he wished to spend. The provision was simply an inducement to the selector to do wrong, and it prohibited him from taking up more than a certain quantity of land. The honourable man who was strictly conscientious would spend the money, and be thereby placed at a disadvantage as compared with the man who was not inclined to be straightforward. Apart from that consideration, it also had the effect of locking up the capital of the man who spent money on his selection which he might have turned to better account in another way; and it prevented some good men from taking up selections at all. Many persons considered that the actual cash price was quite enough in itself for the land, and it was only by keeping a certain class of stock that they were able to make the selection pay. Rather than pay a further sum by way of improvements they would refrain from taking up a selection altogether, and that was one of the reasons why he had always opposed the provision which compelled men to spend a certain amount on improvement. The subject of conterminous selections had not been brought under his notice before, but he could see that in many cases the proposed provisions would be a very great advantage. A very intimate friend of his in New South Wales, who had a family of sons growing up, was impressed, like many others, with the idea that it was necessary to take up as much land as possible in the place where he resided. Under the old system anyone who desired to buy land might have it put up to auction by making an application describing the land and paying a deposit of 6d. per acre, and then, if unopposed, he took it at the upset price or else forfeited the sum deposited. Having bought a good deal in that way he saw that he was placed at a disadvantage in paying £1 per acre cash when the land could be taken up on easier terms, and, therefore, as his sons came of age they each took up selections. They were practically all one family; but all the selections had to be improved and provided with buildings, and the sons who were out working all the day went back to sleep in their own huts at night. Would it not have been much better for themselves and for the country if, instead of sleeping in lonely huts, they could have stayed under their parents' roof and spent pleasant and improving evenings? In the same neighbourhood he had seen cases of selections taken up by both sons and daughters where the provisions of the Act were palpably evaded. In one instance daughters were allowed to take up selections, and two of them would sometimes go out and sleep in a hut by themselves. That was not entirely the fault of the Act, because the parents need not have allowed it; but it was abominable that such a state of things should be allowed to exist. There was, however, such a greed of land, and such a dread that all the land around the homestead would be taken up, that selectors would in many cases allow their daughters to take up land in order that it might be secured to them. He was therefore inclined to regard this clause more favourably than he should have under ordinary circumstances. Of course, as the hon. member (Mr. Groom) observed, the selector knew the conditions upon which he obtained the land, and there was no excuse for evading the law; but the fact remained that the law was evaded, and that however stringent the provisions might be made some persons would always succeed in evading them. There was one thing more the hon. member (Mr. Groom) might have said, and he would say it for the hon member. The hon. member admitted that the conditions of the Land Act were evaded, and objected to this Bill as one that would enable them to be evaded more readily; and yet on a recent occasion the hon. member was found supporting in the House a proposition to give a grant of land to a gentleman who had failed in securing to himself land which he sought to obtain by unlawful means.

Mr. ISAMBERT said the way in which the sufferings of the selectors had been described by hon. members on the other side was truly astonishing. He failed, however, to see where the suffering and hardship came in. To the *bonâ fide* farmer of 160 or 320 acres the Bill would bring no relief. In the case of a selection of 160 acres, the condition of spending 10s. per acre on improvements was satisfied by the fencing which was necessary in order that the farm might be cultivated successfully. But in the case of a selection of 5,000 acres, or eight square miles, the necessary amount of fencing would only amount to about 2s. per acre; and that was the case where the relief would come in, if that amount of fencing were deemed a sufficient improvement. It was the large selectors who were anxious to evade the spirit of the land laws. Instead of settling the people on the land they wished to settle the land in much the same manner as a pugilist settled his opponent—by knocking him down. The Darling Downs was cursed for centuries to come, unless some man boldly crushed the evil or a revolution removed it. Land grabbing was the besetting sin of land laws, not in this colony only, but over the whole of Australia, and nothing had done more injury to both the pastoral and the farming interests. No sooner was a district thrown open than the speculators got hold of all the best land, and the real selector had to be satisfied with land that was not good enough for the land grabber; and then another district had to be thrown open, disturbing another pastoral tenant. Had the land from the beginning been taken up in small areas by *bonâ fide* farmers, settlement might have gone on hand-in-hand with pastoral pursuits without unduly disturbing the pastoral tenants. More or less of the land laws had been framed with the object of preventing the accumulation of large estates. The Bill was clearly one to facilitate land-grabbing of the grossest kind; in fact, the more he looked at it the more convinced was he that the title of the Bill was entirely wrong. It should have been a Bill to

relieve dummies from the inconvenience of having to evade the law or commit perjury, or do anything else that was inconvenient. In the Rosewood district there was a large number of selectors, but he had never heard that they required a Bill of that kind. Why should a whole family be allowed to select land if the head of the family did so? That would cause an evasion of the laws, and prevent the extension of settlement. To compare the land laws of Queensland to the land laws of America was, in his opinion, scarcely fair because in America the settlers had to pay school and other rates, and the local taxation was so heavy that they had not the same inducements to go on the land as they would have here. How hon. members could vote for the Bill was to him utterly incomprehensible. He thought it was a Bill giving a premium to dummies.

Mr. RUTLEDGE said that, like the hon. member for Port Curtis, he had listened to the speech of the hon. member for Toowoomba with great interest and pleasure. It struck him that nothing could be better than the matter and the manner of that speech. He was sorry he could not congratulate the hon. member for Mackay on having exhibited the same delicacy of taste which had characterised the speech of the hon. member for Toowoomba. If a younger man, though an older member of that House than the hon. member for Mackay might be permitted to offer him a little friendly counsel, he (Mr. Rutledge) would suggest that on future occasions when he undertook the duty of criticising speeches he would do it in a less offensive way. The hon. member had exhibited a tendency to be exceedingly dictatorial. Whenever he had thought it necessary to criticise the speeches of hon. members on the Opposition side of the House he had assumed a tone, perhaps unintentionally, which was considered to be very offensive. The hon. gentleman at the commencement of the session had occasion to find fault with something he (Mr. Rutledge) said; and in criticising the remarks of the hon. member for Oxley he had travelled a good deal out of his way. To call an hon. member "thickheaded" and "grossly stupid" was not in keeping with the character the hon. gentleman bore.

Mr. BLACK, in explanation, said he never accused the hon. member for Oxley of being thickheaded; it was the junior member for Enoggera to whom he referred.

Mr. RUTLEDGE said that he had spoken to the hon. member privately about it, and the hon. member had told him that he withdrew anything he said in reference to him that might be considered personally objectionable. He had not thought that "thickheaded" referred to himself, but he could assure the hon. member that he regarded his censure as lightly as he esteemed his compliments. It was a well-known fact that the hon. member had been studiously offensive to the hon. member for Oxley at the time to which he alluded. The fact that the hon. member for Toowoomba spoke so well had led the hon. member for Mackay to make the assertion that the hon. member, through having had access to newspapers and using scissors, had made up a speech so that he might gain the applause of the *ignobile vulgus*, who would think it a fine speech because it was long. He, a very young member, had without the slightest provocation spoken offensively to a gentleman who had had very large experience in that House, and had been connected with it since the inauguration of responsible government in the colony. In future, if the hon. member used language which he (Mr. Rutledge) regarded as studiously offensive, he would always be repaid with interest. The hon. gentleman had talked about a petition. The hon. member for Toowoomba said that there were no petitions in favour of the Bill before the House; and the hon. member for Mackay interjected that there was one, and he had contended that because of that one the Bill was justifiable. Now, he (Mr. Rutledge) had looked into that petition, and what had he found? He found that there were fifteen names attached to it, and that out of those fifteen no less than eleven were residents of Brisbane. There they had a gentleman who was so much opposed to Queen-street influence presenting a petition signed by eleven Brisbane residents out of a total of fifteen, and those eleven had selected 13,520 acres on the Johnstone River; therefore, because some Brisbane capitalists had selections on the Johnstone River, the House was asked to pass a Bill to relieve the struggling selectors throughout the colony. He had, with other hon. members, an objection to any private member attempting to alter the land laws. It was pointed out by hon. members on a previous occasion when a Bill similar to the present was before them, that if such a measure was necessary it ought to be brought in by the Government—it should not be done by a private member. In the early part of the existence of the present Parliament the hon. member for Fassifern and, later, the hon. member for Burnett—neither of whom could be regarded as uninfluential members—had brought forward measures of a similar character; the present one perhaps went a little further. If those two hon. gentleman were not successful in inducing the House to regard with favour a proposal of that kind, the hon. member for Darling Downs—though he deserved every credit for the zeal he had displayed in advocating the cause—could hardly expect to be successful. The hon. member for Mackay had said a great deal with regard to the necessity for the Bill for those who had selected 5,120 acres, and who were not able to complete the improvements required, through not having sufficient capital to carry on. He did not know why the hon. gentleman confined his illustrations to selectors of that class, or why he did not say a single word about the homestead selectors, who clearly deserved consideration. If men who launched out to the extent of taking up 5,120 acres found that they could not carry out the conditions, they ought to be less ambitious, and confine their operations to selections of a less extensive character. Why, because such men chose to cripple their resources, was that House to be asked to inaugurate a measure for their special benefit? How could the Bill benefit the homestead selectors? A homestead selector, who took up 160 acres, was not likely to derive the slightest advantage, because it was necessary for him at the outset to fulfil the conditions of improvements. The first thing he had to do was to was to fence in his property, and then, unlike the large conditional purchaser, before he could turn the land to any account he had to build a house; he had to launch out into a good deal of expense before he could make the land remunerative. Seeing, therefore, that the Bill would not benefit the homestead selector, he could not see how they could put the homestead selector in it. The hon. member for Mackay—he was obliged to refer to the hon. member, because the very many arguments used by the hon. member in favour of the Bill had struck him most—had referred to the excellent work done by the Colonial Sugar Company, for whom a Bill was passed last year to enable selectors to transfer their land to the company. He had spoken of the fact that since that time no less than 200 Europeans had found employment under the auspices of the company. Now, he (Mr. Rutledge) was one of those who

raised their voices against the company's Bill, because it inaugurated precisely that precedent which the hon. member for Mackay now wished the House to follow. Because 200 Europeans had found employment, was that any reason in favour of the present Bill? He thought that the score or so of families who might have been settled on the land would have been of greater advantage to the colony than ten times the number of men who found employment at wages. They wanted a large number of Europeans who had homes of their own, and who were settled and rooted to the soil, and not men who might be merely engaged for the crushing season and then sent adrift. If they were to pass a measure of relief of that kind the precedent would have to be followed up. On the Johnstone River, as he had stated, eleven Brisbane residents had selections, and the next thing would be that a Bill would be brought in to enable a company of capitalists to obtain the transfer of that land in order that they might employ 200 Europeans on it. Where was that kind of thing to end? One would think, from talking so much about the necessity for relief, that the colony was in a most impoverished condition. If there existed the condition of things which existed in South Australia, where settlers, because they were unable to obtain any amelioration of the unpleasant state of things there, were obliged to go to other colonies, it would be time to talk about relief. But everybody was satisfied, and the selectors, notwithstanding the conditions, were getting on very well; and to give permission to a number of men to fence in a number of selections and reside on them by proxy would be doing away with the only guarantee they had that men would make their lands remunerative, which they could only do by settling on them. He regarded conterminous selection as an inducement to evade the land laws of the colony. According to the Bill a family included any of the following members — namely, father, son, daughter, brother, sister, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, son-in-law, and daughter-in-law, and a score of persons might be brought into one family under one or other of those designations. Such a family might have one house on an area of twenty-five or even fifty square miles of country with a fence round. That would make a magnificent station, which would give that family an ascendancy they would not otherwise possess. And if one member of the family found all the money, the squatter who had that ascendancy could induce his poor relatives for a small consideration to move out and leave him master of the situation. If that were allowed, men would obey the instincts common to man, and use the facilities given by the Bill to obtain large tracts of freehold lands. He hoped the House would pause before committing itself to the adoption of such a measure. He wondered how the Government would take any proposition from his (Mr. Rutledge's) side of the House which aimed at a radical alteration of the land laws of the colony. They knew that there was nothing more difficult as regarded legislation than the Land question. That was what now troubled New South Wales, where it had been found that the Act passed by Sir John Robertson in 1861 had been evaded right and left, and that the liberality of its provisions had fostered what it was intended to prevent. And the whole intellect of the New South Wales Parliament would be devoted towards remodelling the land laws so as to prevent dummying. The ability of the Queensland Government might also be devoted to the question of the amendment of the land laws, in order to prevent the dummying which was going on right under their very noses, and which they seemed unable to avoid. But to say that one member could select one defect and provide a remedy, and that another member could provide a remedy for another defect—if such a thing were allowed on the Government side of the House it should be allowed on the Opposition side, and then they might have a dozen members each riding his own hobby, each bringing forward his own Bill to secure an amendment according to his own idea; and instead of one comprehensive Land Act commanding the approval of the House and of the colony, they would have a great number of petty Acts which might, to a certain extent, be contradictory. He must give his opposition to the Bill at every stage; and whilst congratulating the hon. member who introduced it upon what he could not but regard as a laudable desire to carry out what he considered necessary, still that was not sufficient inducement to him or any other member to support him in carrying the Bill through the House.

Mr. BAILEY said he considered the Ministry were the trustees of the public lands of the colony, and that it was rather rough for a private member to expect the House to consider an important change in the land laws not brought forward by the Ministry; and if the Ministry had been consulted with reference to the present Bill it was more strange still. He merely rose to move an amendment which, by some misunderstanding, the hon. member for Towoomba was prevented from moving. He moved—

That all the words after the word "that" be omitted, with the view of inserting the words, "this House declines to legislate upon such an important question of public policy as the administration of the lands on the motion of a private member."

Mr. FRASER said it was quite possible that there might be some considerable amount of justification to lead the hon. member (Mr. Allan) to introduce the Bill. He was not in the House when it was introduced, but he understood that the hon. Minister for Lands had given his sanction to the amendments it contained. If that was the case, it spoke for itself that the Ministry must have recognised that the time had arrived when their present land laws should be amended. If that also were the case, they had a right to expect the measure before them should have been introduced by the Ministry, who ought to take the full responsibility of the question. They knew perfectly well that the law affecting the lands of the colony was one of the most important questions that could come before the House, and one of his principal objections to the present Bill was that it was introduced by a private member. As the hon. member for Enoggera had pointed out, the inevitable effect of legislation such as that was that every petty grievance felt by the selectors in any part of the colony would lead to influence being brought to bear upon some member to bring in such a Bill as the present. The result that would follow would be an entire disorganisation of their land laws, so that they would not know from one session to another how they stood. If the land laws of the colony required amending, a Bill like the one before them of three or four clauses, in the very nature of things, could not meet fully the defects found in connection with it. He stated at an earlier part of the session that he felt very much disappointed that no mention was made in the Governor's Speech of an intention on the part of the Government to introduce a Bill to amend the land laws of the colony. It seemed to him that the intention of the present Bill was to apply to one class of selectors and to one or two parts of the colony. It happened that the parts of the colony in different places varied so much that, in order to fully meet the requirements of the different districts, a much more comprehensive measure than that now introduced

should be brought before the House. In the case of some selectors it might be a hardship, and perhaps an injustice, to compel them to expend a certain amount of money in improvements; but though that might be the case with one class, the measure, as had been asserted already, afforded no relief whatever to another—a different and an equally deserving class. In the case of the agriculturist, properly so called, in his own interest, and before he could make his selection reproductive in any way whatever, he must expend more money than was prescribed by the land laws at the present time. In that case there would be no relief granted by the Bill; and he went further, and would say that in the experience of that class no relief, generally speaking, was required. The hon. member for Mackay contended that the selector should be allowed to complete the conditions in twelve months so that by that means he would be able to raise the money to enable him to carry out his industry with greater effect. The hon. member for Dalby, on the other hand, pointed out that he would object to that because in that case the selector would be entitled to his deed of grant. Still the hon. member would go so far as to allow the conditions to be completed, in order that he might raise the money to carry on with. He (Mr. Fraser) wished to know what the difference was if a man was in a position at the the end of twelve months to receive his certificate of fulfilment of conditions, upon which he could raise money. He could not raise the money without giving the land as security. The conclusion was that if he raised the money and was not able to repay it he lost the land. He did not intend to occupy the time of the House on the question, but he would again maintain that they were not justified in encouraging that class of legislation, which was in effect tinkering with the important question of the land laws of the colony. He would not take upon himself to assert that the Bill was not necessary or desirable at the present time; but he said that if it was desirable and in the interests of the colony something of the kind should be done, it was the province of the Government of the day, and not the province of any private member.

Mr. KINGSFORD said he had listened with a great deal of attention to the discussion on the Bill before the House. At the commencement of the debate he left himself free and unbiassed as to the course he should adopt. He had made himself acquainted with the principles of the Bill so far as he was able, and he had come to a conclusion as to what he should do in reference to it. He quite agreed with the hon. gentleman who had last spoken, that it was not the duty of a private member of that House to take upon himself the work of the Government. He was somewhat surprised that the Government should have delegated their power to a private member, and he thought it would lead ultimately to a very considerable confusion. As had been already pointed out by hon. members, it would lead to an influx of Bills upon little petty partial matters. The great question of the land of the colony was not to be dealt with in that way, or, to use the term used by his hon. colleague, "tinkered with." The land question should only be dealt with as a whole. That manner of pulling, tacking, and hauling with a measure of vital importance to the colony would not remedy the complaint made, and made very often justly. It appeared to him that the question lay in a nutshell, and hon. members had gone round about it a great deal. The Bill would enable people to take up selections for their wives, their sons, daughters, sisters, and brothers, and so on; and they would be doing a very wise thing to resent any interference with the law. It would enable people to take up selections and then transfer them to capitalists—a scheme of which he could not approve. That had been done, and those who had the capital and means to fulfil the conditions had done so. The necessity for relief had arisen, in his opinion, from an utter lack of judgment in those who had taken up land. He had no doubt there were iron safes in Brisbane that were crowded with deeds that were placed there as security by those who had been under the necessity of borrowing money in order to carry on their operations. He believed that had been the great fault of the colony, but it had been brought about by the selectors themselves. Everyone knew well that he who embarked in business with insufficient capital must inevitably come to grief, and the ambition that had been referred to by the hon. junior member for Enoggera had been the great bane of the settlers of the colony. A man with scarcely any capital at all took up land, the conditions of which he could not fulfil, and which were beyond his means. He knew of a case that came under his own notice a short time ago. An enterprising young man took up a selection with a certain amount of capital, and by the time he had paid his second instalment his capital had gone. It was a serious case for relief—he required it badly—but the Government could not grant it, and he got into difficulties. That was the great fault which the Bill before the House would not remedy. He believed where men were not contented with trading in proportion to their means, with the present restrictions, they would not be deterred by any less stringent restrictions. And the same spirit was in all human kind—namely, to be something more than they were. They all possessed it, and more or less manifested it; and it was a want of judgment simply that had brought about the necessity for relief in so many cases. He was now speaking more particularly of the small settlers. For those reasons, and others which he could mention, he could not see his way to support the Bill. It would prove altogether inefficient, and would not accomplish the intended purpose. He did not think it struck at the root of the matter, and it would be ill-advised, however excellent and pure the motives of the hon. member who introduced the Bill might be, to amend the law as it at present stood.

Mr. FOOTE said that as the discussion on the Bill seemed to be a little flagging, he might make a few observations. The amendment that had been moved by the hon. member for Wide Bay was one that he entirely approved of. He also fell in with the ideas of the last speaker, and he endorsed to a great extent what he had said in reference to a private member interfering with one of the most important Acts of the colony. It was well known that the Land Act was a very important Act. It certainly had been—he was going to say meddled with—but at any rate it had been dealt with occasionally in an improper manner, for Acts had been passed through that House which had not been well understood, and which had not been very workable. The present land law of the colony had now been so long established that it was pretty well understood. The selectors themselves understood the land law of the colony almost as well as many members of that House, and perhaps in many cases even better than some. Therefore he thought it was not wise to disturb the existing Act. He could understand that the motive or the intention of the hon. gentleman who introduced the Bill was to relieve certain settlers, and he thought himself that a Bill of that sort was perhaps necessary. But the Bill was not framed so as to relieve

that class of settlers who required relief. It had already been stated by the hon. member for Enoggera (Mr. Rutledge) and several other hon. members that parties entering into business without capital had only one result to expect, and that was failure. He thought the Act as it at present stood was sufficient for the requirements of the colony. The Act accomplished what was intended by the Legislature to be accomplished when it was passed, and he thought that if the time had arrived for a new Act or for a reformation in their land laws and land regulations it should be introduced by the Government of the country and not by a private member. He therefore should not support the hon. gentleman in his Bill, but on the other hand he should be disposed to give it all the opposition that he could give it. He not only promised to vote against the Bill, but if he was supported he would take very good care that it did not go through committee. The hon. member for Mackay had made the remark that he considered the 10s. per acre improvement condition too much for pastoral land and not sufficient for agricultural land. Now, he (Mr. Foote) failed to see that, and he would take as an instance the Rosewood Scrub. Of course the Rosewood Scrub had been taken up principally, he thought, under the Homestead Act, if not altogether; and what was the state of the country then? It was a mass of scrub, and not only had 10s. per acre to be expended, but fully £10, before it could be made useful to the farmers; yet they did not find those men coming to the House for relief. They had carried out to the extreme letter of the law all the requirements of the Act, and the result was that there was a very useful population settled in that place. Some hon. members referred to the lack of capital. They all knew the state of things that existed with reference to the great want of capital; and the Homestead Act, he had understood, was passed especially to meet that requirement—that was to say, to allow parties to select whose only capital was a very small amount of money and the amount of bone and sinew that they were able to employ. There was no difficulty in that class of selectors getting on. Of course they could not expect every man to succeed, and they should take it into consideration that the selectors were not all *bonâ fide* farmers —men who had been brought up to farming and knew what it was—but that many of them were tailors, bootmakers, and artisans, who had an idea that they would like to be farmers and knew not what it was. He always said that the real *bonâ fide* farmer who had been accustomed to it succeeded, for the reason that he knew how to select his land, and knew what was good land, and, when he settled upon it, knew how to work it; consequently such a man had no difficulty in acquiring wealth. Capital must be found somewhere to work the land, and if it did not come from one pocket it came from another: it was like water—it always found its own level—and wherever it could find interest and safe investment it was sure to be invested. The Bill was not intended to apply to that class of selectors, but it applied to another class—those who were able to take up large areas. He candidly admitted that there was a great deal of usefulness in the clause that referred to fencing the external boundaries only of conterminous selections, and he believed that if that Bill had been introduced by the Government, or the clause inserted in the existing Act, he should have supported it. But why should the House or the country give relief to the class of selectors referred to in the Bill? In many instances they were men of capital who had taken up land; possibly some might have taken up too much, and others too little, who might wish to take up a great deal more, and who saw their way clearly to take it up provided they could get an amendment of that sort granting relief to selectors who had selected under the present Act. As he had already stated, if the Government thought it their duty to bring in a Bill, or that the requirements of the colony demanded it, as far as he was concerned he should do what he could towards assisting to pass it. That was the third time that a Bill of a similar character had been brought before that House by a private member, and he could not help thinking that some hon. members were interested. He thought so because he saw opposite members who only put in an appearance when there was an amendment in some Land Act proposed. Therefore he thought they ought to proceed with very great caution with a Bill of that kind, and he for his part should support the amendment. He did so also to show private members that they should not go into that House with a private motion interfering with such important Acts as the Land Acts of the colony.

Mr. STEVENSON said he disagreed with the hon. member in saying that it was not desirable for a private member to introduce a Bill interfering with the Land Acts. He did not think the time had arrived for the Government to interfere and revise those Acts, and if there was any injustice being done to any class of selectors in the colony he did not see why a private member should not interfere and do what he could to correct that injustice. That he considered a very good view to take of the matter. He had not heard very many speeches that evening on the subject, but, from what he could gather from what had fallen from hon. members on the other side of the House, those gentlemen seemed to fancy that the hon. member for Darling Downs had some selfish motive in introducing that Bill.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS of the Opposition: No!

Mr. STEVENSON said they seemed to fancy that because the hon. member was a squatter he could not introduce anything that would be for the benefit of the selectors. He thought the hon. member had been asked by his constituents to bring forward a Bill of that sort. He represented a large number of selectors on the Darling Downs, and why he should not get credit for doing his best to correct an injustice which was being done he (Mr. Stevenson) did not know. The members of the Opposition seemed to think that the people who selected large areas were the only people to be benefited by the Bill. The only mistake the hon. member for Darling Downs had made was that he did not make terms with the Minister for Lands to oppose the Bill instead of giving it his sanction, as in such a case the Opposition would have supported it. The arguments used by hon. members opposite did not tend very much against the Bill. The argument of the hon. member for South Brisbane (Mr. Fraser) was that it would not benefit small selectors—the men with homestead areas—because they were bound to spend 10s. per acre on their selections. Why should that man be subjected to injustice because another man must pay 10s. an acre? Was there any justice in that? If it suited the holder of a homestead area to spend 10s. an acre, why should the other man be compelled to do so if it did not suit him? He did not see that there was any justice in that; and he held that if it were beneficial to a selector and to the colony that he should not spend 10s. an acre, it was only a fair thing that some means should be provided by which he need not be compelled to spend it. The other member for South Brisbane (Mr. Kingsford) said that if those selectors

had made a mistake let them submit to it. But why should men be hunted out of the colony because they had made a mistake? Many Victorians came to the colony in a good season when the country was looking well, and, perhaps, without much experience, took up those lands; and why should they be hunted out of the colony because they had made a mistake? He believed they were very good colonists, and that they were doing the best they could to fulfil the conditions; but if they could not do so, why should they be hunted out of the colony? With regard to the remarks that had been made respecting the suggestion of the hon. member for Mackay, that selectors should be allowed to fulfil the conditions within twelve months and get a certificate, he could not for the life of him see what objection there could be to it, or why there should be such a cry-out against it. If a man had money and could fulfil his conditions within twelve months, so much the better for the colony, and let him do so and get his certificate of title. Altogether he thought the Bill was a very convenient way of amending the Act as far as the hon. member wished to amend it, and for his part he should give it his hearty support. He had not the slightest interest in any selection—he did not own one in the colony; but at the same time he thought the Bill a very convenient mode of amending the Land Act and doing away with an injustice which he believed a good many selectors were suffering from at the present time, and he gave the hon. member great credit, although he was a young member, for tackling a subject of that sort.

Mr. FERGUSON said he intended to vote for the second reading of the Bill. He did not say he agreed with the Bill altogether in its present shape, but at the same time he hoped it would pass the second reading and be amended in committee in such a manner as to make it acceptable to the House, and enable them to pass it into law, the hon. gentleman who had introduced it having expressed himself as willing to amend it so as to meet the requirements of the country. He agreed with a great deal that hon. member had said. There was no doubt a great deal of money was expended at the present time in complying with the conditions of the Land Act that was utterly useless, that was of no benefit to the State, to the public, or to the selector himself. It was merely waste of money, which might as well be pitched into the river as expended in the way it was. He knew of his own knowledge that there were a great many selectors who were bound either to give up their selections or make arrangements with a neighbouring squatter or capitalist to advance them sufficient money to comply with the conditions of the Act, on condition of transferring their land as soon as it was made a freehold. He was certain that there were hundreds of selectors in the Central district, and around the town which he represented, who would never see their land freehold unless they got some relief, or were enabled to fulfil the conditions in the way he had mentioned—by applying to some neighbouring squatter or capitalist for assistance on condition of transferring their holding. In the district round the town he represented the demand for relief had been a burning question for the last three years. It had been argued by some hon. members on the other side of the House that there had been no demand made by anyone for that relief; but it had been a prominent question there for the last three years, and during the last election the first question asked of a candidate was if he would support a Selectors Relief Bill; and he could say that no candidate need appear in the Central district unless he was prepared to do so. He did not intend to say very much on the question, but he could not help remarking that he was very much surprised at the inconsistency of a great many members on the other side of the House who opposed the Bill. It was only a few days ago, when the discussion on the Immigration Bill was before the House, that those hon. members then advocated that large areas of land should be reserved and set apart expressly for the new arrivals. They advocated that new arrivals should get land for nothing; that the Government should even pay their expenses to go on the land; and he was not quite sure whether some of them did not advocate that the Government should even supply them with six months' rations. He believed that some of them went as far as that. At all events, they advocated that new arrivals should get the land for nothing; but they now contended that old colonists of ten, fifteen, or twenty years' standing, who had done as much to raise the colony to the position it was now in as any member of that House, were to be loaded with burdens and have to pay 10s. or 15s. an acre for land, and at the same time expend 10s. or 15s. an acre on it to comply with conditions which were of no benefit to the State or to anyone whatever. It would therefore appear that hon. members opposite had changed their opinion very quickly, as it was only a week ago that their arguments were to give every inducement to settle people on the land; while now the cry was to saddle old colonists with burdens they could not bear. He was, therefore, very much pleased that the hon. member for Darling Downs had brought forward the Bill. He should support it with all the support he could give it, and he hoped the House would see the necessity of such a measure. It was a Bill that could harm no one, but it would benefit the colony by saving money that was now being wasted in useless expenditure.

The PREMIER said the few words that he intended to say at the present time would be upon the amendment moved by the hon. member for Wide Bay. When that hon. member moved his amendment he noticed that it was cheered by the hon. member for North Brisbane, and he, seeing that the mover did not advance any argument whatever in favour of his motion, waited until those who did approve of it should bring forward some substantial argument. There was no doubt a great deal in the contention that all matters of important legislation should be introduced by the Government. It was so laid down by the highest authorities on constitutional government, and that position he meant to take up now. He would show that by the highest authority on the responsibilities of the Ministry in the Imperial Parliament. Todd, in his work on "Parliamentary Government," said, on page 299—

"By modern constitutional practice Ministers of the Crown are held responsible for recommending to Parliament whatsoever laws are required to advance the national welfare or to promote the political or social progress of any class or interest in the commonwealth. This is a natural result of the pre-eminent position which has been assigned to Ministers of State in the Houses of Parliament, wherein they collectively represent the authority of the Crown, personify the wisdom and practical experience which is obtainable through every branch or ramification of the Executive Government, and as leaders of the majority in Parliament are able to exercise powerful influence over the national counsels. But it has only been by degrees, and principally since the passing of the Reform Acts of 1832, that it has come to be an established principle that all important Acts of legislation should be originated, and their passage through Parliament facilitated, by the advisers of the Crown. Formerly Ministers were solely responsible for the fulfilment of their executive obligations, and for obtaining the sanction of Parliament to such measures as they deemed to be essential for carrying out their public policy."

Then he went on to say, at page 301:—

"Bearing this in mind, it must be admitted that the rule that all great and important public measures should

emanate from the Executive has of late years obtained increasing acceptance. The remarkable examples to the contrary, which are found in parliamentary history antecedent to the first Reform Acts, could not now occur without betokening a weakness on the part of Ministers of the Crown which is inconsistent with their true relation towards the House of Commons. By modern practice, no sooner does a great question become practical, or a small question great, than the House demands that it shall be 'taken up' by the Government. Nor is this from laziness or indifference. It is felt, with a wise instinct, that only thus can such questions in general acquire the momentum necessary to propel them to their goal with the unity of purpose which alone can uphold their efficiency and preserve their consistency of character."

And he summed up the argument in the following words on page 305 :—

"Adverting to the privilege of private members to take the initiative in all matters of legislation, it was contended by Sir Robert Peel, in 1844, that 'individual members of Parliament had a perfect right to introduce such measures as they thought fit without the sanction of the Government.' Again, in 1850, Sir Robert Peel urged the propriety of affording to private members an opportunity of inviting consideration to great questions of public interest; that the duty of preparing measures of legislation in all such cases should be undertaken by Ministers of the Crown. Numerous precedents can, indeed, be adduced of the introduction of important Bills by private members; but, unless with the direct consent and co-operation of Ministers, they have never obtained the sanction of both Houses of Parliament."

Those extracts showed the constitutional position of Ministers with regard to Bills of very considerable importance. There was here no more important subject than the land laws of the colony; and therefore, should the subject of the land laws be taken up in Parliament, they should be taken up either with the sanction of the Ministry or by the Ministry themselves. He should certainly regard it as a blow to any Ministry to see a land Bill introduced by a private member passing through, unless from pressure of business they had asked that private member to take that particular work off their hands, they giving all the assistance they could and being actually responsible for the work. Was the present Bill one which could be called in any shape or form an amendment of the land laws of the colony? Let them see how the matter had been considered in practice. No doubt the rule had been well regarded that all important matters of legislation should be initiated and carried through by the Ministry of the day; but there were always small matters of amendment to be seen by hon. members who were in a position to see defects in an Act which were not brought prominently before the Ministry. If it was incumbent on the Ministry to bring in a Bill to deal with those small amendments, the Government would be having important subjects of legislation constantly before the House which it was very undesirable should be there. For instance, if they brought in a Bill to amend the Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1876, it would open up the discussion on all the Land Acts of the colony. They knew perfectly well what it was to carry a land Bill through the House. In 1874, and again in 1876, it was the work of a session. There had been no demand made to the Government to devote a session to the amendment of the land laws of the colony; and it was plain there had been no such demand from the Press or from members of Parliament. No doubt it would require to be done, but they had not reached that stage yet. The very first year the present Speaker sat in the House, in 1870, he acted on the principle which he (Mr. McIlwraith) was trying to explain now. The Land Act of 1868 had just come into operation and it was at that time the subject of comment by all the members of the House. It would clearly have been injudicious for the Ministry, after spending the whole of the session of 1868 in carrying the Land Act through, to have brought in another. It would simply have been to waste that session completely. Some small amendments required to be made, and the Speaker, who was then a private member, brought in the Goldfields Homesteads Bill, which was carried through with the consent of the Ministry of the day and became law. In 1876, Mr. Douglas, the then Minister for Lands, carried through the Act under which the Crown lands were administered at the present time. That Bill was the main work of the session, and the Ministry were clearly right in declining to bring forward little amending Bills within a very short time, which were found to be actually necessary. Consequently, while the hon. member (Mr. Griffith) was Attorney-General, Mr. Persse was allowed to bring in a Selectors Relief Bill. That was one of the cases where a private member could assist the Government by expediting business. A Ministry, in a case of that kind, did not shirk its duty; and if they could get a private member to give the Bill the necessary impetus they were fully justified in taking advantage of his labours. That was the way in which the Government acted in 1878. Mr. Persse brought in his Selectors Relief Bill, and the then Minister for Lands, Mr. Garrick, rose at once and approved of the measure. It was a measure exactly similar to the one now before the House, and it was carried through by a private member. Those were two precedents directly to the point, and showed clearly that the Government were not acting at all unconstitutionally in the course they were taking. They declined the responsibility of bringing in a Land Bill during the session. He would not speak for the Ministry collectively in saying that they intended to support the present Bill — although personally he intended to support it—but they declined, for the reasons he had given, to bring in a Land Bill; but he was willing to give to a private member all the support he could to pass what he considered to be a necessary amendment of the land laws of the colony. He had shown from the past practice of the Opposition, when in office, that it was not necessary for the Government to bring in a Selectors Relief Bill. If the reverse was the case, it was surely the duty of the late Government to have done so, for they themselves had passed the Act that required amending. However, they adopted the same course which the present Government had adopted, and allowed the Bill to be brought in by a private member. He had shown the constitutional law as laid down by Mr. Todd, the highest authority on the subject. The hon. members on the Opposition side, he thought, believed that the law was there properly laid down, but he doubted whether they would be prepared to test it. When the motion coming next on the Orders of the Day—the Triennial Parliaments Bill—was called the sincerity of those hon. members would be tested. Notwithstanding the high position held by the hon. member for North Brisbane, he was still only a private member, and was he justified in bringing so important a matter forward? Yet the Bill the hon. gentleman had laid on the table was the grandest piece of legislation to be seen on the Great Liberal programme; in fact, it was the only part of that programme brought forward up to the present time. That was surely an essential piece of legislation, aiming, as it did, at amending the Constitution Act. Surely that Bill, if any, ought not to have been brought forward by any private member. He had not the slightest doubt that when he moved an amendment, as he should do, declaring that Bill ought not to be brought in by a private member, the hon. members for North Brisbane and for Wide Bay would be found voting against it. He had only risen for the purpose of explaining the position which he took up

with reference to the Bill; and upon the merits of the Bill he had very little to add to what had been said. The hon. member (Mr. Groom) had made the best speech he had heard on the subject, but perhaps the effectiveness of his remarks owed a good deal to the eloquent extracts he had given from authorities in New South Wales. It was not, however, a speech on the matter in question. The natural effect of the hon. member's remarks was to prove the desirability of doing away with all improvements whatever. The extracts read went to prove how systematically the conditions of selection in New South Wales had been ignored by selectors and evaded in every way, and how much those evasions had tended to the creation of vast estates of alienated land. The natural conclusion was that some other and better method of alienating land must be found. The hon. member attributed the evil results that had been produced to the fact that those conditions had been evaded, and that being so, some means should be found by which the conditions could be enforced. It would be well to inquire whether those conditions were not the part that was bad in the present mode of alienation. So long as an artificial system was insisted upon, so long would dummying exist and the land go into the hands of those who were not the best occupiers, and become aggregated into vast estates. The great mistake was made in neglecting to consider the various class of selectors when the Land Act of 1876 was passed. People talked about the poor selector who took up eighty acres, but there were many selectors holding 1,000 acres who were men of exactly the same kind and of equal means as those who held only eighty acres. In and around Toowoomba a man could not perform the conditions of tenure and live on eighty acres without cultivating it; but why should the man who took up poorer land—fit only for carrying stock and useless for cultivation—be debarred from following pastoral pursuits? A great part of the coast land of the colony was only fit to be employed in that way; and if a man chose to take up 1,000 acres and fence and stock it, why should he not be considered as good a farmer as the man who took up eighty acres and put in the plough? It showed a want of judgment on the part of the Legislature to legislate in such a way as to make a selector put the plough into land only fit to carry stock. He did not think it necessary to go further into the merits of the Bill, as every point had been touched upon. With the amendment leaving out the brothers-in-law and the sisters-in-law the Bill would be a step in the right direction, and he should be very glad to see it pass through the House.

Mr. GRIFFITH said the hon. gentleman (Mr. McIlwraith) had been endeavouring to excuse the Government for shirking their duty, and had been trying to justify their action by illustrations to which he had called the attention of the House. The illustrations were, however, entirely foreign to the subject, and the facts placed before the House were entirely inaccurate, as he should show. The principle which the hon. gentleman had recognised as laid down by Todd went to prove that it was the duty of a Government distinctly to undertake any important amendment of law relating to matters of general public interest. If there was one subject more than another with which it would be agreed the Government alone might deal, it was the subject of taxation, and he apprehended that no Government would tolerate any private member introducing a Bill to alter the Customs law. In this country the land laws were as important as the Customs laws; and the Government, in allowing a private member to bring in a Bill to alter the tenure on which lands were alienated from the Crown, were guilty of as serious a dereliction of duty and desertion of their functions as they would be if they allowed a private member to bring in a Bill to alter the Customs tariff. Every word of Todd bore out that proposition. The hon. gentleman attempted to justify the shirking of his functions by referring to an instance which he said occurred in 1878. The illustration given to the House by the hon. gentleman was as follows:—In 1876 the Thorn Government had passed a Land Bill dealing with the whole subject of the alienation of Crown lands. In 1878 it became desirable to amend that law in some particulars, and a private member (Mr. Persse) was allowed, with the sanction of the Government, to do it. That, however, was not what happened. The Bill brought in by Mr. Persse in 1878 was brought in with the sanction of the Government, and was drafted by a member of the Government, but it did not deal with the Act of 1876 at all; it merely assimilated to the provisions of the Act of 1876 the provisions of two repealed Acts, which were still in force with respect to a few selections. The Act of 1876 repealed the previous law except as to existing selections, and a few selections formerly held under those provisions were placed at some disadvantage. All that was done by the Act of 1878 was to assimilate the conditions of those few selections with selections under the Act of 1876, and place all on an equal footing. The Act did not affect the future policy of the country in the slightest degree, but only declared that a few selections that were then on a worse footing should in future be placed in the same position with other selections. The illustration was not in the slightest degree analogous. The Bill of the hon. member for Darling Downs would entirely alter the tenure under which land was held. He supposed scarcely anyone would deny that the one important point in the Act of 1876 was the conditions under which land was alienated by conditional selection; that was a fact upon which there could be no controversy, yet on that point the hon. member undertook to make a radical alteration. If the Government allowed that to be done by a private member, then they were shirking their duty. Why, the other night the Premier had said that the placing of a sum of money on the Estimates would cause them to resign; but he (Mr. Griffith) maintained that to allow a Bill of that kind to be read a second time was a much more serious matter. Constitutional principles would then be more seriously affected than by placing any amount of money on the Estimates. The hon. gentleman had also referred to the Triennial Parliaments Bill, and said that that was a Bill which could only be brought in by the Government. But there were ample precedents in many countries for a question of that kind being dealt with by private members; it had been dealt with by private members on many occasions and in many places.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Name them!

Mr. GRIFFITH: In New South Wales, for instance. That was not a subject dealing with the Constitution at large. If a private member brought in a Bill to make the Legislative Council elective that would be analogous to the Bill now before them; or if any member were allowed to bring in a Bill entirely altering the Constitution by providing for the "Hare" system, that would be abdicating the functions of the Government. It was easy to see that the Bill before them would entirely alter the conditions under which land was held. Up to the present time they had laid down a rule, rightly or wrongly, that all selectors should be placed on an equal footing; they were to pay for their land partly in cash and partly in expenditure on the

land itself. The proposal before the House was to alter that; it provided that the rules should only apply to small selectors and not to large ones. He knew that there were several members of the House who held selections, and who by the passage of the Bill would be relieved from an expense of hundreds and thousands of pounds. That was by the new alteration as to fencing. But in addition to that the Bill would alter the condition of residence in a most serious manner. He was not now discussing whether those provisions were desirable or not, or whether the present law was what it ought to be. The question was whether a serious alteration in an important law should be initiated by a private member. Would the Government allow a private member to bring in a Bill abolishing the present system of alienation and substituting a system of leasing in perpetuity?

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Why not?

Mr. GRIFFITH said he was not addressing himself to the hon. gentleman, who evidently did not understand the question that was being debated. According to the rules laid down in the work quoted by the Premier, the Government had no right to allow that sort of thing to go on. What the Bill would lead to had been illustrated by the speech of the hon. member for Mackay. He had another little amendment which would entirely alter the only remaining condition on which Crown lands were held by conditional selectors; and if the amendments proposed were carried out by the Bill passing, then the land laws would be radically remodelled. And that was to be done by a private member without the sanction of the Government! Upon that matter the House did not get the assistance of the Government, not even their opinions, and certainly not that influence which it was entitled to get. The Premier, in the illustrations he gave, did not even venture to suggest a case where a material part of the law on a matter of public policy was allowed to be dealt with by a private member without the sanction and assistance of the Government; and yet that important matter was an open question with the Government. He (Mr. Griffith) had a sort of recollection that at one time a land Bill was brought into that House by a Government and made an open question; but he apprehended that they had done with that sort of thing. Certainly if the Government allowed the present Bill to go on they would be abdicating their functions, and he would be perfectly justified next week in bringing in a Bill to abolish the Legislative Council. He had not the slightest intention of doing so, because he did not believe in abolishing the Council; but he would be justified in submitting a Bill with that object, or for making the Council elective, which he did not believe in, or for introducing the "Hare" system of representation. He thought there must have been pressure brought to bear on the Government that they did not care to resist. What had taken place with regard to previous Bills of a similar kind did not show that the business of the House would be facilitated by such action. On the two previous occasions a great waste of time took place, as must necessarily occur when everybody was a free lance to air his crotchets, and everybody had a scheme for the amendment of the land law; and, if there had been no authority to be found in the writers on constitutional practice, the illustrations of those two years would be the best possible lesson to show how unwise it was to allow a thing of that sort to be dealt with except by the Government. He should support the amendment.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said the hon. and learned member for North Brisbane stated that the Bill would not have been introduced unless pressure had been brought to bear on the Government.

Mr. GRIFFITH: No; I said the Government would not act in this way.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Unless pressure had been brought to bear on them. He was only one of the Government, but he dared say that any hon. member who had followed his career in that House would know that pressure was not to be brought to bear on him. He had, not only in the present House but always, contended that there should be no conditions in the selection of land except that of a substantial fence. He had the pleasure and honour of introducing a Bill making that the only condition; and the hon. member for Toowoomba, who mentioned the Bill of 1868 and pointedly referred to him, forgot to mention that one of the conditions there mentioned was a substantial fence. It was a great pity that that condition was altered by the Bill of 1876. At all events it would be sufficient to show that whatever he had done with regard to the Act no pressure had been brought to bear on him. He would go further and say that if he had not been honoured by being asked to become a member of the Government, but had remained a private member, whether the Government supported him or not he should have brought in a Bill of the same kind;—he did not say a Bill that would be identical with the one before them, but one which contained so much of the present one as would have put the selector in the same position he would have been under the Bill of 1868. He was pledged to do so, but told his constituents that his position as a member of the Government would preclude him; and that was the reason why the hon. member for Darling Downs, and not he (Mr. Archer), had brought the Bill forward. He might, however, say that if that gentleman had had the confidence to show his Bill to some of the older members he might have received some advice which would have led him to alter it in some particulars. But that was a matter of detail. He should like to say a few words on what fell from the hon. member for North Brisbane about the difference between the Bill and that brought in previously by a private member and sanctioned by a Government of which he (Mr. Griffith) was then a member. He regretted he had not had the same opportunity as the hon. member of learning the art of special pleading, by which he was able to put forward his own case, and show the nice distinction between that case and the present one. But men who were not learned in the law, and who had not been in the habit of being prepared to argue on both sides of a question, would not be able to see any difference. It appeared that in 1876 a Bill was introduced which was defective.

Mr. GRIFFITH: No.

The PREMIER: Yes.

Mr. GRIFFITH: It did not deal with the subject at all.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said he would repeat what the hon. member said. There was a mistake made, and they got a private member to bring in a Bill to rectify the mistake.

Mr. GRIFFITH: That is not anything like what I said.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said that then he was utterly incapable of understanding what the hon. gentleman said, but that was really what he understood the hon. member to say—that there was a defect so far as the Bill of 1876 repealed two Bills which bore on certain selections; and the Government got a private member to rectify that mistake by bringing in a Bill

so as to place those selections in the position they ought to be in.

Mr. GRIFFITH: I am sorry the hon. gentleman did not understand me at all.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said there could be only one of two things: either he was very dull of comprehension, or the hon. member did not explain himself sufficiently fully to the House. But that was the impression the hon. gentleman's remarks left on the House. He had already referred to the fact that the hon. member for Toowoomba, in the long speech he made, slurred over any mention of a substantial fence as one of the conditions of improvement in the Bill of 1868.

Mr. GROOM: I said so.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said the hon. member mentioned other improvements, but forgot to mention fencing, which was the condition they wished to bring back into the land law. He would try to give some reason why they wished it. He would admit at once that if a person selected a piece of land in Queensland which was fit for agriculture the proposed amending Bill would hardly apply. A man who had forty acres of agricultural land was in a position to make a much better living out of it by his own labour than probably a man who had six or ten times that amount of land which was not fit for cultivation. He must cultivate it, he must fence it; he must expend not only the sum demanded by the Bill of 1876, but probably four or five times that amount, before he could support himself and his family. Therefore, anything they could do to relieve the selector would not be of benefit to him. Before he could produce what he wanted to sell in the market he had to expend a sum of money which far more than covered all that was wanted by the Bill. But the man who took up a piece of country, not one acre of which perhaps was agricultural—500, or 600, or 1,000 acres of land only fit for pasturage—that man was by the law as it now stood forced to expend a sum of money which he would not expend unless the law forced him to do so. The agriculturist ploughed and cultivated his land, and expended, say, £100 in doing so, and that was an improvement under the Act; but the pastoral selector who expended £100 on cattle could not call that an improvement, yet they were just as much an improvement on his selection as ploughing was to the agriculturist. The country was not benefited by a man being impoverished in expending money in useless improvements, but by a man making a good living for himself and his family; and the man who took up pastoral country for dairy purposes or rearing cattle, but who had not an acre of agricultural land, was not allowed to put cattle on his land and claim that the money paid was part of the improvements; yet they were just as much improvements as ploughing was to the agricultural farmers. During the late debate upon the Immigration Bill they were told that they offered no inducements to immigrants to come here, and some members, utterly ignorant of the American system, asked them to take a leaf out of the Americans' book. He thought that, after what his hon. colleague the Minister for Works said about the American plan, they would not ask them to take a leaf out of the American book again, seeing that there was no book and no plan, and that the matter was carried on entirely by private enterprise. But would the Bill not be an inducement to emigrants to come out here? Would it not be an inducement to tell them that in parts of the country—not agricultural, but pastoral—they would be able to select 2,000, 3,000, 4,000, and even 5,000 acres of land, and the only condition demanded from them would be residence and fencing; and that they would be enabled to spend the rest of their capital in stocking the land, and making a living for themselves and their families upon it? Would not that be an inducement to men with small capital to come out? And would it not be better than to tell them that they would have to spend the whole of their money in improvements? That was the change which they now wanted to introduce, and which hon. members opposite looked upon as taking away part of the payment for the land. They said that people took up the land knowing the conditions. He admitted that they took it up knowing the conditions, but he had found a great many men who had taken up land knowing the conditions, and had not succeeded; and men from whom they had taken land, or under whom they worked, seeing that it was impossible for them to carry out the conditions and remain solvent tenants, actually altered the conditions, because it was much more payable for the landlord to have a successful tenant than an unsuccessful one. The one man paid his rent and improved the country, and the other man, instead of being of any benefit to the State—for the State was the landlord in this case—became an impoverished man, losing his capital and benefiting nobody. Therefore he insisted that they should offer those superior inducements to settlers; that they should not devise the best means that could be devised to make a man expend his capital in useless improvements that would never return a single penny. The great mistake made in Queensland, in all land legislation, was in looking upon the Darling Downs or the Rosewood Scrub as samples of the whole of Queensland. They had heard that night of the Darling Downs again and again. The hon. member for Toowoomba said something about it, but the hon. member for the Downs (Mr. Horwitz) enlarged upon the Darling Downs to an enormous extent. He believed there were a great many places in the best part of the Darling Downs which the Bill might not perhaps benefit, as the men living there made their living by cultivating land, and thus expended the value of the improvements. When they looked upon the Darling Downs as a fair sample of Queensland, they only showed that they had got no idea of Queensland, as there were millions of acres which, instead of being enriched by cultivation, were actually impoverished. By cultivation in those places they destroyed the natural grasses, and could get nothing else to grow upon them. They might plough and plough them, as he had done year after year; and, unless they got a little bit of rich soil, they were, instead of improving the country, doing an injury by ploughing. That was what they were asking for. They wished those men who took up pastoral country to be enabled to use their capital in the way in which it would pay them best to do it. They did not want the House to lay down rules upon the subject as they had done. The Opposition had discovered a mistake in the Bill introduced by the hon. member for Northern Downs (Mr. Thorn) in 1876, and they wanted them now to discover that there was another mistake in the Land Act of 1876. They discovered that in that Act the whole of Queensland was looked upon as rich agricultural land like the Darling Downs. He should infinitely prefer, if he was a farmer, to be offered a bit of good scrub land like the Rosewood Scrub land, and pay £10 an acre for it, and would consider it infinitely cheaper at that price than to get land at 5s. an acre if it was only pastoral land and he had to fulfil the conditions of improvement upon it. He had tried it and had lost money upon it, and had become a wiser man. He hoped that House would not insist upon people losing their money, but that they would allow them to use

their money to the best advantage. He had listened that night to the hon. member for Rosewood upon the subject, and he was perfectly certain that if that hon. gentleman attempted to go with a plough into the soil of the clayey lands around Rockhampton he would admit it would be to spoil the lands and get nothing out of them. Why should they try to force a law fitting agricultural country admirably upon places which it did not fit at all? A great argument used by several hon. members that night was this: that if the Bill—and he was not speaking now of the whole of the Bill brought in by the hon. member for Darling Downs, but part of that Bill—was passed into law it would give no relief to the farmer on 180 or 320 acres. He (Mr. Archer) admitted that it did not give relief to the agricultural farmer who really cultivated his land, because there was no possible way to give him relief except to offer him the land for nothing. The only way such land could be employed was for cultivation, and as a necessity cultivation fulfilled the conditions in the very act of doing what would best return the money expended. If hon. members would just hold in their minds the distinction between pastoral and agricultural lands they would see that the Bill would be a great relief to persons living upon the pastoral lands of the colony by enabling them to tide over the difficulties in the way of fulfilling the conditions of selection. The hon. member for North Brisbane, who thought the Bill such an enormous innovation, stated that if the land law of 1868 had been renewed it would enable the Minister for Lands to rectify the only complaint; but he (Mr. Archer) did not think he would be doing justice to the colony if he did so, though it was in the power of the Minister for Lands to a large extent to fix the price of land open to selection. He insisted that one acre of good agricultural land was worth twenty acres of pastoral land, even at 5s. an acre. It was the duty of the Minister to keep the lands at the best price he could get for them. He believed that in a great many parts of the colony land had been selected lately—and he was sorry to say he was a witness of it, and the hon. member for Rockhampton had also seen the same thing—for the purpose of farming that had been abandoned for such purposes, and the men selecting it had been obliged to recover themselves by turning it into pastoral land with the object of dairy farming. It might be thought that in such cases as those the price of the land ought to be lowered, but the Minister for Lands had no right to lower the price of land so long as it was selected at the price it was put up at. People taking lands up at their original price were of course subject to the 10s. per acre improvement condition, but the compulsory clause had wrought a great deal of evil on pastoral country; and he insisted that the mere fact of a man putting a fence round his land was sufficient evidence that there was no danger that he was not going to make good use of it. If a man with a small farm put a fence round it he was surely going to cultivate it! Would it be likely that a man would go to the expense of erecting a fence round his land unless he wished to put it to the best advantage? And he maintained that to compel that man to expend his money on other improvements which were utterly useless was a thing that House ought no longer to insist upon for its own sake. The argument had been used that the agreement being made should be fulfilled, but, if it was found that both landlord and tenant would be improved by the relaxation of the agreement, where was the necessity for enforcing it? It was for the interest of the country to see selectors prosperous and able to rear their families in comfort, rather than to try and impoverish them, extort from them the last penny, and eventually drive them off the land. Therefore he believed that it was not only judicious, but would be a saving to the country, if the House would pass so much of the Bill as would enable fencing to be the only improvement on the land.

Mr. MACDONALD-PATERSON said his remarks would be brief on the subject. Last year, when the hon. member for Burnett (Mr. Baynes) introduced his Selectors Relief Bill, he had followed him and given as strongly as he could a general support to the Bill. That Bill had certain objections, but he was greatly in favour of the principle of relieving the selectors from many of the expensive restrictions which hampered them. On the present occasion he would follow the same course and would vote for the Bill, making the same observation—that he did not entirely approve of the Bill as it at present stood. If he were to speak on the Bill he would probably repeat what he had said on a former occasion, but he would content himself with simply giving a quotation from the speech he then made, and that would conclude all he had to say. His words as reported were as follow:—

"He was personally acquainted with a great deal of useless expenditure, more particularly in the Central districts. He was sure the hon. member for Blackall was able to tell this House that many thousands of pounds had been practically thrown away in that way. It would have been better if the views of those hon. gentlemen who promulgated the Land Bill scheme of 1868 had been carried out. The object of that Land Bill was to give any man who intended to settle in this colony the power to take up such area as any reasonable man would require, either for farming or grazing on a somewhat large scale. Secondly, the conditions were to be as liberal as possible. Thirdly, that the applicant should be induced to conserve as much of his capital as possible, in order that he might start in a thrifty and prosperous way; that he should have his capital to devote to the purchase of cattle or sheep or implements of husbandry; that he should have enough to pay for a comfortable dwelling for himself and family, or for fencing such portion of the land as he might require at once for agricultural purposes, or to graze the stock which he commenced with. Now, these objects had not been met either in the 1868 or 1876 Acts. On the contrary, there had been a needless waste of good money; and not only had the selectors lost money, but many of them had been ruined by the compulsory clauses with respect to improvements. But the colony, as a whole, had also suffered. Capital had diminished; and whenever the capital of a country was diminished by an unnecessary expenditure, or an expenditure by which money was practically sunk for ever and produced nothing, it was a damage to the people as well as to the colony."

He thought that was sufficient to indicate the reasons which would cause him to vote for the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. McLEAN said when he recorded his vote against the Bill, as he intended to do, it was not on the principle that he was opposed to affording relief; and he thought, before he sat down, he would show that they were not affording relief to the whole of the selectors of the colony by the Bill. He believed if the present Government were to stay in office long enough every member supporting them would introduce a land Bill every session; it had been the case up to the present. Since the Government had been in office one of their supporters had introduced an amendment in the Land Act every session. He looked upon a person engaged in pastoral or agricultural pursuits in the same way as he looked upon a speculator. Whether a man took up land for pastoral or agricultural purposes, he took it up as a speculation. All trade was carried out on the same principle, and if they were to relieve the men who had taken up large selections, and who found that it was beyond their means to comply with the conditions of the laws of the colony, they might just as well help to relieve any unsuccessful person who had been engaged in commercial speculation and who appealed to the House for relief. He held

that the principle was the same in the one case as in the other. He was opposed to the Bill of the hon. member for Darling Downs because it did not afford relief to all selectors of the colony on an equal footing. The hon. Colonial Treasurer said that there was no way by which they could give relief to agriculturists. He thought that was what he said, but certainly the hon. gentleman said that the Bill would not afford relief in a very large number of instances to those engaged in agricultural pursuits. The Bill would only afford relief to the selector who had engaged in pastoral pursuits. Why should they not afford relief to the agriculturists? They could do that by leaving out all conditions except that of residence. If the hon. member for Darling Downs would remove all the restrictions except that of residence, he (Mr. McLean) should support the Bill. Why should hon. members of that House provide relief for one class of selectors and not for all alike? The Bill, as had been pointed out by the hon. Colonial Treasurer and other hon. members, would not afford an iota of relief to any selector who had taken up less than 320 acres. Last year, on the second reading of the Bill of the hon. member for Burnett, he (Mr. McLean) pointed out very clearly that in the Rosewood Scrub that Bill would be of no use whatever. The hon. Colonial Treasurer wanted the House to believe that the Bill that was introduced by the hon. member for Fassifern in 1878 was brought in at the suggestion of the Government.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Yes.

Mr. McLEAN said he did not know whether the hon. member did so or not, but he could inform the hon. gentleman that half of that Bill was his (Mr. McLean's). When the hon. member for Fassifern introduced the Bill it was to afford relief to the conditional or homestead selectors under the Act of 1872, and when the Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1876 was passing through that House, when they were discussing in committee the penalty for the non-payment of rent, they adjourned for dinner, and after the Bill had been passed into law it was discovered that there was a very serious mistake in it. The whole Committee was in favour of the penalty being 10 per cent., whereas in the Bill it was provided that it should be 25 per cent.

Mr. GRIFFITH: It is only 10 per cent. under the Act of 1876.

Mr. McLEAN said the Bill of 1876 provided for a penalty of 25 per cent.

Mr. GRIFFITH: No.

Mr. McLEAN said he found he was mistaken. However, if the hon. member for Fassifern might have been put up by the then Government to introduce the Bill, he could assure the hon. Treasurer that he (Mr. McLean) had no correspondence with the then Government as to his Bill. Besides, there was no analogy between the Bill of the hon. member for Fassifern and the present one. The Bill of the hon. member for Fassifern afforded relief to homestead selectors under the Act of 1872, but the Bill as proposed by the hon. member for Darling Downs would not afford relief. It was said there had been an agitation on the part of selectors. If there had been any petitions there had only been one or two. If that was such a grievous harm as some hon. members would have them believe, they would have had the selectors up in arms. They would have had meetings got up, and have had the Government called upon to relieve the selectors from the conditions of improvement; but there had been no agitation. In fact, he thought they ought to hear a little more about it from those who were said to be suffering before they took any action. There was another matter he would call the attention of the House to, and it was that the hon. Colonial Treasurer and the hon. member for Rockhampton (Mr. Macdonald-Paterson) had led them to believe that the selectors were compelled to expend all that amount of money in complying with the conditions, whereas it was spread over ten years. There was no necessity for the selector, immediately that he took up the land, to rush into improvements to the extent of 10s. per acre. He had ten years to make his improvements, and whatever little capital he had when he took up the land was available for him to purchase cattle, or whatever other necessary improvements he might think necessary.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: He wants freehold.

Mr. McLEAN said that the Minister for Lands said that, while he was in favour of that Bill, he did not feel called upon to advise his colleagues to amend the law in that direction. It was a remarkable thing that private members of the Government year after year found it necessary to ask the House to amend the land laws, yet the Government had never found it necessary. Notwithstanding that the hon. Minister for Lands was quite convinced that the Bill was absolutely necessary, he did not consider it his duty to ask his colleagues to provide the remedy suggested by the hon. member for Darling Downs. He thought that if the Minister for Lands was really impressed with the burdens of the people who were suffering under a grievance, it was his duty, as a member of the Crown, to have asked the House to provide a remedy. He said last year he intended to introduce that provision himself. The hon. gentleman ought to have brought down a Bill during the present session. He said he was going to introduce the fencing provision into the Bill of the hon. member for Burnett; and why was not that improvement carried out? He did not hear the speech of the hon. member for Darling Downs, but he thought that, in trying to make out a good case, the hon. member ought to have been able to give the House an idea of the extent of the relief that would be afforded under his Bill. There was no hon. member who had spoken in favour of the Bill who had given the House the slightest inkling whatever as to the extent of the relief that would be provided. They were simply told that it would be a relief to a certain number of persons who had taken up selections for pastoral purposes. What the extent of that relief would be no one had yet ventured to give any opinion. If they were going to give relief to selectors let them give all-round relief. If the Government or any private member would introduce a Bill to give all-round relief to the selectors of the colony he would support it; but he was not going to support a Bill that would give relief to only one section of selectors. The 320-acre selector would not benefit one iota under the Bill; the 640-acre selector would a little; and as they went on from that up to the 5,260-acre selectors they would increase the benefit that would arise from the passing of the Bill. He had no doubt that the selectors required relief. He was opposed to the present conditions, and would wipe them off and make residence the condition, and make the relief general and not merely pastoral relief, as contemplated by the Bill.

Mr. PERSSE said he thought hon. members were pretty well aware of what his views were on the subject. In the year 1878 he brought in a Bill for the relief of selectors. That Bill was not introduced at the instigation of the then Government, as some hon. members seemed to think, but was entirely of his own action; and he asked the Government for their assistance in carrying it in

the same way as he supposed the hon. member for Darling Downs had asked the present Government for their support in connection with the Bill before the House. He (Mr. Persse) did not get his Bill framed by the hon. member for North Brisbane, but by the then Postmaster-General (Mr. Mein), and it was brought forward in a form acceptable to the House. Therefore there was nothing to be cavilled at, so far as that Bill was concerned, by either one side of the House or the other. It was brought forward for the benefit of the country; and he thought that any private member of the House had a perfect right to bring forward any measure that was for the welfare of the colony, whether he sat on one side of the House or the other, and to get all the support he could from both sides. Three years ago he framed an amendment of the Act of 1876 and endeavoured to carry it through three sessions ago and two sessions ago, but unfortunately he failed. He did not get the support of the House; perhaps he did not bring it forward in the manner in which it ought to have been done. But on the present occasion he saw that the House was unanimous in trying to pass a measure that would give some relief to settlers. There was no doubt that the greatest hardship that could be put upon selectors was compelling them to spend money on improvements that were not for their welfare or the welfare of the colony. When a man took up land the best thing, in his opinion, that he could do was to fence his selection all round. It prevented him from getting into disputes with his neighbours, and enabled him to utilise the land to the best advantage with the least amount of expenditure; and he (Mr. Persse) did not see what harm it could be if a selector was allowed to fulfil the conditions in the shape of fencing instead of other improvements. The hon. member for Logan had said he was glad that he had assisted to reduce the penalty for non-payment of rent from 25 to 10 per cent.; but he (Mr. Persse) contended that even 10 per cent. was too much—that whether the land was taken up for pastoral purposes or for agriculture, the penalty should not be 10 or even 4 per cent. He held that every possible assistance should be given to selectors, and that they should not be burdened or hampered by restrictions, and he should have great pleasure in assisting to do anything that would be for the benefit of the settler. The greatest kindness they could do to any man who took up land was to impress upon him the importance of fencing it at once. Reference had been made to the Darling Downs and Rockhampton, and some hon. members seemed to think that those two places constituted the whole colony. He could tell hon. members that he had had letters from both the Darling Downs and Rockhampton, thanking him for the action he had taken in previous sessions in trying to get a Selectors Relief Bill passed, and expressing a hope that he would contiuue his exertions in that direction. At the same time he did not believe that the Darling Downs and Rockhampton were the whole colony; there were plenty of other places of equal importance. In the district he represented there were plenty of people who could invest their money in putting cattle and other stock upon the land, or laying it out as best they could, and they would benefit far more by getting their land fenced than they would by being compelled to comply with conditions that were of no use to them. He should certainly support the Bill, and if it went into committee he should have some amendments to propose in it.

Mr. BAYNES said that, speaking to the amendment, he claimed it as a right, as one of the representatives of the people, to introduce any measure that might be beneficial to the general welfare of the country; and he was surprised to find the leader of the Great Liberal party declaiming against it. He maintained that hon. members, whether they belonged to the Ministry or not, had a perfect right to introduce any measure that might be for the public good. He would speak on the motion itself afterwards.

Mr. MACFARLANE said there had been an admission from the Colonial Treasurer that the Bill before them would not benefit the agricultural classes. Who, then, would it benefit? It appeared to him that the Bill was introduced for the purpose of creating in the colony a class of lords of the soil, by giving an advantage to those who were able to take up a considerable quantity of land that they refused to give to the *bonâ fide* selector. With the assistance of those brothers, sisters, sons, daughters, sons-in-law, and daughters-in-law there would be no difficulty in a man of wealth forming an estate of 100,000 acres, and fencing it all round with one great fence. He did not call that settling on the land. The junior member for Rockhampton seemed to argue that those who opposed the Bill were preventing the settlement of people on the land. But they did not object to settlement; what they did object to was the land being given away without settlement, as the Bill was evidently calculated to do. He was surprised at the modesty of the hon. member who introduced the Bill, and was astonished that he had not come down with a Bill to do away with all conditions whatever. No doubt if the Bill was read a second time that would be the next step.

Mr. BAYNES: Except residence.

Mr. MACFARLANE said they would not even except residence. The Bill carried dummyism on its face; and was that a system calculated to advance the welfare of the colony? Would it not lead to immorality? Would it not lead into temptation those who were not very sensitive to acquire land under false pretences—they finding the money, and their brothers, sisters, and so forth, having the name of holding the adjoining selections? He hoped the Bill would not even pass its second reading—although he was afraid it would—but he did not think it would ever get out of committee. At least, he would do all in his power to keep it there.

Mr. BROOKES said that as a new member he must say that the debate had reminded him a great deal of the olden times. The hon. member who introduced the Bill did it very nicely, and there were no doubt circumstances conceivable in which a private member might bring in a Bill dealing with matters which perhaps, strictly speaking, ought not to have been brought forward except by the Government. In a colony like this he did not think they ought to lay down those hard-and-fast lines which applied to an old settled country like England. In connection with the Bill there seemed to be a want of cohesion among the Ministry. If they wanted to sound the feeling of the House on that particular point they had accomplished their purpose, although he would have preferred that they themselves had introduced the Bill. He had had some conversation with the hon. gentleman who brought in the Bill, and he thought at that time that there was a resemblance between what the hon. member wanted to accomplish and the American plan with reference to homesteads; but, on looking into the matter since then, he had found that there was nothing in the American Homestead Act which could be brought forward as an argument in favour of the Bill they were now debating. The Colonial Treasurer made a remark which recalled to his recollection a question which had been lying

still for many years, and that was, "Was it right or moral that members should sit in the House and debate and vote upon matters affecting their own direct pecuniary interest?" He believed there would be members in that House who would be voting on their own affairs if they voted in favour of the Bill. He might be mistaken, but in the *Government Gazette* for March last, under the heading of "Homestead Conditions," he found the name of "John S. Jessop," who was the owner of 4,800 acres; and he believed that that "John S. Jessop" was the hon. member for Dalby. He submitted that an hon. member of the name of Jessop spoke in favour of the Bill.

Mr. BAYNES said he rose to a point of order. The hon. member said he knew nothing about the matter, and he had no right to accuse an hon. member who was not present.

The SPEAKER said there was no point of order.

Mr. BROOKES said he found also the name of William Baynes, 4,737 acres conditional; and also the names of Alice Baynes, Kate Baynes, George Baynes, and Harry Baynes. They held altogether 15,867 acres, or at the rate of 3,173 acres each. In other places he found the names—Henry Palmer, 1,790 acres conditional purchase; De Burgh Persse, 630 acres conditional purchase; and J. Ferguson, 2,560 acres conditional purchase. If the names which he had read were the names of members of the House, it was very singular that four of the gentlemen named had spoken in favour of the Bill. There could be no contention at all as to the fact that those gentlemen were speaking in direct defence of their own personal interests, and the question might very fairly be raised whether they could give their votes on the question. It was a very serious matter, and he was not sorry that it had been raised. The colony had seen enough of that sort of thing in times past, but he had hoped that all influence of that sort was now only brought to bear silently at the Lands Office without the public knowing anything about it. But in this case it was brought in a barefaced way into the Legislative Assembly, and he must protest against it. With regard to the Bill, it was indisputable that the provisions would not benefit those persons for whom it had been prepared—the small selection men. The large selection men were asking the House, and through the House all the small selectors, to allow them to retire from a bargain into which they had entered with their eyes open. He conceived that to be utterly and entirely wrong; and he considered that if the Bill were made law the Parliament would have passed a piece of very defective legislation, of a distinctly party and class character. The measure would not in any way affect a great public interest, and the House in passing it would throw discredit on the wisdom of the past Acts of the colony. The Bill was a request by the large selectors to be allowed to evade their public responsibilities, and he should therefore vote against the second reading, and if that were passed should oppose it at every stage in its progress through committee. Before the House went to a division, however, on the second reading the question ought to be raised whether the gentlemen whose names he had read had a right to vote on the question.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said the hour had arrived when it was usual for the House to adjourn, and it was generally considered bad policy for hon. members to make long speeches at that hour if they desired that their ideas and feelings should go clearly before the public. The subject was a very important one giving rise to a discussion upon the land laws of this and of other colonies, and it would be only fair play towards those hon. members who had not yet spoken to adjourn the debate until next week, or until the following week if other business was coming on for discussion next week. It was known that he had taken great interest in settlement, and that he had had a hand in all the legislation that had taken place on the question in the colony; he therefore claimed the right to be heard in his own defence. He intended to vote contrary to some of the opinions he had heard that night. He therefore moved that the debate be adjourned.

Mr. KELLETT reminded the House that the National Association's Show was to be held next week in Brisbane, and said he hoped the Government would give hon. members an opportunity of attending it. Many members were going to act as judges and stewards, and he trusted, therefore, that on Tuesday and Wednesday next the House would not meet until after dinner.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said it had been suggested to him to allow the division to be taken at once, as he could express his opinions on it in committee. If that were done he would be prepared to withdraw his motion.

Mr. GRIFFITH: The division will take a good while.

The PREMIER said that of course if the debate was adjourned it would keep back a large amount of private business, and if they could take the division now so much the better.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that he had ejaculated that the division would take a good while, because, if some hon. members whose names had been mentioned took part in it, he intended to move that their votes be disallowed, in accordance with the practice of the House of Commons. Possibly, therefore, there would be a division on that point also.

Mr. BAYNES said it was not his intention to take any part in the division, although he had complied with the requirements of the law.

Mr. H. PALMER said he had not intended to say anything on the question, and he had not made up his mind how he should vote up to the time that the hon. member for North Brisbane brought his accusation. Now he should certainly vote against the hon. gentleman and against those who opposed the Bill. He was not a selector of 1,500 acres of land, nor had he even that number of acres in his name. He had a selection in his name—that was a pre-emptive one—of 640 acres; and he had a conditional selection of 200 acres, bought within the last twelve months from a person in the neighbourhood of the land he had, who was almost starving. Those were the only two selections in his name, and he felt that he could conscientiously give his vote on the question. He might explain with regard to the 1,500 acres that he had had a mortgage over a selection of about that quantity of land, but it was transferred from him more than eighteen months ago. He never had any interest in it beyond holding it as a security, and had never seen the country for over fifteen or twenty years.

Question put and passed.

Mr. ALLAN moved that the resumption of the debate stand an Order of the Day for that day fortnight.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER moved that the House do now adjourn.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS moved, as an amendment, that the House adjourn until Tuesday next at 7 o'clock.

Mr. BLACK said he supposed the proposed adjournment was in consequence of one of those

matters which were considered of sufficient national importance to necessitate the business of the country being stopped. He knew he should stand no chance if he opposed the motion; at the same time he would express his opinion on the subject. No doubt the show would be a good one, and he intended to see it, though he hoped he should not be deceived as he was when he went to Toowoomba; but he saw no reason why the House should adjourn. Hon. members could go to the show in the morning and be at the House in the afternoon. He should like to have an assurance from the Premier that he would, without unnecessary delay, add Monday and Friday to the business days. There had been so many delays, and they were likely to see more. He expected the hon. member for Logan would move for an adjournment in the case of the Beenleigh Show, and he thought he should support the hon. member on that occasion. Hon. members who lived at a distance from Brisbane were at great disadvantage in attending the House, and town members should take into consideration those disadvantages, and as a matter of common fairness try and get the business through more expeditiously than at present.

The PREMIER, in reply to Mr. GRIFFITH, said that on Tuesday he would ask the House to adjourn till 7 o'clock on Wednesday.

Question—That the words proposed to be added be so added—put and passed.

The House adjourned at seventeen minutes to 11 o'clock.