Queensland

Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 5 SEPTEMBER 1882

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, 5 *September*, 1882.

Questions.—Motion for Adjournment.—New Bills.—Settled Districts Pastoral Leases Bill—second reading.—Pastoral Leases Bill—second reading.

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

QUESTIONS.

Mr. KINGSFORD asked the Colonial Treasurer—

1. Is it the intention of the Government to increase the length of the Dry Dock, South Brisbane?
2. If so, when?

The COLONIAL TREASURER (Hon. A. Archer) replied—

1. Yes.
2. The Government intend to ask the House, at an early date, for funds to extend the Dock.

The HON. G. THORN asked the Colonial Treasurer—

1. Is it true that the site chosen for wharfage accommodation at Port Alma is three feet below high-water spring tides, and that the country around for a considerable distance is periodically flooded by the tides?
2. Who is the successful tenderer for the wharf or wharves at Port Alma?

The COLONIAL TREASURER said it was impossible to answer the first question; it was not specific enough. In fact, it contained two questions, which could not be replied to in one answer. "Flooded" might mean one inch of water. He might say, however, that it was not true that the site chosen for the wharf was three feet below high-water mark; and that it was true that the back country was occasionally covered at high spring tides. The answer to the second question was, Messrs. Burns and Twigg.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said he intended to move the adjournment of the House for the purpose of referring to a letter that appeared in the *Telegraph* of August 30. The letter was headed "Ministerial Favouritism," and was signed "Neptune." The letter was as follows:—

"TO THE EDITOR.—Sir,—Last night I visited the House of Assembly. On my arrival they were discussing Mr. Norton's complaint *re* Ipswich railway officials. The leader of the Opposition in a very mild and gentlemanly manner exposed the partiality shown by the Minister for Works towards his friends, and said he had been told of a man being dismissed from the railway without any cause assigned, and another, who, after serving a sentence on St. Helena, was taken on in his place, but he was not in a position just then to give the man's name. Now, sir, if that hon. gentleman is not in a position to give the man's name, I am in a position to give the public the name of a man who, after doing a sentence (six weeks, I think) for breaking the laws of the colony, was reinstated in his former situation on the Railway Works. I enclose the name of that man, and you are at liberty to give the name to the public."

Then followed the reason why he (Mr. O'Sullivan) had brought the matter forward. The writer continued—

"He is a particular friend of the Minister for Works, and also of my old acquaintance Paddy. This man did great service at the Ipswich dismissals some three years

ago, and was rewarded for his services by being placed to a certain job, and had men to instruct him, and he also received more money than the man who was dismissed, and who thoroughly understood the work. The member for Logan spoke of holding a Royal Commission upon the rotten favouritism upon our railways. I can assure that gentleman that nine-tenths of the railway officials would be told what evidence to give, and if they did not give that evidence dismissal would be their fate. If there is a Royal Commission, I would like to be called upon as a witness. I could enlighten the public as much as any man in the colony."

He took it that he was the "Paddy" referred to, and he had not the slightest objection to the name. The writer of the letter authorised the editor to give his name and also the name of the person referred to. The letter somewhat astonished him, for he knew no more of the official in question than the man in the moon. He had since made inquiries, and found that the man got into a bit of a scrape in the "Porteous riots" that took place at Ipswich seven or eight years ago. At that time some of the secret societies in that town hired itinerant or vagabond preachers to go to the place and abuse their neighbours. Those men did so for a certain sum, and before they went away, after being very well paid, they did no end of mischief. In consequence of those "Porteous riots" five or six young men were brought up and prosecuted. He was happy to say there were only half-a-dozen, for there was a chance of a couple of dozen being pounced upon. There was one man, who was now a leading barrister in the colony, whose name was down for prosecution, and six witnesses had sworn that he took part in the riots; but before the trial came on it was discovered that he was in Brisbane at the time, and that he had never been near Ipswich on that occasion, although six witnesses were prepared to swear that he was. Of another man, who was marked for prosecution, it was proved by the Police Magistrate that he not only obeyed the law, but did his best to enforce it. The man referred to in "Neptune's" letter had been at that time ten years in the Railway Department, and there was not a more honest, capable, and respectable man in the colony. For his alleged share in those riots he was sent to gaol for three weeks. After the expiration of that time, Mr. Macalister, who was then Premier, sent the man back to his work on the railway. Secret societies were then very numerous in Ipswich—much more numerous, he was happy to say, than they were now—and they sent an anonymous letter, signed "A Friend," to Mr. Macalister, saying that the man had attended a public dinner given to the rioters when they came out of gaol, and that if he did not dismiss him they would take care to put him (Mr. Macalister) out at the next general election. He had seen that letter, and it was quite a curiosity in its way as showing the state of public feeling in Ipswich at that time. Mr. Macalister was, and always had been, a vacillating creature, liable to be swayed by the loudest puff that happened to be blowing at the moment, and he actually dismissed the man. Not knowing what he had done, the man was naturally astonished, and he applied to the then Minister for Works to be reinstated. The Speaker was Minister for Works at that time, and at his instance orders were sent to Ipswich by the Commissioner for Railways to reinstate the man. The letter containing those orders was dated 12th June, 1876. The man had been in the department from February, 1865, and that was the only complaint that had ever been brought against him. It was not necessary, he thought, for his purpose to mention the man's name. The name of the gentleman who wrote the letter signed "Neptune," which he forwarded to the editor of the *Telegraph* as a guarantee of his *bona fides*, was Alfred Sagar. That Alfred Sagar was a decrepit old loafer, who was kept on the railway at Ipswich for years under the title of a draughtsman. In reality he was a sort of little secretary for those secret societies; he did nothing and got a large salary for doing it. The man was half-blind—he (Mr. O'Sullivan) was sorry for his misfortune—and could do no work; he was an excrescence like many others who were dismissed from the Railway Works at what was known as the Ipswich dismissals. Misfortunes never came singly, and about that very time the man Sagar's house was unfortunately burnt to the ground. Although Sagar signed himself "Neptune" in his letter to the *Telegraph*, the god of water gave him no assistance on that occasion, and not a drop of water was to be had. But Sagar was a shrewd man. The cost of a cottage in Ipswich at that time, where both timber and labour were cheap, was from £60 to £200; a very good cottage indeed could be built for the latter sum. But Sagar had got his cottage insured for £350, and when the accident happened he was away from home, and therefore could have had no hand in burning it. The general inference was that if a man had his house over-insured there was something wrong somewhere if a fire broke out. He had been credibly informed that Sagar was not in the School of Arts that night, and yet he appeared as a witness. He (Mr. O'Sullivan) had been credibly informed that that man was not at the School of Arts on the occasion of the riots, although, strange to say, when the trials came on there was no lack of witnesses against him. He had a special purpose in bringing the matter forward. Scarcely a day passed but what some charge of favouritism was made. The present Ministry were not in power until nearly three years after the man was reinstated, and the reinstatement was made by the present Speaker, who was then Minister for Works. There was no reason, as far as he could see, why the man Sagar should have made those gross charges against him and against the Ministry now in power. Possibly there was some future design in it. All he could say was that he was quite prepared to deny them and to prove that they were groundless. He (Mr. O'Sullivan) was placed in a very curious position in the House. A couple of years ago he wrote a hurried private note to a boy in the parliamentary stables. That note was stolen out of the boy's waistcoat pocket, and got into the hands of a man of the name of Bulcock. That Bulcock, whoever he was, thought that he had found a treasure, and actually went and got the deuced thing photographed. From that hasty note it was inferred that he (Mr. O'Sullivan) was the "fifth wheel" of the Ministerial coach. Had he found a private letter with the writer's name attached, his first impulse would have been to have returned it to the writer; but that gentleman—Heaven save the mark!—had kept it, knowing that it was not his own. However, that was a matter of taste. That letter had done him (Mr. O'Sullivan) a great deal of injury. It had brought him letters from all parts of the colony, and even from the other colonies, asking him to find situations for the writers. It would require one or two secretaries, whom he was not able to pay, to reply to all the letters of that sort he had received. He did not believe the man Bulcock intended him any injury, but he had not a shadow of an idea of the injury he had done him. One applicant had actually asked him to get him appointed a police magistrate, another as an immigration agent in Ireland or somewhere, somebody else wanted to be a judge; and three or four had told him he was the greatest scoundrel living, because he had never answered their letters. The result was that the Ministry cocked up their bristles, and he did not believe they

would grant him a favour on any consideration. He could challenge any Minister to say that he (Mr. O'Sullivan) had ever received a favour from him since he had been in the House. If he had to ask for anything for himself he would not go to a Minister, but to an Under Secretary. From the day that that letter appeared Ministers had made it a rule to give him a corner of their eye whenever they saw him near their offices. He had never received the value of a threepenny-bit from any of them. In now moving the adjournment of the House he ought, perhaps, to apologise for bringing such a trivial matter forward, but he hoped he had succeeded in showing that the thing to which "Neptune's" letter referred took place over two years before the present Ministry came into power.

Mr. BAILEY said the House ought to be rather obliged to the hon. member for bringing up a matter which had caused considerable anxiety for a long time. It was not at all the trivial matter which the hon. member represented it to be. It was rather a melancholy spectacle to see a practically innocent man, possessed of all the virtues, coming before the House to vindicate his innocence from the attacks of those vicious backbiters who were traducing his character. There was not the slightest doubt that, not only in Brisbane and Ipswich but throughout the colony, that hon. member had been looked upon for a long time as the "fifth wheel" of the Ministerial coach. From the time of the Ipswich dismissals, when those secret societies were so carefully weeded out with the assistance of the hon. member, that hon. member had been looked upon as taking charge of a department distinct from that of the Minister for Works, though working with that hon. gentleman for an object. The hon. member had in a way defended himself, but a man who found it necessary to excuse himself very often did more to accuse himself than had been done by others. It would have been wiser for the hon. member to have said nothing, and left his character to defend itself, instead of in a weak way attempting to slip out of one of the little transactions in which he might not have been directly engaged. The hon. member said he was astonished that such a letter should appear, but he of all others, who had lived so long, should cease to be astonished at anything like that appearing in the public newspapers. In the speech which he had made the hon. member abused some poor fellow whose house had been burnt down, and inferred that because the insurance might have been a little above the value of the property either the man, or someone acting for him, had burnt that house. The statement was made in such a way as to lead people to believe that the man had been guilty of arson. From behind the privileges of the House an attack had been made on a man outside by charging him with a criminal offence, although it was well known that the man had no means of defending himself. It was very unfair that under cover of a motion for adjournment a man outside the House should be charged with arson, directly or indirectly, because the poor fellow had not very good sight, or because he was an excrescence on the Public Service, or because he had written a letter to a newspaper. The man who had been appointed might be, in the opinion of the hon. member, the very best man that could have been appointed, but that had nothing at all to do with the recent case. It was very well known in the House and in the country how the departments were being worked now. The system of favouritism at present going on was so revolting and repugnant to the public that, though the public voice had not yet been raised, it would be heard before long. Though seen by everyone, the matter had seldom found expression in the public newspapers as yet, but the state of things was being watched by many and the result would be apparent by-and-by. What stronger proof could be desired of public opinion throughout the colony than the statement made by the hon. member himself? From all parts of the colony the hon. member said he had been deluged with applications for appointments in the Service—from a railway porter's place to a judgeship. That was the opinion of the public outside in all parts of the colony, showing that the country looked upon the hon. member as a Minister, and a Minister to whom was delegated the work of giving appointments to a particular section of the community to the discredit and damage of the majority. The hon. member now said that he had no influence—that the Ministry shunned him; but surely there could be very little reason for that! Was the hon. member not connected with a certain Government contract at present being carried on? The public said so; he (Mr. Bailey) knew nothing about it. Perhaps the hon. member had the credit of more than belonged to him. The hon. member had, however, been looked upon as a ruling power in the Ministry, and he was glad to hear the hon. member acknowledge that he had not so much influence as the country had credited him with during the past twelve months.

Mr. MILES said he was very glad to hear the statement made by the hon. member (Mr. O'Sullivan), and he knew that the outside public would learn with the highest gratification that the hon. member had not the power he was supposed to possess. Outside it was believed that the hon. member was not only Minister for Works, but also Commissioner of Police. He (Mr. Miles) did not say so; but public feeling outside credited the hon. member with having more power than all the Ministry put together. The hon. member himself said that he had been deluged with applications for appointments in the Service, coming not only from all parts of the colony but also from beyond the borders. It was well known that on the railway if anyone wanted a billet as a railway porter, or if a man were wanted for the work, the expression "I will tell the hon. member for Stanley" was often heard. He was glad to hear the hon. member say that he had not so much influence, and he hoped the outside public would believe it. Hitherto they had been under the impression, rightly or wrongly, that the hon. member could make, break, or do what he liked. The hon. member admitted it himself, but said that since the affair in connection with the stable-keeper he had been powerless. He (Mr. Miles) had never believed that the hon. member ever had so much power. Another rumour was that the hon. member was connected with railway contracts. It had struck him very forcibly, when he made a slight allusion to the Fassifern Railway, that the hon. member got his bristles up very quickly. He believed himself that the construction of the line was all that could be desired, but he thought the gradients were too great for a main line and would necessitate the rebuilding of the line. The action of the hon. member on the occasion to which he referred dovetailed in with other things which he had heard on the same subject. He was very glad to hear the hon. member deny the power imputed to him, and he hoped the public outside would believe the statement.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said he had denied on several occasions and had challenged anyone to prove that he had anything whatever to do with the Ipswich dismissals; and his denial should be accepted by the hon. member as being true. The only connection he had with the subject was

that he risked his election for Stanley by his advocacy of some reformation in the Public Service of the colony. He was, however, in a position to know those who had something to do with those dismissals, and he made an attempt on one occasion to make the matter public, but failed because the Minister for Works refused to give certain names. The hon. member for Wide Bay had accused him of attacking a man outside the House; but he would not put himself out of the way to do such a thing. He knew nothing about that man, except that the man had made an uncalled-for and unsolicited attack upon him, and he had stood up in the House and replied to it. The hon. member (Mr. Bailey) also charged him with being the "fifth wheel," and said he would hesitate to believe what he said. His connection with the present Ministry did not spring from the same kind of feeling of gratitude that the connection of the hon. member with the leader of the Opposition sprang from. He was under no compliment to the present Ministry, but supported them only from a conscientious feeling that they were the best Ministry for the colony. Could the hon. member say that he supported the leader of the Opposition on the same principle? Did he not support the leader of the Opposition because the hon. gentleman had the power of sending him from the House? The hon. member also said that he (Mr. O'Sullivan) was connected with a railway. He openly asserted that not one shilling of his money had ever gone into a Government contract or ever would go. Probably that rumour had arisen from the fact that he had a son who was in partnership with Byrne; but for his own part he had never had any money to spare for such a purpose, and if he did become a Government contractor he should that moment resign his seat in the House. He should not have opened up the subject if hon. members had not stated that those rumours were believed all over the colony. His support to the Ministry was given because he believed them to be the ablest Ministry that had ever sat in the House. He had been a Queenslander for many years, his children were Queenslanders by birth and training, and he had the interest of the whole colony at heart. His object was not fear nor favour, but to do what he could in his humble way to increase the prosperity of the colony, and the way to succeed in that object was to support the ablest men. He expected neither friendship, favour, nor reward. He had always been out of pocket by attending the House; but he had done what he could to forward the prosperity of the country, and if he had failed it was not through want of will, but through want of ability.

The PREMIER (Mr. McIlwraith) said the hon. member had apologised for taking up the time of the House over an apparently trivial matter. No doubt the matter introduced by the hon. member was not sufficiently important to justify him in taking up the time of the House, but it had led to something much more disagreeable. Those recriminations between different members of the House were not desirable. The hon. member for Wide Bay was not, he thought, justified in making such accusations against the hon. member for Stanley merely on public rumour. The hon. member might have hinted at the subject, and asked the hon. member to deny it; but instead of doing so he made the accusation, saying that it was believed outside, and apparently desiring that hon. members should believe it also. The accusation—that an hon. member while being a Government contractor was holding a seat in the House—was not worthy of the hon. member; and he might thank himself for the hard knock he had got in return. He rose, however, principally to refer to the statement—also made on the grounds of public rumour—that the hon. member for Stanley was Commissioner of Police. He (Mr. McIlwraith) had the credit with those who knew him of managing his own department, and he could say that the hon. member had had very little to do with the police since he had been at the head of the Colonial Secretary's Department; and he hardly thought, judging from the known character of his predecessor in that office, that there had been any interference previously. Since he had been Colonial Secretary no one had interfered in the office, directly or indirectly. The Minister for Works might, if he chose, make a similar remark, but he knew that hon. gentleman was too much a man of character to be swayed one way or the other by the hon. member for Stanley.

The HON. S. W. GRIFFITH said he only rose for the purpose of saying that the insinuation of the hon. member (Mr. O'Sullivan) in reference to the hon. member for Wide Bay was utterly unfounded and untrue.

Question—That the House adjourn—put and negatived.

NEW BILLS.

The SPEAKER announced that he had received messages from the Governor forwarding the following new Bills for the consideration of the House:—A Bill to Impose an Export Duty on Cedar; a Bill to Amend the Navigation Act.

On the motion of the COLONIAL TREASURER (Hon. A. Archer), the messages were ordered to be taken into consideration tomorrow.

SETTLED DISTRICTS PASTORAL LEASES BILL—SECOND READING.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. P. Perkins), in moving the second reading of this Bill, said it would be necessary that he should make reference to the Act in force at the present time, and the necessity that existed for bringing forward the present Bill. The Settled Districts Pastoral Leases Act of 1876 provided, amongst other things, that leases should every five years be put up to auction, and that the upset price should be £2 per mile. In cases of failure to sell or provide a purchaser at auction there was no alternative. It was not the £2 upset price that he so much complained of, but the want of elasticity in the Act. In some cases it happened that pastoral tenants felt that the whole of the country they occupied was not worth £2; they attended the sale, and carefully looked on, and if they found that there was no offer they quietly walked away. In other cases they sometimes purchased, paid one year's rent, and then forfeited. In other cases there were conspiracies and combinations by outside parties, where valuable improvements had been made; they did not want to enter into a *bonâ fide* transaction, and they had not, he believed, the slightest desire to enter into a bargain. It was a species of blackmail levied upon the lessees; and it was a well-known fact that the country had been a great loser by the defect he had called attention to — namely, the want of an alternative in case of failure to sell. In one or two cases they attempted to prosecute persons who had thus offended, but, as in cases of dummying, when the principal evidence was wanted it was not forthcoming. They could get any number of persons who said that such and such an one had asked £50 to buy them off; but when he placed himself in the position of a detective to make inquiries, he could only get up to a certain point—when the people were wanted to give evidence he could never bring them up to the scratch. He thought it would be just as well that he should read to the House what was the existing state of things in the settled districts of

the colony before proceeding any further. In the Moreton district there were twenty-two runs leased, having an area of 1,074⅝ square miles, and yielding a rental of £2,023 17s., or an average of £1 17s. 10d. There were twelve runs forfeited, comprising 596 square miles, and there were 961 square miles of vacant land. In the Darling Downs district there were seven runs leased, with an area of 310¼ square miles, and producing a rental of £493 10s., or an average of £1 11s. 9¾d.; the number of forfeited runs was six, comprising 122 square miles; there was no vacant land. In the Wide Bay and Burnett districts there were thirty-six runs leased, having an area of 1,491 square miles, and producing a rental of £2,744 4s., or an average of £1 16s. 9¾d.; there were three forfeited runs, comprising 655 square miles, and there were 1,402 square miles of vacant land. In the Port Curtis district there were seventy-three runs leased, the area being 4,753¼, and the rental £9,383 3s. 6d., being an average of £1 19s. 5¾d.; there were fourteen forfeited runs, comprising 1,050 square miles; and there were 1,198 square miles of vacant land. In the Burke district they received no rent from the settled districts, but there were twenty-four forfeited runs, the area being 1,570 square miles; and there were 6,480 square miles of vacant land. In the Cook district there was no rent received, but there were 15,840 square miles of vacant land. That brought the total up to 172 runs leased at the present time in the settled districts, having an area of 9,050½ square miles, and producing a rental of £16,839 4s. 6d., or an average of £1 17s. 2¼d.; there were seventy-nine runs forfeited, having an area of 4,252 square miles; and there were 30,543 square miles of vacant land. Those facts would show to the House the state of things at the present time. After all the efforts they had made in many directions to induce persons to come from the other colonies, as well as making concessions to the occupiers of runs, those were the results they had achieved. There were seventy-four runs forfeited at the present time, and there was an area of 30,000 square miles vacant. The principal changes they proposed to effect by the Bill were: First—a renewal of lease by the present occupier instead of submitting runs to auction every five years, as was done under the existing Act. Then, next, a new principle—that of appraisement instead of arbitration; the latter had been very seldom indulged in, and whenever they had had recourse to it the Government had the worst of the bargain. Another change was the extension of the tenure from five to ten years. Then another, which was altogether a new one, was the machinery which was introduced into the Bill for dealing with vacant Crown land in the settled districts. Under the Act of 1876 there was no provision for dealing with Crown lands vacant in districts like Cook. At the time of the passing of the Act little or nothing was known about those lands; but latterly they had been brought into prominence, and it was, he believed, not unreasonable to expect that at no distant date those places would be as thickly settled as other parts of the coast. With regard to the right of renewal by present occupants, he had a feeling—and he had reason to believe that that feeling was shared in by his colleagues—that the submitting of runs to auction every five years, so that they might be competed for by persons in the colony as well as from the other colonies, was not the way to get the most for them; it was not the way to encourage pastoral tenants to make improvements or do anything else desirable to ensure success. If a man knew that every five years he had to compete for the property he occupied, he would not feel that interest—he would not have that heart in his work—which he might have if he had something like a fixity of tenure. On the other hand, when persons came from New South Wales or Victoria, and on looking round saw that they would have to undergo the process of competing every five years, they complained loudly and said it would not be worth their while to take up land—the inducements were not great enough for them to compete against the present occupants. Thus the law militated in two ways against the success of the Act. Under the proposed new mode of determining the value of a lease—that was, by appraisement instead of by having recourse to arbitration—they would have a perfect assurance that every time it was found necessary to determine the value of a run it would be done in a proper and impartial manner, always having regard to the fact that the Government would appoint proper and impartial persons to act as appraisers or commissioners to carry out that provision of the Act. The result would be that, instead of the present uncertainty which existed in the minds of pastoral tenants in settled districts, they could settle down on their runs and go to work assured that they were there at least for ten years, and furthermore assured that, when they had made improvements and increased the grazing capabilities of their run, all that would be taken into account by the appraisers and would be re-valued when the terms of the lease expired. There was another element in favour of such a provision, and that was that it had been tried with great success in New South Wales. In that colony, as in Queensland, the old mode of determining the value of a run when a dispute arose between the State and the tenant was by arbitration. The tenant would appoint a squatter, and the Government would appoint a person who was supposed to be well up in the value of pastoral property; between them they had a pastoral tenant appointed as umpire. That system was a very unsatisfactory one for the State—so much so that the present Act was now in force in New South Wales, and under that Act the tenant had to allow the value of the grazing capabilities of the run to be arrived at by an appraiser. The valuation might be vetoed by the Minister for Lands; but in very few cases had an appeal been made, pastoral tenants as a rule being content to submit to the valuation of the appraiser without appealing to the Minister. That was the last appeal they could have. He thought it would be much better, instead of trying something novel, that they should try a plan that had been in operation and worked successfully in another colony; hence the clause in the Bill providing for appraisement. The 30,000 square miles of vacant Crown land, which would be taken up when the Bill passed, would augment the rents in the settled districts considerably. There had been various applications for land in the Cook district, and even along the coast towards the Gulf of Carpentaria; and, without being at all sanguine, he was impressed with the opinion that when the Bill passed into law those districts would be as thickly settled by pastoral tenants as any part of the settled districts of the colony. He did not propose to go through every clause *seriatim*, because he presumed that hon. members were acquainted with the working of the present Act. There were other changes besides those he had alluded to, but they were very small ones. He would call attention to clause 4, which provided for a change he had previously mentioned—namely, the extension of the tenure to ten years; and that instead of submitting the lease to auction the tenant might apply for its renewal. Clause 5 provided that applications for renewal were to be lodged at the office of the Secretary for Lands. Clause 6 was the most important in the Bill, for it pro-

vided, as he had already explained, that, instead of the arbitration in existence at the present time, the value of the land should be determined by appraisement. He believed that if the Government managed to get hold of a capable and honest man as appraiser, the State would be considerably the gainer by that change in the law. Clause 7 provided that if there was no application for a renewal of the lease the run might be offered at auction. Clause 8 provided for the appointment of appraisers. Clause 9 provided that appraisers might take evidence by oath and determine the grazing capabilities of runs. Clause 10 made provision for the rental of runs being appraised on the grazing capabilities, and stated that the rent should in no case be less than at the rate of £2 per square mile on the area of the run. Clause 11 provided for making deductions for improvements, but those deductions were in no case to exceed 25 per cent. of the appraised rent of the run. Clause 12 was the usual provision that a declaration should be made by the appraisers when they entered upon their duties. Clause 13 provided that the award or appraisement should be made in writing; and there was a subsection stating that the material substance of each appraisement should be published, after confirmation by the Secretary for Lands, in the *Government Gazette*. Clause 14 provided that upon an appeal by the lessee or otherwise the appraisement might be made by three appraisers. Clause 15 provided that leases of Crown lands in settled districts might be granted; that had referenceto vacant Crown lands. Clause 16 provided that the Crown lands in the settled districts might be proclaimed open to application to lease at any annual rental of not less than 40s. per square mile. Clause 17 provided for the withdrawal or exclusion of any area from an application to lease. Clause 18 provided for the mode of obtaining a run. Clause 19 provided that—

"The Governor in Council may approve of a lease being issued for any part of a run applied for, if by reason of prior application or otherwise the application cannot be granted as to the whole of the said run."

Clause 20 provided for cases where there were two or more applicants at the same time for the same piece of country, as followed :—

"If two or more applicants shall be present at the time of opening the land office of the district in which the run applied for is situated, the applications lodged by them shall be deemed to be lodged at the same time."

That meant that, because one of them happened to force his way into the Lands Office first, he should thereby have no priority over the other men outside the office. That, he thought, was only fair. Clause 21 provided that simultaneous applications for runs should be submitted to auction between the applicants only; clause 22 dealt with the area of the runs; clause 23 provided for the refundment of the deposit in cases where the lease was refused; clause 24, which commenced the general provisions, provided for the annual payment of the rent at the Treasury, in Brisbane, on the 30th day of December in each year, as provided in subsection 4 of section 4 of the Act of 1876; clause 25 was a very important clause, as it was a sort of balancing, compensating, and regulating one. It provided that, in any case where the lessee of a run had not applied for the renewal of his lease, it should be put up to auction—

" Provided that if after the expiration of twelve months from the said offering at auction the said run shall not have been applied for, the Governor in Council may again offer the run at a reduced upset price of not less than 20s. per square mile."

The reason for such a provision was as followed: The Government had good reason to believe that, in many cases in Queensland where they failed to command a purchaser, if the lessee knew that the Government had power at the time to throw the run open to selection, the lessee would himself appear the next morning in person and take it. He thought, therefore, that the clause would commend itself to the House. It was a well-known fact that there was a great variety of soil and climate on the coast of Queensland, and that some runs might be worth £2, or even considerably more—say £5—per square mile; many runs embraced in the same area might not be worth as much as £1 per square mile. However, he was very sanguine about the future. He happened to know that a very gloomy view was taken in 1878 and 1879 about those cattle runs, and that the market was not then so buoyant as it was at the present time. But the uneasy feeling of those tenants tended more to weaken the value of their property, and to frighten others away from it, than any uncertainty of tenure which might have unsettled and disturbed it. That was the reason why the clause was introduced into the Bill, with the proviso attached to it, which he had already read to the House. He believed that they would thus be able to meet any case which might crop up in the settled districts, and, even though some of the runs were inferior in quality, he was hopeful enough to believe that very little country would be unoccupied when the clause he was referring to had been in operation for any considerable time. Clause 26 provided that the Government might make regulations. Clause 27 provided that the Act should be read and construed with the Settled Districts and Pastoral Leases Act of 1876; and clause 28 contained the short title. He concluded that all hon. members were acquainted with the boundaries of the settled districts of the colony, or they could at any rate ascertain them by reference to the new map of Queensland, a copy of which was, he believed, in the Library. He might, however, say briefly for the information of hon. members generally that north of Rockhampton the settled districts extended inland about thiry miles from the coast up to the Gulf of Carpentaria, and westward to the boundary of South Australia. From Rockhampton south the area was larger, and in the district of Moreton in particular, up to the Main Range, East and West Moreton and other places, including all the Darling Downs. He did not know that there was much to be said upon the Bill before them. In his own opinion the minimum was too high. That was £2 the square mile, but he supposed the Committee would regulate it. He did not say that the Bill was not capable of some amendment, but he did not think that alterations, if any, were made in it would be of more than a trivial nature, or tend to alter the character of the Bill in any important way. The desire of the Government was to get the best rent they could for the land without acting in any arbitrary way; but he knew that complaints had been made, and whether they were true or not he could not say. He knew also of cases under the present Act where men had stuck to their runs under circumstances of great cruelty, hardship, and injustice. He begged to move the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that he took it that the main principle of the Bill was to grant to the present holders of leases an extension of their term of holding without competition. At present the land was held for five years, and was then open to competition. The proposal of the Bill was to extend the five years by ten years, and give the holders fifteen years instead of five years. That was the main principle of the Bill, and the introduction of the system of appraisement was only a minor point. They had had no experi-

ence of appraisement. The system depended very much upon the appraisers, and he was therefore not very sanguine on the point. In the old days there were very curious stories told about the appraisers, and he had heard it said that the appraisements were generally made in the interests of the lessees. The same kind of stories were told also about the action of the appraisers or valuers of improvements upon the conditional free selections in New South Wales; and he was very much afraid that the interests of the colony of Queensland would not be very well protected under a similar system. The principle of the Bill, however, was to give an extension of tenure without competition, and he for one did not like that. He was quite aware of the difficulties which existed in respect of the putting up of runs for sale by auction; and he was inclined to think that the five years which were fixed by the Act of 1876 were too short, and that in cases where a new lease was granted it should be for ten years. The Act of 1876 was brought in by the Government in power at that time because the leases were then about to expire, and also because there was a notion existing that the holders of the leases of those runs were entitled to them in some way in perpetuity. The Government thought that belief ought not to remain, and the Bill was brought in, not so much because the Government attached so much importance to the detail of selling the runs by auction as because they wanted at that time to break down the impression that the original squatters were entitled to their runs in perpetuity. He remembered how the Bill passed the House of Assembly, and he remembered how it became law, singularly enough, against a majority in both Houses of Parliament, because the majority did not care to go counter to the feeling of the public that such a perpetuity should not be recognised in dealing with the waste lands of the Crown. He desired to see that principle continued. He supposed the Government were strong enough to carry the Bill, but he thought that the principle should be explicitly stated in the Bill, that the lessees had no right to any further extension. If they remembered what the original tenure of the squatters was, and compared it with what was proposed now, they would see what a wonderful change had come over the spirit of the thing. Formerly they held their leases from year to year, and they never thought of claiming much to perpetuate the title. He supposed that their present claim was put forward as was done in Ireland at the present time, where tenants who had been in possession of land for a long time thought themselves unjustly treated if they were turned out. They had always been in the habit of compensating the Crown tenants in Queensland for improvements; and he was sure everyone desired that those tenants should be treated with the greatest fairness. No one wanted to take advantage of them or to make them pay more than they could fairly afford to pay. But the object was not to have sheep and cattle on grazing leases as the only kind of settlement. That there were parts that were not at present wanted for other purposes than grazing he allowed, but it would probably not be so for many years longer. Still the temporary nature of the leases should always be maintained and insisted on. What the Minister for Lands had stated about the operation of the Act of 1876 not having been very successful was perfectly true, but it was never expected that the operation of that Act would be, from the mode in which the administration of it was carried on. He believed that the failure was quite as much due to the mode of administration as to the principle of the law. The lessees under that Act complained that they did not receive the consideration that they were entitled to. Perhaps they might fairly ask for an extension of those leases for another five years, but to ask the House for their extension for ten years without competition was asking it to confirm a principle which he thought was wrong, and which, at any rate, ought not to be adopted without very serious consideration. The latter part of the Bill dealing with the sale of leases of runs by auction he liked very much, but he wanted to hear some member of the Government upon the principle of extending the tenure of the present lessee without competition.

The PREMIER said that the hon. member for North Brisbane had made his statement not unfairly, but in his (the Premier's) remarks on the same subject he should put the matter in different language. The principle at the present time under the Act of 1876, which the Government proposed to repeal, was that runs were to be put up to auction for five years. That principle had been found to be a failure; and the Government, therefore, had to consider what was the next best principle to adopt. The object of the Government was not necessarily to disturb any interests of the colony, but to do the best they could for the public interest in regard to the land of the colony. They therefore examined all the systems which had been in vogue, and they found that the system now proposed was the only one by which they could get tenants for the land of the colony without complaint from the tenant in possession that he had to give much more than the incoming tenant. If he could be put out of the land and another put in, no matter what time was given, it was quite plain that the land would not be worth so much to the incoming as to the outgoing tenant. So far as the Government were concerned it did not matter who was the tenant as long as they got a good price. Then came in the principle which had always been spoken against as being perpetual tenure. It looked like it, but, when they considered the circumstances of the colony, to apply that word to the system was absurd. They had free selection wherever those runs existed, and that had diminished the runs of the squatter so as to wipe out the idea of perpetual tenure altogether. They saw at once that it would be a grossly impolitic act, and contrary to the interests of the colony, unnecessarily to disturb the tenants of the runs on the coast. How had the other Act worked—the Pastoral Leases Act of 1876? The hon. member for North Brisbane said it was a peculiarity of that Act that it was passed by both Houses of Parliament without a majority. That was an extraordinary statement to make, for he (the Premier) remembered it passing with a good majority, though he never saw an Act passed which was so little believed in by the majority by whom it was passed. If the hon. member had said that the majority did not believe in the Act they were passing he would have believed the statement. The Opposition, who did their best to oppose it, were not able to throw it out, but they predicted that it would be a failure. The hon. member (Mr. Griffith) was unjust to his colleague (Mr. Perkins) in saying that it was the administration of the Act which had made it a failure. He knew the maladministration to which the hon. member referred, and had already justified the action of the Government. The late Government—of which the hon. gentleman (Mr. Griffith) was a member, and of which the hon. gentleman sitting beside him (Mr. McLean) was Minister for Lands—had the administration of an Act they passed, but in which they did not believe—their action proved they did not believe in it—and they would not put it into operation. The Act was put into operation by the present Government, who were left just enough time to put all the runs into the market in one day to

save one year's rent. In doing so the Government did a proper thing, and that was the only maladministration alleged to have taken place. But, as he had already shown, that was the only course left in consequence of the action of the previous Government. But he did not take up that ground at all. Had he been Minister for Lands he would have done the same. That was the proper thing to do, first because the action of the late Government forced them to do it, and in addition to that it was right in itself. What they had done defeated the objects of the land-jobbers, who would otherwise have swarmed to the sales. The Act had operated exactly as they, the Opposition of that time, said it would. There were plenty of the lands offered which were not worth £2 a mile, and the consequence was that the men who leased them did not bid, and there was this difficulty—that the Government had no power to reduce the amount—all they could do was to put the land up again. If the lessee could not give £2 a mile no one else would, and anticipated buyers from the South never came, because they saw it would not pay to bring stock to a piece of ground liable to be selected at any time, and with a lease of only five years. It took three years to settle stock on a run, and that time would elapse before they could expect any return, and no one would come on those conditions. It was perfectly plain, therefore, that the only grounds on which the Government could expect rent to be paid by, or extorted from, the lessee would be by placing the lessee in such a position that no scoundrel could go into the auction room and bid against him—not because he wanted the land, or had the slightest intention of buying it, but because he wished to annoy the lessee and force him to give £200 or £300 a year more than the land was worth. That was what had taken place, and was taking place every day. The Government were conscious that scarcely a sale of runs took place in the colony under the present system at which there were not actual conspiracies against the Government to defeat them from getting the rent they ought to get. What common sense was there in putting up the lease of a piece of land when the occupant was so bound that he must bid—he was ruined if he did not? It was not a proper thing to bring all the world into competition with a man who was handicapped, and who would be at great expense to remove his stock if he did not again secure the lease. There was no question that the operation of the Act of 1876 had been getting worse and worse every year. At first they did not see how the Act worked, but since then the auction-room loafers had got to know how things could be managed so as to screw money out of men in land transactions. Hon. members might remember a man being taken off the Commission of the Peace in Brisbane for that very thing? He knew of a justice of the peace being dismissed for having threatened to oppose a Crown lessee unless he paid him a certain sum of money, and also for having taken money from another person interested. He knew plenty of cases where the Government would have done the same thing to others had they possessed the same proof, but there was the difficulty. The Act had been a failure all through. In the settled districts no man would go in for a ten years' lease except under more favourable terms than those which were offered; and the next best thing was for the Government to get the best terms they possibly could for the country. That was what the Bill before the House sought to do. The mode of appraisement was the one of all others that had stood the best test in the other colonies, but the hon. member for North Brisbane simply referred to it as a failure in Queensland He (the Premier) did not remember the principle being applied in Queensland.

Mr. GRIFFITH: No; it has not been applied.

The PREMIER said that appraisement was certainly the best system that had been tried in New South Wales. He thought with the Minister for Lands that the weak part in the Bill was fixing the minimum price at £2 per square mile. He believed that there would not be two-thirds of the leases applied for with such a minimum.

Mr. McLEAN: Then the leases can come under clause 25.

The PREMIER said the only objection he expected to have heard against the Bill was the old objection against squatting in perpetuity; but in a country open to free selection, where the and was going at the rate and at the price it was going in Queensland, he did not think there would be a perpetuity of squatting.

Mr. McLEAN said he had heard the same objection against the auction system in 1876 that had been raised by the Premier in 1882. He might just as well say that he was not in favour of the auction system in 1876, neither was he in favour of the principle of appraisement. He considered then—and he had not since changed his mind—that the fairest system for the Government and all parties concerned was that of tendering for the leases of the runs. The occupant of the run was the one best able to judge as to the value of the run, and he would be sure to tender so as not to be a loser, and in such a way that the Government would at the same time receive a fair equivalent for the use of the land. In 1876 the system of appraisement was advocated from his (Mr. McLean's) side of the House; but he believed still, as he believed then, that the system of tendering would be better both for the interests of the Government and of the lessee. The Minister for Lands had alluded to the Act of 1876 as not having worked satisfactorily, and he said amongst other things that some of the lessees would take up a run, pay the first year's rent, and then pay no more. But that could be easily remedied. Anyone paying the first year's rent and refusing to pay any more should be liable to have his run forfeited; and then he would, no doubt, pay the second and third years' rents, and so on. It was all very well for the Premier to say that the preceding Government left them no time to put the Act of 1876 into operation in any other way than they had done. The late Government never entertained the idea of putting up all the rents to auction in one day. No doubt that was the plan adopted by the present Government to make the working of the Act of 1876 a failure.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No!

Mr. McLEAN: There was no doubt whatever that was the object of the Government. When in opposition they had prophesied that the Act of 1876 would be a failure, and when in office they were determined to make it a failure by offering all the leases at auction in one day in the different parts of the colony. The question was not what they, the Opposition, had or had not done, but what the present Government had done.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: All the time you were in office you did nothing.

Mr. McLEAN said the system of tendering would also have the effect of making the lessee understand that he did not hold the land for life, but that at the end of five or ten years he must submit to competition.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: He discovered that long ago.

Mr. McLEAN said it would be different from the auction system, because the parties he would have to compete with would know the value of the land as well as the lessee himself. But there was one objection he had to the

Bill—the system which seemed to be adopted by the present Government of allowing the Minister to do everything. He noticed that after the appraisement was made and submitted to the Minister he could alter or veto it with one scratch of his pen. According to the Bill, "no appraisement or award shall be final until confirmed by the Secretary for Public Lands, who may alter or veto the same." What was the use of appraisement at all if the Minister had power to alter or veto it? The object was to get at the proper price, and the Minister might say he was a superior authority to those appointed by the Government—men who were supposed to have a special knowledge of appraisements. He did not mean to say that the present Minister for Lands would abuse the power, but there might be future Ministers for Lands who would not have the faintest idea of the value of runs; still the Bill gave the Minister power to alter or veto the appraisement. That portion of the Bill would require some amendment.

Mr. NORTON said he thought the Government ought to be congratulated on having taken a step in the right direction. In speaking about the present Act he did not mean to entirely blame the gentlemen who passed it into law. The system under which it was worked was entirely novel in the colonies—the system of leasing runs by auction. He believed the gentlemen who passed that Act had no practical knowledge of the matter, and were misguided by what was said outside as to the desirability of making the lessees understand that they had not the runs permanently. In that respect they might have done some good, because there could be no question that leaseholders holding runs in the unsettled districts previous to the passing of the Act of 1876 were made very painfully aware that they had no claim to the land; and when the leases were put up to auction, although the same men in most instances bought them, they came in practically as new men. He did not think the Act had operated well in any respect, but that it had had the effect of very much harassing the lessees. It had very materially reduced the value of the properties they held, and at the same time had not benefited anyone. No other section of the people had benefited from the depreciation which had taken place in the leaseholds, or if there was a section of the people who had derived any benefit it was the leaseholders in the outside districts. Those leaseholders had perhaps benefited, because the capital which had flowed to the colony from the other colonies for investment in pastoral properties, instead of going to all districts alike, had all gone to the unsettled districts. The mere circumstance that all that money had been invested in those parts of the colony had had the effect of raising the value of leaseholds in the unsettled districts to a greater extent than could have been the case otherwise. It had been said that a great many people came to this colony from Victoria and New South Wales with the view of investing in that class of property. A great many, no doubt, had come, but in almost every case where investments were made they were made in the unsettled districts; there was scarcely a case on record where people coming from other colonies, where the land laws were different, had invested in property in the settled districts of this colony. He did not think—although he had no means of saying so positively—that the country had derived much benefit from the change in the system of granting leases, although rents were increased, as it must be remembered that a great many leases were not retaken. The hon. member for Logan had spoken about the impropriety of the Government in having put up all the leases to auction in one day; but the hon. member should have borne in mind that, although they were all put up in one day, yet in some districts scarcely one lease was bought. He (Mr. Norton) believed that in Rockhampton, of all the leases that were put up to auction, scarcely any were bought, and the then occupiers continued to occupy them without paying any rent. When the leases were again put up scarcely any were then bought. Some were put up as many as three times without being purchased, and in order to get the previous occupiers to take them at all, as the rate of 40s. per square mile could not be reduced, the area had to be reduced. In the end matters were made to fit in that way; so much country was thrown in as unavailable. It was not really of no value, but it was thrown in because nobody would take the whole area of the runs at 40s. per square mile. When the hon. member for Logan spoke of the impropriety—he (Mr. Norton) did not think that was the word—of putting up the whole of the leases in one day, he should have remembered that many of those leases were put up afterwards over and over again, and always with the same result. But, apart from that, hon. members should remember that the Act had had a very bad effect in another way. Previous to its being passed, squatters were looked upon by the working classes generally to a certain extent as their friends; that was to say, the owners of leaseholds spent large sums of money in improving their runs. He (Mr. Norton) did not say they were wise to do so, but at any rate they did so up to the time of the Act of 1876 coming into force; and there was consequently a large amount of employment found for the working people. But when that Act came in, what was the consequence? No one would carry out improvements on runs which could be held for only five years, and not 1s. was spent by a lessee that he was not absolutely forced to spend. The result was that a great number of men who maintained themselves by fencing and similar work went away to the outside districts; in many districts great numbers of the best men cleared out altogether. When he (Mr. Norton) first came into the House he had numbers of letters from those men—not from leaseholders at all—complaining that such was the case. In his own district they could not get work, as the only improvements carried out were on selections; and some of them waited for weeks seeking employment, and finally went out to the unsettled districts where there was a chance of work. The hon. member for Logan objected not only to the auction system, but to the appraisement system of leasing; and said he believed in the system of tendering for leases, as by it they should be enabled to arrive at the true value of runs without harassing the leaseholders. He (Mr. Norton) did not think the hon. member could have considered the subject fully. At the present time the squatter had an open enemy to deal with. If his run was put up to auction, and someone wanted to levy blackmail, he went to him and informed him to the effect that he must buy him off. The squatter put the matter off until the auction, and then, if the man was at it, he met him face to face. But what would they have under the system of tendering? The blackmailer would go to the lessee and say he wanted £50 not to bid against him, and if he was not bought off he would oppose him. There was no means of meeting the man after that and the squatter was kept under the idea that he was going to put in a tender against him. The squatter had no option but to run the risk of giving up the run, to pay a higher rent than it was worth, or else to buy the fellow off. That was what that system amounted to. There was no open meeting of the rascal and the occupant of the run. There was an amount of treachery mixed up in it which was not in the other system. He did not say that to treat with such men

was anything but reprehensible in the highest degree; but in the tendering system matters would be tenfold worse. It was quite clear that there were difficulties in the way of the appraisement system, but the system of appraisement in the Bill was quite different from that in the old system of what was called valuation. The system in the Bill was the same as that in vogue in New South Wales, and which he believed answered remarkably well. Under the old system of valuations, he believed in many cases that the occupant of a run got out of paying rent that should have been allowed. Under the Bill the occupant would be completely at the mercy of the Government, because they had the appointment of all the men who would take action in the matter of appraisement. The appraisers were appointed by Government, and whether the occupant accepted the appraisement in the first instance, or whether he appealed, it was all in the hands of the Government. To make the thing more decided still, the Minister for Lands had the power of veto. He had the option in the end of saying that he would not have the appraisement at all if it did not please him. He (Mr. Norton) thought hon. members must admit that the appraisements under the Bill must be entirely in favour of the Government, and would, if anything could, obviate the faults of the old system, and be the means of obtaining the proper valuation of runs. He thought it was scarcely necessary to refer to the extension of tenure, because he believed that every hon. member would admit, without any hesitation, that short tenures were very detrimental both to the occupant and to the Treasury. The leader of the Opposition had referred to the fact that the Act had been passed in opposition to a majority of the members of both Houses. He (Mr. Norton) did not know what was done in the other House, but he believed that in the Assembly a majority of the members opposed the Bill, and could have thrown it out if they thought it desirable. Some of the members, on the occasion of its second reading, walked out of the House and would not vote at all. He did not know what the reason for such action was, but it appeared to him that they must have been influenced by the same feelings as the gentleman who introduced it. So much had been said about the lessees having a permanent claim upon the country that they thought it just as well to let them know they had not. The result was, the settled districts were sacrificed and there was a line drawn which divided the sheep from the goats. He thought it must be admitted, from the facts which had come under the knowledge of every man in the country, that the country in the unsettled districts had increased enormously in value and the country in the settled districts had decreased proportionately; so that it must be admitted that those in the settled districts had been made scapegoats of very effectually indeed. He did not think it necessary to say much about the Bill, because last year a similar measure was introduced by himself, and it met with very little opposition; and hon. members had had greater opportunity of considering the matter since. Most of them would admit that the present Act had been a failure, at least in the chief principles with which the present Bill dealt. The Bill dealt also with country which it was absolutely imperative that some special legislation should be provided for—that was, country which had not hitherto been occupied. It made provision for taking up that country which did net exist in the present Act. There was one other alteration in the Bill which he thought was also a good one, and would lead to many leases being taken up after being put up to auction, which, under other circumstances, would probably be unleased for many years — that was, the provision to enable any man who chose to do so to take up country that had been put up to auction without finding a purchaser. The lessees of runs under the present Act, not caring to pay a high rental, went into the auction room at the termination of their leases and waited to see if anyone would bid against them. If no one would bid they would not, and the consequence was they went on using the lands without paying any rental until the runs were put up to auction again. But, with a provision of the kind referred to, he did not think anyone who had land worth anything at all would allow it to remain idle when they found that anyone else might get it by putting in an application for it at the upset price. He looked upon that provision as one of the best features of the Bill, and he must say the leader of the Opposition had treated the question generally with very great moderation. He hoped other hon. members on that side of the House would take his view of the case, and look upon a Bill of the kind as an absolute necessity.

Mr. H. PALMER said he was very glad to find it admitted on both sides of the House that the present regulations had proved to be a failure. That seemed to be conceded on both sides of the House.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS of the Opposition: No, no!

Mr. PALMER said he understood hon. members on the Opposition side of the House to admit that. The argument he had heard that evening, so far as he could judge, tended to show that the present Act had been a failure. It had been admitted by a Minister of the Crown that it had not enhanced the value of the lands, and it was further admitted that there had been a depreciation in their value. The hon. Minister for Lands had read out a statement which clearly showed that the lands had not brought the minimum value placed upon them of £2 per square mile throughout the settled districts. It did not require any very great knowledge of the country for anyone acquainted with them to know that those leases had been neither satisfactory to the Crown nor to the country. The hon. member for Port Curtis had shown that to be so in the few practical remarks he made. He had shown that the lessees did not make any improvements upon those lands held under short leases—that, in fact, short leases were prohibitory to improvements, and that there was nothing to justify their making improvements under short leases. It must be quite clear to every hon. gentleman that there was nothing in the five years' leases to warrant the lessees in spending money on improvements, knowing, as they did, that at the end of the term of five years they had to go and compete for the renewal of the leases for the next five years; and the consequence had been a very serious loss to the country. Perhaps hon. members on the Opposition side were not aware, but the improvements on those lands were allowed to go into a state of disorder and dilapidation, simply from the fact that lessees expected to be turned out at the end of the five years over which their lease extended. They had to go into competition for its renewal—competition which, as had been shown, was often of a very disreputable character. It had been shown that persons were sometimes paid simply to run up the price of the leases without any intention on their part of buying. The Bill was only an act of justice to the lessees, and the principle of it was only equitable and fair to those men who had been unjustly dealt with for the last three or four years. The Crown would not lose anything by it, but would receive a fair rent for the lands, as

the appraising of the lands was a just and equitable principle if properly carried out. He did not see why it should not be so if men were selected by the Government as appraisers who would do justice both to the Crown and the tenant. If that could be attained, he did not see how any fairer principle could be adopted. He saw from the Bill that it was intended to appraise the lands according to their value. He did not believe that any lessee of the Crown wanted those lands at less than their fair value. He was sure that at the present time many of them were paying more than the value of the land they occupied, and some of them were not paying half the value. On that ground, therefore, there could be nothing fairer or better than the appraisement principle; and that it might be carried out thoroughly and effectually, so as to give satisfaction, he had no doubt. The next great principle involved in the Bill was the extension of tenure. He thought that was only just and right, and if it was proved that the present tenure had not been right or fair to the lessee, he believed that the one proposed would prove to some extent satisfactory, although, perhaps, not to the whole of the lessees. He understood from the Bill that the tenure was to be ten years, but the leader of the Opposition had stated that it was to be fifteen. If that were so, so much the better. He did not exactly understand it, but he hoped the provision would be to this effect: that, when the renewal of the lease took place, the appraisement would take place simultaneously with it. That would only be an act of justice to those who had been paying so long for leases of a worthless nature. If it was found that the lessee was not paying a fair price, he did not see why a higher appraisement should not take place; but where the lessee was found to be paying more than the actual worth of the land a reduction should be made or some equivalent given in the shape of more land. He knew that a great deal of the coast country was going to waste every year through bad management and over-stocking. He knew for a fact that country which used to feed a beast to every five or six acres of land would not now feed one on less than fifteen or twenty acres. The overstocking and bad management were, of course, caused by the short lease and the small encouragement given to the lessees. They were taking no trouble or pains to keep down the evils he spoke of, and the consequence was that most of the coast lands were now wretchedly deteriorated. He trusted if the Bill were carried that an impetus would be given to the lessees, in order that something might be done to keep up the character of the Crown lands. He knew an instance in which a stock and station in the district he was most aquainted with—Wide Bay—sold for £2 10s. per head of the stock. That was, of course, only the value of the cattle themselves. Before the present Act came into force there was scarcely ever an instance, even in the Wide Bay district, where a cattle station sold at less than £4 or £4 10s. for the stock, and in some cases the price reached £5; and, in view of the deterioration that had taken place, it was most difficult to get a purchaser for a run in the coast district. Men of means, as the hon. the Premier had said, would not invest their money in country where the tenure was so short. An additional enhancement had of course taken place in the outside districts, where they reaped all the advantage of the defects in the coast country. Believing, therefore, that the Bill before the House was only an act of justice, and that it would be the means of giving a little heart and spirit to those lessees who had been so terribly handicapped, he was very happy to see it before the House and to notice that it had been received so well by members on both sides of the House. He hoped hon. members would look upon the Bill as an act of justice to men who had a right to complain and who had complained. He would be very happy to support the Bill.

Mr. MILES said he was not in the House when the Act of 1876 was passed, but he took it for granted that when the leases fell out it would be necessary and desirable to make a fresh departure. The principle acknowledged had been that from time to time, as the leases expired, the lessee was entitled to a renewal, and that would go on to doomsday. He presumed that the Government had thought it necessary that a new departure should be taken, and that lessees should be made to understand that when their leases expired they had no further claim. He presumed that was the object of the Bill. The hon. member for Maryborough had said that before the Act of 1876 came into force the price to be obtained for stock and station was £4 per head, but as soon as that Act came into force only about £2 10s. per head could be got. He (Mr. Miles) thought it was the value of the land that brought the price and not the cattle. He saw a great difficulty in the way of short terms of lease, for it was not likely that the country would reap the same advantages from leases if the terms were short instead of long. He did not see why there should be very much objection to extending the term to ten years, because they knew that the whole of those lands were open to selection. He should like to see some principle adopted by which the Government could get the best terms they possibly could for the land. The hon. member for Port Curtis had said he did not believe in the auction system, or, in fact, any system that did not give a continuous lease of the run to the lessee. He regretted very much to hear the expression made use of by the Premier, that those persons who opposed the lessees at auction were all scoundrels. What encouragement was that, he would ask, to people to come from distant places to bid for that land when they were described by the Premier as scoundrels because they competed with the lessees?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No!

Mr. MILES said those persons who came to compete for lands were designated as "scoundrels."

The PREMIER said the hon. member was altogether misconstruing and misquoting what he said, as he did not use any such terms. The persons he referred to as scoundrels were the scoundrels and auction-room loafers who extorted money from *bonâ fide* bidders.

Mr. MILES said he was very glad indeed to hear the hon. Premier's explanation.

The PREMIER: You knew what I meant all the time.

Mr. MILES said it was a most extraordinary thing that the Government, who opposed that Act in every shape and form and in every way they possibly could, had brought it into operation, and had done their level best to make it a failure by their bad administration of it. How were they to get the value of the land? They were not to sell by auction, or by tender, but by appraisement. It seemed that the appraiser was to make a declaration that he had no pecuniary or other interest in the matters referred to him; but the Bill should go further and say that he was not to speak to the squatter, or live in his house, or drink with him, or, in fact, have anything to do with him. He did not know whether it would be possible to effect that, but that was what the hon. Attorney-General proposed to make law under the Jury Bill now before the House. The jury were not to be allowed to

speak about the case tried; and if that principle was adopted with regard to juries, the appraiser under the Bill should also be warned that he was not to speak to the pastoral lessee whose run he was appraising. He could perfectly understand what a nice thing it would be to have the appraiser appointed by the Government. He (Mr. Miles) was not prepared to make accusations against any man; but he thought that the best mode they could adopt when the lands were put up for competition would be to put them up for tender. In his opinion the only way the country could get value for their lands was to dispose of them as he had suggested—by tender. There was far greater advantage to be gained by appraisement than by auction, but the appraisers were liable to be got at. The Government were to blame mostly for the Act of 1876 not having worked well, as they had not given it fair play; they had not done what they ought to have done, but they had done their level best to make it a failure. A squatter went to the auction rooms, and if there was nobody bidding he would not bid at all, so that he could have the full use of the land for one or two years without paying any rent. That was the fault of the Minister for Lands, and all the ills which were attributed to the Act were more due to the administration of it by the Minister for Lands than to any flaw in the Act itself. With regard to the remarks of the hon. member for Maryborough, he could only say that of all the speeches he had ever heard it was the worst. If it was necessary to substitute some other method than the present of selling leases, he thought that instead of the proposed system of appraisement that of tender should be adopted.

Mr. RUTLEDGE said that, at one of the banquets at which the Premier was entertained during the progress he made through the Western districts at the close of last year, he was reported to have uttered—not a boast, but—something tantamount to an expression of pride in the fact that he was the head of a squatting Government; and it struck him that the Bill now under the consideration of the House was the outcome of the feeling that prompted the hon. gentleman on that occasion so to express himself. He did not know that there was anything in the boast, of itself, that should be recorded to the discredit of the Premier. He did not know that a squatting Government was in itself an objectionable thing. A Government that was supposed to be interested in the welfare of squatters was, *per se*, as worthy of confidence as a Government that professed to be actuated more especially by desire to promote the interests of any other section of the community. But in Queensland the expression "squatting Government" had come to have a peculiar meaning, and the public utterance of the Premier—that he was proud of being the head of a squatting Government—would be accepted as a declaration made in full view of the meaning usually attached to the expression in the colony. The people of the colony, whether rightly or wrongly, regarded a squatting Government, pure and simple, as being a Government that was opposed to the best interests of a certain class of the community—namely, those who, without very much capital, were disposed to settle upon the land and were content with a much smaller area from which to obtain a living. It was in view of that declaration of the Premier that he was prepared to look to the Bill with a certain amount of suspicion. He could not cordially approve of a measure which seemed from beginning to end to aim at conferring an advantage on a particular class. He was sorry that he was not in the House when other hon. members spoke on the subject. The only speech he had heard was that of the hon. member (Mr. Miles), and in some of the remarks of that hon. member he cordially concurred. He should regard himself as being very blind to the best interests of the colony if he were not to consider the squatters of the colony as being worthy of all just consideration. No hon. member, whether of the Opposition or a supporter of the Government, could be looked upon as a friend to the best interests of the country if he should become a party to any measure by which the squatters were singled out for harsh or oppressive exaction. But there was a limit to all things; and while measures should be brought forward having in view the well-being of the squatting interest, those measures should be placed before the House side by side with measures having in view the amelioration of the condition of another—and by no means small or uninfluential—class of the community, the selectors. The Bill before the House, while aiming at something towards the well-being of the squatting interest, went a great deal further, and aimed at conferring upon the pastoral lessees in the settled districts a sort of monopoly, at their own price, of the land they now enjoyed. It was no argument to say that, because many of the lessees did not now derive so large a revenue from the land as they formerly did, therefore a measure like the one before the House was called for. It might, perhaps, be wise to provide for an extension of the time for which the land might be held; but the Bill went further than that. If men by the present system had been discouraged from making improvements on their runs, and thereby making them more advantageous to themselves and to the State than they would otherwise be, that might be an argument for lengthening the duration of their tenure; but it was no argument why the whole system upon which the value of those runs had hitherto been ascertained should be completely and radically altered as it was in the Bill. While the Government were seeking to ward off dangers that were menacing the pastoral lessees through unfair competition by men who were said to compete with them merely for the purpose of levying blackmail, it was very unwise and unfair on the part of the Government to go to the other extreme, and by means of such a Bill imperil the interests of the public Exchequer. He was perfectly satisfied—from his observations in New South Wales of the way in which the system of valuation by means of appraisers had worked — that the public revenue would very considerably suffer if the means now proposed were adopted. It had been a usual thing in New South Wales for the appraiser to become the guest of the proprietor of the station, and he could not believe that the kindly and generous feelings usually evoked by such entertainment would be foreign to the breast of an appraiser. Unless some clauses were introduced making it penal for the appraiser to have any relation, even of a momentary character, with the proprietor of the station, the tendency of the measure would be to subject the owner of the station on the one hand to the temptation to use a certain amount of personal influence, and the appraiser on the other hand to the temptation of being induced to take a more favourable view of the value of the land than he would have taken had he acted solely and strictly in the public interest. The appraiser going into a distant part of the country would, in all probability, take up his abode with the proprietor of the station, who would *chaperon* him round the run, showing him the poorest parts of the country, and conveying to him the impression that the general character of the country was similar to that of the parts shown to him; and the appraiser would probably be found in such case to take a view of the value of the country which

was not likely to be beneficial to the public Treasury. He could not help contrasting the amount of anxiety displayed by the Government in the 11th section of the Bill, on behalf of the pastoral tenants, with the feeling exhibited in the measures for introducing local government, such as the Divisional Boards Act. In the Divisional Boards Act they adopted the principle of rating by which a man was taxed for his enterprise and industry in improving his land, and making it more productive; while the 11th section of the Bill before the House provided that—

"The rent chargeable on any run shall be subject to a deduction for any increased pastoral capabilities caused by fencing or storage of water upon such run, but such deduction shall in no case exceed 25 per cent. of the appraised rent of the run."

That was to say, that in proportion as a squatter improved his property his rent was to be deducted, even to the extent of 25 per cent.

The PREMIER: You don't understand it at all.

Mr. RUTLEDGE said he understood the clause to mean that if a man by means of outlay succeeded in improving his run so as to increase its capabilities, he would have the benefit of a corresponding deduction not exceeding 25 per cent. There was encouragement in that case to a man to lay out his money in making his land more productive, because, in proportion as he did that, to that extent would he have to pay less. But on the other hand, under the Divisional Boards Act and the amending Bill before the House, the more a man expended in improving his property the more he would have to pay; and therefore he said that there was a disposition indicated in clause 11 to deal much more generously towards the pastoral lessees than towards any other class of the community. It was to be admitted, of course, that pastoral lessees had to pay rates towards the divisional boards as well as others, but they knew very well the kind of basis upon which that levy was made; and that while in the case of persons of small means the tax might be very oppressive, in the case of large runholders the amount was almost infinitesimal. In fact, it was well known that many runholders were not required to pay nearly as much towards local government as men of comparatively small means who resided in more thickly populated districts. He thought that while the Government were to be commended for doing anything in reason for the benefit of the pastoral tenants, they were not to be commended for giving them advantages over any other section of the community. He had always expressed an opinion in favour of giving extended duration to leases of runs where it was shown that the result of not giving it would be to deterioriate the value or lessen the productiveness of such runs. If squatters could be induced to incur larger expenditure in consideration of getting a more certain tenure of their property, then he said they ought not to act ungenerously with them; but at the same time he did say that the method of arriving at the valuation of runs by means of appraisers, and giving such large deduction in the case of expenditure which made the property more productive, was adopting a principle which singled them out as a class of the community upon whom it was proposed to confer special advantages to which they were not entitled. It might be said that the appraisers were not going to form their opinion of the value of a run themselves, as the Bill empowered them to take evidence on oath as to its capabilities, and they could see for themselves. But that seemed to him nothing more than a farce. Who would the appraiser be likely to ask for evidence of the value or capabilities of the run, or know anything about it, but the lessee himself, or the men he employed? And it was not likely that they would say anything by way of exaggerating—to put it mildly—the merits of the run. He held that valuation by means of appraisement was adopting a system which, so far as the revenue was concerned, was likely to be prejudicial rather than advantageous. The cry of the colony with regard to squatters, so far as he had been able to gather, was this: That while everybody admitted the benefits squatters had conferred on civilisation by their pioneer exertions, yet it was contended that they did not pay sufficient for the privileges they possessed; and if they were conferring a great privilege upon the pastoral lessees by giving them extended duration of tenure, surely some corresponding benefit to the State should be looked for, and not left upon so uncertain a basis as that proposed in the Bill. Surely the Minister for Lands should be able to arrive at the valuation himself of those runs, just as he did with regard to lands thrown open for selection in various parts of the colony, which he decided according to their quality and position were worth 5s., 10s., and £1 per acre; and he did not require the services of an appraiser, who would probably form his opinion in the way he (Mr. Rutledge) had already pointed out. He thought there ought to be a basis fixed; that the value of the runs ought to be ascertained, and then that the pastoral tenants of the Crown should be required to pay the public Exchequer a larger return for the advantages they enjoyed than they now paid, or were likely to be called upon to pay, under the provisions of the Bill.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said the hon. gentleman who had just sat down stated, in the beginning of his remarks, that the Premier had congratulated himself upon being the head of a squatting Government. He could not remember that his hon. colleague had ever done so, although it was very likely he did, because people were occasionally called upon to make speeches at banquets, and possibly he had made such a statement, and if he had it would not be very much to his discredit. The hon. and learned member for Enoggera stated in the first instance that he had some appreciation of the value of squatters, and he (the Colonial Treasurer) granted that that was all very well; but if his hon. colleague looked back upon the history of that House he would find that every step that had been taken in the colony to settle people upon the land had been made by a squatting Government. He defied the hon. members opposite to deny it. That was the reason the Premier was proud of the position he occupied. He (the Premier) was not in the House at the time he referred to, but he knew that a squatting Government and their strongest supporters were the only persons who ever made any attempt to settle a population in Queensland. Certainly a Liberal Government, of which the hon. member for North Brisbane was a distinguished member, passed an amendment of the previous Act which had to some extent prevented settlement. He did not say that they did so intentionally—he really gave them credit for having the wish to encourage settlement; but still the fact remained that a squatting Government was the only Government that had ever done anything in the colony for settlement on the lands. He could state that without fear of contradiction. Sir Robert Mackenzie was Premier when the Land Act of 1868 was passed, and without the consent of that Government that law would never have passed. Sir Arthur Palmer was another member of that Government; unfortunately he (the Colonial Treasurer) was not a member of that Government, but several other squatters were, and they did what any other

Government might be proud of having attempted to do, and that was to break down the old system and introduce a new one for the benefit of the whole country. The hon. and learned member for Enoggera, in dealing with the Bill, and particularly the clauses relating to the rents of runs and deductions for improvements, stated that the Government were very anxious to deal leniently with squatters, but asked were they as anxious to deal leniently with selectors? He (the Colonial Treasurer) said they were quite prepared to deal leniently with selectors, unless they were prevented by the other side of the House. Anything that was proposed on the Government side of the House for the purpose, as the hon. member said, of "ameliorating" the position of selectors, was determinedly opposed by hon. members opposite. Hon. gentlemen on the other side of the House said the selectors should do so-and-so—it did not matter whether it paid or not;—they said that every man should do certain things, and should expend a certain amount of money in a certain way; and when other members tried to ameliorate the position of the selectors they were told by the other side of the House that they should not do it. Only that day he had received a letter from farmers and selectors at Rockhampton, asking him to support, as far as he could, the Bill brought in by his hon. friend the hon. member for Darling Downs (Mr. Allan). He intended to support it; in fact, he had intended doing it without being influenced by any letters. He had stated why that proposed change in the law ought to have been made long before: he believed the selectors could not be put into a worse position than under the Act of 1878, which was a mistake. The hon. and learned member for Enoggera ought to understand the Bill; he was a lawyer, and ought to be able to understand the Bill better than he (Mr. Archer), who found it difficult to stagger through it and comprehend it. The 11th clause said:—

"The rent chargeable on any run shall be subject to a deduction for any increased pastoral capabilities caused by fencing or storage of water upon such run, but such deduction shall in no case exceed 25 per cent. of the appraised rent of the run."

The hon. member said that gave enormous advantage to the squatter as compared with the selector, because the selector was taxed for improvements, while the pastoral lessee was actually to have his rent reduced for increasing the carrying capacity of his run. Was it not wonderful that the hon. member should not understand the matter better? The squatter took up a piece of country anywhere, probably where there was no water except, perhaps, for two or three months in the year, and the consequence was that he would have to remove his stock. He therefore went in for making improvements. He got water, and he was able thus to stock a piece of country which otherwise would be valueless. But it was not his own property; it was the property of the Government, and he might be ousted by any Government. Did the hon. member for Enoggera suppose that he (Mr. Archer), for instance, was going to take up Government land, spend money upon it, make it fit for stock, and that then the Government were to charge him for the improvements he had thus made? Was he to have no allowance for those improvements? As to the selector, the improvements he made were on country in his own possession, not in the possession of the Crown. Now he (Mr. Archer) was only a selector; he was no longer a squatter; he had improved his property, and he paid rates on it. Of course he did so simply because he had improved it, and it was no longer in a state of nature. Those improvements were his own, and he was rated upon them. He would just mention one case which came within his knowledge, although it did not refer specially to that Bill, but to the unsettled districts. A pastoral lessee bought a run that carried 40,000 sheep, some of which travelled in the dry season because there was no water on the run. For four years he spent £20,000 a year, or a total of £80,000, in making fences and providing water, and raised the carrying capacity of the run from 40,000 to 200,000 sheep. Did the hon. member for Enoggera mean to say that those improvements ought not to be taken into consideration? Of course he (Mr. Archer) did not mean the case to apply exactly to that Bill, because it dealt with the settled districts, and there were no cases in those districts at all to be compared with the one he referred to; but still he had used it to illustrate what was a fact—namely, that a man who had a long lease, and a comparative surety that he would obtain the benefit of his improvements, was more likely to make improvements than the man who had a short lease. To say that such a man ought not to have his rent decreased was simply absurd. Generally a run was valueless until improvements were made. As to the selectors, he had done as much as any man in that House to help them, but he was not one of those who started up a cry for the selectors and did nothing, and when there was occasion to make a cry for them did all he could to prevent their wishes being granted. He thought that the selector who had been industrious and had become prosperous, who was able, not only to live well but to bring up his family well, and who saw clearly ahead that he had a good future, should be rated, and he was rated. Of course those who were idle and profligate—who did not endeavour to make improvements or to become prosperous—could not be rated as the industrious man was, and it was the industrious man who had to pay the taxes; therefore everybody who was industrious should obtain their approval—there was no other way of putting it. To talk on a Bill of that kind about ameliorating the position of the selector—which did not bear at all on the question—for the purpose of saying something in their favour, and then, when any measure specially for the advantage of that class came before the House, to speak and to vote against it, was a cheap way of trying to gain popularity which was not worthy of the hon. and learned member for Enoggera. As to the Bill before them, he thought it was an exceedingly fair one. The manner in which it was proposed to ascertain the rents of runs in settled districts was certainly fairer than at present, and would, be believed, confer a great benefit on the country. Under the Act of 1876—which came into operation very shortly after he arrived in the colony the last time—he happened to be present at the first of the land auction sales which took place at Rockhampton, which was perhaps of all the coast districts the most favourable for pastoral settlement. It was not everywhere very fertile as regarded agriculture, although there were places here and there which were well suited to cultivation; but, as a rule, there was probably no town in Queensland which was so surrounded by good cattle stations as Rockhampton. Taking it altogether, he believed that it was better supplied with good beef than any other town in the colony, simply because good pastoral country went right down to the water's edge, and 100 miles back the land was fit for fine cattle stations. He happened, as he had already said, to be present at the first auction sale which took place under the Act of 1876. Hon. members had stated that those auction sales were failures because they were all proclaimed on the same day. He would examine that state-

ment by-and-by. He noticed at that sale that several runs which were put up to auction—and they were not by any means bad runs—were passed in without a bid. No one made any offer for them at all. The very best runs about the country had perhaps a few shillings added to their previous price, and he believed that one or two very small runs, of eight, or ten, or twelve square miles, really went at a very good figure, because they were selected bits of country such as were not usually to be found in any district. The greater proportion of the runs offered were, however, passed in without a bidder, and the result of the auction of that day was that, instead of increasing the amount of the revenue derived by the colony from the rents of the runs, it actually decreased—and very considerably decreased—it. The rents of a very few runs were increased, but the total sum showed a decrease. The Government were blamed for the result, which was attributed to their putting up too many of the runs on the same day. It was said that the sales ought to have been scattered over a greater number of days. The late hon. member for Rockhampton (Mr. Rea) said that the land ought to have been cut up into blocks of twelve square miles each. That, of course, the Government could not do. That was another specimen of the kind of blowing in which hon. members on the opposite side of the House indulged in with regard to the land laws. When the auction sale resulted so disastrously for the revenue, the Government again and again offered the same runs for sale. There were, of course, not so many put up—none save the rejected ones, and those of which the holders felt themselves secure, knowing that they were giving the extreme sum which a man could pay and still get a living out of the land. They knew that, if they were to leave, no one else could stock the run and get a living out of it, even if he had outbid them; and so they took no trouble to bid at all. They felt that no man could go in after them, bring stock to the run, and make improvements on it, and then get a living from it. The truth was that the Act of 1876 was a failure so far as that, instead of increasing the revenue of the colony, it decreased it; and it was only lately, since the runs had been offered again and again, and since the price of cattle had slightly risen, that the revenue had begun to approach anything like the amount which was realised from the runs before the Act of 1876 came into operation. That was in itself quite enough to show that the Act was a failure, and that it did not attain the ends for which it was passed. Were they now to go on the same line and use the system which not only had not produced the results hoped to result from it, but had raised up other evils which they ought, if they possibly could, to eradicate? Some hon. gentlemen on the other side of the House had sneered at the idea of such a thing as a man going for the purpose of levying blackmail at those auction sales. Hon. members might sneer and sneer again, but the fact remained the same that it was so, and that men had been paid from £50 to £100 not to compete at those sales against the possessor. Not that the possessor had any fear that the man would go into residence on the land, but simply that when the run was put up to auction—the run on which the possessor had settled with his family and his cattle and stock—rather than remove which he would give more than the value of the place to enable him to continue in residence;—it was in such a case as that, when a person came who said that if the possessor did not give him so-and-so he would bid against him, he would rather submit to the blackmail than be exposed to competition, and so he would pay down the sum demanded and remain there. That was not a benefit to the country. It simply gave them the benefit of training up a race of men who would use the same tactics in Queensland as the selectors in New South Wales had done for some time—tactics that had brought about a system in that colony which had become not only unbearable to the people, but which was really destroying the people themselves. The Act of 1876 had not only failed to produce a larger revenue, but it had failed to do anything for the benefit of the colony; and therefore the Minister for Lands had very judiciously made the provision that the rents be based on the quantity of stock that the land had carried according to the evidence which could be procured. That evidence would not need to be got, as the hon. member for Enoggera had said, from a squatter and his friends. Did the hon. gentleman know what stations were in the colony? He could assure the hon. gentleman that all the squatters, stockmen, and selectors within 100 miles of any station could tell him everything he wanted to know about it. Those people intimately knew the country, now that selection could be carried out so easily. They had gone over and over the districts looking for likely places to select, and if they had not actually selected they would be able at least to give evidence on the point. Nothing amused him more than the argument used on the other side—that the Bill of 1876 was introduced for the purpose of taking a new departure in consequence of the public belief that the squatters in the settled districts considered themselves freeholders, and to show the squatter that he was not a freeholder, and could be disturbed. He could only assure hon. gentlemen that many squatters discovered that long before the Act of 1876 was passed. The Act of 1868 convinced many squatters that they were not freeholders; indeed, a great many of the best squattages in the settled districts had been selected before the Act of 1876 came into operation, and many of them had been open to selection since 1866. The fact that they were to hold their runs by a new tenure came home to them more strongly from the fact that one-half of their runs had been selected after the passing of the Act of 1866. There was no necessity to convince squatters in the settled districts that they were not permanent proprietors, because an argument that could not be disputed had already been used—their runs had been taken away bit by bit by selectors; and, after the resumed halves of the runs had been selected, if the occupied halves had been required by selectors they would have been thrown open to selection. That House would have resumed the remaining halves of the runs without the slightest doubt, wherever there was a necessity for resuming more country for selection. He did not think there was much in the argument that the Act of 1876 was a new departure. He was a good deal amused, too, at the argument used by the hon. member for Darling Downs (Mr. Miles) when he asked how the Government could expect bidders to come forward if they were called scoundrels. The Act of 1876 had been in force for six years, and they were not complaining that men would not now come forward, but that during those six years nobody had come forward to bid for those runs. Anyone who examined the condition of affairs could see that the price for cattle country in the coast districts was greater than he could afford to pay. The name "scoundrel" or "rogue" was never applied to those men who came to buy; and how could a name applied to men now have prevented people from buying runs four or five years ago? The thing was absurd, and it showed the arguments people were driven to when they made a

mistake and wanted to get out of it. The hon. member for Darling Downs was a strong partisan of the Act of 1876.

Mr. MILES: I was not in the House at the time.

The COLONIAL TREASURER begged the hon. member's pardon. He was not in the House himself at the time, and he was not aware that the hon. member was not then in the House; but he thought, from the manner in which he defended the Act, that he considered it to be a very good piece of legislation, as he (Mr. Archer) considered it to be an exceedingly bad piece of legislation. It failed in every object it had in view; it failed in so far as to diminish the revenue; it failed in so far as to stop all improvements on runs; and it failed in so far that it had given no security to those who wished to invest money in the settled districts. It had failed most decidedly in every way, and he thought the House might reconsider the mode of auction, and substitute another system for that of valuation. Land should not be put up, as the hon. and learned member for Enoggera suggested, by the Minister for Lands at 5s. here, 15s. there, and £1 in another place, acting on the reports of other people; but it should be leased at such a figure as would bring in a larger revenue to the Government, and in such a way that the best and the worst lands would not bear the same price. What was wanted was that there should be greater confidence in the matter of squatting in the settled districts, without preventing selection and without interfering with it in any way. If that were done the probable result would be a most prosperous future—he meant as regarded revenue—to the colony. He thought the Bill, instead of being a squatter's Bill or a Bill for the benefit of any one class, was one for the benefit of the colony at large, and one which would at the same time allow people who took up squattages to make money on the capital they invested. Unless people saw their way to make a profit on their investments they would not take up land. He considered that the best country should bear the highest rent, inferior country a lower rent, and the worst country the lowest rent; that would allow people to make interest on the capital invested, and would be a system of benefit, not only to the lessees, but also to the colony.

Mr. DICKSON said the speech of the hon. Colonial Treasurer was, to his mind, a complement to the Bill, inasmuch as the Bill and the speech tended unmistakably to show a desire on the part of the Government to revive the squatting dominancy of the Crown tenants of the colony and to maintain for them a perpetuity of tenure. The hon. gentleman waxed quite eloquent in his eulogy of squatting Governments and described how the colony had invariably derived benefit from such Governments; and he (Mr. Dickson) imagined that the public statement made by the Premier on the occasion referred to by his hon. colleague (Mr. Rutledge)—that he was the head of a squatting Government—possibly originated from a feeling of sympathy with the very strong squatting opinion held by the Colonial Treasurer. But if they analysed the benefits conferred on the colony by squatting Governments they would see unmistakably that, whatever benefits had filtered to the public, those squatting Governments took care that the largest proportion of benefit should accrue to themselves. And while some of their Acts did ostensibly—he might say really—confer a certain amount of benefit upon other classes of the community, he maintained that the largest benefits were derived by the squatters themselves. If hon. members traced the course of legislation in the colony they would see that, continuously, every time a Land Act had been brought before Parliament there had been provisions heaped upon provisions for enlarging the privileges which pastoral tenants had always claimed in the colony. At first they claimed payments on improvements then in 1868 they claimed a renewed lease of one-half their runs; in 1869 they claimed a pre emptive right of 2,560 acres in every run, not only out of large runs, but also out of divided runs down to those of an area of twenty-five square miles. The pastoral tenants of the Crown, whenever a Land Act had been before Parliament, had insisted upon vested interests, security of tenure, and other means of making the Parliament recognise them.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said he understood the hon. gentleman to have said that in 1869 the squatters claimed a pre-emptive right in every run. It was during Mr. Macalister's Government that the Act of 1869 was introduced.

Mr. GRIFFITH: Mr. Lilley's.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Mr. Lilley's Government? Well, it was quite a mistake on the part of the hon. gentleman to say that the squatters had claimed that right.

Mr. DICKSON said he had referred to the Act of 1869 as giving an increase to the privileges of the pastoral tenants. Ever since, whenever a Crown Lands Bill came before Parliament, the pastoral tenants had invariably extended and increased the privileges they enjoyed. Though some of the Crown Lands Acts had appeared to encourage settlement, yet he maintained that, while in their language they had held out a word of promise to the ear, in their administration they had broken it to the hope. When the waste lands of the colony were thrown open for settlement by the Lands Acts of 1867 and 1868, were not the worst portions of land in the colony thrown open by a squatting Government, so that the Agent-General in England had to remonstrate against the portions of sterile land which were thrown open for occupation by agricultural settlement? He (Mr. Dickson) had not wished to enter into that subject at all had not the hon. the Colonial Treasurer provoked those remarks by his uncalled-for eulogy or panegyric on the squatting Governments of the colony. It was unfortunate he had done so, for it had roused in his (Mr. Dickson's) mind a suspicion that there was something beneath the surface in the Bill. They were at the same time threatened with another Bill dealing with pastoral leases, and he believed it was intended by it to increase still more the benefits of the pastoral tenants. It had been said that the Pastoral Leases Act of 1876 was a bad Bill; but it had received worse administration. It was administered by a Government which was professedly opposed to it *ab initio*. They were sure that nothing good could come from it. He believed also that a great deal of the evil practices at auction sales were largely due to the manner in which those leases had been submitted to public competition. He would invite the attention of hon. members to the remarks made by the Minister for Lands in the debate on the Pastoral Leases Act of 1876. When he introduced that Bill he said—

"It was unnecessary for him on the present occasion to refer to the operations of those (the previous) Acts, further than to say that he believed them to have remedied the original objects of the Act to a great extent; and now, as the time approached when the ten years' term would shortly expire, it became their duty—so, at any rate, the Government considered—to review the whole question, and to provide for the contingency of the lapse of the leases—such provisions as should meet the purposes of settlement and conduce to the public interest. There could be no doubt that legal tenure of the Crown lands described in those leases ceased at the date of the expiration of the lease. When that took

place all legal and even equitable right to occupy the land described in the leases ended, and it therefore at the present time became the duty of the Government, in anticipation of that event, to say what should be done with the Crown lands which would be then available for treatment under direction of the Legislature."

The House seemed to have lost sight entirely of the fact that, when those leases expired by effluxion of time, the legal and equitable right to the leases had justly terminated. Then why such tenderness in dealing with those leases? Why the apprehension that they would disturb the existing rights of lessees? He maintained that when a lease had expired by effluxion of time the pastoral tenant had a right to undergo the same competition that any other leaseholder of the property of the Crown would have to undergo when his tenure had expired. In addition to what the hon. Minister for Lands said on that occasion, he pointed out the necessity for sales by auction of the expired leases; he pointed out that in dealing with runs in unsettled districts—

"They had had a large area of country which had been sold by auction, and that leasehold property had realised a considerable amount to the revenue."

He then proceeded to quote from Mr. Tully's report, showing—

"The average rent per square mile of the available area in the unsettled districts. The general result was that the highest amount received was 19s. 9½d. and the lowest 5s. 6d., showing that the average amount of rents throughout the whole of the unsettled districts was 14s. 5½d. This, he might explain, included the 10 per cent. increment of the present year, now coming due, and it represented therefore the average, not of the past years but of the current and succeeding years; so that the 14s. 5½d. average rental of the runs in the unoccupied districts represented the average of the next seven years, and included the 10 per cent. increment. It was important therefore to observe that, while the average upset price had amounted to about 14s. 5½d., the actual amount realised on these runs offered by auction had been £1 2s. 5½d., very nearly double the upset price; and almost double that of the average rents of the present time."

But two things had to be considered: would the House, by passing the Bill, confer any vested interests upon the original holders of leases? and, secondly, would they be adopting the best means by which benefit to the revenue could be secured? He had listened to the statements on both sides of the House concerning the probability of getting increased prices under the appraisement clauses. He very much doubted it. He believed that if the Act of 1876 had been fairly and judiciously administered, and in such a manner as a private individual would administer his estate if he wished to obtain the best price for it, a much better return would have been made to the Treasury. He maintained that the Act had never had a fair trial or a fair start. It was administered by a Government professedly opposed to it. The Act itself had been most unmeritedly condemned that evening whilst the administration which had made it so inoperative had been entirely unnoticed, and that was to his mind the chief fault in the matter. He observed in the report of the Under Secretary for Lands a reference to a strip of land which formed the settled districts of the colony in the northern portion. The Under Secretary for Lands said:—

"In the Burke and other northern districts there is a strip of land thirty miles in width, extending from the coast inland, which comes within the settled districts of the colony. This land is becoming more valuable every day for pastoral purposes, but there is no provision in any of the Acts for leasing or licensing it. The Settled Districts Pastoral Leases Act applies to runs originally leased under the Act of 1868, and does not deal with vacant Crown land. It will be necessary, therefore, to provide for this omission, as the colony is losing the rental of these lands."

He would ask the Minister for Lands whether, in the schedule to the Bill, the boundaries of the settled districts had been altered in conformity with the recommendation of the Under Secretary for Lands?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is so.

Mr. DICKSON said that was an improvement. While attributing the failing of the Act of 1876 to the administration of it by a Government hostile to it rather than to the Act itself, he disliked anything in the Bill which tended to establish the perpetuity of the squatting tenure. He did not desire to do anything unjust to the pastoral tenants, but he did not think they should legislate in the squatting interests solely when considering extended leases, as that to his mind was fraught with dangerous consequences to the best interests of the colony.

Mr. KINGSFORD said it appeared to him that between two hon. members on the other side of the House the squatters would have a hard time of it. The hon. gentleman who had just sat down had intimated that whatever had been done by squatting Governments had been done from selfish motives, because they had not benefited the colony more than themselves. He thought that charge—if it was a charge—applied equally well to the other side of the House. He would mention one instance in which the Liberal party, so called, had benefited from a monetary point of view to a much greater extent than anything the squatters had done for themselves. He referred to the act of a former Colonial Treasurer, Mr. Hemmant, when he reduced the *ad valorem* duty from 10 per cent. to 5 per cent.; so that the same charge might hold good in that respect if applied to the other side of the House. He thought that if any party in that House could benefit themselves to any extent without injury to the country, while at the same time doing a world-wide benefit to the colony, they were perfectly justified in doing so. He saw no harm in it, and both sides of the House were chargeable with it. The hon. member for Enoggera (Mr. Rutledge) had drawn a very rough picture of hon. members who were squatters, and of squatters generally. While the hon. member was making those remarks he (Mr. Kingsford) felt he was in very bad company; but on looking around he was not quite sure that the squatters did not bear comparison with other members of the community for honesty, uprightness, and intelligence. The remarks the hon. member made against the squatters were made also against the appraisers. They were both infernal rogues together from the hon. gentleman's point of view. No doubt both would appreciate the remarks of the hon. member at their full value. He (Mr. Kingsford) believed that both appraisers and squatters were strictly honourable men as a rule. A comparison had been attempted to be made between the present Bill and the Bill introduced the other evening by the hon. member for Darling Downs (Mr. Allan). He saw no likeness between the two Bills, and he had opposed the Bill introduced by the hon. member for Darling Downs, and would oppose it so far as he could. He thought that in the Bill before the House there was throughout a strong principle of equity that must commend itself to all unprejudiced men. He saw nothing in the principle of the Bill to favour the squatter any more than anyone else. The lease of the squatter running out, the Bill provided that on giving three months' notice—a very short notice he must confess, as it should, he thought, be twelve months—he could have the renewal of the lease. That was nothing more than equitable, and it was the duty of the Government to grant the renewal upon reasonable terms. There was no doubt that it was desirable on the part of the Government to increase the rent after a proper appraisement and

valuation; but it would be barbarous, and unworthy of any Government or any civilised nation, to say that after a squatter or lessee had expended his capital upon the land he should be kicked out into the world at the expiration of his lease. There was nothing more cruel or unworthy of anyone than that a landlord should turn out his tenant at the expiration of his lease without granting him a renewal of it on reasonable terms. The tenant ought always to have a priority of claim as to a continuation of the lease of the property which he held, in order that he might be able to carry out his improvements. If he did not wish to remain he need not send notice to that effect, but if he did wish to stay and gave notice of his intention, then in all fairness the Government should be bound to pay attention to his request and let him hold his position with as light a hand as possible. He should have much pleasure in supporting the measure.

Mr. FRASER said he did not understand that there was any serious objection raised on his side of the House to deal equitably and fairly with the tenants of the Crown, and he had not learned, from any criticism that had taken place upon the Bill from the Opposition side, that members sitting there were not prepared to give such a tenure as would justify gentlemen in possession of the Crown lands in spending or investing their capital profitably. He could not help being amused at some remarks made by the Colonial Treasurer, who had accused the hon. junior member for Enoggera of going in for cheap popularity. He (Mr. Fraser) could not help feeling, when the hon. gentleman was addressing the House, that he was posing before the country as a friend of the selector very cheaply indeed by accusing the Opposition side of the House of opposing every attempt to grant relief to the selector. In dealing with the Bill introduced by the hon. member for Darling Downs, the objection urged on his side of the House was not against granting relief when required, but it was because the Bill introduced by that hon. gentleman was a partial Bill, and only reached a certain select and limited class of selectors. If the Bill introduced by the hon. member for Darling Downs would also grant relief to agriculturists he did not know that any great objection would have been urged against it, but it was because of its partiality and unfairness, and because it dealt with one class only, that it was opposed by Opposition members. The Colonial Treasurer had condemned the Act of 1876, and stated that instead of furthering the object that was intended it had actually prevented settlement. But what was the reply of his (Mr. Fraser's) side of the House, and what had been their complaint, but this: that the Government felt that the Bill of 1876 was a defective Bill—felt that it fell short of the object that was intended; and the contention of the Opposition was that, instead of the hon. member for Darling Downs being permitted to bring in a partial Bill, it was the bounden duty of the Government to come forward with a Land Bill such as would correct the defects found to exist in the Act of 1876 and all other Acts. That was the position they had assumed, and he objected to the hon. Colonial Treasurer posing before the public in that Hosue as the friend of the selector, to the disparagement of hon. members sitting on the Opposition side of the House. The hon. gentleman had also told them that every attempt made to grant relief to the selector had emanated from the Government side of the House. He (Mr. Fraser) remembered, although he was not then a member, when the Act of 1868 was passing through the House in charge of the present Colonial Treasurer, and he must remind him that one of the most useful provisions in that Act was forced upon the Government of the day by the late lamented Hon. T. B. Stephens—and that was the homestead clauses. Attention was called by the hon. junior member for Enoggera to the 11th clause of the Bill, and he must confess that that clause had struck him in the same light as it had done that hon. gentleman. The argument had been used that there was a difference between the selector and the Crown lessee—that the one was improving his own property, whilst the other was investing his capital in the property of the Government, and that consequently the Crown lessee should receive a reduction in consideration of the money he invested. The hon. Colonial Treasurer had asked very pertinently if any man would invest his money without seeing the probability of getting a return? No, certainly he would not; and he (Mr. Fraser) would like to ask the Colonial Treasurer whether the gentleman who expended in four years £80,000 on his run would have done that unless he saw a probability of getting a handsome return for it. He (Mr. Fraser) said no; and if, as the hon. gentleman had pointed out, a squatter took up a piece of country, badly watered, but capable of being improved, and if he took up that country with his eyes open, and entered into a contract with the Government to pay so much for it per year, was he not bound by his rental? It was for him to elect for himself whether he should expend his money on improvements to such an extent as would give him a remunerative return for his money. He could not see why such a reduction of rent should be made for a Crown tenant any more than for a man in any other walk of life. With respect to the Bill itself, he was not going to criticise its provisions. The bone of contention seemed to be about the mode of assessing the annual rental. Well, the choice seemed to lie between the auction and appraisement systems. His own opinion was that if appraisement could be carried out fairly and honestly it would prove the best for all parties, but he believed that it had been tried in many of the colonies and it had not proved a satisfactory success. The fears expressed on his side of the House had been sneered at, and hon. members had been accused of entertaining unjustifiable and ungenerous suspicion in the matter; but they were influenced a good deal by the experience of the past, and, while not desiring in the slightest degree to call into question the honourable intentions of Crown lessees, they must remember that by something of the kind the colony had lost land—or, rather, land had been locked up for a considerable time which might be classed as the fairest portion of the southern part of the colony. There was not the slightest doubt that it had been through the friendly arrangement between officials connected with the Darling Downs land and the lessees in that part of the colony that such a large area of land had become permanently locked up. When they remembered those things no one should be surprised if they should look at every provision of the kind proposed with some considerable amount of suspicion. Hence, he did not think they were open to those accusations that were charged against them by the other side of the House. He saw several provisions in different clauses of the Bill, which he had no doubt would be amended in committee. He must again express an objection to the accusation made against his side of the House, that there was any desire to deal unfairly or uncharitably with the Crown tenant under that Bill or under the Act of 1869. With reference to the Act of 1869, they were told that it was an Act of the Liberal Government. He remembered something about the passing of that Act, and it was almost extorted in its present form from the Government of the day as a *quid pro quo* to

enable the Government to carry through their immigration policy.

Mr. FOOTE said it was not his intention to say much with reference to the Act. For his own part, he thought some Act of the kind was absolutely necessary; and that necessity, he considered, arose from the fact that the Act passed by the late Government to meet that want was a failure. That failure, he held, was brought about by the action of the present Government. They took all the steps they possibly could to make it a failure. He had thought over the matter a good deal, and had come to the conclusion that the country was not deriving the amount of rent from the pastoral lessees that it had a right to expect from them. He was not speaking from a prejudiced point of view, because he looked upon the pastoral interest as a very great interest—in fact, it was the chief interest of the colony at present, and had been from the commencement of the colony, and even before the commencement of the colony, and it would remain so for a very long period to come. If the proposed Bill was to deal with the whole colony—that was to say, with the unsettled as well as the settled portions—it would not be suitable to the requirements. The fact that free selection was allowed all over the settled districts took the sting out of it to a very great degree—that was to say, as to the extension of tenure. There seemed to be no difference of opinion as to the giving of additional security to the pastoral lessees, but what they asked for was a fair proportion of rent to be paid to the Crown. It was well known that the amount of interest that the colony had to pay every year was considerably increasing, and, as they were continually borrowing from year to year for the extension of railways and other improvements, there must be an increase of revenue; and it was only fair and proper that that increase of revenue should rest proportionately upon all classes of the community. As the hon. the Colonial Treasurer had said, it had to come out of the industrious and energetic men and men of capital; therefore it was only proper that it should be made proportionate so far as it possibly could without prejudice to any particular interest in the colony. He could not see why the pastoral lessees should be exempted or protected from all competition. They seemed very much afraid of competition. The Colonial Treasurer pointed out that the colony suffered considerably in consequence of the Act that was passed by the late Government subjecting the runs in the settled districts to be put up to public competition. He thought there was a great deal to be said about the manner in which that was done, because, if it had been brought about in a right manner, the effect would have been very different to what it was. The hon. member for Port Curtis referred to the matter of blackmail. He (Mr. Foote) thought that rested with the pastoral lessees themselves. They appeared to be very much afraid of public competition, although he did not see why they should be. He could not see why a man on a good run should not pay more than the man on a bad one. The man who had a bad run was not likely to suffer much from competition, but the man who had a good run would have to pay, in all probability, the value of his run, which he had a perfect right to do; and if he was not prepared to do so himself, the man holding the poor run, or other speculators who wished to go into that occupation, would step in and he would have to seek "pastures new." Then again, he thought the party or the gentleman who paid blackmail was as much to be censured as the man who received it; because, if he only stood upon his dignity as an honest man and a man determined to protect his own rights and his own interests, he would very soon put down blackmail. He believed it was very probable that the party would have to contend with the same thing upon the second occasion; because, if he paid too much for the run on one occasion, he could forfeit it if he chose, and it would be again subjected to public competition. Therefore he believed that the system which was proposed by the late Government was a very good one, and would have been found to work well if it had met with encouragement from the Government instead of disapprobation. Taking the Bill all through, there would be no hardships to complain of under its provisions. He would certainly take exception to the Colonial Treasurer claiming that every liberal measure with reference to the land laws of the colony had come from a squatting Government. He (Mr. Foote) did not look upon the present Government as being purely a squatting Government. He believed there were a couple of pastoral lessees in it, but there were other members who were, so far as his knowledge went, not interested in that pursuit. He did not remember any Government that had strictly been so. He gave the present Government credit for having the interests of the colony at heart and trying to push it on, and they evidently were doing so. It was the duty of the Opposition to severely scrutinise the actions of the Government and to watch them with great care, lest they might be guilty of acts of imprudence which would bring about a very undesirable state of things in the colony. Allusion had been made by the Colonial Treasurer to the Bill of the hon. member (Mr. Allan). The contention of the Opposition with regard to that measure was that if it was a necessary one it was an important one, and one that ought on that account to have been brought in by the Government. If the Government saw the necessity for such a Bill, why did they not take the responsibility of it instead of entrusting it to a private member? No doubt they were perfectly cognisant of all that was going on, and perhaps there had been many consultations with reference to the Bill; and he had no doubt when the Bill came before the House it would be received in a proper manner. The hon. member for Maryborough (Mr. Palmer) had made the statement that the recent depreciation in pastoral pursuits had been brought about by the discouragement caused by the Act passed by the late Government. There was not the slightest foundation for any such statement. Before that Act was passed cattle were in great demand and fetched a high price for years previous. The fact of the Act being passed by the late Government had nothing whatever to do with the subsequent depreciation of the industry. After that time came a period of three or four years when cattle did not pay expenses except in rare cases and in very good country; but that was not the fault of the Act. On looking through the present Bill he had come to the conclusion that there were some provisions in it that were really very good, and he had no doubt that in committee what was detrimental would be removed. He objected, however, to the clause which placed so much power in the hands of the Government, although that fault appeared in almost every measure that had been introduced. It was a power which might be cruelly abused. After an appraiser had sent in his report the Minister had power to alter it if he thought proper; he might reduce it, although he could not perhaps increase it; and that was a power which the House ought not to grant. His own idea was that instead of introducing the system of appraisement it would have been better to declare certain districts, according to quality, at a certain price; lands of a poorer quality at a lower price, and so on. Such a system would not be open to the suspicions which

had been cast upon Government officers in connection with previous Acts. Although nobody would say that undue influence had been brought to bear, or that corrupt practices had been put into force, or that bribes had been received by Government officials, still those who were familiar with the working of the Act knew that there had been cases that were beyond suspicion.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Name them.

Mr. FOOTE said there was no occasion to name them; the Minister for Lands knew of plenty of cases. He was satisfied that what he had stated was the fact; and the House should try to protect the interests of the Crown and the interests of the country as far as possible.

Mr. FEEZ said that after the very exhaustive manner in which the Bill had been discussed he had very little to say; but as one or two important matters had been omitted he would briefly refer to them. There could be no doubt that under the Act of 1876 there had been a most unmistakable falling-off in the prosperity of the pastoral industry. Before that year improvements were going on in all directions in the central division of the colony; but as soon as that Act was passed a falling-off was apparent, and the recent revival of prosperity was owing to a very different cause. It should not be forgotten that squatters in the settled districts were always in danger of having some portion of their runs selected, but if their tenure could be made more secure than it was they would be prepared to lay out more money in making permanent improvements. The hon. member for Enoggera had referred to the question of pre-emptives. He should like to see it established that no further pre-emptives should be allowed on runs within the settled districts. Those pre-emptives had been a curse to the country. Some of the finest pieces of land, containing the whole of the water in a district, had been monopolised; and it was a matter of regret that that had not been prevented sooner. He believed there were applications now in the Lands Office for the division of runs of immense extent—some exceeding 2,000 square miles—the object being by pre-empting and consolidating to obtain immense estates and pick the eyes out of the country. It had been said that the auction system had been found to work very badly, and he thought that a more unfair system could not have been introduced; but he would remind the Minister for Lands that the system of sales by auction, which he so strongly disapproved of when applied to runs, was still adopted in the case of land offered for selection. In throwing the land open to auction in that way intending selectors were brought into direct competition with their masters and capital, and the consequence had been that many intending selectors had been unable to obtain land. In all selecting districts in the interior, such as Springsure and Peak Downs, the land should be kept open for a couple of years, and not put up to auction to be competed for by the squatters and selectors. He was, however, inclined to think that it was the duty of the country and of the Government to put a stop to the sale of land altogether. In that respect South Australia had shown a good example, and had been more successful than the other colonies. In that colony leases were granted, and when those leases expired the selector had the opportunity of taking up the land without being brought into competition with the squatter, who had so much more means at his disposal. On the other hand, the result of the system of sales by auction in New South Wales had been that nearly all the selections so obtained had fallen back into the hands of the squatters. At the present moment there was no demand for the country affected by the Bill, and it would therefore be a dog-in-the-manger policy to deprive the squatter of advantages which would justify the expenditure of a large amount of money on the land. He believed the passing of the Bill would be the harbinger of a large expenditure of money which would be very beneficial to the country. Since the Act of 1876 was passed several measures had been introduced which had pressed heavily upon the squatters who lived in the settled districts. They had to pay a heavy marsupial tax; under the Divisional Boards Act they were taxed to maintain the roads; and the railways into the interior had brought them into competition with the squatters in the unsettled districts who paid only a nominal rent. By railway an outside squatter could send, for 10s., a fat bullock, produced on, say, five acres of land, to compete with a similar beast produced in the inside districts on, say, twenty acres. He also fully endorsed some of the remarks made upon the appraisement clause. It would be better, in his opinion, that there should be two appraisers—one appointed by the Government and one by the lessee; and in the event of their disagreeing the matter should be submitted to arbitration. Clause 13, which appeared to be a favoured clause of the Minister for Lands, left too much power in the hands of the Minister. No Minister of the Crown, he thought, should place himself in such a position, because if he exercised the power given to him by the Bill he would be subjected to criticism and abuse. Were he (Mr. Feez) placed in such a position he should strongly object to being called upon to exercise such power. With a few amendments, he thought the Bill would be much perfected and give great satisfaction to all interested; and he should like to see the Government bring in a Bill of a similar nature to give satisfaction to all the selectors. As the Colonial Treasurer said he was well disposed to the selectors, he hoped means would be found to confer upon them advantages equal to those conferred by the Bill upon the squatters. It would perhaps be wise to introduce a measure by which selectors in the neighbourhood of large settlements, where there was a great demand for produce, should be allowed to take up from 5,000 to 10,000 acres—not by purchase on the usual terms, but on lease for, say, ten years at an increasing rental. Such a provision would be of great benefit to the colony; but it would of course have no place in the proposed measure. He hoped hon. members would be able to make the Bill a good one.

Mr. GARRICK said he noticed that the hon. member for Port Curtis said that the framers of the Act of 1876 were determined to sacrifice somebody, and that the lessees in the settled districts were those sacrificed. The sheep were separated from the goats; and the hon. member for Port Curtis said that, unfortunately for himself, he was one of the goats. He could not say whether that view was in the minds of those hon. members who supported that Bill or not; but, if it were, he thought there was something to be said in defence. It had always been an acknowledged principle—admitted, he believed, by hon. members whether sitting on the Government benches or in opposition—that the pastoral lessees who held the land were prepared to give way, when necessary, to more active and closer settlement. That principle being admitted, who should be prepared first to give way? Surely, those who were nearest to the centres of settlement; those on the seaboard or near to the towns along the seaboard; those who had held the land longest and had derived the most advantage from it should be the first to be told to stand aside. So that, without admitting the force of what the hon. member said, he would affirm that those

who promoted the Bill, if they acted upon any such reasons, had good grounds for the course they took and that the hon. member for Port Curtis, according to the position of his run, was rightly placed among the goats. There were in the amending Bill two principles: one relating to an extension of tenure; the other to the mode by which the value of the lands to be held was to be arrived at. With respect to the first, if the tenure was to be extended at all he possibly should have no objection to an extension of from five years to ten years; but he was very doubtful whether in most parts of the settled districts there should be any extension at all. He thought that that part of the country was ripe for a new principle. True it was that those holdings were subject to selection, but they knew well how very difficult it was—he knew it—how many obstacles pastoral lessees could put in the way of selection in a variety of ways; so that while the lands held under lease were nominally open to selection the lessees frequently almost completely stopped selection.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS on the Government Benches: No, no!

Mr. GARRICK said it was so. There were a variety of questions continuously raised, the result of which was very much to retard settlement.

The PREMIER: We have not found any difficulty.

Mr. GARRICK said he had always held that if they wanted the law well administered it should be administered by those who believed in it; but if they wanted it marred and its defects to be seen, then it should be administered by those who did not believe in it. The present Government admitted that they did not believe in the Act of 1876, and therefore he did not wonder that the Premier had seen its defects. He repeated that there should be a new principle with regard to those lands, and the suggestion had been thrown out by the hon. member for Leichhardt. It was this: They had now only selection—but why should they not have smaller areas devoted to pastoral occupation? There was no principle in the Bill such as there was in the Act of 1876, by which there was a division of the run—putting up to auction not the whole of the area but the several blocks comprising the run, so that any purchaser who would require smaller capital might compete for the smaller blocks. But under the Bill before the House they would lease the whole area to the lessee, who would hold it, subject only to selection, for ten years. But he held that there was something else than selection to be looked to; there was a sort of large farming. There was too much capital required in selection. Those who were familiar with it knew very well that a man who was seeking to earn interest for his capital on purchased land by the natural grasses only stood a very small chance in competition with the man who did not require to be a freeholder, but merely leased his land and paid his rent according to the Act. He said the competition in that case was unequal and unfair, and why should not the principle be adopted by which they would have larger farms—not so large as the runs in the settled districts, but so large as to be beyond the power of purchase and yet within the power of leasing? Why should not those large areas be subject to something of that kind? But they were going to lock them up for ten years if the Bill were passed. He admired the persistency of the hon. member for Port Curtis, and would make use of him as an illustration of those hon. gentlemen who sat on the other side of the House. He had ever found during the whole of his public life that on any question relating to the public lands they fought most persistently for their own interests. It had always been a question with them of shoulder to shoulder. Members on the Opposition side of the House were frequently severed and fought singly, but hon. members opposite always fought in battalions. The question was, primarily, should there be any extension at all, and, if there was to be an extension, should it be such an extension as would lock up again all those lands immediately at their command, and which were required for that new sort of settlement to which he had alluded? They knew that experience expanded their knowledge of those matters, and it was something like the steam mail contract, which was for eight years; they wanted something quicker than that service—they did not want nine-knot service for all that time. And so it was with the land laws. Within the next ten years new light might break in upon them which might make them very much regret having locked up those lands for a further period of ten years. The other matter was as to the manner of arriving at the value, and there again he would compliment hon. members opposite on raising that great bugbear, the man who was levying blackmail. Why, he could count them on the fingers of one hand! It was the business of those hon. members to magnify them—to make an army of them—to go about crying "Wolf, wolf!" with respect to them; but hon. members on that side of the House were not taken in. Of course it sounded very hard. It was unpleasant for even an honest man to bid for the holding of another even if he were actuated by no unselfish desire or only so much selfishness as might belong to business; and he (Mr. Garrick) concurred that the man was beneath contempt who went into an auction room with a view of levying blackmail on the bidders there. But he thought there was no need of the fear which the hon. gentlemen opposite had endeavoured—and, he hoped, vainly endeavoured—to excite in regard to that matter. The hon. the Treasurer had stated that members on the Opposition side of the House stood, as usual, in the way of progress with respect to land reform. He wondered that the hon. gentleman had the audacity to say that. His coolness was really sometimes refreshing. But he (Mr. Garrick) would like to write a chapter or two of his history and read it over once to him, and he thought it would cure him of all that sort of thing. He thought there were one or two records which, if written in large letters and held up, would be sufficient to stop for ever such statements from the hon. gentleman. He (Mr. Garrick) had once or twice been tempted to give a chapter of his own experience in watching the career of the hon. gentleman with respect to land laws; but perhaps it was better not. He thought, at any rate, it came with no great force from the hon. gentleman to accuse members on that side of the House of standing in the way of liberal reforms. He said, with reference to auction, "Now, is it not a singular thing that you on the other side of the House apply the principle of auction because you think that is the way to get the best value for the land?" But they were told also that because of their efforts to get rid of the land the supply was larger than the demand, and therefore they checked the demand and there was no price. The hon. member said, "Look down this series of years—there has been no competition." How did that fit in with the blackmailing? How did it fit in with the tenants being so terrified that they made no improvements? During that series of years, not only had there been a perfect absence of blackmailing, but also of legitimate competition. He (Mr. Garrick) saw at once that the Colonial Treasurer was cutting the ground under him.

He told them, "You have alarmed the tenants so much that they are making no improvements and expending no money." Did not the hon. member see that what he had said cut both ways? As to the question of appraisement, he agreed with what had been said by other members on his side of the House. If he really thought that appraisement was going to give them a fair value he would have no objection to it, but from observation he was driven to the conclusion, very reluctantly, that it was not at all likely such a system would give a fair value. They need not speak of things so gross as downright corruption; but he had known men so artful as to persuade others—after a convivial sort of night—he did not know whether it was the effect of reasoning or of pleasure, or what;—at all events, the appraiser in such cases was not in the morning by any means the same gentleman they left at night. They knew that wherever there had been a system of appraisement, and wherever there had been a minimum below which the appraiser could not go, the authorities had said it was idle to appraise at all—they would take the minimum and have no further bother. He would ask the Government whether that had not been the case—whether, under such circumstances, it had not been decided to take the minimum at once? If that was the experience with respect to appraisement, what was the experience with respect to auction? It had been stated by the hon. member for Enoggera (Mr. Dickson) with respect to forfeited leases. Wherever there had been open competition, experience had shown that it was by that system they got the best value for the country. There was another question to which he would allude—that of appeal. It appeared that not only had the Minister the power of vetoing an award, but also of altering it. That was a most extraordinary power. The Minister could disregard the opinion of the appraisers. If he did not like their opinion, it did not matter whether justice had been done or not, the Minister might alter it. Notwithstanding that appraisers had been appointed for the very purpose of ascertaining the value, the Minister had the power not only of vetoing their decision, but of altering it, and of saying, without appeal, what should be the value to the country. He (Mr. Garrick) was not going to oppose the Bill, though he did not like it. It was a Bill drafted somewhat on the principles of a Bill brought in last session by the hon. member for Port Curtis, and he really thought that, under the circumstances, it would have been better if the hon. member had not said a word about it.

Mr. NORTON: It would have been better for you.

Question—That the Bill be read a second time—put and passed.

On the motion of the MINISTER FOR LANDS, the committal of the Bill was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

PASTORAL LEASES BILL—SECOND READING.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said that, in moving the second reading of the Pastoral Leases Bill, it was not necessary that he should take up the time of the House at any very great length. The necessity for the Bill had arisen in the following way:—Under the Pastoral Leases Act of 1869 powers were given to the then lessees of the Crown and pastoral tenants to come under the operation of the Act. It so happened that many of those persons, either by neglect or wilful intention, omitted to do so. He could not say why, but certain it was that they did not do so, although it would have been of great advantage to them.

Mr. GRIFFITH: How many are there?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said that in the 5th clause of the Act of 1869 reference was made to the modes by which the lessees of runs who held their leases under the Orders in Council, the Unoccupied Crown Lands Occupation Act of 1860, the Tenders for Crown Lands Act of 1860, the Pastoral Leases Act of 1863, or any other Act, might, on application to the Secretary for Lands, surrender their existing leases or promises of lease, and obtain new leases under the provisions of the Act. Such application was to be made before the 1st of January, 1871. That was just what some of the lessees omitted to do. Many failed to take advantage of the provisions of the Act, and the Bill now before the House was intended to deal with such persons, who, in consequence, when their leases terminated, came under the operation of section 40 of the Act of 1869, which was worded as follows:—

> "It shall be lawful for the Governor, on the expiration of any existing lease or promise of lease, to grant to the holder thereof a renewed lease, for fourteen years, of the land held by him, or such portion thereof as shall not be required to be resumed for sale or otherwise lawfully withdrawn from merely pastoral occupation."

To be brief, the Bill proposed to deal with all those who at the present time came under the operation of the Act of 1869, the consequence of which had been that the leases matured at different periods of time. He held in his hand a return of the runs which would so expire. Some of them commenced in 1883, and they kept on until 1890. He would read over the abstract which he held, so that hon. members might be in a position to understand what they were talking about. On the 30th June, 1883, there would be forty leases of runs fall in, comprising 2,017 square miles, the rent being £1,495 10s. 7d. In 1884 ninety-six leases would fall in, the area being 4,163 square miles, and the rents £4,191 9s. On the 30th June, 1885, thirty-seven leases would fall in, the area being 1,244 square miles, and the rent being £1,240 8s. 2d. On the 30th June, 1886, forty-two runs would fall in, the area being 1,296 square miles, and the rents £1,628 17s. 8d. On the 30th June, 1887, forty-one runs would fall in, the area being 1,298½ square miles, and the rents £1,368 19s. 1d. On the 30th June, 1888, ninety-two runs would fall in, the area being 2,869½ square miles, and the rents £3,099 8s. 4d. On the 30th June, 1889, there would be fifty-six leases expiring, the area of which would be 2,277 square miles, and the rents amounting to £2,645 19s. 9d. On the 30th June, 1890—the year which would terminate that system of leases—there would be seventy-five runs expiring, the area of which would be 3,012¼ square miles, and the rents £3,506 0s. 11d. So that hon. members would see that those leases commenced to terminate from the 30th June next year, and it was necessary to make provision during the present year for dealing with them. The most important change which was to be made was the mode of determining the value of the leases, instead of that system of arbitration where the State appointed one arbitrator and the lessee another, and an umpire was appointed between them; which system, as he had stated in the earlier part of the evening, had been unfortunate in its results to the State from the time it had been brought into operation. The Government proposed, in lieu of it, to have an appraisement of the run. He believed that such appraisement would result in a great increase to the revenue. While the runs out west were exceptionally good as a rule, they were not all good. There were bad ones there as there were bad ones in the settled districts, and it was only fair that the lessees of the runs should return an adequate amount to the State for them. It would be a hardship to some and a favour to others to have one uniform rate for every run in a district, and therefore he did not propose to take

such a step. The country was so diversified, and people could get into desert, gidyah, or marsupial country, or in other tracts of country where a man's success would be militated against. Looking around in every direction, they would see that the State would, if exacting the same from all, be unfair and unreasonable. The Government had therefore decided to adopt the system which had answered so well in New South Wales. Notwithstanding all that could be said against it, and that they might have a corrupt appraiser, and that a squatter of social and convivial habits could decoy an appraiser away from the right path by drink, as the hon. member for Moreton had suggested, he believed that men of honour and ability were still to be found in Queensland; and even if they were not to be found in the colony they would be able to get them elsewhere. In order that an appraiser should be free from suspicion it was necessary that he should be kept as far as possible from the Crown lessees, though of course he must not be uncivil, rude, or tyrannical. He would have a right, in the exercise of his duty, to ask lessees or their employés certain questions, and to get necessary information wherever he could. And notwithstanding all they heard about crime and the frailty of humanity at the present day, he was satisfied, and he believed his colleagues were satisfied, that there would be no difficulty in that direction. If they had the administration of the Act they would be able to get competent, able, and impartial men to act as appraisers. The system was not an experiment, and, since they had dropped into the groove in New South Wales, the Crown lessees there seldom appealed against the awards of the appraisers. That showed the appraisers to be men of ability who knew their work. It would be better to appoint men with colonial experience—he meant Queensland colonial experience—rather than men who would have to come to the colony and learn their work; and he believed suitable men could be obtained. He did not apprehend that the troubles which hon. members opposite seemed to anticipate would arise from the operation of such a clause. It would seem from them, notwithstanding all the clergymen and police in the place at the present time, that an honest man was a *rara avis* in the country. How hon. members on the other side came to be acquainted with so much crime he was at a loss to know. They were, most of them, church-going people, attended to their religious duties, wanted to have public-houses closed on Sundays, and where they met those dishonest people they spoke of he was at a loss to understand. He never saw them in any company except that of one another in that House, and they might possibly have imbibed their opinions there. But he was quite easy on the point that men were to be found in the country both able and willing to carry out the intentions of that section of the Bill impartially. The Bill provided that, instead of fourteen years, the period for which the lease might be renewed should be fifteen years, which could be divided into three progressive periods; and hon. members would notice that the lessee had the power of calling in the services of the appraiser, and the State could take a similar course if either party was dissatisfied with the revaluation of the run. That was provided by clause 5. The next clause said that if there was no application for a renewed lease the run might be offered at auction. Clause 7 related to the appointment of appraisers. Clause 8 made the usual provision for taking evidence on oath. Hon. members would notice that "unavailable country" disappeared altogether in the Bill. Great difficulties had arisen from time to time in determining what was available and what was unavailable country, and he considered it was a much sounder way to take the country *in globo* and let the appraisers find out its grazing capabilities, and base the rent on their findings. Clause 10 related to deductions for improvements, and in reference to that clause he must allude to a remark made at an earlier period of the evening by an hon. member opposite. He failed to understand how it was that a gentleman who wrote "barrister-at-law" to his name actually attempted to mislead hon. members by saying that a pastoral tenant who made improvements paid less for his lease. He would not go to the extent of £40,000 or £80,000, but supposing the pastoral tenant expended £1,000 in improving the grazing capabilities of his run, to which he had no title, and which might be thrown open to selection at any time, if those improvements were not to be taken into account there would be no encouragement to expend the money. Suppose the run carried 500 head of cattle, and by digging waterholes and making dams he increased the grazing capabilities to 1,000 head of cattle, why, in the name of all that was fair, should he be assessed to the extent of 1,000 head? The maximum deduction in such a case would be 250 head of cattle, and the lessee would be paying to the State on 250 head of cattle extra. It was nonsense to try to mislead hon. members, for they could see that there was nothing in the statement, though it might do very well for an election speech. Clause 11 provided for the declaration to be made by appraisers, and the penalty for making a false declaration. Clause 12 provided for making the award in writing, and also that it should be confirmed by the Secretary for Public Lands. In reference to the latter portion of the clause he could only say that he believed it was very unpleasant for a Minister to have those powers. But his view of the matter was that if a man possessed great powers he would be slow to exercise or abuse them. If an appraiser made an assessment on first class country, and it appeared as fourth class, or as an inferior piece of country, he should consider that a gross neglect of duty; and of course it was only in extreme cases where the Minister should interfere. Speaking personally, he thought it was a misfortune that a Minister should have to do many of those things himself. However able and impartial he might be, he was bound to give dissatisfaction in some way or another. If machinery and officers were provided by the Act for carrying out the law, it was better for him not to interfere. The Bill was not an experiment of this colony; its provisions had been tried in New South Wales, and they had been attended with much success. He was informed that it was rare there for the Minister for Lands to interfere, or for an appeal to be made to him; and that the lessees generally abided by awards made by the appraisers. It was much safer to take over sections of a measure which had been tried in another place than to make experiments in this colony. The difference between this colony and New South Wales was not great; the mode of raising cattle, of grazing them, and the character of the country were similar. It could not be called an experiment to transplant the clause and put it into operation here. He was very confident that no abuses would arise from leaving that clause in the Bill. In committee, of course, hon. members might think otherwise; and he was quite sure he would be content with their decision. Clause 13 provided that "upon appeal, fresh appraisement may be made by three appraisers." Well, that was only reasonable. It was quite possible that a pastoral tenant might feel aggrieved and think the appraisement for rents so excessive that he would like another tribunal to review the appraisement, which would be like an appeal court. No doubt

those cases would be few and far between, but when they did arise it would give satisfaction, if even the first appraisement by a single appraiser were confirmed, or the amount reduced. It was not likely that a tenant would bring an appeal to obtain an increase on the award, but rather in the direction of getting a reduction. The 14th clause was the usual clause, providing that the Governor in Council might from time to time make, alter, or rescind all regulations under the Act, and establish such forms as might be required for carrying it out. The 15th clause gave the short title of the Act. Whatever measure might be introduced about which there might be some contention, he thought hon. members would admit that that was a fair attempt on the part of the Government to get what was fair and reasonable from the tenants in the unsettled districts on those runs that would expire between 1883 and 1890. He believed it was desirable that a little more rent should be got from them, as railways went out in that direction, and other conveniences that they were quite unaccustomed to some years ago. They should keep pace with the growing requirements of the colony, and should pay what was fair and reasonable. He could say that that was the intention of his colleagues and of himself. The contents of the Bill were the machinery by which they would attempt to get the revenue from the pastoral tenants in the unsettled districts. It would be seen that no radical change was proposed, except in the mode of determining the value of runs, as contrasted with the old process of doing so. He hoped hon. members would go to the second reading that night. He begged leave to move that the Bill be read a second time.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that he thought it was a pity the hon. the Minister for Lands had not informed the House a little more about the conditions under which those runs were now held. He had given no such information; he had not informed the House that the Bill would give lessees a better tenure at a less rental than before. The proposal was to give those lessees of runs who declined to take advantage of the Pastoral Leases Act of 1869 a greater extension of tenure than if they had taken advantage of that Act, and to give it to them at a possible lower rent than they were now bound to pay, and with greater privileges. That was the proposal before the House. The hon. Minister ought to have explained that, in order that they might form a clearer opinion whether it was desirable to do so or not. He (Mr. Griffith) did not see how the Bill complied with the conditions laid down by the hon. the Premier as to the duty of the Government in dealing with Crown lands, that the country should derive the greatest possible benefit from it. By the Act of 1869 all lessees then holding Crown lands were entitled, if they thought fit, to get a new lease for twenty-one years, dating from the 1st July, 1869, to the 1st July, 1890. That was the term of the new lease granted to a holder of an existing lease under that Act, and, in addition, he got his land at much lower rent and with the additional privilege of pre-emption. Most of the lessees took advantage of those provisions, and got their land at the lower rent. In addition, the land, instead of being resumable on twelve months' notice from the Minister, was only resumable after the proposed resumption had been laid before both Houses of Parliament, and had lain there for a period of sixty days. Some lessees apparently thought it was better to retain their privileges under the old law, and those were the lessees to whom the Bill was to apply. They would get further advantages; they would get an extension of time; and, further than that, they would get a reduction of rent, and an additional privilege of pre-emption. What reasons were offered for that? He had heard none. The Minister for Lands had interrupted him and said that he would not have been correct if he had said the minimum rent proposed by the Bill was less than under the existing tenure. He must assert that it was. Under the Act of 1860 it was provided that a lease should be granted for fourteen years, and that for the last five years the rent should be not less than £30 or more than £70 for a block of twenty-five square miles. That was not less than 24s. or more than 56s. per mile. Now, the Bill proposed that the rent was to be appraised, and it was not to be less than £1 per mile. How much more it would be would be left to conjecture. It was not to be less than £1; but at present it could not be less than 24s. So that the Bill was a distinct proposal to renew the leases of pastoral tenants at a rent perhaps less than they were now paying. Hon. members who had much experience of the matter knew that the minimum rate allowed to be fixed by the appraisers would in most cases be the rate fixed by them; so that for all practical purposes the Bill was to allow lessees to have renewal of their leases at a reduced rent. He was rather surprised at that, as he had yet to learn that the pastoral tenants were paying too high a rent. Some of the leases would not expire until 1890, and yet it was proposed to grant an extension of the lease for several years beyond that. He failed to see why that should be. If they asked that the lessees should be allowed to come in now under the same terms as they might have done under the Act of 1869 one might suppose it to be granting them a great concession, because everyone knew that since that Act was passed the properties had increased in value. Properties then worth next to nothing were now worth £100,000. Although they refused to take advantage of the privileges accorded them under that Act, it was now proposed to allow them to come in under better terms. He was surprised to hear such a proposition as that from any Government. The next privilege it was proposed to give them was the right of pre-emption. All the leases to which the Bill applied would already have been in force for at least twenty-eight years. The leases under the Act of 1860 were for fourteen years, and those under the Act of 1863 were also for fourteen years, and under the Act of 1869 they were extended for a further period of fourteen years. That made twenty-eight years, and many of them had been in existence before the commencement of that period. During all that time they had gone on without the right of pre-emption, but now it was proposed to give them the additional right of pre-emption. Did not everyone know that the Act of 1869 was passed when it was supposed that the pastoral interest was in a particularly depressed condition? And was it not surprising that, after a lapse of thirteen years from that time, they should have a proposal brought in to grant pastoral tenants still more liberal terms? He thought the time had arrived when the whole system of pastoral tenure should be revised in the interests of everyone, the pastoral lessees as well as the country. They knew a great deal more now about the capabilities of the country than they did then, and he was satisfied that the whole system of pastoral tenure could be revised with great advantage to all parties, and without interfering in the least degree with the settlement of the country. He was not going now to say—nor was it the proper occasion to say—how that change in the law should be effected, but he thought it was very unwise at the present time to create a new class of leases which largely increased the term fixed when the Act under which those leases were taken up was passed,

and which would cause a great deal of confusion when the whole question came to be dealt with. He saw no reason why lessees should be placed now in a better position than they would have been in had they come in under the Act of 1869. They had no right to better privileges than if they had come in under that Act. If the Minister for Lands had pointed out the real nature of the tenure of those leases, he would have contributed a great deal more to the intelligent discussion of the Bill before the House than by the speech he had made, as he gave them no assistance as to the nature of the tenure of the leases which it was proposed to renew under the Bill.

The PREMIER said of course it was a disadvantage to him to answer the objection raised by the hon. leader of the Opposition on the spur of the moment, especially as those objections were mostly of a legal nature. Still he wished, in order to forward the debate, to reply to some of the remarks made by that hon. gentleman. The hon. member said that his objections to the Bill were objections which ought to have been answered in the statement made by the Minister for Lands. They were these: that the Bill proposed to give certain tenants of the Crown better leases than they would have been entitled to had they taken advantage of the Act of 1869.

Mr. GRIFFITH: Longer.

The PREMIER said longer, and on better terms than they had now. The second objection was that under the Bill they would obtain privileges which they had not under the present Act, by securing pre-emption.

Mr. GRIFFITH: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER said, with regard to the first, the hon. member quoted from an old Act—he thought the Act of 1860—to show that the rent in the last five years to which they would be entitled was a minimum rent of 24s. per square mile, and that would be greater than the rent which they would have to pay when the Bill came into operation. The hon. gentleman forgot that that Act had been repealed by the Act of 1864, which fixed the maximum amount at £1 per square mile.

Mr. GRIFFITH: No. The maximum under that Act is £4 per square mile, as will be found on reference to the 43rd section.

The PREMIER said he had not time to refer to the Act since the hon. gentleman spoke, but he knew it was a Commutation Act by which the rent was fixed at £1 per square mile. That was the price the lessees had been paying, and that would be changed to some amount not less than £1; so that it was quite possible for them to get a reduction of the rent. They might easily enough secure that by scoring out "minimum" altogether. It had been suggested that where "minimum" was inserted it was taken as an instruction to the assessors that that was the rent the Government intended should be paid; and the assessors considered they would be carrying out the wishes of the Government in fixing the rate at the minimum. If there was any strength in that argument—and he had not heard a single fact brought to bear to say that there was;—but if there was, the Government had no objection to fix the minimum price or let it be a matter to be discussed hereafter; it was not a vital part of the Bill. With regard to the other point—that was, that the Bill would give the lessees who came under its operation rights which they had not before—he could only say that he was not aware of that fact. He believed they had the right of pre-emption at the present time. It did not matter whether they had the right or not, because under the operation of clause 2 they would secure the right of pre-emption afterwards. The Government were in this position: that they were making a new bargain with lessees whose rights had legally expired. Nor was it a point made by the Government that those lessees had any rights. He did not insist upon that part of the Bill. Those who came under the Act of 1869 were induced to do so by the pre-emption clause. It was surely an inducement for a man to take up land under the Act of 1869 when he knew that he had the right of pre-emption to a certain extent. Had he not had the right he would most likely not have taken up the land, or, if so, would have paid less for it. In any new leases to be made at any future time he was sure his hon. colleague would agree with him that the right of pre-emption should not be a feature, and he was perfectly willing to see it taken out of the Bill himself. He thought he had answered the various objections that had been brought forward by the hon. member. His hon. colleague might, perhaps, have gone further into the matter than he had, but the subject was pretty well understood, and was so like the Bill they had just been discussing that the Minister for Lands was justified in saying as little as he did. It was quite plain that the auction system could not be applied to those runs, although it had been advocated by members on the other side of the House.

Mr. McLEAN: It is to be applied under this Bill.

The PREMIER said it was to be applied under the Bill in the same way as under the other Bill—only in exceptional cases. Hon. members knew perfectly well that it was almost absurd to advocate the application of the auction system to the whole of the runs of the colony. He would take, for instance, the case of a squatter in the Kennedy district. His lease was put up to auction, and he lost it. He went to the Maranoa district, and, in order to put his stock upon the run the lease of which he had lost, he bid at auction for a run in the Maranoa district. How would that man be compensated? If he attempted to shift his stock, he would lose at least 30 per cent., besides the whole of the year's interest. That would be an absolute loss, and how could it be to the advantage of the colony? They must make terms with the present leaseholders, and when making those terms the great principle to carry out was to see that they made the best terms they could for the country. That was the object of the Government. He had shown that the criticism that they were going to get a less rent would not apply, and there was nothing whatever in the idea that because a minimum price was fixed, which was done in the interests of the Government, that it should be taken for granted that that should be considered a maximum. The committee could strike out the minimum or fix another. The principle of the Bill under discussion and the one the second reading of which they had just passed were so identical that he hoped hon. members would come to some conclusion on the matter and leave the different points that had been raised to be discussed in committee.

Mr. McLEAN moved the adjournment of the debate.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he would take advantage of the motion to correct a mistake he had made in his criticism of the Bill. No wonder members should fall into an error when the Minister had not taken the slightest trouble to explain the provisions of the Bill to the House. He had said that the minimum rent on the last period of five years of those leases was 24s. to 56s. He was not quite correct in that. That was the minimum rent of leases granted under the Acts of 1860 and

1863. At the time those leases came to be surrendered under the Act of 1869 they were mostly in their third period, so that the minimum rent of the existing leases under that Act, to be renewed under the Act of 1869, was 24s., the rent being from 24s. to 56s. And under the Act of 1869 the rent was more than that. The rent for the first four years of a renewed lease was the rent for the last year of an expired lease and one-tenth added; for the second period one-tenth was added again; and for the third period another tenth was added; the maximum being £4 a mile. So that the only mistake he had made was certainly not in favour of the Bill. With respect to the motion for adjournment, the Bill was of considerable importance and introduced quite a new departure, and he anticipated that it would be fully discussed. He was therefore not surprised at his hon. friend moving the adjournment of the debate, and he hoped the Government would consent to it.

The PREMIER said he had no objection to the adjournment of the debate. With reference to the explanation of the hon. member for North Brisbane, the matter he referred to was in the Commutation Act of 1864.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he did not know anything about that Act.

Question put and passed.

The resumption of the debate was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

In moving the adjournment of the House, the PREMIER said that the business-paper for the next day would be arranged as follows:—Pastoral Leases Bill, Tramways Bill, and Fire Brigades Bill.

The House adjourned at twelve minutes past 10 o'clock.