Queensland

Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 20 AUGUST 1884

"Because the Bill, while providing no additional safeguard against the fraudulent acquisition and monopoly of land, would, by abolishing solemn declarations now required to ensure *bonâ fide* settlement, open the door to fresh abuses of an aggravated nature.

"Because the substitution for the Governor in Council of a nominee board would not be in harmony with the principles of responsible government.

"Because the Bill, instead of strengthening land administration by judiciously enlisting the aid of trusted representative men, possessing local knowledge of the various duties, would unwisely entrust the entire administration to a central board, hampered by legal technicalities, and delayed by the difficulty and cost of procuring local information.

"Because the repudiation of the pre-emptive right involved in the repeal of the 54th section of the Pastoral Leases Act of 1869 would not only be a breach of faith towards the holders of existing leases, but also be injurious to the good name and fame of the colony.

"Because the Bill materially affects the land-revenue of the colony, and no indication has been given by the Minister introducing it of the means by which the probable deficit shall be made good.

"Because, by abruptly substituting for the much cherished freehold tenure, a system of mere leasehold, except in respect of holdings termed agricultural farms, the Bill would give an impolitic and unjust preference to one class of selectors, and prejudicially affect the reputation of the colony as an attractive field for enterprising immigrants.

"Because the entire abolition of the much-prized facilities now offered for homestead selection would be a disastrous reversal of the most successful provision of the existing land laws.

"That this House therefore requests the mover to temporarily withdraw the Bill, with a view to its early re-introduction in a form better calculated to check abuse and encourage the legitimate settlement of the people upon the lands of the colony"—

being read—

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH said: Before any hon. member rises to speak to the question, I wish to ask the permission of the House to slightly amend the phraseology of the amendment. The first amendment is that instead of saying "remedy the laws" it should read "remedying 'the defects' in the land laws." There is also a clerical error in the same clause where the word "intention" should be "intentions." And in the fourth paragraph the word "duties" is used instead of "districts," the proper reading being "possessing a local knowledge of the various districts," etc. Of course the context shows the meaning.

Proposed amendment amended accordingly.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said: Mr. Speaker,—In rising to address myself to this Bill, before I go into the merits of it, I have a serious complaint to make, which I think some hon. members who have already spoken should have taken notice of. That is, the want of information that has been supplied us—when I say "us" I mean hon. members on both sides of the House—by the gentleman in charge of this Bill, and by every speaker who has risen from the Ministerial benches to speak upon it. It will be admitted, I think, by every member on both sides that there has been no Bill dealing with the land laws of such importance as the one now before the House; and if we search the records of this House and examine what was done in other cases when Bills of less importance dealing with the land laws were brought in, we shall find that much more information was given than on this occasion. In fact, no information whatever has been given us on this measure; we have been left entirely in the dark. Hon. members seem to be expected to find out any information that they want for themselves. I must say that I have tried to do that, but would hon. members of this House believe it that, in trying to obtain the information which should have been given by the hon. gentleman at the head of the Lands Department, I was actually prevented by that gentleman

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Wednesday, 20 *August*, 1884.

Question without notice.—Crown Lands Bill—second reading.—Adjournment.

The SPEAKER took the chair at a-quarter past 7 o'clock.

QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE.

Mr. NORTON said he would like to ask the Premier, without notice, if he could give any idea when the return he (Mr. Norton) had moved for, in reference to the number of clerks appointed since 14th November, would be laid on the table of the House.

The PREMIER (Hon. S. W. Griffith) said he believed the fault was his. The return had been in his hands for several days, but he was not certain whether there were not some errors in it, and owing to his inadvertence in omitting to ascertain whether that was so, it had not been laid on the table. It would, however, be laid on the table to-morrow, or on the next sitting day.

CROWN LANDS BILL—SECOND READING.

On the Order of the Day for resumption of adjourned debate on Mr. Dutton's motion—"That the Bill be now read a second time"—upon which the Hon. Sir Thomas McIlwraith had moved, by way of amendment, that all the words after the word "that" be omitted, with a view to the insertion in their place of the following words, namely:—

"While earnestly desirous of remedying the land laws, of correcting the abuses developed under them, and of generally strengthening their administration for the more effectual carrying out of the intention of the Legislature, this House regrets its inability to approve of the present Bill for, *inter alia*, the following reasons, that is to say—

from getting information in the Lands Office? I think it is scarcely credible that such a state of things should be allowed. I have been ten years a member of this House, and have had occasion at different times to get information from the various departments, and I have never been refused before. I have been a Minister for nearly five years, and during that period I have always afforded every facility to members of this House to procure information on public matters; I have always given them access to information with regard to the working of my department. Well, sir, having done this myself, and having thought it was the practice to allow it to be done on every occasion, I, on Wednesday morning last, after hearing the speech of the hon. the Colonial Treasurer—and I must say that I was surprised that he gave no information upon the financial bearing of this Bill—went specially to the Lands Department to get information. I asked the Under Secretary for certain information, which he said he could get. On Friday morning I went to get that information, and the answer I got was that the Minister told him I was not to get it. I told that gentleman that a large portion of the information I had since got from the records of the House, but that I wanted to be accurate in the information I had got. I said, "It does not matter; if the Minister for Lands thinks fit to prevent me from getting information, I must go without, or do the best I can to get it for myself." The Under Secretary then said, "I will see the Minister—perhaps he will alter his mind." I do not know what passed, but he told me that I was not to get the information, but that it would be prepared and laid on the table of the House on Tuesday. This is Wednesday, and no information has yet been laid on the table.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. C. B. Dutton): What information do you want?

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: There is another case. The hon. member for Mackay moved for a certain return, and it was information in connection with that return which I wanted also—the return which has been distributed to-day. That information was moved for on the 16th July, and this is the 20th August. The return specifies the resumed leases under the Pastoral Leases Act of 1869. The Surveyor-General could not tell me anything about it, but by his advice I went to the Government Printing Office, thinking that, as the paper had been asked for four weeks, a copy could be obtained; but to my surprise the gentleman in charge told me that no attempt had been made to set it up. He did not know that it was important; he did not know that it was wanted; but he said, "If it is wanted urgently I will set to work and get it done as soon as possible." He complained also of want of material in the Printing Office. I told him that I did not want it specially, but that it would be of use to members on both sides of the House. Whatever information hon. members may be able to extract, therefore, from that return to-morrow night, they may thank me for getting it, because it would not have been in type only for my visit to the Printing Office. That is the way we are treated. We are taking a leap in the dark on a new principle entirely—new, not only in this colony but in all the colonies, and in the whole world. We are asked to come to a decision upon an important matter of this kind with all the information which is contained in that map hanging on the wall. That is the only information given us—unless the report of Commissioner Hume on the homestead selections, which the hon. the Minister for Lands took occasion to read, may be regarded as information. Compare the conduct of the Government in giving information, with the conduct of Governments in the other colonies. At the present time there is a Land Bill under discussion in New South Wales. I was present in the Legislative Assembly of that colony one night during the discussion, and I may say that I was pleased to see the amount of information in the shape of papers in the possession of hon. members. Besides that, hon. members may have read the report of Messrs. Morris and Ranken on the Land question, issued last year, upon which report the Land Bill was based. That report contains a mass of information. Therefore hon. members in that colony can discuss the Bill in an intelligent manner. In Victoria, at the present moment, a Land Bill is going through Parliament; and what is the information given there? I will show hon. members. I hold in my hand the Victorian Land Bill, and hon. gentlemen can see its size compared with ours. They have only a few acres to deal with there, and the question of dealing with that quantity is very limited in extent. The half of this Bill consists of maps. There is a map of every district in the colony, showing exactly the bearing the Bill will have on every acre of land in Victoria. Now, sir, I ask hon. members on that side of the House, as well as on this, if I have not great reason to complain as a member of this House; and every member of this House has reason to complain as well as myself. I can certainly understand the reason why the hon. gentleman has prevented information being got at the Lands Office, from the speech he made in moving the second reading of the Bill. He took occasion then to call upon his party to meet this question as a strictly party question. Now I say this: It could only be through ignorance or the want of intelligence in treating this Bill as it ought to be treated by men who know the facts of the condition of the colony, and the effects this Bill will have on the colony—only by such ignorance that the Bill can be treated as a party question by any man in this House. It is only by keeping men in the dark that a Bill of this kind can be treated as a party question—only by that, and by reading misleading information that hon. members on the other side of the House will agree to abolish the homestead clauses, as has been done by that hon. gentleman in this Bill. Putting the two things together I can understand them—reading one by the light of the other. I am not going to say it is because of the hon. gentleman's bad temper, for he is no worse than others in that respect; and it is not because of his inexperience, because in a matter of that kind there is no experience required. Every man with the least common sense knows that the more information is given on a question of this kind the better it will be for the country. Therefore, the information has been kept back for the purpose of keeping members in the dark concerning the operation of the homestead and conditional selection clauses, so that they will pass this Bill, and throw as many obstacles as possible in the way of acquiring freehold; and turn out the homestead selector entirely. I say that, because we are ignorant, I believe the Bill will be read a second time, and voted for heartily by every member on that side of the House; but before the Bill leaves committee, Mr. Speaker, there will be a large amount of light shed upon it—such an amount of light that it will be a Bill moulded entirely on different principles. The hon. gentleman at the head of the Government last night stated that several members on this side of the House had expressed their disappointment at the Bill. Perhaps "disappointment" was not the proper word to use; but I dare say the hon. gentleman knew very well the meaning of hon. members

who used the word. The word "disappointment" should have been "surprise"—and the surprise comes in in this way: The hon. gentleman told us in the last session of this Parliament that he had for a long time had his eye on the Minister for Lands as a gentleman whom he thought fully competent to administer the Lands Department. Now there are a great many old members on that side of the House — members who, I think, understand the Land question quite as well as the majority of the men on the Ministerial benches; they were passed over for the Minister for Lands, Mr. Dutton—not because he understood the Land question, but because he had a particular theory upon the Land question; and therefore the surprise of hon. members when they saw this Bill, after having read the speeches of the hon. gentleman in addressing the electors of the Leichhardt district, to find that this was not a Bill founded upon the "Georgian" theory. That is where the surprise came in, and, if there is any disappointment, the disappointment, I dare say, is with the hon. gentleman himself. Now, the hon. gentleman stated distinctly before he became a member of this House and after he became a member—when he was made a Minister, but before he took his seat the second time—that he believed thoroughly in leasing instead of freeholds; that there should be no freeholds, and that was to be the foundation of this Bill. That was to be the leading principle in the Bill; and he told us the other day, in introducing it, that he had been obliged to give way partly through the sentiments of men whose ambitions and aspirations led them to acquire freeholds. But he had no opportunity of testing the ambitions and aspirations of men, outside of the number of his own colleagues, from the time he became a Minister until he introduced this Bill. There has been no general election since to test the feelings of the people on the question, so that whatever pressure was brought to bear on the hon. gentleman was brought by his own colleagues, and not by the ambitions and aspirations of men who, as he said, desired to acquire freeholds. He also stated that one reason why the Bill was brought in was to prevent the aggregation of large estates; and, to prove the enormous iniquity which was being carried on in the aggregation of large estates, he read us that report of Mr. Hume. Now, Mr. Speaker, I am not going to say whether I believe that report of Mr. Hume or not. I dare say Mr. Hume gave it as conscientiously as he possibly could. I remember the report. I remember seeing it as a Minister, and I thought it was a very strange report. I was not inclined to believe it then, and I am not very much inclined to believe it now; but nevertheless, let any person read that report throughout and he will find not one single syllable against the homestead selectors. The whole of it is against the conditional selectors who have taken up pastoral areas under conditional selection, and not against the homestead selectors at all. Why, therefore, the hon. gentleman should single out the homestead selector as an enemy to the State I really cannot understand; because I am under the impression —and I think most men who understand the question are under the impression—that the homestead selector has been the real *bonâ fide* settler of this colony, as he is everywhere else. The hon. gentleman also stated, in support of the statement he read, that he did not believe a man could live on 160 acres of land. That is a strange statement, but it is one worthy of an old squatter. I dare say you, Mr. Speaker, must have heard frequently of that mythical squatter in the Darling Downs who said a cabbage would not grow there. I believe the spirit of that mythical gentleman must have got into the Minister for Lands, because he would never have given vent to such an idea if he had known anything about the capabilities of the soil, or if he had not been imbued with the notions of that old squatterdom which flourished twenty years ago. It is the opinion of members on his own side that a man can not only live, but prosper, on a selection of less than 160 acres; and so far from it having been the fact, as the hon. gentleman said the other evening, that 160 acres were given as a bribe to the poor man by the land-grabber, so that he might grab as much land as possible under the cloak of generosity—so far from that being a fact—I say that 160 acres were given to him by men who believed in the homestead principle, and who believed that 160 acres of good land was sufficient for a man to support his wife and family upon. It was given by the members on this side: but "as no good thing can come out of Nazareth," therefore their motives are impugned by the hon. gentleman. If he had made himself acquainted with the history of our land laws, as he ought to do, he would have known, as several of the members on the Government side of the House know, that when we introduced the homestead clauses into the Act of 1879——

The PREMIER: The Act of 1879?

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Yes; we increased the acreage in 1879. The hon. gentleman is thinking of the time when he reduced the acreage, but I am thinking of the time when we increased it. I say, had he studied the Land question as he ought to have done, he would have seen then what the hon. member for Oxley (Mr. Grimes)—who is looked upon by members on that side of the House, if not on this, as being one of the most experienced agriculturists in Southern Queensland—has acknowledged. That hon. gentleman has stated that he believes 40 acres are sufficient for any man, and he said that from his experience of twenty-seven years as an agriculturist; and he also stated his belief that the Rosewood farmers would have been even more successful than they have been if they had been restricted to 40 acres. The Hon. J. Douglas, who may be looked upon as an authority by gentlemen on the other side, said also that his belief was that 80 acres was sufficient for a man to make a good living out of; and gave reasons and arguments in support of his statement. Mr. Rutledge, the present Attorney-General, said the same thing. Mr. Kates, the member for Darling Downs, who represents an agricultural constituency, actually asked the Government to withdraw the increase of acreage, because he thought it was too much——

Mr. KATES: I think you are mistaken.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: If the hon. gentleman thinks I am mistaken, I have the report here, which I can read. He also read a resolution passed by the farmers who had held a meeting in the town of Allora, proposing that the exchanged lands should be divided into three classes, according to their value and distance from town. The first class was to be of only 80 acres, the second class 120 acres, and the third class 200 acres. You, sir, also said you believed that 80 acres was sufficient in certain cases, and better than 320 acres in a good many other cases. The hon. gentleman at the head of the Government said the same thing, and yet the Minister for Lands accuses members on this side of the House of having given 160 acres to the poor man as a bribe, when his own side wanted to confine it to 80 acres! If a man wants to destroy a principle he is not badly off for a weapon, no matter whether he is slandering a class, be that class high or low. The hon.

gentleman has done both. He has slandered the class of homestead selectors, and he has slandered those who gave them the homesteads under the present conditions. I have taken a great deal of trouble to gain information upon this very question of homesteads, because I feel sincere and earnest upon it, and always did. It is well known to you, sir, that I have always been an advocate for homestead selection, and I will, if I can, increase the acreage still more than 160 acres. I have taken the trouble, not to examine the condition of Europe for an argument in favour of a man living upon 160 acres, but the condition of a country similar to our own—not exactly similar, for no two countries are exactly the same, but still a new country, and a country which has been the greatest success of any country in the world in the matter of agriculture—and that is the United States of America. I will not read the extract, but give it in words. The State of New York contained in 1860 about 250,000 farms, and the average size of those farms was 90 acres. Ohio contained somewhere about the same number, and the average acreage was 92. Pennsylvania had under 200,000 farms, and their average acreage was 96. Illinois, the other great producing State of the Union, being a newer State, contained a smaller number of farms than Pennsylvania, and their average acreage was 130; and that is the highest average acreage of farms in the four leading agricultural States of the Union. Those four States contained at that time a farming population of nearly 800,000—that is, heads of families; if you want to get at the total population living on those farms, you must multiply the number by 5, making 4,000,000. Here is convincing proof—if any is needed—that a man can live on less than 160 acres of land. But because he can live on less, that is no reason why we should confine him to 160 acres. Our land laws in regard to homesteads ought to be at least as liberal as those of the United States or of Canada. The hon. gentleman mentioned something the other night about American homesteads, in which he was slightly mistaken. He said that the American Government gave men 160 acres as a homestead, and took them and planted them alongside the railways. Such is not the case. The American Government does nothing but give the land. It does not take the man anywhere. It does not even pay for the man's passage to America. Everything that is done for the immigrant in America is done by the various voluntary associations—by men who have the interests of the immigrant from Europe at heart. But it gives 160 acres entirely free of cost, with the exception of the survey fee and the condition to live upon the land for five years. But it does not give 160 acres alongside of a railway. Hon. gentlemen have frequently been told here the custom in America with regard to the making of railways. The great companies get a square mile of land in alternate blocks with the Government, and immediately the Government divides a district into a railway grant the value of the land left to the Government is doubled. It becomes worth 2½ dollars an acre, instead of 1¼ dollars, or 5s.; and if a man wants to select a homestead there he can only get 80 acres, because it is supposed to be double the value of the same acreage elsewhere. That is where the hon. gentleman was wrong. The immigrant only gets 80 acres alongside a railway, and the Government does not carry him there. But he gets the land for nothing; and, so far as regards the inducement to the agriculturist to go there or to come here is concerned, the greater inducement to him is to go there. And we are lessening those inducements, as far as we possibly can, by the restrictions in this Bill. In Canada, a man gets 200 acres—that is more than the 160 acres that we give or that the Americans give—and each of his grown-up sons, at the age of eighteen, can get 100 acres more; and the only condition attached to it is that he must live upon it for a certain time, and clear and plant two acres a year for five years. The land then becomes his own. In the face of these facts, how can it be possible for a party calling itself a Liberal party—a party that professes to have the encouragement of settlement at heart—how can they possibly expect members of this House to agree to the abolition of homesteads, and the restrictions contained in this Bill, unless—as the Minister for Lands wants to do—by keeping us in the dark?. There is no other way in which we can agree to pass a Bill of this kind. I am not going to discuss the "Georgian" theory with the hon. gentleman; I will only say this much about it: that it is a very good subject for a debating society, but that it is not one which we can afford to take up in this colony. It has not yet reached the region of practical politics; and when it does I am afraid our condition will not allow us to take it up until it has been experimented upon and proved to be a success elsewhere. With the enormous debt we have hanging on our shoulders we cannot afford to make experiments, in the dark, with our land. It is too important a question for us, not only as far as settlement is concerned and the future increase of population, but also as far as the payment of the interest upon our public debt is concerned. Therefore, I think we should be very chary in taking up any question or doing anything which in any way will affect the revenue of the country, unless we can see our way to get some corresponding benefit. This question will affect the revenue of the country in a detrimental way, and there will not be a benefit to correspond. That is the contention I take up in this Bill to-night, and I think I shall be able to prove, before I sit down, that it will seriously affect the revenue, and that the Bill is not such a one as we in this House can approve of. The Premier said last night that the desire of himself and of his party was to encourage settlement by fixity of tenure and low rents. I will give the hon. gentleman credit for his intentions. I believe he does wish to encourage settlement, and I believe hon. members on that side and on this side also wish to encourage settlement; but I would ask the hon. gentleman to do as much for his opponents, and to give them credit for wishing to encourage settlement, although it may be on a different basis from his. It is not because we cannot agree on the mode of encouraging settlement that, therefore, we wish to discourage settlement. I do not agree with the hon. gentleman's mode; indeed, I may say I very seldom do agree with his modes. I shall now ask the House to go back with me a few sessions, and in doing so I will ask hon. members if they think that the hon. gentleman and the party which he leads is capable of dealing with the Land question in an intelligent way, so as to encourage settlement and increase it. I do not think the hon. gentleman took any important part in the land legislation of the colony until 1874. In that year Mr. Stephens, then Minister for Lands, introduced a Bill amending the Act of 1868, and all previous Acts dealing with the alienation of land. That Bill was thoroughly discussed in this House, and passed this Chamber with amendments; some of them very important ones, introduced by the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government. It did not become law, but in 1876—the hon. gentleman was then a member of the Government of which, I think, Mr. Thorn was Premier—a Bill was introduced on the lines of the Bill of 1874, to amend all previous Land Acts. That

Bill was introduced by Mr. Douglas, then Minister for Lands. Now let hon. gentlemen read the Minister's speech, and they will find that he says that Bill was drafted principally by the hon. gentleman now at the head of the Government, and that he thought, from the knowledge of the land laws which had been gained by that time, it might be looked upon as a measure of finality. That is only eight years ago; yet we are told in the discussion on this Bill that the Act of 1876 was a bad Act. We were told by the Minister for Lands that an immense amount of dummying has been done under it. Well, Mr. Hume in that famous report says that all the dummying that came to his knowledge, up to the date of the report, was 20,000 acres on Darling Downs; and that is where the principal dummying has been carried on, I believe; men in other parts of the colonies do not trouble much about dummying. If only 20,000 acres have been dummied in five years, according to the information obtained by the writer of that report, I think, when we place the very great amount of settlement on the Darling Downs against that 20,000 acres, we can well afford it. This Bill which the hon. gentleman is going to repeal was then looked upon as a Bill dealing finally with the Land question—a Bill thoroughly embodying the principles advocated by the Liberal party. Their principles at that time were alienation of land at a sufficient price to to prevent it from being profitable for the employer of dummies to buy the selector out; and the restriction of the area. The areas allowed under the Act of 1868, as all hon. members know, were much larger than those which could be taken up under the Act of 1876. I think the largest area in any class, under the Act of 1868, was five thousand seven hundred and something acres, and the largest area under the Act of 1876 was 1,280 acres altogether under the three classes.

Mr. MACDONALD-PATERSON : 10,000 acres under the Act of 1868.

Mr. MACROSSAN: The principle of homestead selection was also restricted in the Act of 1876—the area being reduced to 80 acres. We were told by the hon. gentleman who had then charge of that Bill, which became the Act of 1876, that it did not embody the whole land policy of the Government; that there were other Bills lying on the table at the same time—the Railway Reserves Bill for instance. Now the policy of the Government at the time, as stated by the leader of the present Government, was the Act of 1876 and the Railway Reserves Bill. He told us last night in his speech that "we know what we want, and when we know what we want we are in a fair way of accomplishing it." Did the hon. gentleman not know what he wanted in 1876? Was he dealing with the Land question in ignorance of what he wanted? Shall I remind him of what he wanted? He wanted to encourage settlement, just as he does now, and, I believe, sincerely; and he wanted also to make railways out of the proceeds of the land. The members on this side of the House did their best to combat the latter principle and encourage the former. We predicted exactly what would happen through the hon. gentleman's want of knowledge of political economy. We told him he would lodge the country in disaster; that he would put the finances in a mess; and the result has been exactly what we predicted, without having the administration of the Act as the hon. gentleman had. He had the administration of the Act, and when he left office with his colleague, the Treasurer, he left the largest deficiency looming in the distance that ever clouded the prospects of Queensland. That was the result of his land legislation in 1876. We are told by him now, "We know what we want—we want to encourage settlement;" and the Minister for Works has told us repeatedly that the making of railways depends upon the passing of this Land Bill. Therefore, what the hon. gentleman wants now is exactly what he wanted then; and I say that the results will be similar to the results of the Act of 1876—worse, if anything, as far as the finances of the colony are concerned. Within three years our position will be worse than it was at the worst of the period between 1876 and 1881; and, as far as the settlement of the people on the land is concerned, we will not get one-fifth of the number that we got under the Act of 1876.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Nonsense!

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: The hon. gentleman says "Nonsense." All he knows about legislation I think this House can very well dispense with. I have taken the trouble to read that hon. gentleman's speeches on the Land question since he became a member of this House, and I think there are are no speeches that contain less information and evince less knowledge of how the land of the country should be settled. He is great, as the hon. gentleman at the head of the Opposition said, on having reductions made in the rents of runs; and that has been his principal object in dealing with the land laws upon pastoral leases. He has always tried to get clauses in by which squatters could reduce the rents of runs. I do not know if he worked that oracle himself or not—the hon. gentleman at the head of the Opposition says he did. At all events, that appears to be the extent of his knowledge with regard to the method of dealing with the Land question; so he had better not interrupt by saying "Nonsense" any more. Now, the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government also told us last night, when answering the charge that the principle of this Bill was entirely different from the principles of the Liberal party a few years ago, that he had profited by the experience during the last ten years of every English-speaking country in the world on the Land question. Well, it is an extraordinary thing that I believe he has not profited by the experience of any of the English-speaking countries. I think he is going backwards from the experience gained in English-speaking countries. The only English-speaking country in which the Land question has obtained any prominence in the last ten years is Ireland, and the experience of Ireland is dead against the system of leasing. The result to-day of the experience of Ireland is this: that if the Government of England offered the Irish people the land of Ireland on the condition of their becoming tenants of the State—even although that principle is advocated by one of the purest and best patriots in Ireland, Mr. Davitt—they would reject it. There are 600,000 holders of land, and every man of them wishes to become his own landlord, not to become a lessee of the State, or to remain as the serf of a private landlord. And yet the hon. gentleman dare tell us that he has profited by that experience! I say he has not profited. If he had he would never have made Mr. Dutton Minister for Lands, because he was the advocate of leasing. It shows the hon. gentleman's utter incapacity to grasp the Land question, when he talks in that way. Why, every English-speaking country—new country at least—has had to undergo the same process of settlement as this—that is, selling the land to the settlers, not leasing it. The experience in England is that farmers with the leasing system cannot

compete with the American freeholder, at a distance of 3,000 miles by sea, and in some cases an additional 1,500 miles by land. The experience of Ireland I have spoken of; and yet the hon. gentleman gets up in this House and tells us that his experience in those countries is the light upon which he has brought in this Bill. Now, I think I shall be able to show that the hon. gentleman has taken a leaf out of some of his Irish experience. I do not think he was ever in Ireland. If he had been, and had studied the Irish land laws and Irish tenants, he could not have profited more and been more in accord with the basis of the principle there. The very first principle of Irish land laws hitherto has shown that, whenever a tenant made improvements on his land, that improvement was taxed by increasing the rent.

The PREMIER: We propose to do just the opposite.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: If he refused to pay that rent, or failed to pay it, he was given time. The Irish landlords are given a very bad name, but there are thousands of them good men, I believe. The tenant is allowed to go on, but still he has to struggle under a load of debt till at last it becomes insufferable, no doubt. Under this Bill, if a tenant, through bad seasons or misfortunes of any kind, fails to pay his rent, what follows? Eviction! Ninety days' grace are given him and after that he is evicted. "Eviction" is a hard word in the mouth of an Irishman who knows something about it. But it does not stop with that. The Bill also gives the State the right to distrain on the tenant's goods for the rent; not only are his improvements confiscated, but the Bill gives the State the right to take away his goods, his horse, his cow, and his cart. Why, the Irish law does not do that, hard as it is. The Irish landlord must proceed by process, and after he gets a process, the tenant has still six months' grace given him to pay the rent and redeem his land. Under this Bill eviction takes place after ninety days. And this is the Bill the hon. gentleman tells us that is going to encourage settlement on the land! I do not think it will encourage any Irishman anyway to settle on the land; and I do not think it will encourage many Germans, because if there are any people on the face of the earth who are eager to get possession of a bit of land it is the Germans. Let any man go through the Rosewood Scrub—as I have done several times, from end to end—and see how men there have struggled and fought to get possession of a small bit of land. Let him ask any of those men if they would consent to become tenants of the State. I say no, they would not. They would not consent even under better conditions than are contained in this Bill. Those conditions are such that neither Germans nor Irishmen will consent to come under them. What are these conditions compared with our present law for encouraging settlement? Under the present law, imperfect as it is, a homestead selector can take up 160 acres, which costs him 6d. per acre per annum for five years. The sole condition upon which he acquires it is that he is to live upon the soil, and spend 10s. per acre in improvements. At the end of the five years he is entitled to get his deeds of grant of the 160 acres, at a total cost of £100—that is, £20 for rent and £80 for improvements. Compare that with the encouragement given in this Bill to the same class of selectors! Supposing a selector takes up 160 acres. He must live on it for ten years. He may pay during that time 3d. per acre, which is the amount that is now paid on homestead selections. At the end of the ten years he is still the tenant; he has no right to the soil. He must pay down £160 at the very least—it may be more, the land being good. Those soft-hearted gentlemen comprising the land board may fix the price of the land at £3 per acre instead of £1; at all events he will pay £160 at least if he desires to become a freeholder. In addition to that, he has to completely fence the land within two years. Thus the total expenses, which is £100 in the one case, is increased in the other to £304. That is to say, three times as much as the homestead selector has to pay now, and after double the time before he gets any deeds. That is what is called encouraging settlement! For the conditional selector the conditions are equally as bad. If a man takes up a conditional selection to the fullest extent of 960 acres, he has to live on it in the same way for ten years, and he has to fence the whole of it in after two years. That may cost him £360 at the very least—six miles of fencing at £60 per annum. If he has a neighbour he will probably get off with less. Then his house and other improvements, which he must make to live on the land, will bring up the cost to £1,000 in two years. Then, at the end of ten years, after paying whatever rent, not less than 3d. per acre, the board may choose to assess the land at, he will be entitled to the freehold after having shown his *bona fides* as a selector. But he has got to pay for that land at least £1 per acre, so that at the end of his ten years, when he may become a freeholder, it will cost him 30s. or 40s. per acre for simple improvements and the price of his land. Will hon. gentlemen say that this is encouraging settlement? I shall be told, no doubt, that selectors will come in, because they are not required to pay down the purchase money; but they are not required, under the present Act, to pay down the purchase money. The average price of selections last year in Queensland was 13s., and the selector has ten years to pay that 13s. in. He is not bound to fence his land within two years; but he is bound to make certain improvements upon his land within ten years. The conditions in the one case are a thousand times more in favour of settlement than they are in the other. There is no comparison between the two. Now, Mr. Speaker, I will ask any member of this House just to compare the ideas prevalent amongst members on that side of the House only six or seven years ago. I myself was one who used to advocate that the land should be sold at a very reasonable price—that it should be even given away if settlement could be obtained, but, at any rate, that no restrictive price should be put upon the land. Yet these men—I believe, at the instigation of two or three gentlemen who have changed their opinions upon the Land question—will actually vote for this Bill, which is the most restrictive that could have been introduced by members on this side of the House if they wished to stop settlement. I know that we will be always told that on this side we do not want to encourage settlement. The hon. gentleman who represents South Brisbane not long ago claimed me as a Liberal. I think I am a Liberal; I am too liberal to pass a Bill of this kind. I will deny the principles of Liberalism if they are contained in this Bill upon the Land question. I think it no credit to be claimed as a Liberal by the hon. member for South Brisbane upon a question of this kind, and be told that I am nearly as liberal as he is, if he votes for the second reading of this Bill, for I shall certainly oppose it. I will now come, Mr. Speaker, to a few parts of the Bill. I will take clauses 6 and 7, which repeal the pre-emptive right under the Act of 1869. I have always been one of those who believe that the passing of the 54th section of the Act of 1869 was a most

unfortunate thing for the country, and any member who has been in the House along with me for the last ten years has heard me denounce that clause more than once or twice; and they also may remember that I took some steps to oppose the consolidation of the pre-emptive rights, under the clause which was drafted by the hon. member who now leads the Government, in the Railway Reserves Act. I am thoroughly convinced, and always was convinced, that the squatters under the Act of 1869 had a perfect right to pre-empt 2,560 acres. If I did not think they had a right to do so I should have had no reason to denounce the passing of the clause. What does the hon. gentleman tell us? He tells us that all previous Governments have been wrong—he himself included; that the Governments which have been in existence at different times, Liberal and others, have all been wrong in permitting squatters to exercise the pre-emptive right; and it is only last year that he made the discovery that they had no legal right. I believe he would like now, from what he said last night, for some squatter to test his legal right in a court of law.

The PREMIER: I would. Then there would be an end to it for ever.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: The hon. gentleman's opinions upon the Land question are not very intelligible ones. I remember I backed him up once in this House upon a certain question connected with the land, upon the strength of his opinion, and I, with many others, was mistaken. His opinion, when it came to be tested by the highest court of law in the British Empire, was found to be worthless.

The PREMIER: What was that?

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Probably upon this occasion his opinion will be worthless.

The PREMIER: What was that occasion?

Mr. MOREHEAD: Look at your fee-book.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: I do not like to be so personal as that. I know very well, and he knows, what I am talking about. He went out of his way a long distance to prove something against the existence of this pre-emptive right. Of the word "squatter" and the word "pre-emptive" he was far wrong in his history, and some other members on his side are equally far. The Premier went to New South Wales to find the origin of the word "squatter." He should have gone across the Atlantic to find the origin of the word, and he should also have gone across the Atlantic to find the origin of the word "pre-emptive." He would have found the word "pre-empt" was applied there half-a-century before there was any pre-emption in New South Wales. The origin of the word "squatter" is, a man who goes out to "squat" in the woods of America in advance of survey, and takes up a selection. He takes up a selection, and squats there until the survey comes up to him. That is a "squatter." A man who makes an application in the Lands Office for a piece of land, whether it is a homestead or any other, is said to "pre-empt." That is the American term for it, and it was from there that the words came to New South Wales; so that these terms have no bearing whatever upon the right or want of right under the 54th section of that Act; and the hon. gentleman was very short of arguments when he went so very far and did so very little. It is sometimes very convenient—in fact, it is sometimes very right—if there is any contention about the meaning of a certain clause in an Act, to try and find out what was the intention of the passers of the Act. Has the hon. gentleman ever taken that trouble? I will tell him. His colleague the Minister for Works knows something about it: he was a member of the House in 1869. I did him the honour to-day of reading his speech upon that occasion too. The Minister for Lands who introduced that Bill in 1869, with this 54th section in it, said distinctly that this section was to give the squatter a right to pre-empt, or to pay for, or purchase—call it what you like—2,560 acres at 10s. per acre; and lest there should be any mistake about it, when the hon. member for Blackall at present (Mr. Archer) was speaking, the Minister for Lands interrupted him, and stated distinctly that it gave the squatter the right to pre-empt that amount of land in every 15,000 acres.

Mr. MOREHEAD: 16,000.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: The hon. gentleman said 15,000; I know it is 16,000, but I am now quoting the hon. Minister for Lands. He made a mistake, and said they were entitled to pre-empt 2,560 acres out of every 15,000. Can there be any doubt about the intention of the proposers after that? But who were the Ministry of that time? They were the present Chief Justice, as Premier—Sir Charles Lilley—and he was the greatest of the Liberal leaders who have ever sat in the Parliament of Queensland; the Hon. Arthur Macalister, another Liberal leader; the Hon. John Douglas, another Liberal leader;—all these three gentlemen have been Premiers of the Liberal party;—and the Hon. T. B. Stephens, who was, I may say, from my short knowledge of him in this House, an excellent Minister for Lands. We have these four men, a big majority of the Cabinet, who actually brought in this Bill of 1869, giving the right which the members of the same party now repudiate and say the squatters have no right to. I think it is dishonouring to Queensland to attempt repudiation of that kind. However damaging it may be to the country—however bad the bargain may be—and I admit it is a bad bargain—it should be carried out or fairly bought out. It is not sufficient to say, "We will pay for your improvements." Any tenant may rightly say, "I don't want you to pay for my improvements; I want my right; I want my bond; I have mortgaged this bond to my creditors." And there is where the dishonour to Queensland will come in—that this man will be compelled to tell his creditor, at the instance of the Government, "I cannot fulfil my bond." It is the same as if the Government had undertaken to give a man one thing, and then said, "No, we cannot give you that thing, but we will give you this instead." That is what they are doing now. But there is something else to be said on the question. Why the hon. member himself has actually legislated upon that very pre-emptive right as a pre-emptive right.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Hear, hear! Twice over!

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: In addition to having legislated in 1876 he legislated again upon the question, though I am not certain whether his second action was taken in the same year. I say the hon. gentleman not only legislated upon it, but completed that legislation, and he tried to legislate again upon it last session by bringing in a Bill to repeal what he himself calls "an imaginary right." Was there ever such an absurdity? If really there is no right, why bring in a Bill to repeal it? If there is no right, why does the Minister for Lands tell us that the squatters will have no cause to complain, as we pay for improvements instead? If there is no pre-emptive right, why should we pay for improvements instead? I object to this paying for improvements in this Bill. I shall read now to the House how the hon. gentleman legislated

upon the pre-emptive right which he now denies to exist. I find the following in the 4th subsection of the 4th section of the Railway Reserves Act:—

"The lessee shall have and may exercise"—

That is positive enough, Mr. Speaker—

"The right of pre-emption conferred on him by the 54th section of the said Act"—

That is the Act of 1869—

"Over any part of his run that shall not for the time being have been so reserved or selected, or have been proclaimed for sale by auction, or open to selection by conditional purchase or as a homestead area."

Now, in the 14th section of the same Act, he legislates still further upon this matter:—

"In cases where one person or firm is the lessee of two or more runs in the Western Railway Reserve, adjoining each other, he may, within three months from the passing of this Act, apply to the Secretary for Lands to have such runs consolidated into one, and thereafter they shall be considered as one run, and the lessee may, if he has not therebefore exercised the same, exercise his pre-emptive right in the same manner as is provided by this Act."

Could anything be plainer than that? I believe that this act of repudiation—for such it is—will certainly redound to the injury of Queensland, in a material way. Of course every member must admit that an act of repudiation will injure the colony's fame everywhere; but I say it will redound to the colony's injury in a material way, and that very seriously. I sincerely hope that hon. gentlemen, before they pass this in committee, will reconsider the question very seriously. A good deal has been said about the land board by members on both sides of the House; and the hon. the Premier last night, in speaking upon this part of the Bill, said that the members of the land board would simply exercise judicial functions; that they had a tenure something like the Auditor-General, or like the district court judges. I do not think they are about the same as the district court judges, or the Supreme Court judges. In one respect they are superior to the Supreme Court judges, because from the decision of the latter there is an appeal. We can appeal from the decision of a Supreme Court judge, and it has been done in this and in the other colonies; but from the decision of these gentlemen who are to compose the land board under this Bill there is to be no appeal whatever. When we come to compare them with the judges — whether of the district court or the Supreme Court—why, the comparison is odious. The gentlemen composing the judicial bench are men trained in the profession of the law. When they get on to the bench they are under the influences of the precedents and traditions of the judges of the Empire that have preceded them; and they are not in any way entitled to initiate a case to be tried before themselves. There is no comparison, therefore, in that respect, between the judges and the gentlemen who will compose this board. If their functions are simply judicial they should be barristers—they should be trained in the sifting of evidence—trained in the exercise of judicial functions; but they will probably be some two broken-down old squatters. The board may be composed of some impecunious members of this House — in fact, it is hard to say who the gentlemen composing the land board may be; and that is another element of uncertainty which disquiets people. People are very anxious to know who these men are to whom such immense powers are to be given —to whom are to be given the powers of a dictator. The hon. gentleman also said that the functions of the land board would be similar to those of the Irish Land Court. Well, he is as much in error on that question as he was on the leasing question, as far as Ireland is concerned. The gentlemen comprising the Irish Land Court are barristers, and one of them is a very superior gentleman—Mr. O'Hagan. I dare say the hon. gentleman knows something of him by hearsay. The members of that court are all trained barristers. There are three courts, and a fourth is about to be established.

The PREMIER: There are several courts, and one court of appeal, corresponding to this land board.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: There are three courts, and the Government contemplate establishing a fourth, as the three cannot overtake the work.

The PREMIER: There is only one court of appeal.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: There are three courts.

The PREMIER: There are about fifty.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: The hon. gentleman is talking about appraisers. They do not form a court; they give their evidence before a court. They are practical men having a knowledge of the district and of the farms and produce of the district in which they act, and they give their evidence before the land court; and the farmer whose case is to be tried also gives his evidence before the court.

The PREMIER: There are about fifty courts of that kind.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: As far as a comparison between the Irish Land Court and this land board is concerned, the only comparison is that the judges of both tribunals will have to decide upon the amount of rent. The Irish Land Court has to decide upon the amount of rent, but it has a mass of evidence on which to decide. But it does not initiate any case, and that is where the difference comes in. The gentlemen composing this board will not only have to decide cases, but will have to initiate them. In many instances under this Bill nothing can be begun except by the board, and then it has to decide on the matter.

The PREMIER: No.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: I will show the hon. gentleman directly. The speech of the hon. gentleman who introduced the Bill was very different from the speech delivered last night by his chief in support of it, and was also somewhat different from the remarks of the Colonial Treasurer, who mollified matters very much before he sat down when speaking on the second reading of the Bill. The hon. gentleman at the head of the Government minimised a good deal the evils in this Bill by what he said last night. Did not the hon. gentleman in charge of the measure say that the Lands Office was so corrupt that the administration of the land laws could not be entrusted to it, and that the moral tone of the people was so lowered that they could not be trusted to take an oath? And the Minister for Works went further and said he never knew an honest man a Minister for Lands. I should be very sorry to think, sir, that we ever had a dishonest Land Minister. I do not believe we ever had. We have had Ministers who have interpreted an Act of Parliament in a different wa from their predecessors. The hon. gentleman at the head of the Government interpreted the 54th section of the Act of 1869 in a different way now to that in which he interpreted it a few years ago. But because a Minister interpreted an Act from a different point of view to that of his predecessor in office, that does not make him dishonest. I think the Minister for Works not only believes that Ministers for Lands are dishonest, but also believes that our judges are

dishonest; and, therefore, he cannot expect to get any honest men to administer the provisions of this Bill as a board. But I say I believe that the Lands Office is quite competent to administer the provisions of this Bill or any other Bill that passed in this House; but especially this Bill, if we had land boards the same as those which are to be established in New South Wales. I have got a copy of the New South Wales Land Bill as it passed the Legislative Assembly, and from it I find that land boards are to be established in different districts; two members of the board being local men—of course men of competent ability—having a knowledge of the district and the runs or farms upon which they will be called upon to approve or otherwise. The third member, I believe, is to be a salaried officer. The decision of the board when come to, if there is an appeal, comes before the Minister for Lands, who sits in open court and administers the Act openly. Under that system I maintain that there can be no more dishonesty than there is in the administration of the law by the judges; and there they have the advantage of having the man who is responsible for the administration of the Act before them. But if this Bill become law as it is now, how will we be able to call the land board to account for maladministration? The Minister for Lands can easily say, "I have no responsibility under this Bill; the matter is in the hands of the land board." He might also say, "Neither have I any influence with the board;" and he would be perfectly right. As far as the corruption of the Lands Office is concerned, as stated by the Minister for Lands, that is a myth. There is just as much corruption in any other office, and if the Minister for Lands wants protection from political influence so does the Minister for Works. I was in the Works Office for nearly five years, and I know very well that there is a good deal of political pressure brought to bear on the Minister for Works in regard to the making and working of railways. And if we are going to relieve the Minister for Lands of his responsibility and establish a land board, why not do the same for the Minister for Works? We have as much reason to do the one as to do the other. A very short time ago the education of the colony was administered by a board. The hon. gentleman now at the head of the Government took the work from that board and placed it under a Minister. Now he is actually reversing, in this Bill, the very principle he then adopted. The hon. gentleman at the head of the Government was quite right last night in saying that this portion of the Bill is the centralising part of it.

The PREMIER: I said nothing of the kind.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: I mean the leader of the Opposition.

The PREMIER: You said the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government.

Mr. MOREHEAD: He is prophetic.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: There is scarcely a divisional board in the colony that could not furnish members to form land boards to do the work in their respective districts; and their work, if necessary, could be revised by the Minister for Lands. I look upon this land board proposal as a most dangerous departure from the principle of responsible government. It is one that will not stop there. If we once make a false step in this direction we are almost certain to make another or two afterwards in the same direction, and things will go from bad to worse until responsible government will almost cease. No doubt it is a very nice thing for a Minister to try to get rid of responsibility; but when a gentleman aspires to that position and gets it, he should accept the responsibility, and should do his duty under that responsibility fairly and honestly, and let people say what they will. Surely his position as Minister for Lands, administering a measure of this kind, is no greater than the position the judges occupy in the country. They are not afraid of their responsibility; they perform their duty with justice and impartiality, and to their own credit and the benefit of the country. Why should not the Minister for Lands do the same? Surely that is not a portion of the "Georgian" theory—to abrogate responsibility? I should think that a man who has the moral courage to accept the "Georgian" theory would have the moral courage to accept the responsibility of ruling the whole universe. I think the land board, Mr. Speaker, is a very bad portion of this Bill, and nothing would please me better than to have it omitted entirely, or emasculated in such a way that the Minister will have the responsibility and that the House will be able to criticise its administration. The hon. gentleman at the head of the Government asked me, where did the board initiate? I will tell him. There are other clauses, but I will refer to the 17th clause, which says:—

> "Whenever it is necessary to determine the amount of any rent or compensation payable under this Act, or to determine any other amount required by this Act to be determined, the same shall be determined by the board, and the following rules shall be observed:—"

They call on the commissioner to furnish them with proof, and there is the initiation. There is scarcely a single clause in the whole of the Bill which leaves the Minister for Lands anything to do. The board will be like the mayors of the palace in the time of the Capetian dynasty in France. The Minister will be the lazy king; and these two men will be actually bossing the department and drawing two salaries, while the Minister, who could do the work for one salary, will be doing nothing. And they will be without criticism. They will be not only irresponsible to us but irresponsible to everybody else, unless the Ministry are certain they will be able to suspend one of them, and that the suspension will be carried through when Parliament meets. They will never attempt to suspend them unless they are certain they can command a majority in both Houses. Whatever responsibility they will have will be under the control of the Ministry; but it should not be under the control of the Ministry. If they are responsible to anyone they should be under the control of this House; they should be responsible to this House the same as the Auditor-General.

The PREMIER: It is exactly the same tenure.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: I come now to the existing pastoral leases in Part III. Under this part, Mr. Speaker, the pastoral tenant, or rather the pastoral lessee, when he comes under this Bill, if he is a runholder under the Settled Districts Pastoral Lands Act or under the amending Act, gets one-half of his run given back when half is resumed by the board; and different periods are fixed according to the length of time in every case that the lease has been in operation. The conditions which then follow are these:—The pastoral lessee for the half which is not resumed receives an indefeasible lease for ten years—that is, in the settled districts. Now, I recollect the time, not so very long ago, when the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government objected very strongly to giving the pastoral tenants in the settled districts a ten years' lease which would not be indefeasible—a ten years' lease which carried with it the right of resumption at any time, and the right to throw open this land for selection. I recollect the time previous to that when he thought five years quite enough;

but now, on the head of these ten years which these tenants obtain, he is going to add ten years' more indefeasible lease, and pay them for the improvements at the termination of the lease; or pay them for the resumption of the run if he should take a portion for settlement during the existing lease. Now, let anyone compare the position the hon. gentleman occupied on the previous occasion of which I speak, and the position he occupies now. I take up the position of objection he occupied then. I object to indefeasible leases being given to the pastoral tenants, either in the settled or in the unsettled districts, or anywhere else; I object to the pastoral tenants being paid for improvements on the termination of their leases; I object to their being paid for the run or a portion of the run if the run is required for settlement and resumed; and I appeal to the experience of the mother-colony, New South Wales, which has just passed a Land Bill, to show that the squatters there had not been given the right to payment for improvements. Yet the hon. gentleman will now actually saddle the country with an indefeasible lease, payment for improvements, and payment for resumption; and at the end of ten years what will be the condition of the settled districts? I make bold to say, Mr. Speaker, that, if the grazing farm portion of this Bill is only a partial success, at the end of ten years, in the settled districts, the small graziers and the then pastoral tenants will combine, and they will get the land for nothing; and the amount of money the State will have to pay for the improvements upon those runs at the end of twenty years from this time—that is, the ten years now running, and the ten years they are to get—will be such that the Government of the day—more especially if it be an impecunious Government, as all Liberal Governments are—will say, "We cannot afford to pay for these improvements and must give up the runs to the present holders." That is the condition of things the hon. gentleman proposes shall exist in this country twenty years hence in the settled districts. But instead of giving such favours to the pastoral tenants in the settled districts, I think he ought to have done better—he should have reduced the rent. I believe the rent was unfairly fixed at a very high minimum. If he is to confer favours at all, I think that favour of fixing the rent at £1 for every square mile of land in the unsettled districts should be left to the board. That I would not object to, but I object to saddling the Government in such a way with those pastoral tenants that they will not be able to get rid of them. Then, in the outside districts, as soon as this Bill comes into operation, the same kind of resumption will take place; the same division of the runs; the same compensations will be given; the same indefeasible lease will be given, but for a longer period—a period of fifteen years. Now, when we come to think that the very first of the pastoral leases that can fall due will not fall due until 1891, and they will be falling due from that time in different years for ten or fifteen years, and when we add that period to the fifteen years which the hon. gentleman is going to give them, we find that these men will actually be living in possession of the land for from twenty-five to thirty years, and at the end of that time they are to be paid for a lot of improvements. Well, I think the statement which I made, that the hon. gentleman is unable to grapple with the Land question, is thoroughly borne out when we see what he is going to saddle the country with in regard to these pastoral tenants. If the members on this side of the House who represent squatting constituencies act in the interests of party and not in the interests of the country, they will accept this Bill in its entirety, because it is the best Bill from that point of view that they could have.

The PREMIER: I wondered when that was coming.

Mr. MOREHEAD: You expected it, then?

The PREMIER: I knew somebody would say that.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: The hon. gentleman knew that it was deserved.

The PREMIER: It is the old bogie.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: It is a new bogie. We never had an indefeasible lease before. We never had compensation for the resumption of a run before. We have had compensation for improvements in the case of selections, but not at the termination of a lease. It is a new bogie, and a bogie which, when the people come to understand it, they will not have. Let us examine more closely into what will be the condition of the country thirty years hence, when this Bill has been in full operation. If it has been successful, there will be a large class of small pastoral tenants—a very numerous class indeed. I have not gone into the figures on that question, but it is one which any member may go into very easily for himself by taking the halves of the runs; and there will be a large class also of men—big squatters, wealthy men—whose improvements will amount to millions of money. It will not be a fence here and a dam there, but there will be improvements that will have cost very likely fifty millions of money. Now, I ask any man in his senses will the Government be prepared to pay that money to get back its own land—the land which has been given away—squandered by the hon. gentleman at the head of the present Government? The only hope that I can see of averting this calamity—and it will be a calamity—is that the grazing portion of this Bill will not be a success. The agricultural farms have to be let by the board in areas of 960 or 320 acres, as the case may be, and the grazing farms in areas of 20,000 acres. Now let us see how the hon. gentleman encourages settlement in that respect. He told the House last night that we were going to have a class of small lessees—small graziers—and that these were the men that the big leaseholders are to be displaced by. Very well, let us see how far the provisions of this Bill carry out that object. In the first place, the grazing farmer has to fence in the whole of his farm—twenty-three miles at £60 a mile to start with. That is to be done within two years, or it may be extended to three. He must then, if he utilises the farm, build a house. He must make provision for artificial water if there is no natural water upon the farm. And now comes the pinch. I am giving the manner in which these small graziers are to be encouraged. The small man is to pay four times the rent that the big man alongside of him will be called upon to pay. I take, of course, the minimum. The minimum rent that the big squatter, whose land has been resumed as fairly as possible, so as to make the capabilities of the one half equal to the other—the minimum rent upon that is to be £1 per mile; and by way of encouragement to the small grazier he will have to pay £4 per mile, and to compete with his big neighbour under, not only that disadvantage, but under the disadvantage of being compelled to fence in his selection. Then, in addition to that, the lessee of the small station, or small squattage, as I may call it, does not get off with that. At the end of a

certain term of years his rent is to be raised. It is to be re-appraised, and at least 10 per cent. added to it; and that goes on continually to the end of his lease. All this time this small man who has been encouraged to take up this piece of land is to pay four times at least—it may be five or six times—but four times at least, the rent that his big neighbour has to pay, and that on a squattage which the latter has had the benefit of holding for at least twenty-one years. Agricultural settlement is to be encouraged in much the same way. It is to be encouraged by the system, that I spoke of a short time ago, of taxing all the improvements which the selector will have to put upon his property before he can utilise it. He digs a well or makes a dam, and increases the value of his lease; and his rent is to be raised. If he is an assiduous and industrious man, and cultivates his land in a better degree than his neighbour, making his farm more valuable, his rent is to be raised; and anything he can do in improving his land, so that it may be better utilised, increases his rent. That of course is all in the interests of settlement! Why, the position of the poor ryot in India is exactly similar. There, in some portions of the country, the State is the landlord. In some portions of India, such as Upper Bengal, the State is not the landlord, and there the ryot is contented and prosperous, but where the State is the landlord he is discontented and is almost worse off than the Irish peasant. That is an instance of State landlordship; and here we are asked to dispose of our land under exactly the same conditions. If he improves his land the appraiser raises his rent. In fact, the rents have gone on increasing from the time when they form one-tenth to one-eighth the produce of the soil until they are now two-thirds and three-fourths, and in some cases leaving the tenant the barest possible subsistence. That is State landlordism; that is the taxation of improvements. Having seen the evils of that, the Home Government, in 1865, brought pressure to bear on the Indian Government, and compelled them to pass a regulation preventing the taxation of the wells. They gave them a right to tax the land on "general considerations," as it is called. How did the appraisers get out of that? They simply said, "This land is more valuable because there is a well upon it; we will not tax your well, but on 'general considerations' we will raise your rent"; and the rent was raised accordingly. That is the system proposed under this Bill, and proposed, mark you! by gentlemen who raised the greatest outcry upon members on this side, when sitting on that side, for having taxed improvements under the Divisional Boards Act. But under that Act the money raised by that taxation was spent in the district, and for the benefit of the men who paid it, whereas this tax is to be taken out of his pocket and spent for the benefit of the big speculator and the small speculator living in the towns, and who are not taxed at all. The purchaser of land within two miles of a township can get eighty acres of land at auction at the upset price of £1 per acre, and the buyer need not even fence it in, but leave it in a state of nature. Meanwhile the town grows gradually; it may even grow round it, and the land becomes enhanced in value until the unearned increment becomes probably £100 an acre. He can cut it up, as is done every day round Brisbane and other towns in the colony, and make immense sums of money out of it. The poor struggling country farmer, who goes a few miles further into the bush to reclaim the land and make a home for his family, has to pay for every improvement he puts on his land, and every penny of that goes to the benefit of the town speculator who is protected as against him under this Bill. The Minister for Lands spoke the other day about principles of equality and justice, and said that all classes should be treated alike. Why does he not treat all classes alike under this Bill? Why should the selectors be taxed on their improvements, and their rent increased every five years, while the man who speculates in town lands shall reap the benefit of it, and the benefit of his labour as well, because the labour of the man in the country increases the value of land in the town; and the man in the town gets both—the unearned increment and a portion of the labour of the unfortunate selector. I will give a mythical case. I will not mention names or places, but hon. members on both sides know full well what I allude to. I can imagine a certain portion of land in a northern town being sold at a very small price per acre—taken up under the cotton regulations at nothing per acre, absolutely nothing. That land, after being purchased at £5 an acre, I believe, was allowed to lie in a state of nature. The Government of the colony was in the meantime spending over half-a-million of money in railways, harbours, and other improvements around that place. Private capital to the amount of another half-million was spent in bringing the surrounding country under cultivation, until this land, which cost £5 an acre, can be sold for £20 an acre or more. Yet the owner of land like this, while actually reaping the benefit of that expenditure, and of the improvements of the poor selector, pockets this enormous sum without having earned one penny of it—without having even expended a penny on the soil. This is a case which I think is *apropos* of the question under discussion; and if the Minister for Lands or the Premier had been actuated by feelings of justice, and the principles of equality and fair play between man and man, he would never seek to tax the improvements of selectors, and raise their rent for having put their own money on the soil, without at the same time conferring the same benefit—if it is one—upon the holder of lands in the towns. This Bill is a most unfair one in that respect, for neither the grazing farmers nor the selectors are treated fairly and honestly. As I have said, the small man pays four times the rent of the big man. Why should that be so? Why should a man, because he is poor or takes up a small selection, be compelled to pay four times more for it than a man who has taken up one ten times as large? But how will this affect settlement?—for settlement is what we want, and what the hon. gentleman professes to want. If it will pay—and I am not certain whether it will pay or not, because I have my doubts about the amount of rent being too large—if it will pay the small grazing farmer to take up a 20,000-acre block, it will pay the man, a portion of whose run has been resumed, to utilise the same block; and he can easily do so. There is nothing to prevent him having an accommodating shepherd or stockman, and build a hut upon that 20,000 acre block. There is no dummying whatever, and he will simply secure himself by the mortgage clauses of the Bill. There is therefore every facility left in the Bill itself for the present lessees to occupy every piece of land that will be taken from them—and there will be no increase of settlement. There will be an increase of rent, with an increase in the apparent number of occupiers of the soil, but no increase whatever in the real number. This can be repeated. The lessee can take up every piece of land that has been taken from him by finding the men in his employment. He is not bound to stock it; all he is bound to do is to fence it in. He simply occupies it; the same thing can be repeated in every land district in the colony; and settlement under this portion of the Bill will not be one-twentieth part of what the hon gentleman

expects. But the Minister for Lands himself does not want settlement, although the Premier may, for he told us distinctly the other night that his reason for not including that portion of land next to the border of New South Wales was that he was afraid people would come over from New South Wales and settle upon it. There is too much of the old squatter in him to want settlement. Not the old mythical squatter, Mr. Speaker. I want to make a distinction. There are squatters and squatters: but the old mythical squatter who could not grow a cabbage is not dead yet. Now as to the scrub lands, I do not think I shall trouble about them, and I do not think many of the people of the country will trouble about them either, except, perhaps, in certain favoured spots. I admit there are spots, such as the Dugandan and Rosewood Scrubs, where if a man got 10,000 acres he might do very well out of it.

The PREMIER: The Bill does not apply to scrubs of that kind.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Yes, it does.

The PREMIER: No, it does not.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: I do not think the rest of the Bill is worth dissection at present, as we shall have another opportunity in committee of dissecting it. I wish now to say something about the financial operation of it. I think this is a question the Treasurer should have entered upon when he made his speech on the second reading. The hon. gentleman said last night, that if the lessees of the settled districts did not choose to come under the provisions of this Bill they might stay out; but he implied that if the land was wanted, of course, it would be resumed. Well, it can be resumed, but there are certain leases which are falling due, and which can be operated upon without troubling the pastoral tenants in the settled districts for some time to come; together with the amount of land that is open for selection at present in the settled districts—some 19,000,000 acres. But there are certain runs in the unsettled districts the leases of which are falling due; some fell due last year, and some will fall due this year—altogether some four or five hundred leases between the 30th of June, last year, and the 30th of June, 1890. These are what are called the renewed leases under the Pastoral Leases Act of 1869. Now, I will suppose that the Government will operate on these leases; that they will not give the tenants any other tenure than that provided by this Bill; and I will just take the first three years of the operation of the Bill—I do not want to weary hon. members by going too far. In 1883, 1884, and 1885, there will be altogether 173 runs falling into the hands of the State, containing 7,424 square miles, and paying a rental of £6,926. I may say that this is part of the information I tried to get in the Lands Office, but was prevented from getting, so I got it independently of the office. Other information which I could not get there, I was unable to supply myself with. We will suppose these 7,424 square miles are operated upon; one-half is taken for settlement, and one-half left to the pastoral tenant. I will take the minimum—of course I can deal with minimums only, as I have no knowledge of anything but the minimum in the Bill, and we cannot assume anything beyond it. The half of 7,424 square miles is 3,712. At £4 per square mile, which would be the rent of the small farmer, this would be £14,848, and the other half, at £1 per square mile, would be £3,712, making altogether £18,560. That is the rent which will be derived from those runs which will fall in up to 1885. From that is to be taken the rent which is now being paid for those same runs, and then you will get the increase on the rent derived from them. The rent now being paid is £6,926; so that the difference, £11,634, is the increase of rent upon these runs within the next three years. That is to say—supposing the Government are able to get the machinery of this Bill in working order, and operate as I have assumed—that is the rent we shall derive in the beginning of 1886. That gives them a whole year from the time the Act comes into force to get it into working order. Now I am going to give the hon. the Colonial Treasurer a great benefit in this. I am going to suppose—although it is only a supposition on my part—that the selection of agricultural land will go on at the same rate as it has been doing. The average of the last two or three years has been about 650,000 acres, and I will suppose there are 650,000 acres selected under the agricultural part of this Bill, which will give exactly £8,000 rent. Adding that to the £11,634, we get £19,634. That is at the beginning of 1886. Now, come to the losses we will have at the beginning of 1886. In the first place, we dispense with auction sales of country lands, and we dispense with pre-emptive leases and with selection purchases. These are all items kept separate from the annual rents—hon. members must understand that. Then we shall have no new transactions from the beginning of next year; that is also a separate item from the annual rents. Well, I find that in 1882—that is the latest I can get—the new transactions amounted to £49,000; I will take the average at £45,000. The paid-up balances—also an item by itself—amounted to £45,000. Now we come to the loss of rents. These are things I wanted to get, and could not get, from the Lands Office. Making an estimate as near as I possibly can, the amount of rent which I think will be lost for the first three years will be about £30,000; very likely it will be more. I have arrived at it in this way. I have taken the total acreage at present under selection; and I have taken the fourth part of that—2,000,000 acres—to drop out of the rent list by the beginning of 1886. That will reduce the rent of the runs by £30,000. Well, the total losses mentioned now amount to £220,000. Of course it leaves a rent list of about £90,000 still from the beginning of 1886. Now put the increase against the loss. I will deal with round numbers, leaving the odd figures out altogether. The increase upon these runs of which I have spoken and the selections amounts altogether to £19,000; take that from £220,000, and it leaves £201,000. This is the loss which will accrue to the State for the first year under the operation of this Bill. The loss that will accrue in the second year will be less than that, those quantities being fixed; the increased rent not being fixed, the quantity is a progressive one. The second year—that is, in 1886, which under the operation of the Bill, will bring us to the beginning of 1887—will give an increase of £29,000; the next year the increase will be £38,000. Taking the increase from the decrease in each year, the total loss for the three years at the beginning of 1888 will be £549,000. Now, if I am mistaken in any way, hon. gentlemen on that side of the House are themselves to blame for not supplying us with the information. I should have arrived at the total loss under the Bill for the next three years easily enough if I had been supplied with the information I wanted. It was the duty of the Government to supply members of the House with that information; and I make bold to say that the Bill will not be allowed to go far into committee unless the Treasurer gives it—in fact, it will be unconstitutional to allow the Government to proceed with an important measure of this kind, dealing in such a

radical way with the finances of the colony, without telling us and taking the responsibility of how it will operate on the finances. But the loss will go on beyond the three years. I can even give more selections than this. I can give the hon. gentleman two million acres additional grazing farms in the settled districts each year for the three years. That will be six millions of acres. That, with the three times 650,000 acres, which I have allowed for agricultural farms every year, and the grazing farms and the renewed leases under the Act of 1869 falling due, will actually bring the selections up to 13,000,000 of acres, being two millions beyond the total acreage of selections from the beginning of the colony up to the present time. The hon. gentleman at the head of the Treasury has a difficult job before him; and I feel as confident as I am standing here, that he will have to sing the same song before two years that he had to sing the last time he was in office, and that the Government will be obliged to leave those benches after having brought the revenue far below our expenditure. Our wants are increasing at a most rapid rate, and the Government will make matters still worse. This deficiency, too, will operate, not only on the finances, but on the trade and commerce of the colony. Then the men on this side of the House will be called upon to retrieve the disaster brought about by hon. gentlemen on the other side. I am confident of that. I say that if the hon. gentleman had devised a measure by which this disaster was to be brought about, instead of trying to devise one to encourage settlement, he could not have employed a better tool than the Minister for Lands to do it—that is, if he is allowed to be the author of this Bill, which I doubt very much. I say, that by the calamity that will take place in this country by placing us in the grip of the pastoral tenants, which this Bill does, by restrictions being placed on *bonâ fide* agricultural selectors, and by the finances of the colony being deranged for a number of years, the hon. gentleman will have done more harm to the colony than the best Government that has ever existed in any country will retrieve in ten years.

Mr. BROOKES said: I have listened to the hon. member for Townsville with great pleasure; and now that he has closed, I cannot help thinking this: that when the great bulk of the population read his speech to-morrow morning they will wonder what he is aiming at; they will not be able to understand him. The hon. gentleman is trying to play a double game. He wants to take the part of the pastoral tenants and also of a democrat. Now, it is not possible for the two characters to be combined. Like most people when they have a bad case, I notice that the hon. gentleman concluded his speech with a number of prophecies. Well, I do not know that any member of this House in particular is endowed with the spirit of prophecy. It is rather dangerous to prophesy before the event. The hon. gentleman also expressed the opinion that this Bill will place the lands of the colony in the grasp of the pastoral tenants. Now, I propose, with the permission of the House, to present a picture of what the colony is now—just what it is now. I propose to read from the paper I have in my hand some information which has been very carefully compiled so that there will be no mistake about it.

Mr. NORTON: Where from?

Mr. BROOKES: Never mind that. I should just like to address are mark to the hon. member: if he wants to say anything, let him wait until I have done. Now, we find that the land in this colony is allotted in something like this way:—The Bank of New South Wales holds 76 runs in the North Gregory district, 48 in Maranoa, 46 in Leichhardt, and others on a diminishing scale till we come to 1 only in the Port Curtis district. The total is 304. The Commercial Banking Company of Sydney holds 167 runs in different parts of the colony. The highest number in any single district is 54 in the Maranoa, 31 in Burke, 27 on the Darling Downs—the unsettled part. The Queensland National Bank is recorded to lease 103 runs; its highest number is 26, in respectively Maranoa and Warrego. The Mercantile Bank of Sydney holds 32 runs in Mitchell, 16 in Leichhardt, 2 in Moreton, and 1 each on the Darling Downs and Kennedy; altogether, 52 runs. The Union Bank of Australia holds 37 runs in the Warrego district, 22 in Leichhardt, and 3 in Mitchell; total, 62. The English, Scottish, and Australian Chartered Bank holds 49 runs; Australian Joint Stock Bank, 46; Bank of Australasia, 35; London Chartered Bank of Australia, 28; Australasian Agency and Banking Company, Melbourne, 18; City Bank, Sydney, 13; Oriental Bank, Melbourne, 9; Commercial Bank of Australasia, 18. Then, taking the number of square miles, the Bank of New South Wales is at the head. It has 18,052¾ square miles, or 11,053,600 acres; the Commercial Bank has 7,829½ square miles, or 5,010,880 acres; Queensland National Bank, 5,567½ square miles, or 3,563,200 acres; Mercantile Bank of Sydney, 3,352½ square miles; Union Bank of Australia, 2,593 square miles; Australian Joint Stock Bank, 2,507¾ square miles; English, Scottish, and Australian Chartered Bank, 2,449½ square miles; Bank of Australasia, 1,416¼ square miles; London Chartered Bank of Australasia, 1,214 square miles. The other five banks have 2,930¾ square miles amongst them. The total number of runs for which these banks are registered as lessees is 904, containing 47,913½ square miles, or 30,664,640 acres, being 1-14th of the whole area of the colony. The Bank of New South Wales has control over 3,868 square miles in the Mitchell; the Commercial Bank has 1,259,520 acres in Maranoa, at a trifle over ¼d. per acre per annum. The Queensland National Bank has 395 square miles in North Gregory for £67 5s., or 15¾ acres for 1d. per annum. The Bank of Australasia has 708¼ square miles in Maranoa for £676 9s. 7d., which is less than 20s. per square mile, or 2¾ acres for 1d. per annum. The Australian Joint Stock Bank has 459 square miles in Leichhardt for £411 10s. 8d. The Mercantile Bank of Sydney has 787½ square miles in Leichhardt for £436 16s. rental, or nearly five acres for 1d. per annum. Those are the banks; now we will take the companies. The Western Queensland Pastoral Company limits its holdings to the Maranoa and Warrego. In Maranoa it has 9 runs, in Warrego 33 runs; total, 42 runs, containing 1,918 square miles. The Queensland Investment and Mortgage Company has 1 run in the Port Curtis district, 11 in the unsettled district of Darling Downs, 8 in the Leichhardt, 6 in the Mitchell, and 7 in the Warrego; total, 23 runs, equal to 1,040¼ square miles, or 665,760 acres. The Darling Downs and Western Land Company has 1 run in the settled district of Darling Downs, 1 in the Moreton, 45 in the Gregory North, 8 in the Maranoa, and 8 in the Mitchell; total, 62 runs, equal to 4,025¾ square miles, or 2,575,480 acres. The North Australian Pastoral Company has 8 runs in the Kennedy, containing 323¼ square miles. The Lansdowne Pastoral Company has 14 runs in the Mitchell, containing 956 square miles. The Peel River Land and Mineral Company has 9 runs in Maranoa, containing 247½ square miles. The Scottish Australian Investment Company has 12 runs in the Burnett, 6 in Burke, 1 in the unsettled district of Darling Downs, 5 in Leichhardt, 28 in

Warrego, and 92 in Mitchell; total, 144 runs, containing 6,265¾ square miles, or 4,010,080 acres. The office of this company is at B. D. Morehead and Company's, but there is no list of shareholders or directors at the Supreme Court. The South Australian Land Mortgage and Agency Company has 3 runs in the Leichhardt, containing 75 square miles. The Australian Mortgage and Finance Company has 6 runs on the Maranoa, containing 203 square miles. The North British Australian Company has 8 runs on the Warrego, 8 in Leichhardt, 2 in the unsettled district of Darling Downs, and 1 in the settled district of Darling Downs; total, 19 runs, containing 901 square miles. The New Zealand and Australian Land Company has 29 runs in the Mitchell, and 1 in the Warrego; total, 30 runs, containing 2,061⅜ square miles, or 1,319,280 acres. The Australian Mortgage and Agency Company has 2 runs in the Burke, 11 in the North Gregory, and 14 in the South Gregory; total, 27 runs, containing 1,835 square miles, or 1,174,000 acres. The New Zealand Land and Mercantile Agency Company is registered as the lessee of 8 runs in the South Gregory, containing 347½ square miles. Altogether, these corporations are the real or nominal lessees of 395 runs, containing 20,199⅜ square miles, or 12,927,600 acres. The five largest are as follows:—Scottish Australian Investment Company, 144 runs, 6,265¾ square miles, or 4,010,080 acres; the Darling Downs and Western Land Company, 62 runs, 4,025¾ square miles, or 2,575,480 acres; the New Zealand and Australian Land Company, 30 runs, 2,061⅜ square miles, or 1,319,280 acres; the Western Queensland Pastoral Company, 42 runs, 1,918 square miles, or 1,227,520 acres; and the Australian Mortgage and Agency Company, 27 runs, 1,835 square miles, or 1,174,400 acres. If we add the runs in the hands of banks and other monetary institutions, we have as follows:—Banks, 904 runs, 47,913½ square miles, or 30,664,640 acres; companies other than banks, 395 runs, 20,199⅜ square miles, or 12,927,600 acres: total, 1,299 runs, 68,112⅞ square miles, or 43,592,240 acres. The Queensland National Bank appears on the Government returns as the lessee of 103 runs, equal to 3,500,000 acres; the Queensland Mortgage Company as lessee of 23 runs, equal to 665,760 acres; the Darling Downs and Western Land Company as lessee of 62 runs, equal to 2,575,480 acres; the Scottish Australian Investment Company, 144 runs, or 4,010,080 acres; and the Australian Mortgage and Agency Company, 1,174,400 acres. When these figures are in print, people will be able to appraise at their value the speeches made by hon. gentlemen on the opposite side. Anyone who has lived in Australia for any time must have felt that there was something excessively wrong in the way in which the lands of Australia have been dealt with. The hon. the Premier, last night, gave a very correct description of the beginning of squatting. We are accustomed to hear a great deal about the progress of Australia. Let us compare the progress of Australia with that of other colonies. Discounting the advantage of their proximity to England, there is no comparison between the progress of the United States and that of Australia. The squatting system has been shown by the figures I have given to have been the great secret of the retardation of the progress of Australia, and I think it is high time that the colonies woke up to a perception of this fact. I do not know whether the last speaker had read the speech made by Mr. Dalley in the Legislative Council of New South Wales: if he had, a great deal of his present speech would have been an impossibility. I do not intend to trespass very long on the time of the House, but I just wish to say that if we have been silly in dealing with our lands we have company in South Australia. That colony has got a great northern territory, and in connection with it I find an advertisement in the *Daily Telegraph* of the 16th June—and the same advertisement has appeared in the *Times*—and there is a long prospectus advertised. Really, when I read that advertisement, I was thunderstruck. Two private individuals, Mr. C. B. Fisher and Mr. Maurice Lyons, were attempting to float a company in London to take up 22,200,000 acres. They have got quite into the squatting way, and have boasted in this prospectus that, being capitalists, they have got the "cream of the country." We have heard that talked for thirty years, and we shall hear it talked for another thirty years more, if the gentlemen on the opposite side of the House ever sit on this side again. I shall not say much more upon that; but I will just say this much: that I was very glad to hear this morning that this company did not float. With reference to homesteads; what a lot the opposite side has made about homesteads! When I remember that we are considering the second reading of a Land Bill, it causes me to think that this is a Bill on which both sides of the House ought to take a full wide view. But it is impossible. The hon. leader of the Opposition has not changed in the least, and we all remember what a providential escape the colony had from his plans. We remember that we only escaped "by the skin of our teeth" from having had 12,000,000 acres of the best lands in this colony handed over to just such a company as the one I have referred to. If that land had been given to those six or eight gentlemen what would they have done? They would have had a "concession." That would have been a saleable thing, and they would have sold it at once, and would have been enriched by that single transaction; and we, in this unhappy colony of Queensland, would have been saddled with foreign people of every description trying to make the most of the bargain. We might have had amongst the number some impecunious dukes. I see one in this prospectus of the South Australian Company. I may say, in passing, that I do not like dukes; they ought to stop in Scotland or in England, or anywhere but here. At all events, I hope they will not come prowling around Queensland. I look upon them as I would look upon a dingo around a sheep-fold — no more and no less. But with reference to the homestead clauses, I have not the slightest doubt that it will be admitted on both sides of the House that the homestead clauses have done an infinity of good. Why is it the Opposition make such a mountain of them? There is no great opposition on this side to the homestead clauses. The spirit which created the homestead clauses is in this Bill, and all I ask from members on both sides of this House is that they shall endeavour to observe and discern this spirit if they have the power to discern it. I ask that every hon. gentleman in this House, who has a right respect for his position and a right esteem for every one in this colony, to endeavour seriously to ascertain the lines of this Bill. I know it is too much to ask, and I cannot expect some of the hon. gentlemen opposite to be able to take this view of the matter. They are imbedded in the vested interests of the squatting system, which I distinctly pronounce it to be the curse of Australia, and to always have been. I say I hail the advent of this Bill with a very great amount of pleasure, and I call upon hon. members in this House to stand by it. I will ask, does anyone mean to say that the amendment proposed by the hon. leader of the Opposition last night is sincere? It carries its insincerity on the face of it. Why, it is a vote of want of confidence, and

if the Premier would take my suggestion, which I do not suppose he will—I may say that if I were Premier I would tell the hon. leader of the Opposition, that I would take it as a vote of want of confidence—and the sooner we go to a division upon it, and have done with it the better, and not have to sit here night after night talking all round the compass, like so many wind-bags. I shall not take up the time of the House very long, though I might talk for ever upon the various parts of this amendment. I have said that the whole of them have the stamp of insincerity upon them ; they have the stamp of a wish to do nothing—the stamp of a wish to throw dust in the eyes of the people, as well as in the eyes of hon. members of this House. I will just read the last :—

"That this House, therefore, requests the mover to temporarily withdraw the Bill."

What humbug ! Why this is the essence of humbug ! Suppose we were to withdraw the Bill for twenty years, how will we be in a better position then to accept the Bill? There is nothing practical in the suggestion. It is a deceitful suggestion ; and, moreover, we are told it is to be withdrawn temporarily—

"With a view to its early reintroduction in a form better calculated to check abuse and encourage the legitimate settlement of the people upon the lands of the colony."

Why, do not these figures, which I have just read, speak of an abuse which the leader of the Opposition has been aiding and abetting ever since he had any political power at all? And the people of this colony hope for no checking of this great abuse from gentlemen opposite, and as for encouraging the legitimate settlement of people on the lands of the colony—why we know very well that squatting and settlement do not agree. You might as well expect sheep and wolves to agree. There is something in the nature of pastoral occupation opposed to close settlement. The farmer and the squatter do not agree, and never have agreed. I have been in this colony for more than thirty years, and have known many instances of a squatter driving away the little farmer from his neighbourhood as a pest and a nuisance, because to carry on his avocations he says he requires absolute quiet. I have often said, that if the squatters had the whole terrestrial globe for a run, they would want the moon for a heifer paddock. I do not, as I have said, intend to speak at length just now upon the Bill. We shall have many opportunities of again referring to its provisions.

Mr. NORTON : I rise to a point of order. I did not like to interrupt the hon. gentleman when he was speaking, but I think it is very important that the House should know whether those returns which the hon. member has read are reliable. I asked the hon. member if they were furnished by the Lands Office, and he declined to reply. I wish now to know whether I am in order in asking the hon. Minister for Lands if those returns were compiled by the Lands Department.

The SPEAKER : That is scarcely a point of order.

Mr. NORTON : I wish to know if I can put that question ?

The PREMIER : You may not make a speech.

Mr. NORTON : I do not wish to make a speech just now.

The SPEAKER : The hon. member may reply to the hon. gentleman's question with the consent of the House, if he pleases to do so, but it is scarcely a point of order.

Mr. BROOKES : I have no objection to reply to the point of order. The hon. member for Port Curtis can ask me any question he likes, but I reserve to myself the liberty of answering, and I do not choose to answer his question.

Mr. JORDAN said : The hour is late ; I move the adjournment of this debate.

Mr. NORTON said : I think the hon. member who has moved the adjournment of the debate has given me a very fair opportunity to put the question which I wanted the Minister for Lands to answer just now, or rather which I gave him the chance to answer without asking. You, Mr. Speaker, have decided that I was not entitled to ask the question in discussing the point of order. I should like to know from the hon. gentleman now, whether the Lands Office supplied the returns which have been read by the junior member for North Brisbane, Mr. Brookes. We know that it is information which ought to have been given to a member on this side of the House. Why it was refused to him the Minister for Lands knows, but I do not think any hon. member sitting on this side of the House knows. It appears to me that the hon. member for Townsville (the Hon. J. M. Macrossan) has been treated in a most discourteous way in being refused that information, which, I think, every member of this House is entitled to have if he asks for it, and which ought to have been supplied to hon. members at the time the Minister moved the second reading of the Bill. If the Minister for Lands did supply the information to a member on his own side of the House, he should not have refused it to a member on this side. If the hon. gentleman had answered my question and said "Yes, the hon. junior member for North Brisbane got it from the Lands Office," there would be an end of the matter. As he has not done so, I now ask him fairly was that information which the hon. junior member for North Brisbane read to the House supplied to him from the Lands Department? It contained, I think, some returns which could not have been got from other sources, and that is the reason I ask the question ; because I think it is grossly unfair that members on one side of the House should be supplied with any information they want, while the same information is refused to members on the other side. I hope the Minister will answer the question.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said : I am surprised at the concluding remarks of the hon member, because he seems to have assumed that information was supplied to one member and refused to another. He might have waited to know whether that was the case or not. The information or the figures which the hon. the junior member for North Brisbane (Mr. Brookes) has read to-night were certainly not supplied by the Lands Office ; at all events, not to my knowledge. I know nothing of them, and never gave any authority for their production. Whence they came, I know not. I expect they could be got from public papers, which are records of this House ; or the hon. member may have got them out of the report of the working of the Lands Department. Now, as to the matter which the hon. member for Townsville complained of to-night, the hon. gentleman made a request to the Under Secretary for a very complicated and elaborate return to be prepared for his special information. The Under Secretary came to me and asked me whether he should give it to the hon. member. I said, "No ; it may be prepared, and if he asks for it in the House I will be prepared to lay it on the table of the House, so that it may be available to every member in the House." I refused to grant it to him specially. I have nothing more to say.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said: I must correct the hon. gentleman. I wanted no information for my own special use. I wanted information for use in this House. I told the Under Secretary for Lands that; and any man who thought I wanted it for my own special use must be a special fool. Why should I want to know the number of leases falling into the hands of the Government within the next three years, except in connection with some public question? I told the Under Secretary that I wanted the information asked for to use in this House—not for my own special use. What he may have told the Minister I do not know. I only know that the Minister refused me the information. I asked for it on Wednesday, and would have got it on the Friday, had not the hon. gentleman interfered. To show that it was not a complicated return I requested, I may state, that I got out a large portion of the information myself. But my application was refused, simply because the hon. gentleman wanted to keep this side in ignorance. The information which he himself should have supplied to the House I wished to supply from the Lands Office, but I was refused it. At the same time I may say this: that the Under Secretary for Lands said there would be no difficulty whatever in getting out the information, and professed his willingness to give it, and he would have done so if the hon. gentleman had not interfered and prevented him. I say that no member of this House should be refused any information on public business by any department. As Minister for Mines, I have given information on public business to prominent citizens of Brisbane, who were not members of Parliament. Why should this not be done if it is for the public benefit? And I maintain it was for the public benefit that I should have got the information I asked for, which information the Colonial Treasurer should have supplied to this House.

Mr. T. CAMPBELL said: I think that the hon. gentleman who has just sat down—the hon. member for Townsville—has been endeavouring to mislead the House in the expressions he has made use of. I am quite certain that if he had applied to the Minister for Lands for the information that he says he applied for, and at the same time gave his reasons for applying for that information, it would have been given him. When he applied for that information, I presume—and I think the presumption is not a very violent one—that he applied for it as a partisan; and he wished to make use of that information in this House. I do not say that he was wrong in wishing to make use of that information, but I think that information of that character should be asked for in this House; and if any member goes, simply as a member, to the Lands Office, he should be denied such information unless he can show a good and substantial reason why it should be given. When the hon. member for Townsville went for information—I speak under instruction—the Minister for Lands never knew that he wished to receive the information as a member of the House. He simply said that he required it. And I say the Minister for Lands was perfectly justified in refusing the information. I have as much right to go to the Lands Office and ask for information as the hon. member for Townsville; and if the Minister for Lands is to be pestered with every member of the House, perhaps, going and asking for information without the authority of the House, I do not see where his duties will end. I certainly think it might have been more discretionary for the Minister for Lands to have given the hon. member for Townsville the information; but that hon. member should not say he asked it as a right, and that he would have it as a right. He has not the right to do so. Of course we know that the hon. member for Townsville is a man who bears great weight in this House as he does in the whole country, and as he ought to do; but I do not think he ought to put forward that character as entitling him to any privilege beyond any other member of the House. I think that is exactly the impression he is endeavouring to convey to this House—that because he is an old and experienced member of the House, any information for which he asks ought to be given him without question, whether he has a right to get it or not. I am quite confident that the Minister for Lands would be quite willing, if asked, to give any information of the kind. In this case I ask why should the Minister for Lands object to give the information? It is exactly the information he should give—that he would give—to carry out his own policy; and I cannot for the life of me understand why the hon. member for Townsville should say that the Minister for Lands ought to have withheld that information. Of course, we know that the hon. gentleman sits on the opposite side, and that he wishes to make a little—and it is a very little indeed—political capital of this matter; but I think the opening remarks of his address this evening were unworthy of him. He is a member upon whom I have looked for some years—I have followed the course of debate in this House for some years—and looked upon him with respect; but really when I heard him referring to that matter—I do not say that he should feel grieved—but I really felt that he had lowered himself somewhat in my estimation. I think the hon. member should not only retract what he said in regard to the Minister for Lands, but should possibly apologise for the insinuations he had made.

Mr. JORDAN rose to speak.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH: The hon. gentleman cannot speak again to his own amendment.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member cannot speak after having moved the adjournment of the debate.

The PREMIER: I have one word to say in respect to the question of information having been refused. I am sure that every member of the Government will be only too glad to afford all possible information to every hon. member, or to the House generally, to assist them in arriving at a correct conclusion on that most important of matters—the Land Bill. If the hon. member for Townsville had intimated to the Minister for Lands the information he required, I have not the slightest doubt that it would have been given. But the information, to have been of value in the hon. member's speech, should have been in such a form as to be accessible to other hon. members, that they might follow the hon. gentleman and correct any errors or erroneous inferences he might draw from the materials at his disposal. It is quite possible that the hon. gentleman might draw erroneous inferences. Nobody, however, will conclude that the Minister for Lands wittingly kept back information dealing with the question. It is late now, and though we have not made very great progress with the debate this evening, I will consent to the adjournment.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH: I think great progress has been made; and we have to-night listened to one of the most eloquent speeches ever delivered in the House—the speech of my hon. colleague, the Hon. Mr. Macrossan. Speaking to the question of the adjournment of the debate, I wish to say a few words in reference to information being withheld

from the member for Townsville. Every hon. member knows perfectly well that when he has work to do and intends to do work in this House, he can be materially assisted by the officers in the different departments; and it has been the recognised right of every working member of this House to get all information that consists of facts only, if the department can possibly furnish them. He simply asked for facts, not for the purpose of leading hon. members astray, but to prove from the authenticity of those facts coming from the Lands Department that his argument was true. It was to facilitate the Government business that the hon. gentleman wanted the information. The Minister for Lands clearly refused it because he thought the hon. member was going to make a damaging speech against the Government—which he did. That was why the Minister for Lands refused the information; but there is a great deal more, which will come out in future debates.

Mr. BLACK: Before we adjourn, I may mention that during a conversation I had with the hon. member for Townsville I pointed out to him that certain information which I considered very important in the discussion of this Land Bill had been applied for by me no less than five weeks ago. It is a return which would have been of importance to members in discussing this question, as showing what runs were likely to be immediately brought under the operation of the new Land Bill. It is a most simple return. I called for it on the 16th July, and it has only been distributed to members to-day. I cannot help thinking that the Lands Department have been exceedingly remiss in this matter. Important information of this sort might certainly have been supplied very much sooner. I know that the bulk of this information was in manuscript twelve months ago, for I had it in my possession, but I wanted to have some further details in connection with it; and my advice to the hon. member for Townsville was that he should go and endeavour to get what he wanted without moving for a return, which, from my experience of departments was not likely to be furnished before the debate on this Bill had closed. Now with regard to what the hon. member for Cook has said. He, a new member—a novice—comes here and tells us, after the grand speech delivered by the hon. member for Townsville, that he (the hon. member for Townsville) has sunk in the estimation of the hon. member for Cook.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Which member for Cook?

Mr. BLACK: The junior member.

Mr. T. CAMPBELL: The senior member.

Mr. BLACK: I will call him the hon. member for Cook, Mr. Campbell, so that there may be no mistake. Well, sir, I hope that when the two speeches—the speech of the hon. member for Townsville and that of the hon. member for Cook—go forth to this colony that there is sufficient intelligence left in the people for them to be able to point out which of those two members has sunk in the appreciation of the public.

The SPEAKER: After what has fallen from the hon. member for Townsville with regard to the return referred to, I think I should be perfectly justified in instructing the Clerk of the House to inform the Government Printer that any returns ordered by this House to be printed should take precedence of all other business in the Government Printing Office. I wish to state this because it is through no fault on the part of any officer of the House that the return in question has not been printed.

The PREMIER: In reference to what you have said, sir, I may point out that I, as Colonial Secretary, am in charge of everything connected with the Government Printing Office, and, while every facility will be given for the printing of parliamentary papers, as far as the means at the disposal of the office will allow, I cannot undertake to say that the printing of parliamentary papers will take precedence of all other work which may require to be done. I can, however, say that no unnecessary delay will occur.

The SPEAKER: I may mention that I meant any order that might be given to the Government Printer to be given through the Colonial Secretary's Office. I did not mean to say that the officers of the House would be instructed to communicate direct with the Government Printer; but I think the House will agree that papers ordered by the House to be printed should be printed and distributed to hon. members as soon as possible.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH: I quite endorse what the Premier has said. I do not believe that this House ought to take the responsibility of saying that the management of the Printing Office should be taken out of the hands of the Colonial Secretary. He is responsible to this House, and I believe that is a much better system than giving the Printer instructions which will relieve him of that responsibility. I am sure that the reason given for this return not having been produced before—that the work could not be carried out before—is not the correct reason: and I know quite well that while I had charge of the Printing Office, parliamentary work was always attended to.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: I may be allowed to say that no fault can be found with the gentleman in charge of the Printing Office. He told me distinctly, when I went to see if I could find a copy of the return, that he did not know that there was any importance attached to the return. If he had known, he said he would have had it printed before. I told him that the only importance attaching to it was that it would be used during the debate on the Land Bill, and he said then that he would do his best to have it printed on Tuesday.

Question put and passed, and the resumption of the debate made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER, in moving the adjournment of the House, said: As the private business will not occupy a great deal of time, I hope to be able to make considerable progress with the second reading of the Land Bill to-morrow.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH: Might I ask the Premier how long he thinks the debate is likely to last?

The PREMIER: It is rather difficult to form an opinion on that subject. It depends very much more upon members on the other side than on this. Two or three nights ago, the member for Townsville said he thought the debate might close in one evening after that. I was unable to agree with him then, and two nights have passed since that time. I certainly hope it may be finished at the outside in two more days from the present time. I am very anxious to bring the debate to a conclusion, and will do everything in my power to bring about that result.

The House adjourned at twenty-seven minutes past 10 o'clock.