Queensland

Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 7 OCTOBER 1884

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, 7 *October*, 1884.

Question.—Motion for Adjournment.—Maryborough School of Arts Bill—third reading.—Sessional Order.—Crown Lands Bill—committee.—Messages from the Legislative Council.—Adjournment.

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

QUESTION.

Mr. NORTON asked the Colonial Treasurer—

Is it the intention of the Government to ask the House this session to provide a sum of money for deepening the "Narrows" between Fort Curtis and Keppel Bay?

The COLONIAL TREASURER (Hon. J. R. Dickson) replied—

The matter is at present under the consideration of the Government.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT.

Mr. KATES said: Mr. Speaker,—I rise to call the attention of hon. members to a very important question in connection with the terrible accident which occurred at Darra, near Oxley, a few days ago. My own impression is that the time has arrived when a double line of railway should be laid down between Ipswich and Brisbane to meet the increasing traffic between those towns. If we look at the traffic returns printed last week in the *Courier*, we find that there is an increase of more than £20,000 in the railway revenue of the Southern and Western Railway—an increase equal to about £80,000 per annum. Looking at the returns for last week, as compared with the returns for the corresponding week of 1883, we find an increase of £2,760 on the Southern and Western Railway, or an increase at the rate of £140,000 per annum. This railway has returned more than twice as much already than the increase on all the other railways in the colony. The Central Railway shows an increase of £1,000 as compared with 1883, the Maryborough Railway an increase of £300, the Northern line £127, and the Bundaberg line £27, which altogether does not amount to more than half the increase on the Southern and Western Railway. In the face of these facts I think it would be desirable to have a second line laid down between Ipswich and Brisbane to meet the largely increasing traffic on the Southern and Western Railway. I think there should also be another line from Ipswich to the Darling Downs, by way of Warwick. This question was before the House two or three years ago, and I am pleased to see that the hon. leader of the Opposition, as well as the hon. member for Townsville and the late hon. member for Stanley (Mr. P. O'Sullivan), have expressed themselves in favour of such a second line. I am sure the opinion of these gentlemen should be considered of some value. By opening a second line the existing traffic coming down by Toowoomba would be greatly relieved. It would also open a large agricultural district above and below the Main Range; it would shorten the road to Sydney by four or five hours, and would also secure to us a border traffic from the southern portion of the colony. We know that New South Wales is about to borrow large sums of money, and a great deal of this money will be expended in making railways to reach our southern borders. In connection with this accident I may as well say that the station-master, Mr. Bunting, had very onerous duties to perform. I have been informed that he had no less than thirty-three trains to look after every day. He had from 6 o'clock in the morning to 10 o'clock at night to attend to these duties. He had to attend to the ticket-office, and to the receipt and discharge of goods, as well as the thirty-three trains daily, besides specials. I think that, considering he has only been receiving £165 a year for the last seven years, while he has been stationed at Oxley, and was one of the most efficient, sober, and obliging servants in the department, some consideration ought to be shown him by the Government in connection with this accident. I have also been informed that this special goods train had only been running once a week for the last four weeks. For the first two weeks it ran every Friday; during the third week it was cancelled; and during the fourth week it was resumed again. However, my chief object in rising is to call the attention of the Government to the necessity for a double line between Brisbane and Ipswich, and between

Ipswich and the Darling Downs, to relieve the increasing traffic on the Southern and Western Railway. With these remarks, I beg to move the adjournment of the House.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. Miles) said: I greatly regret the sad accident which took place last week; and I believe the same feeling is entertained by the members of the community, and also by the members of this House. I hardly think that this is the proper time to discuss the railway policy in regard to what railways shall be carried to the Darling Downs. I simply say that I regret the accident, and that so far back as April last the Traffic Department was instructed to make arrangements for the adoption of the staff and ticket systems. From time to time I have impressed this on the department, but the Traffic Manager has been engaged in preparing a time-table to allow trains to run through from Brisbane to Mitchell, and, until that is completed, arrangements cannot be carried out for running trains on the staff system. I was not aware that these special trains were running at all, and I have always discouraged them in every possible way. However, I have given instructions that a magisterial inquiry shall be held. I think that is better than that an inquiry should be held by the department. In that way the matter will be thoroughly investigated; and whoever is to blame will have to take the consequences. I may further inform hon. members that I have received a telegram to the effect that all those injured by the accident are progressing favourably, with the exception of Mr. Brown, the dyer. I have no desire to attach any blame to anyone at present. It should be understood that when the staff and ticket systems are introduced there will be considerable delay; but the public had better put up with delay than have accidents. I may add that it is the intention of the Government to make arrangements for the construction of a double line between Brisbane and Ipswich.

Mr. BEATTIE said: I take this opportunity of asking the Minister for Works or the Government if their attention has been called to a letter which appears in to-day's *Courier*. It contains most extraordinary charges against the Railway Department; and, if true, I think it is the duty of the Minister to have an inquiry into the matter at once. The letter is signed, "Harry W. Bell, late assistant station-master, Toowoomba." The charges are of such a character that I am sure the head of the department will not be doing his duty to the public if an inquiry is not made at once. The grave nature of these charges against some official in the department makes it necessary, for the satisfaction of the travelling public, that such an inquiry should be made, especially when the letter is coupled with the very calamitous accident that took place last week. I will not trouble the House with reading the letter, because I presume every hon. member has read it. I will just say that I believe when charges like these are brought against a public servant immediate steps should be taken to refute them. If there is any truth in them, then surely the sooner we clear out some of these officials the better.

Mr. BAILEY: There is one thing I should like to mention in connection with this railway accident. The poor fellow who was killed died at his post, doing his duty, as he said with his last breath, and he has left a wife and family. I do not think that widow and those children should now be dependent on public charity; and I should like to hear from the Minister for Works whether it is intended that some immediate provision shall be made for them by the Government. I think when a public servant dies under such circumstances that that is a debt of honour which the Government owe to his family. There is another point in connection with railway management which I will notice. I find that at some stations on the Sandgate line men are employed as station-masters, having to check the entry and departure of every train, from sixteen, to eighteen hours a day, during seven days a week. Certainly that ought not to be allowed. It is not possible for any man, year after year, to perform duty during from sixteen to eighteen hours out of the twenty-four; on some occasion he will fail in his duty, and I therefore say it is too much to expect from any man. I think that the working hours should be more moderate, and that men should not be called upon to do what really no man ought to be expected to do.

The PREMIER (Hon. S. W. Griffith) said: The Minister for Works when he spoke had not, he believed, read the letter to which the hon. member for Fortitude Valley has referred. That letter appears to be an attack on the Traffic Manager. I had not seen it myself either. I find it contains charges against an officer which seem to require investigation. As far as I can make out, the writer was dismissed by the Traffic Manager—for what reason I do not know. The Government cannot, at a moment's notice, give an explanation in respect of a matter of that sort. As for the question put by the hon. member for Wide Bay, it is not possible for the Government at the present time to say what they are prepared to do with respect to the widow of the man who was killed. The circumstances of the case have to be inquired into; and when it is discovered who was to blame for the accident, and all that can be known is known, the Government will do what they think right in the matter.

Mr. SCOTT said: I do not wish to say much on this matter, but to mention that there are a number of reports current with regard to this accident. Some people say that the only person cognisant of the running of this special train was the station-master; others say there were five people who knew it, or ought to have known it. Apart from this particular case, I think it would be well if the public could know whether steps are taken to let drivers and guards of trains, as well as station-masters, know when special trains are running on their lines.

Mr. MOREHEAD said: I should certainly be inclined to pay more attention to the letter to which notice has been directed by the hon. member for Fortitude Valley, but for the position in which the writer is placed, and the terms in which his letter is couched. It appears that he was dismissed by the officer against whom he makes his charges; and if he has grounds for those charges they should certainly have been made before this deplorable accident happened. As it is, his action bears evidence of malice, and I should not be inclined to pay much attention to it.

Mr. KATES said: I think the discussion has been productive of some good. In the first place we have had an announcement from the Government that they intend to construct a second line from Brisbane to Ipswich; and secondly, we have become aware of the fact that a man employed by the Public Works Department, engaged from half-past 6 in the morning till half-past 10 at night, and having to attend to thirty-three trains during the day—an efficient servant of thirteen years' standing, known to be sober, obliging, and kind to all who came in contact with him—was paid a salary of £165 a year. I hope the Government, when framing the Supplementary Estimates, will consider

whether men called upon to work sixteen or seventeen hours a day in responsible positions do not deserve more than £165 a year.

Question put and negatived.

MARYBOROUGH SCHOOL OF ARTS BILL—THIRD READING.

On the motion of Mr. BAILEY, this Bill was read a third time, passed, and ordered to be transmitted to the Legislative Council, by message in the usual form.

SESSIONAL ORDER.

The PREMIER said: I ask permission to make an amendment and repair an accidental omission in the motion of which I have given notice, by inserting the words "unless otherwise ordered" after the word "session." The motion will then read—

1. That during the remainder of this session, unless otherwise ordered, this House will meet for the despatch of business on Friday in each week at 3 o'clock p.m.
2. That the sittings on Friday morning be suspended.
3. That Government business do take precedence on Thursdays, in addition to the days on which precedence is now accorded to it.

The only matter to which I propose to address myself, after what took place on Thursday evening, is the question of sitting on Friday morning. As far as I have been able to learn, it would be extremely inconvenient for a great many members to sit on Friday morning; and if the business is such as not to occupy more than two hours and a-half in the afternoon we can adjourn at 6 o'clock. I think, on the whole, it will be better to leave the motion as it stands.

Question, as amended, put.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH said: I see, on looking at the sessional order as passed, that Friday is at present a Government day. The Government have Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday, and now they ask for Thursday, so that they will have the whole week. When the hon. the Premier spoke to me about it the other day, I understood that Friday was to be for private business.

The PREMIER: Of course; it is an oversight.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH: The Monday sitting had better be rescinded. The proposal of the Government, as I understand it, is that Government business shall take precedence on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays; that we shall not sit on Mondays, but that we shall sit on Fridays, for the disposal of private business, if there is any.

The PREMIER said: With the permission of the House, I will further amend the motion so that it will read in this way:—

1. That during the remainder of this session, unless otherwise ordered, this House will meet for the despatch of business on Friday in each week at 3 o'clock p.m.
2. That the sittings on Monday and on Friday morning be suspended.
3. That Government business do take precedence on Thursday, in addition to the days on which precedence is now accorded to it, and that the order that Government business do take precedence on Friday be rescinded.

Question, as amended, put and passed.

CROWN LANDS BILL—COMMITTEE.

On the Order of the Day being read, the Speaker left the chair, and the House went into Committee for the further consideration of this Bill.

Question—That the following words—"The decision of the board on a rehearing shall be final," at the end of new clause 19, be omitted—put.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he thought the phraseology of the clause was not absolutely correct. He referred to the words, "upon the application of any person aggrieved." The word "aggrieved" signified that the injury had been done.

The PREMIER: There is an amendment to the clause.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he was aware of that; but he simply pointed out that the clause assumed that a person had been aggrieved.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH asked what the Government intended to do with regard to the amendment that had been moved, and also with regard to the amendment of the hon. member, Mr. Donaldson, which bore upon it?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. C. B. Dutton) said the amendment of the hon. member, Mr. Donaldson, was pretty fully discussed at the previous sitting, and the Government were not prepared to accept it.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH said, what about the amendment now under consideration? He had been informed that the Government had accepted it. Was that so?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is not.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he must again call attention to the 1st line of the new clause—"On the application of any person aggrieved." Who was to decide that any particular person was aggrieved? Surely not the person himself! It would be for the Governor in Council to decide; and the clause should read, "Any person who considers himself aggrieved."

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said he did not see any difficulty in the phraseology. A man would not make a complaint unless he considered himself aggrieved, and it would be for the board to decide whether he was aggrieved or not.

The PREMIER said the matter had been fully explained the other night. Admitting that the board might make a mistake, the Government thought there should be power to refer cases back to them for reconsideration—a power analogous to that which existed under one of the Railway Acts, which provided that persons aggrieved by the decision of the railway arbitrator with respect to damages might apply to the Governor in Council to have the matter referred back to him for reconsideration. The thing was often done, and he supposed the arbitrator reviewed the case on its merits. A division was taken the other night on the question whether the reference back should be compulsory or optional on the Governor in Council; and the majority decided that it should not be compulsory, probably concurring in the argument that, if made compulsory, it would take away all meaning from the reference back. As the clause stood the Minister was bound to exercise his discretion, and in doing so he no doubt, to a certain extent, acted as a court of appeal; but the matter went back to the board for review. It was not proposed that those rehearings should be continued indefinitely, otherwise there would be no finality in the proceedings. The Government therefore proposed that the decision of the board on rehearing should be final. The motion was first made by the hon. member for Bowen, to omit the last line of the new clause, so as to allow as many rehearings as might be desired; but that was withdrawn in order to allow another amendment to be proposed in an earlier part of the clause, and was afterwards again moved by the hon. member, Mr. McWhannell. That was how the matter now stood; and the Government were of

opinion that the words should remain, on the ground, as already explained, that there must be an end to disputes somewhere.

Mr. DONALDSON said it had been pointed out previously by the hon. member for Bowen that if the clause was not amended by the omission of the words it would be useless for him (Mr. Donaldson) to move his proposed amendment on the next clause. The Premier's reply was, "We propose to omit that."

The PREMIER said he had certainly not used those words, and he corrected the mistake immediately, as the hon. member would see if he looked a few lines further down in *Hansard*.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he thought the Premier was mistaken in saying that the provision in the Railway Act for referring cases back to the arbitrator was very often availed of. He had never heard of such a case, and he scarcely thought the Premier had. It was a thing of the rarest possible occurrence. People did not care about being sent back to the arbitrator, when they well knew that it would make no difference in the result.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that what was considered on the other side one of the strong points made by the Minister for Lands was that the Bill would relieve the Minister at the head of the Lands Department of a great deal of responsibility, and enable him to escape charges of corruption that might possibly be made against him. But by the proposed new clause the responsibility still rested with the Minister, and he might still be the centre of corruption, because it would rest with him to advise his colleagues that any particular case should or should not be remitted for rehearing. He should like to hear from the hon. gentleman some explanation on that point.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said the Minister had no power to reverse the decision of the board. All he had to do was to ask them to reconsider cases that they had already dealt with. The board's decision would then be final, whatever the Minister's view might be. If the losing party in a case felt himself aggrieved, he represented it so to the Minister for Lands; and the Minister for Lands, by the Governor in Council, would remit the case to the board, when it would be dealt with on the same conditions as before, with the addition, possibly, of fresh evidence. That was all the Minister had to do in the matter, and his responsibilities were neither increased nor diminished thereby.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he thought the hon. gentleman was wrong. As to there possibly being new evidence forthcoming on the rehearing, that was not shown in the Bill. But surely it bore on the face of it that, if the Governor in Council remitted the matter to the board for reconsideration, the Governor in Council must come to the conclusion that the board had come to a wrong decision; otherwise they would not remit the matter for reconsideration. Surely that was too palpable for the Minister for Lands not to have seen!

The PREMIER said he would point out again—he thought he had pointed it out in answer to the hon. member for Warrego just now—that the hon. gentleman seemed to think that the decision on this amendment must necessarily dispose of the amendment which he desired to propose. That was not so at all. The hon. member must not think that it was intended to exclude the amendment which he desired to propose in the succeeding clause. There was no inconsistency in allowing a person who desired to appeal from the board, either to ask that the matter might be referred back to them, and so settle it, or to appeal to the Minister for his decision. There was no inconsistency in the two schemes. The Government did not agree to the both schemes; they believed in one scheme and they did not believe in the other, and they were not prepared to accept the amendment.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he would ask the hon. the Minister for Lands one question, which he was sure that hon. gentleman would answer; it was, whether he conceived it possible that two men could possibly disagree? Did not the hon. gentleman tell them, when he introduced the Bill, that he did not think it possible that two men could disagree; that it was not within the range of possibility? Now the hon. gentleman appeared to have changed his views in that direction, and to conceive it possible for a disagreement to take place between the two members of the board. He would like to ask the Minister for Lands whether he would be good enough to inform him (Mr. Morehead) if he was right in forming that opinion, and what conclusions induced the hon. gentleman to change his former opinion?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said that matter could be pretty well dealt with when they came to discuss the next clause. He did not mind saying, in answer to the hon. member for Balonne, that he was certainly still of opinion that the two men were not likely to disagree. Therefore there was no harm in referring the matter back to them if no possible harm was likely to arise, and there was no harm done by leaving it in the clause.

Mr. NORTON said that if the two members of the board would not disagree, there was no good in sending the matter back to them for reconsideration; and if they did agree, what was the good of sending it back to them? In regard to the provisions of the Railways Act, he thought the hon. the Premier must be mistaken in saying that cases were often referred back to the arbitrators. He (Mr. Norton) did not think that they were referred back very often; he had not heard of a case himself, and the hon. member for Townsville could not mention one case where that had occurred. In the Railways Act there was a provision by which a case might be referred back to the arbitrators, but there was also a provision by which they might refer it to the Supreme Court provided the amount awarded was over £500; and he thought in most cases, if those who were concerned were not satisfied with the award of the arbitrators, they would very much prefer going to the Supreme Court to sending it back to the same men who had already tried it, because it was a sort of condemnation of the award which had been already given. And it was not likely that the board, unless some fresh evidence was brought to show that they had not given a right judgment, would alter their decision. He did not like the clause at all.

Mr. SCOTT said he understood that if the amendment was carried it would not prevent the words coming in—"The decision of the board shall be final." If that were so he did not see what was the good of the amendment of the hon. member for Warrego at all. The whole gist of his amendment was the appeal from the board to the Minister; and although the other amendment would not prevent it being put, it would stultify the Bill if it were carried. One said, "The decision of the board shall be final," and the other said, "The decision of the Minister shall be final." It appeared to him that such a thing could not be done. He did not understand what would be the good of referring a case back to the board. The Minister for Lands said that these two gentlemen could not disagree. The probability was

that the one would take one view and the other another; and one might give in to the other on the first hearing of the case, and the other might yield to the other on the second hearing. That was the only way in which he could see it might be done. One was best in the one case, and the other was best in the other, and that was the case when both disagreed. He thought if the last line of the new clause were left out, and the amendment of the hon. member for Warrego put in, it would be a very much better way of putting the matter.

The PREMIER said that there was no inconsistency in the matter at all. Supposing a man considered himself aggrieved by the decision of the board, and supposing the scheme of the hon. member for Warrego were carried, and also that of the Government, he would say—"Shall I appeal to the Minister or to the board? I have got a lot of new evidence. Who is most likely to do me justice?" The man might wish to go back to the board, or to the Minister, and if he had a choice he would take his choice. If the man went to the board their decision would be final, or if he went to the Minister his decision would be final. In either case, when the matter had been reconsidered once, there would be an end of the matter.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH said the 19th clause provided for a person aggrieved to appeal to the Minister, which was exactly what the amendment of the hon. member for Warrego provided. But the Government proposed one state of things to follow the appeal, and the hon. member (Mr. Donaldson's) amendment provided that another state of things should follow. That was plain on looking at the matter. The hon. the Premier should have told the hon. member (Mr. Donaldson) at once that the amendment was inconsistent with the clause under the consideration of the Committee.

The PREMIER said that the hon. member for Mulgrave was wrong. There was no inconsistency whatever. In Canada a man might take his choice of appeal to the Supreme Court or to the Privy Council. The man could do what he liked; he would do whichever he thought would be most advantageous. Sometimes there were appeals to the one and sometimes appeals to the other. If the scheme of the hon. member for Warrego were carried, the man might appeal to the Minister, and, supposing he did, the decision of the Minister would be final, and there was an end of it; or, under the scheme of the Government, he might ask for the matter to be referred back to the board. The man might prefer the latter, thinking that he might get better terms than he would get had he appealed to the Minister. If the man preferred to go to the board with additional evidence their decision was to be final. Where the inconsistency was he did not see. The only inconsistency could be removed by a verbal amendment. There was nothing inconsistent in the two principles; there might be a verbal amendment required to prevent any formal inconsistency. The Committee were now asked to determine whether the decision of the board should be final or not.

Mr. CHUBB said there was this, which had not been pointed out by the Premier: The amendment contemplated an appeal after a rehearing by the board. In fact, there would be three hearings—two by the board and one by the Minister. If the clause stood as it was, and the clause of the hon. member for Warrego were carried, one would be inconsistent with the other unless it was contended that there should be an appeal to the Minister after the two hearings by the board.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH said there was no doubt that the two amendments would be inconsistent. The Premier, in trying to make his explanation clearer, distorted his own amendment, which he treated as if it were an appeal from the appellant to the board. It was an appeal from the board to the Minister, and the Governor in Council would then have the power of deciding. When that appeal took place a certain course of events would follow. Those events would not follow which were laid down in Mr. Donaldson's amendment, if the Minister chose.

Question—That the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the clause—put and passed.

New clause, as read, put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS moved that the new clause 20 stand part of the Bill.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH said the hon. member for Warrego had a clause to propose before that of the Minister for Lands, and he therefore rose to a point of order. The hon. member, Mr. Donaldson, had intimated his intention of proposing a clause which should come before that just proposed, and the point of order was that if the hon. member, Mr. Donaldson, wished to go on with his amendment he should have precedence. He asked the ruling of the Chairman upon the point of order. The proper time for the hon. member for Warrego to move his clause was before the hon. Minister for Lands moved his.

The PREMIER said, speaking to the point of order, the hon. member for Warrego had given notice that he desired to amend the new clause to be proposed by the hon. Minister for Lands. The Minister for Lands had risen to propose that new clause, and the hon. member for Warrego could of course propose the amendment of which he had given notice. There was no point of order; the Minister for Lands was in possession of the Chair.

Mr. SCOTT said the hon. member for Warrego proposed to omit the clause just now passed, not the clause which was just coming on.

The PREMIER: Read on.

Mr. SCOTT said the hon. gentleman proposed to omit new clause 19, and propose a new clause 20.

The CHAIRMAN: I understand the hon. member for Warrego is to move an amendment on the Minister for Lands moving new clause 20.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS moved the following new clause 20:—

> If the members of the board certify to the Minister that they are unable to agree upon any question, the question shall be referred to the Minister for decision.
>
> Every question referred by the board to the Minister, the decision upon which ought to be pronounced by the board in open court, shall be heard and determined by the Minister sitting in open court at Brisbane with the assistance of the members of the board, and his decision shall be pronounced with the reasons thereof in open court.
>
> The decision of the Minister shall be final.
>
> For the purposes of hearing and determining any such question the Minister shall have and may exercise the same powers as are hereinbefore conferred upon the board.

The object of the clause was that if the members of the board disagreed the matter might be referred to the Minister, who should finally decide the question.

Mr. DONALDSON proposed that the following words be inserted at the beginning of the clause:—

> Any person aggrieved by the decision of the board may appeal to the Minister from such decision.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said the effect of the amendment would be to neutralise

entirely the object and intention of that portion of the Bill. The object of that part of the Bill was to take the power of dealing with questions of that kind entirely out of the hands of the Minister. They could very easily understand that a man having a very bad case, and being aggrieved at the decision of the board, would immediately appeal to the Minister to reverse the decision of the board. He would turn to the Minister for assistance, and do what the special object of that portion of the Bill was intended to prevent—endeavour to bring political influence to bear upon the Minister in order to induce him to take a different view of the case from that taken by the board. The very intention and object of the Bill was to put the Minister beyond the possibility of such influence; and to consent to the introduction of such an amendment would be to forego the express intention of that part of the Bill which was to take that power out of the hands of the Minister.

Mr. DONALDSON said the hon. Minister for Lands was quite right in his statement of the object of the amendment. The object of the amendment was that, in the event of the land board becoming too arrogant and not giving a proper decision, any aggrieved party should have the right of appeal to the Minister. He thought that was a very proper position for the Minister to occupy. Before being called upon to give any decision, all the evidence would have been first filtered through the board, and he would have all the documents before him to enable him to say whether he should confirm, vary, or reverse the decision of the board. The whole matter would be so thoroughly put before him that he would at once be able to see whether the board had actually come to a proper decision or not. He granted that honest men might be appointed on the board; but that was no guarantee that they would not make any errors. It was quite possible that they would make errors, and it was because of that, and because their position was so thoroughly irresponsible and impregnable, that he chiefly objected to them, as they might become so arrogant as to give but little consideration to their decisions. There was no means whatever of getting them out of the position they occupied, and that was his chief reason for wishing to have their decisions reviewed. If the members of the board knew that their decisions were likely to be reviewed by the Minister they would probably be much more careful in giving those decisions. With regard to the practice in the other colonies, in no other colony in the Australian group did the Minister for Lands occupy a position such as that proposed in the Bill. If some such amendment as he proposed were not introduced, the Minister for Lands would be a mere puppet in the hands of the land board. All he would have to do would be to accept certain recommendations of the board. Surely, he might go the length of accepting such action as would be imposed by the amendment he proposed! They saw an example of the danger of such a board only the other day. A dangerous power was now in the hands of the Chief Engineer for Railways in New South Wales; and only within the last few days a deputation had waited upon the Minister for Railways, and asked that all cases going before the Engineer-in-Chief should be referred to arbitration. Probably, in most cases persons would be prepared to accept the decision of the Chief Engineer for Railways; but the danger was that he went upon the evidence of the officers in the department, and it was a well-known rule that officers of departments backed each other up. If the members of the board came to a certain decision, in nine cases out of ten the Minister would accept that decision. The hon. member pointed out the other evening that on the eve of an election, if matters were left in the hands of the Minister for Lands it would be quite possible for him to make a proposal to reduce the rents, and by that means be able to gain some seats in the country. If the reduction of the rents tended to popularise the Minister for Lands it could be managed as easily with the board as without one, and there would be no more danger in the one case than in the other. He hoped the Minister for Lands would take a favourable view of the amendment and allow it to pass.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said he was sure the hon. member who had just spoken must recognise the fact that an amendment of the kind he proposed must utterly neutralise that portion of the Bill. The real object and purpose of that part of the Bill was to take the settlement of any question of that kind out of the hands of the Minister. The Government had provided what he thought a better substitute for the direct action of the Minister, in the appointment of a board. The hon. member must certainly recognise the fact that the majority of cases which would come before the Minister as appeals from decisions of the board would be very bad cases, and would be brought by the aggrieved party in each case, in the hope that he would be able to bring pressure to bear upon the Minister for Lands to get him to reverse the decision of the board. They should not cast the suspicion of being influenced in that way upon the Minister. Whether such influence was used or not it would be possible for the Minister for Lands to be open to the suspicion of being influenced and acting corruptly; and it was to prevent that very thing that the Government desired to remove that power from the Minister. For that reason the hon. member would see that the Government could not accept his amendment, which, if adopted, would render the clause proposed entirely valueless.

Mr. DONALDSON said he failed to see that rascality rested altogether with the Minister for Lands; and he failed to see that the Minister for Lands could not be honest and give an honest decision. He gave the present Minister for Lands credit for very honest intentions in regard to the Bill, but he would not always be Minister for Lands, and surely he should give his successor credit for some honesty. If the Minister for Lands had not sufficient backbone to resist any attempt to influence him in the way suggested by the hon. gentleman he would not be fit for his position. He should scout such attempts to influence him. He did not anticipate the difficulties which the Minister for Lands did in that matter. He did not think that any cases would come before him in which there were not good grounds for action, as the case would first of all be tried before the board and the proceedings made public, and that would in a great measure prevent any improper application being made. In New South Wales, a case in the first instance was heard before the local land board, and afterwards before the Minister; and in that colony they did not anticipate any great danger from that. He thought that if the clause were passed in the form of his amendment it would be better for all parties. He maintained that if the amendment were not passed now it would be called for in a few years.

The PREMIER said he would point out, in answer to the hon. member, that the functions performed by the land boards to which he referred were different from those to be performed by the land board here; the scheme was quite different. An appeal to the Minister as proposed would simply be an appeal from the board's decisions on assessing value.

Why should there be an appeal from the board to increase the value from £200 to £500, for instance? In matters of policy the Government should be the judges; but in matters of value he thought that some independent person should be employed. Could a single instance be given in which the Minister was entrusted with the duty of assessing the amount of money to be paid by the country? There was no instance of the kind, as he pointed out the other evening. Supposing a Minister was called upon to fix rent or compensation during a general election, what an extremely inconvenient position it would be for him to have to sit in open court and decide appeals from persons on whose influence perhaps two or three seats would turn? Supposing also that a Minister, during a critical time in Parliament, was called upon to say what amount of money some members should get, because, as he had said, those appeals would be a matter of money: would it not be extremely inconvenient for a Minister, during such a critical time? Supposing he reversed a decision of the board in favour of some of his own supporters—would he ever be able to shake off the imputation that he had reversed that decision, not on the merits of the cases, but because he wanted to obtain the support of the parties? That was not a remote danger, but one that was very likely to arise if there were an appeal to the Minister. In every other matter involving policy there was already an appeal to the Minister, because no recommendation of the board would take effect until it had been approved by the Governor in Council; but he did not think there ought to be an appeal to the Minister in a matter of value.

Mr. CHUBB said the argument of the Premier went to show that even according to the amendment of the Minister for Lands the appeal to the Minister would be on a question of value. If questions of policy were allowed to go to the Minister, what would be referred to him unless questions of value? The Premier had told the Committee that nothing would be referred to the Minister except questions of policy; but, under the Minister for Lands' amendment, the board would be enabled to refer anything to him. If it was only to be a question of value, where was the distinction between a case being referred to the Minister by an aggrieved person, and a case being referred to the Minister by the board supposing they did not agree? The hon. gentleman had told them that the two schemes were inconsistent; but if a man could go to the board why could he not go to the Minister on a question of value, if the board had power to refer it to the Minister? The hon. gentleman in charge of the Bill seemed to assume that there was necessarily corruption in a Minister for Lands, and that no Minister for Lands could be got who would be honest enough to conduct the department without corruption. Shakespeare somewhere said that an honest man was "one so guileless in himself that he suspected no wrong in others." He did not know whether he had given the quotation exactly. At all events, the hon. member seemed to think that no honest man could be got capable of performing the duties of Minister for Lands. Surely that ought not to be the record of the colony for the past twenty-four years; if so, it was not very creditable to it. He did not think there was any real distinction between the amendment proposed by the Minister for Lands and that proposed by the hon. member for Warrego.

Mr. MOREHEAD said the view taken by the Premier reminded him of one of the Greek philosophers, Diogenes, who went about with a lantern trying to find an honest man. The Minister for Lands had admitted, or asserted, that in the Lands Office, so far as his knowledge was concerned—and it had extended now over some months—it was almost impossible to keep pure in such an atmosphere of corruption. How did he expect to get out of that difficulty by appointing two almost irresponsible men, who, he assumed, would be kept out of an atmosphere of that kind? Did he suppose that if the Lands Office in the past or at present—which he (Mr. Morehead) denied—was a nest of corruption, that the appointment of a board would better matters at all? He (Mr. Morehead) thought they were much more likely to have corruption exposed with an individual to represent the Lands Department in that House, than by the appointment of a paid and almost irresponsible board. The hon. gentleman had landed himself in a dilemma in that respect. The amendment moved by the hon. member for Warrego would be a great improvement to the Bill; all the weight of argument had been in favour of it.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH said that the Premier had thrown new light on the matter in his last speech. The hon. gentleman had given a colouring which he (Hon. Sir T. McIlwraith) had not seen before, and put upon the matter an interpretation which he did not think could be sustained. He said that the reason why the proposal to make an appeal to the Minister was resisted was because all matters that would come before the board would be matters of rent and assessment. That argument could not be deduced from the Bill. In a dozen different clauses there were most important duties put upon the board, which did not concern either rent or assessment, and yet with regard to which there was no appeal to the Minister. For instance, there was clause 24. The commissioner had to divide the run, and the board to choose which half was to be resumed by the Government; and from that there was no appeal. Yet the Premier had the conscience to tell them that an appeal had been provided for in everything except matters of rent and assessment. If there was an appeal to the Minister on that point, where was it? Certainly not in the Bill. He could point out a dozen different instances of the same kind. He quite agreed with the hon. member that a Minister should, as far as possible, avoid temptation. If the hon. member would look back he would see that, wherever political power was to be attained by his own party through undergoing temptation and yielding to it, they had yielded. He would take some other occasion to go into that matter rather fully. There was not the slightest reason, for example, why a Minister should have gone out of the ordinary course and taken responsibility on himself in connection with certain Government contracts; and yet he did so just at a time when the temptation was very great, from the fact that political help at that moment would do the Government a great deal of good. There were plenty of cases in which the Government had rushed into temptation, and yet the Minister for Lands made out that the main point of the Bill was that it kept the Minister for Lands out of temptation. But if the Minister for Lands had not backbone enough to avoid anything of that sort he was not fit for the position. The compliments which were showered on the Minister for Lands by his colleagues for his honesty were becoming fulsome. He did not think the Minister for Lands was honest at all, or he would not have talked so much about it. He did not mean to say that the hon. member was a dishonest man, but that when the records of his office came to be raked up he would be found to have done more for his party by twisting the laws than any of his predecessors. The Minister for Lands might

thank God that the Bill would keep him out of temptation; but it was not their business to pass a Bill to keep a Minister out of temptation. What they wanted was a man who would walk manfully up to temptation and overcome it; not a man who was always complaining about temptation and saying he was a sinner. They knew he was a sinner. If the Minister for Lands was not fit to sit in court and decide an appeal from the board, he was not fit for the post at all. But the principal argument in favour of the contention made by the supporters of the Government was that brought forward by the Premier—that the only decisions which would not come before the Minister were those which dealt with rent or assessment, and in all those cases provision had been made for appeal to the Governor in Council; but that was not borne out by the Bill.

The PREMIER said that, when he stated that in all cases except those relating to rent and assessment there would be an appeal to the Minister, he distinctly excepted some comparatively unimportant matters. He had expressly mentioned the division of runs as one exception, and the hon. member spoke of that as one of a dozen he could name; but he challenged the hon. member to name the dozen exceptions. The matter had been discussed over and over again since they had gone into Committee on the Bill; he had made the same speech on it at least five times.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Why do you not get someone else to make them?

The PREMIER said that what he complained of was that it was only by degrees he was instilling into the hon. leader of the Opposition what the Bill was about, although he knew the hon. gentleman was apt enough to understand a thing when he wished to do so. As to the exception in regard to the division of runs which had been instanced by the hon. member, that did not seem to him to be a very desirable matter to leave to the Minister. It was distinctly a matter of value, just as essentially so as what might be a very much smaller matter—whether £100 or £200 was to be paid as compensation for a resumed woolshed. Another exception to which he (the Premier) had referred was the confirmation of applications to select, and another was the decision whether a man was injuriously using his grazing right so as to prevent anyone taking it up after him. All the really important matters with regard to which there was no appeal were questions of value. The hon. member had said that they did not want to pass a Bill to protect the Minister for Lands against his own corruption. It was not for protection against the corruption of the present Minister for Lands that the Bill was introduced; as the present Minister would not always be Minister for Lands. They had seen many Ministers for Lands in this colony, and in other colonies, and they knew the effect of giving them absolute discretion, to be used for the advantage or prejudice of their political friends or opponents. It had been shown over and over again that it was extremely undesirable to give them that discretion. The amendment would to a very great extent have the effect of exposing the country to that danger, and so the Government could not accept it. He knew the hon. member who proposed it did not take that view. That hon. gentleman had seen how the appeal to the Minister had worked, under different circumstances, in Victoria; but he should remember that the Minister there was one of a board of several, and that the appeal was by no means simply to the political head of the department. In New South Wales, too, the appeal in their present Bill was a very different system; and he did not think it was a desirable one to follow here. They had not been eminently successful in New South Wales in the administration of their Land Acts, and he did not know that the scheme of the new Bill there, would be very desirable to adopt. A comparison between that measure and the one they were now discussing here was certainly very much in favour of the Queensland one.

Mr. NELSON said he could not make out what position the Minister for Lands would occupy under the Bill. In the last clause discretionary power was given to the Governor in Council to refer a matter back for reconsideration by the board; and when it was proposed by the Opposition side to make it imperative the Premier objected on two grounds. The first was that it would take away the whole effect of the new clause, which was that the Governor in Council should have the power of considering a case in which an appeal was made from the board. The Minister for Lands, on the other hand, told them he did not want them to have any such power—that all such power was to be taken out of the Minister's hands. The second objection the Premier took was that it was contrary to usage to make anything imperative upon the Governor in Council. It struck him (Mr. Nelson) very forcibly at the time that it was a great pity the hon. member did not bring forward that legal dogma at the time they were discussing the pre-emptive right, because that was decided by the members of the other side purely on the ground that it was permissive. If it was always permissive with the Governor in Council to do anything referred to them, the whole argument fell to the ground. Was the Minister to be responsible, or the board? If he was to be responsible, then that should be distinctly stated. First they were told that the Minister had every power, and then that he had none and that the board were to do everything. The Premier had told them that the functions of the board were to determine questions of value; but he had altered that since and said there would be a few other things for the board to attend to. All through the Bill it would be found that the board had the power of a landlord. He could point out, for instance, at least nine cases where they would have the power to evict a tenant.

The PREMIER: They have no such power. The Minister alone can do that.

Mr. NELSON: Well, they could forfeit the lease.

The PREMIER: No; only the Governor in Council can do so.

Mr. NELSON said, then he really could not understand the Bill. The Governor in Council had power to do anything and everything on the recommendation of the board; and if the board recommended, did it not amount to the same thing as acting? He could not understand where the board and the Minister began, and where they ended. According to his reading of the Bill the board was virtually, if not nominally, the landlord. That was the whole scope of the Bill. They had to exercise the functions of a landlord; and who evicted except the landlord? He really thought some amendment or other would have to be made before they went any further, so that it might be thoroughly understood what the functions of the Minister and the board were to be, if the Bill passed.

Mr. MELLOR said he wished to say a word with reference to the amendment. He had been rather inclined at first to go with the hon. member for Warrego in his amendment; but when he came to think more seriously over the question he was more disposed to vote against it, and for the reason that they should, if possible,

keep the Minister beyond the power of political influence. They knew that, in the past, Ministers had been interviewed on different occasions, and the influence of political parties had been brought to bear upon them, in consequence of which they had been obliged to concede to the wishes of those who asked for their favour. He might mention a case in point, and a good many hon. members might remember it. He referred to the Barolin lands. The commissioner had told him, at the time he valued the land as first-class pastoral, that the decision of the Minister was that it should be second-class pastoral. But the commissioner acted conscientiously. He said, "These are, according to the decision of Minister, only second-class pastoral lands, and I shall not be able to find any first-class pastoral lands in the coast districts, because these are decidedly the best lands open to selection at the present time." The effect of the Minister's decision was that, in the whole of the coast lands in the Wide Bay district, there was no first-class pastoral land. The only first-class pastoral land was on the Darling Downs and in the western part of the country. He could point out other cases in which political influence had been brought to bear upon Ministers, and he thought it was desirable, if it could by any possibility be done, to remove the Minister from temptation.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he really could not follow the hon. gentleman. He started by saying that in the first instance he agreed with the amendment of the hon. member for Warrego, and then he went on to say that he had seen good reasons to alter his opinion; but the hon. member did not give to him (Mr. Morehead), nor, he believed, to any member of the Committee, a good and sufficient reason for his sudden conversion. If any amendment had been introduced in the Bill to really protect the liberty of the individual, that provision was contained in the amendment of the hon. member for Warrego (Mr. Donaldson). There was nothing unfair, or unjust, or improper in the amendment. It was simply giving fair play to everybody—to the individual as against the board, and possibly against the Crown. The hon. member for Wide Bay could hardly have read the original clause, or rather the amending clause—because most of the clauses now were amendments introduced by the Government on their own measure—and the substituted clauses proposed by the hon. member for Warrego. The difference between the two were material, but material only in the direction of giving to the individual fair play and no favour as against any injustice he might be subjected to at the hands of officers of the State. The clause, as proposed by the Minister, said:—

> "Every question referred by the board to the Minister, the decision upon which ought to be pronounced in open court, shall be heard and determined by the Minister sitting in open court in Brisbane."

In what way did the amendment of the hon. member for Warrego go beyond that? The difference between the clauses was certainly important, but it was important only in the way of allowing justice to be given to an individual who might consider himself aggrieved, and who probably would be aggrieved. If he was not really aggrieved, the decision was left in the same hands as in the other cases. Surely the bulk of hon. members who wanted to see even-handed justice given to all members of the community who might come under the Bill, would support the amendment, and allow those people the right of appeal from the board to the Minister. There could be no argument brought forward against the amendment. Every argument was in its favour. Every argument was in favour of that right being given, no matter who the man might be—a small agricultural farmer or a large grazier. Let them have the right to appeal to the Minister against the decision of the board; it had been given under certain circumstances, and he thought it should be given under all circumstances. The infallibility of the board had been abandoned; the absolute agreement of the board had been abandoned; the power of appeal had been admitted in a modified form, and it should be granted right through. He hoped hon. members would pause before they rejected the amendment proposed. It was an important question, and one that deserved consideration. Every individual in the colony might be affected, and they would be doing a great injustice to all classes of the community if they took away from them the right to appeal when they considered they had been treated in an unjust and improper way.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he thought the hon. member for Wide Bay had taken a very proper view of the matter. He was perfectly satisfied that if the Committee accepted the amendment they might as well sweep away the land board altogether.

Mr. NORTON: And a good job too.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that the consequence of the adoption of the amendment would be that if any man had his run divided, and his improvements valued by the board, it would cost him nothing to appeal to the Minister, and if he happened to be a friend of the Minister the appeal would be heard, and the land board would become of less value than a cypher. He hoped the Minister for Lands would not accept the amendment.

Mr. PALMER said that, judging from the "brilliant silence" displayed by the other side, the amendment of the hon. member for Warrego appeared likely to share the fate of all previous amendments that had been moved. Indeed, it was scarcely worth while to introduce amendments when there was no chance of carrying them. He agreed with the amendment, and could not see that it was at variance with the principle of the Bill. With regard to the appeal to the Minister for Lands in the New South Wales Land Bill, that did not appear in the Bill as originally introduced, but was the result of the debates in the House. The Bill as originally drafted provided that there should be a land court, with the Minister for Lands as chairman; and it was finally decided to refer appeals to the Minister for Lands alone. With regard to insinuations of corruption, he failed to see that the board would be less open to them than the Minister for Lands, in spite of the hon. gentleman's contention to the contrary.

Mr. JORDAN said that, while he considered the amendment neither unjust nor unfair, he held that it was entirely inconsistent with that part of the Bill, which was the creation of a board, so that the administration of it might be removed from political influences. If that were done away with, the object for which the board was created was destroyed. He regretted that the Minister for Lands had gone so far as to allow an appeal to the Minister in any case, but he had gone quite far enough in that direction, and he hoped he would stop there, otherwise the object of that part of the Bill would be destroyed.

Mr. STEVENSON said they had just heard the Minister for Works advise the Minister for Lands not to adopt the amendment of the hon. member for Warrego, because if he did they might as well do away with the land board altogether. He would remind the Committee that the Minister for Works gave his colleague some very similar advice during the debate on the second reading, when he said that if his colleague inserted the homestead clauses he might as

well throw the Bill aside altogether. But, notwithstanding that advice, the Minister for Lands had amendments ready to reinstate the homestead clauses, and he hoped the Minister for Works' advice would be no more listened to in the present case than it was in that. The hon. member for Warrego had supported his amendment with sound arguments, and the only reply of the Minister for Lands to those arguments was that the object of that part of the Bill was to relieve the Minister from responsibilities and to enable decisions to be given unbiassed by political influence. But surely that was a very inconsistent argument, because that very clause gave power to the Minister in certain cases. He could quite understand why the hon. member had brought the amendment forward. The board was a most peculiar one—a board of two—and although the Minister for Lands could not conceive of their disagreeing, there was a very great chance indeed of their doing so; and they would be most likely to disagree in important cases where political influence would come in. Those cases would be referred to the Minister, whereas the poor selector was to be told there was no further court that he could appeal to, which would be very unjust. In accepting the amendment there would be no giving way on a matter of principle on the part of the Minister for Lands. One principal argument in favour of the amendment was, that if it was adopted there would be fewer appeals to the Minister than was otherwise likely to be the case; people would be less likely to be aggrieved than under the clause as it at present stood. It would make the board very careful indeed if they knew that a man, whoever he was, had the right of appeal; that any selector had the right of appeal. It would make the board very careful indeed before they gave their final decision. He should be glad to support the amendment of the hon. member for Warrego.

Mr. NORTON said he must confess that he was surprised at the opposition which the amendment of the hon. member for Warrego had received from the Ministerial side. They had heard from the hon. the Minister for Works that if the amendment were passed it would be inconsistent with the Bill, and would have the effect of abolishing the board altogether. But the hon. the Premier had told them when the previous clause was being discussed that it was not inconsistent—that one amendment was not inconsistent with the other. Therefore, if one was not inconsistent with the other, it was not inconsistent with the Bill.

The PREMIER: That it was not inconsistent with the principles of the Bill.

Mr. NORTON: That one amendment was not inconsistent with the other, and was quite in accordance with the principles of the Bill. He thought a slight departure like that proposed might very well be agreed to. The Bill was nothing like what it was when it was brought in; and as for the Bill which was talked about before the Land Bill was introduced in the House, it was as different as any two Bills could possibly be. The Minister for Works talked in the same exaggerated way, about its having the effect of abolishing the boards, as he did about the homestead clauses on the second reading. He backed up his colleague in saying that the homestead clauses had worked a great deal of harm. The thing was preposterous. Not the slightest reason had yet been brought forward why the amendment should not be allowed. The only reason that had been given was that hitherto those men who were interested had not been allowed the right of appeal to a board at all. The Premier had just referred to an appeal under the Railways Act—or rather to the matter being referred back to the arbitrator. But that Act not only allowed every matter to be referred back to the board—though the hon. member did not say he knew of a case acted upon in that way—but it also provided for an appeal to the Supreme Court. There ought to be some appeal, either to the Minister or to the board; but under the present circumstances those who were most interested had no appeal at all. He was not one of those who believed that the board, however good its members might be, would be infallible. That the members would be nothing of the kind they all knew. Not a member of the Committee believed that the board would be infallible; they knew that those men must make mistakes, and there was no power to remit the case for appeal after their decision had once been given. He presumed that no Minister would take it upon himself to interfere with their decision unless in a case where he saw that a serious error was committed. He thought that, as the principle of boards had been agreed to by the Committee, some protection should be afforded to enable people to appeal against any arbitrary decision.

Mr. JORDAN said that the 19th clause, as amended, provided that any person aggrieved might appeal to the Minister, who would remit the matter for the consideration of the Executive Council as the way by which the matter should be reheard by the board. The Premier said there was nothing inconsistent with that in the permission which was proposed to be given by the amendment of the hon. member for Warrego—that a man should choose, if he thought proper, to appeal to the Minister instead of the board. That was what he understood the Premier said would not be inconsistent with the other. He did not say that it would be utterly inconsistent to refer any matter to the Minister. That was another question altogether. The thing was as plain as possible.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that the hon. member was somewhat in error, and if he would read the 19th and 20th clauses he would find a vast inconsistency. In the 19th clause he would find if he would read it—

> "Upon the application of any person aggrieved by a decision of the board, the Governor in Council may remit the matter to the board for reconsideration."

If the Government thought that an individual had been aggrieved by the board, they would express that opinion by remitting it to the board; and no doubt they would bow to the decision of the members, from which there was no appeal. But on the other hand, under the 20th clause, the members of the board had a much greater power. It did not say that their decision "may" be considered by the Government, but it said it "shall" be considered by the Government in open court. In the one case the board was to be sheltered; in the other case the unfortunate man who appealed against the decision of the board under the 19th clause might or might not have an appeal made to the board which tried him, and which would either endorse what they did before or be influenced by the Minister for the time being. That was exactly what the result would be. There could be no other result, and he was astonished that the hon. gentlemen on the Ministerial side could not see the cogency of the argument and the cogency of the clause itself as proposed by the hon. member for Warrego. There was nothing in it given to the individual that should not be given to him; he was only getting that appeal which he would be allowed in any civil action in the courts of the

colony. And that was to be refused by what was called the Liberal Government. A more—what a late member of the House would say—a more algerine proposal than theirs was never introduced in committee in any Bill. It was strangling the small man who could not appeal or who would not appeal under those conditions. If the man saw any chance of getting justice by an appeal to the Minister, or to the Governor in Council, he would do so; but here every hope was denied. There was no chance of getting justice. The man had no chance of getting justice when he appealed from the board, because the matter was relegated to the Ministry, and then it was for the Ministry to say whether they would remit it to the tribunal that had tried him. The Ministry could give no appeal. It was proposed in the amendment of the hon. member for Warrego that every appeal from the board to the Minister should be relegated to the Governor in Council. That was what was asked, and nothing more than that; and surely that was only what an individual was entitled to ask for from the State! He could get it outside the Land Bill by an appeal to the Supreme Court or to the Privy Council in England if he liked; but here he was to be debarred by those most stringent, monstrous conditions of the proposed liberal Land Bill. A more unjust and illiberal Land Bill, as far as those conditions at any rate were concerned, was never brought before a legislature. No such conditions were contained in any Act in the Australian colonies, and the Minister for Lands knew that as well as he did. The Minister for Lands would not accept the proposition of the leader of the Opposition to appoint local land courts, because he was afraid that justice would be administered to those men—that a fair thing would be done; and raised the most frivolous objections to that clause being passed—a clause which was perfectly in accord with the whole tendency of legislation in the self-government of this colony. The hon. gentleman knew that, but was pretending to shelter the Minister for Lands for the time being from being a corrupt man. The whole idea of the Minister for Lands was that the Minister for Lands must be a corrupt man; of course the hon. gentleman could judge himself. It was not for him (Mr. Morehead) to say what the Minister for Lands might be, though the hon. gentleman might evolve that idea out of his inner consciousness. He (Mr. Morehead) had no doubt about that. He appeared to have based his Land Bill upon the assumption that all legislators and Executive Councils and the Committee of the House were men who were necessarily corrupt; and therefore, feeling that, he had apparently sheltered himself behind the board—only half sheltered himself, because on some occasions he appeared to assert himself. On occasions when really there was a possibility or probability of a gross injustice being done to individual holders of land or leases in the colony, he let the board deal with it, and said that if an injustice was being done he would have no hand in it—he would let the board wash their own dirty linen; the injury might be done, but the Minister for Lands or the Government would have nothing to do with it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said the hon. gentleman was trying to be as offensive as he possibly could be; but he would not touch upon that, except to say that he did not intend to shirk any responsibility that might accrue from his office. His object was to prevent the possibility of a Minister for Lands appointed by the other side, it might be the hon. gentleman himself, being appealed to. He did not want to be at all personal; but he had a right to say that much. He had never shirked any responsibility yet. The hon. gentleman had said that there was some case in which they had departed from the principle of the Bill which admitted the right of appeal. There was no such case as appealing from the decision of the board, except in the case where the two members of the board could not agree. The hon. gentleman had also said that hon. gentlemen on the Government side did not seem to understand the purport of their own arguments. The object of the Government was this: to remove liability from a political Minister for Lands. That had been reiterated over and over again, and there was very little more to be said upon it. It was not a question whether a man shirked his responsibilities or not. He did not mean to say whether a Minister for Lands was better or worse than a board; but the position in which he was placed must, at all events, excite the suspicion of those persons whose cases he dealt with, simply from the fact of his being a political partisan. Members of the board would not be in that position; they were removed from political influence; and by that the Bill allowed, as nearly as possible with the machinery they had, a fair and honest administration of the law. So long as ever Ministers for Lands remained in the position of political partisans, no matter what perfect judgment they exercised in the discharge of their duties, there would be always a certain amount of suspicion. If he had a case, and the Minister for Lands gave an adverse decision on it, although he had himself considered it a good case, he should be very much inclined to attribute that decision to certain political influence. If that decision were given by men who were outside political influence, though he might know they were wrong, he should be satisfied that they had given a decision in accordance with the best of their judgment. That was the position in which he wanted to see the men who were to form the land board. But if a man were a politician, and gave an adverse decision, he should attribute it to some improper motives. But when that feeling was removed men felt that, whether they had been dealt with as they wished or not, they had been dealt with honestly from the point of view of the men who had his case in hand.

Mr. MOREHEAD said the Minister for Lands had told the Committee over and over again that the man who was Minister for Lands lived in an atmosphere of perjury, and must necessarily be corrupt, or subject, at any rate, to undue political influence. He had said he wished to get rid of that by appointing two members to a land board. He would like to know whether the hon. gentleman's political influence would come to bear upon him when he appointed those two gentlemen. Would he appoint two political friends of his own? The hon. gentleman had led them to believe that he had his weaknesses, and other Ministers for Lands had had theirs too. He would like to know from that hon. gentleman whether he would appoint political friends, and if he believed, as he (Mr. Morehead) did not, that all impropriety must emanate from men placed in high positions, either directly or indirectly. If the hon. gentleman admitted that, he would ask him whether they were to get really even-handed justice from men appointed by him; because he supposed the hon. gentleman would be the motive power in the appointment of any men under the Bill, as members of the board. They knew that the hon. gentleman had helped his friends before now. He put Mr. Golden, a man who was in no way entitled to the position in which he was placed, over the heads of many officers of the Civil Service, into a station of high emoluments and pay—much higher than his abilities deserved; and perhaps he might be one of those who were to be made commissioners;

probably a member of the board. The hon. gentleman stuck to his political friends, and his politics were also very bitter. He was part and parcel with that yellow pamphlet which was the most defamatory ever produced in the colony. The hon. gentleman was the most bitter politician who ever came into office, and he told them they were to expect absolute purity in the appointment of two individuals to the board. He doubted it very much. He doubted whether it was at all probable that a man, who was likely to be greatly embittered against those who dared to differ from him in politics or upon some of those wild theories which he had been forced to abandon by his hon. colleagues, could give a just decision, although he might give one according to his own lights, which was an honest one. He was not physically or mentally fit to appoint men to such positions, or to give appointments to persons under the Bill. The hon. Minister for Lands looked upon him (Mr. Morehead) with a jaundiced eye, and thought nothing but bad could come from him. The hon. gentleman might or might not be right; but he was only pointing out that the hon. gentleman was prejudiced, and possibly he felt that he might do what was not right, if he had not done it already; and therefore, in measuring other Ministers for Lands by his own bushel, he had come to the conclusion that all men were thieves and all men were liars. He had said already that he lived in an atmosphere of perjury, and that he did not consider that a declaration was worth anything. If he were wrong the hon. gentleman would correct him. In one of the hon. gentleman's speeches—the one in which he introduced the Bill—he said he did not believe in declarations or oaths connected with taking up land, or with anything to do with the work connected with the Land Office. The hon. gentleman seemed to have gone back from that, as he had sent any amount of circulars round requesting men to make declarations that certain country was stocked, and stating that if those declarations were made he would be satisfied. Could the hon. gentleman deny that? That was a strange diversion from the path which the hon. gentleman had set himself to follow. When they found such an erratic individual — to put it in the mildest way—at the head of the Lands Department, they should be very careful before accepting a Land Bill at his hands; and they should be more than careful when they found in the Bill before them the erratic nature of that hon. gentleman. The hon. gentleman had abandoned every principle upon which the Bill was based. The first principle of it was abandoned even before it was introduced. The hon. member had thundered round the country what the Bill was going to be. It was to be an embodiment of the Georgian system. Henry George was his god, and the being to be worshipped at that time. What did they find now? They found the Bill a little Georgy, though not very much. It was not to be all leasehold and no freehold now. The hon. member had abandoned every Georgian principle in the Bill, and night after night they were swamped with fresh amendments which the hon. member proposed in his own Bill. But when a really good amendment, in every way pertinent to the matter and nature of the Bill, was proposed by the hon. member for Warrego, the hon. gentleman said he would have none of it. He would have only his own amendments which he (Mr. Morehead) supposed were suggested and invented by the dummies on the other side, for he could not imagine a man of such fixed principles as the Minister for Lands inventing those amendments himself. He said that if the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Warrego had been proposed by a member on the Government side of the Committee it would have been accepted by the Government. There was nothing in it at variance with any portion of the Bill; but simply because the hon. member for Warrego happened to sit on the Opposition side of the Committee and support the minority, his most reasonable and pertinent amendment was rejected and contemned, and that in spite of the fact that the Premier himself had said the other night that he had no objection to it.

The PREMIER: You were not here.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he was there that evening, and he knew by the hon. member's denial that he must have said what he attributed to him the other night. The amendment of the hon. member for Warrego was simply an act of fair play to the individual as against the State. All that was asked was fair play for the individual as against the decision of a board, which unfortunately would appear, so far, to be thoroughly and entirely irresponsible.

Mr. JORDAN said that, if the amendment of the hon. member for Warrego were carried, any person feeling himself aggrieved would have an alternative of appealing either to the Minister or again to the board. With that alternative, there could be no doubt that the aggrieved person would choose to appeal to the Minister from the board.

Mr. MOREHEAD: And why not?

Mr. JORDAN said that if he did so the whole object of the appointment of the board would be destroyed.

Mr. MOREHEAD: If you read the new clause 20 you will find that there is an appeal to the Minister against the board.

Mr. JORDAN said that under the new clause 20, if the members of the board could not agree upon any question, they might refer to the Minister. That was a very different thing from an aggrieved person appealing to the Minister to reverse a decision of the board. He had no doubt hon. members opposite understood the matter quite as well as he did, only they found it convenient to misunderstand it.

Mr. NORTON said he quite agreed with the hon. member that hon. members on the Opposition side understood it. Anyone who had read or listened to the debates upon the Bill would see that the Opposition had taken a very great deal of trouble to understand it. Hon. members opposite knew very well that nearly all the discussion on the Bill came from the Opposition side of the Committee. They also knew very well that some members on the Government side were scarcely in the Chamber at all, except when they came in to vote in divisions. Something had been said about amendments from the Opposition side being rejected as a matter of course; but they carried their amendments in another way. For instance, those amendments which the Government had introduced, in connection with the omission of the homestead clauses from the Bill, had really come from the Opposition side of the Committee. When the Government found that they dared not refuse the amendments suggested from the Opposition side of the Committee they took care to adopt them before hon. members on the Opposition side could have an opportunity of proposing them. That was how it was done. The first two speeches made by the Minister for Lands were as strong against the admission of the homestead principle as any two speeches could possibly be. The Opposition saw very well the mistake the Government were making in abolishing the homestead clauses, and they pointed it out; and when the Government saw it was unpopular on their own side, and throughout the colony, they at once introduced amendments remedying that mistake,

and emanating from themselves, but really originating on the Opposition side of the Committee. That was the only way the Opposition could get in any amendments at all. It should be remembered that the members of the board would not last for ever. Another Government would sooner or later come into power, and members on the Opposition side were quite as much entitled and as competent to make appointments of that kind as hon. gentlemen opposite. He could bring up a case which hon. members would hear of by-and-by, and which the public would give the Government very little credit for when the facts became known; a case in which the Minister for Works, with the assistance of the Premier, enabled a man to receive certain moneys after having already given a full receipt. The Government entitled him, by their action, to receive several hundred pounds for which he had already given a full receipt. The appointment to which he referred was that of a contractor to sign full receipts for the payment of certain moneys. It did not refer particularly to work that had been completed; it referred to two contracts, one of which had been absolutely completed. That was a matter which was likely to be brought under notice on an early day. With other hon. members, he was sick of the insinuations against the Opposition side of the House; they were getting full of them, and they were not going to submit to statements from the other side. They were not going to stand those eternal insinuations. Hon. members on the other side would find that the Opposition would have something more definite to say on a subject which the public would take great interest in, and in which the members of the Government would get very little sympathy from the public. Now, there were lots of charges they might bring up if they liked—plenty of matters they allowed to go by in silence, because they did not wish to be continally insinuating charges. The action of the Government in the case where the late Sergeant-at-arms sold his property, through the Colonial Treasurer, for double the amount he had asked for it twelve months ago was a matter with regard to which they might have made very gross insinuations against the Government if they chose.

The PREMIER: Go ahead!

Mr. NORTON: The hon. member said "Go ahead"; but they did not care to adopt the hon. member's style of fighting. It was a disgraceful thing that hon. members on the Government side of the Committee should always be attacking that side with insinuations of corruption. Now, with regard to the amendment of the hon. member for Warrego, it was a most reasonable one, and, in his opinion, proposed an amount of fair dealing which could hardly in justice be refused. As he said before, he had not heard any solid argument against it. It was quite true that the Premier and the Minister for Lands had asserted that the object was to leave those matters solely to the board, and take them altogether out of the Minister's hands; but he could not understand why they should be removed entirely from the Minister's hands. He did not see what likelihood of corruption there was if the Minister had to decide publicly on matters of that kind, which had been publicly dealt with before. Even if he were inclined to be corrupt, there was very little probability of his being so; because it would be so palpable that he would simply be hunted from his office. Apart from that, he (Mr. Norton) would ask where all this protection of the country against responsible Ministry was to end. Was the power of deciding what matters were to be brought before the court to be taken from the Attorney-General? That was a power which could be used for political purposes. He remembered one case which had been discussed in the House, where a man, who previous to the accession of the present Government had been put on his trial for some charge, was defended by the present Attorney-General, and when the present Government came into office the case was dropped. He did not wish to impute any wrong-doing—the case was to a certain extent explained afterwards; but there were sufficient facts brought forward to show that in similar cases a gentleman in the Attorney-General's position could protect a man whom it was his interest to protect. There was no Minister who had not his responsibilities, and there was not one from whom the responsibilities ought to be taken. If they were to take every possible responsibility from the Minister for Lands, they must logically go on and interfere with the responsibility of every other Minister, and remove every possible temptation to act in a corrupt manner. The position of every Minister was the same, though they might not all have opportunities for corruption to the same extent as the Minister for Lands; if they wished to be corrupt they could find opportunities in some way or other; and if they were to take every responsibility from the Minister they were sapping the foundation of that responsible government of which they all professed to be so proud.

The PREMIER said he was not going to answer the numerous vague insinuations the hon. member had made without venturing to give them any form. It had just occurred to him to compare the proposition now made with the possibility of making a similar proposition in connection with the Irish Land Bill, which had been referred to more than once during the debate. Suppose for a moment the possibility of the suggestion being made in the House of Commons that an appeal should be granted from the Irish Land Court to the Chief Secretary for Ireland?

Mr. MOREHEAD: There is no analogy.

The PREMIER: There is a perfect analogy. In Ireland the matter is first investigated by a local tribunal.

Mr. MOREHEAD: They are not Crown lands.

The PREMIER: Would any hon. member draw the picture to himself of anyone having the temerity to make such a proposition, or the reception he would have met with, in proposing that there should be an appeal from the Land Court to the Chief Secretary for Ireland?

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Ours are Crown lands.

The PREMIER: An hon member said they were dealing with Crown lands. That was true enough, but suppose an appeal had been proposed to be given to a committee of landlords. That would have been a similar proposition to the present one. The proposal to get a political officer to determine the question of value, whether between the Crown and the tenant, or any other person, seemed to him to be entirely untenable. The real argument made use of was that, the country having been in the habit of trusting so much to the Minister of the day, it was not desirable to take that trust from him; but he (the Premier) had endeavoured to point out, on more than one occasion before, that it had never yet been recognised as part of the functions of a Minister of the Crown to determine questions of value. So that what was proposed by the Minister for Lands was not by any means an innovation; but the amendment of the hon. member for Warrego was an innovation, proposing, as it did, to give to a Minister the power of exercising a function he had never

yet exercised. That was the difference. The clause did not take away from the Minister any function which he had hitherto exercised ; but the amendment proposed to throw upon him the exercise of a function entirely outside the proper duties of his office.

Mr. JORDAN said he had not said that hon. members opposite understood the Bill as well as hon. members on his side. He had said that hon. members on the Opposition side understood that particular part of the Bill just as well as members on his side, but affected for their own convenience to confuse two things together, which they knew were distinct and separate. The two points were the proposal to give the board power to appeal to the Minister, and the power of any individual to appeal to the Minister. Those points were quite distinct, and hon. members knew they were distinct. He would not pay them so bad a compliment as to say that they understood the Bill as well as he did. He would not pay them so poor a compliment. Of course they understood it better than he did. The hon. member for Port Curtis had misunderstood him when he supposed that he (Mr. Jordan) had said hon. members opposite understood the Bill as well as he did. If they looked at the history of the administration of the land laws of this colony from the beginning, he thought they must be convinced of the value of the principle contained in the Bill as far as the board was concerned. The very first Land Act passed in Queensland would have served the colony for all time, he believed ; certainly it would up to the present time, and for another hundred years to come. It was wisely conceived, admirable in every respect, dealing fairly with all classes—the pastoral tenant, and those whom they wished to settle in hundreds and thousands upon the land as farmers. He called it the Land and Immigration Act, because it provided for the emigration of a middle class. That was a wise Act, but it was badly administered—politically administered—corruptly administered, to the ruin of the colony. The Act of 1868 was not a wise Act, he thought. It was not well framed, but, apart from that, it was badly administered. Under that Act hundreds of thousands of acres of the finest lands of the colony were dummied in violation of the Act, and the dummying of the land was winked at—permitted, he might say ; condoned, at all events, if not encouraged. That was because the Act was badly administered. The present Bill was an admirable one, but if they had no board he was very much afraid it would be badly administered. He believed they had at present as honourable a man as Minister for Lands as any man in the colony—as honest a man—a man whom he believed even hon. gentlemen opposite would trust with untold gold ; and he did not say that any Minister who had been in the Lands Office had been dishonest. He should be very far from saying so. He should be ashamed of himself if he said so ; but he did say he had observed the way in which the colony had been mismanaged for the last twenty-five years, and that mismanagement had much of its origin in the mismanagement and political administration of the lands of the colony. It was proposed that this part of the Act should be administered entirely by the board, and that there should be no appeal to the Minister. The appointment of a board, as he had said, he thought most valuable—a most important principle, and the most useful principle of the Bill. He rather regretted that the Minister had yielded slightly in that matter, because some hon. gentlemen on his side were afraid that if the administration of a certain part of the Act were entirely, and exclusively, and solely, in the hands of two men, by-and-by some question would arise upon which those two men would differ. The hon. Minister for Lands, when he was asked the question, point-blank, by the hon. member for Balonne—who rejoiced in putting very funny questions to the hon. gentleman—whether he did not believe that those two gentlemen were likely to disagree, answered, "No, they must agree." Of course they must, if they were only two ; but if they allowed an appeal—if they provided machinery encouraging the board to appeal to somebody else—then there would be no necessity for their agreement ; but if there was a necessity that they should agree, then they would agree just in the same way in which a jury was obliged to agree.

Mr. MOREHEAD : They do not sometimes.

Mr. JORDAN : Then they were locked up without even the comfort of a pipe of tobacco, and compelled to agree. Their aim was that those two gentlemen should realise their responsibility.

Mr. MOREHEAD : Would you lock them up ?

Mr. JORDAN said he believed they would agree. He rather regretted what had been done, still there was no harm in it. He could certainly not agree with the proposition of the hon. member for Warrego, which involved one of the main principles of the Bill.

Mr. NELSON said the hon. member for South Brisbane was very much exercised as to whether hon. members of the Opposition understood the Bill. He did not think the hon. member need trouble about that. The hon. member laid down the principle that although the board should have the power to appeal to the Minister, the tenant or intending tenant—the man who wished to take up a selection, or take up land, or who thought he had a right to take up land, and who had any grievance against the landlords in the shape of the board—should have no right of appeal. That was what he understood the hon. member to say, but he was open to correction. It seemed an absurdity on the face of it. Then the Premier drew an analogy between their land laws and the recent land legislation with regard to Ireland. He (Mr. Nelson) did not profess to be particularly well up in Irish legislation, but he knew that the church lands were put into the hands of commissioners, and that the main principle upon which they acted was exactly the contrary to what that Bill proposed. That principle was to make every tenant a freeholder, and on nine-tenths of those lands they had succeeded in doing so. It was the same in every other country in Europe—in France, Flanders, and particularly in Germany, where the State had interfered not to create a lot of leaseholders, but to make freeholders and nothing but freeholders. In Germany they had done everything in their power to encourage that most desirable thing ; they had gone so far as to find people the money with which to become freeholders. They had established State banks for the purpose, and after the borrower had secured his freehold he repaid the purchase money to the State. Where the Premier's analogy failed, and where his argument told most strongly against his own contention, was that the Irish land laws did exactly what the present amendment aimed at doing. They were passed for the purpose of dealing between the tenant and the landlord—to give the tenant a chance as against his landlord. In this colony a board was to be their landlord, for they knew not how long—a board armed with immense powers, many of them very arbitrary ; and yet it was contended on the other side that it would be wrong if the poor selector had a right of appeal to some higher authority—

to the Minister at the head of the department, who was himself responsible to the people. What did the Premier want? The hon. gentleman said it would be absurd if the Irish Land Acts had provided that there should be an appeal from the commissioners to the Chief Secretary or somebody else. But that was the very thing they did provide. They provided an appeal, because there were disputes between the tenants and the landlords; and they provided courts to which an aggrieved tenant could go and state his case and get justice done. That was what they asked for now. He (Mr. Nelson) had before stated that he was altogether opposed to the board, because the relationship between landlord and tenant could only work well when there was a full sympathy between the parties. As soon as ever there was any want of co-operation between them the system broke down. But the Committee were compelled to accept the board on account of the strength of the other side, but, seeing that it was to be forced upon them, it was their duty to reduce its obnoxiousness to a minimum, because, otherwise, instead of being a blessing to the country, it would be the direct opposite. Ultimately the appeal must be to the Executive, who represented the people of the country. The Minister for Works, in his usual way, took it for granted that only the present pastoral tenants would be affected; but the Bill applied to all—not only to the pastoral tenants but to the selectors and small leaseholders who would be called into existence. It would affect them all for years to come, and he asked, was it reasonable that they should give to two men—particular friends of the present Minister for Lands, who were to be appointed by him, and who would hold office for the term of their natural lives—those immense powers without some mode of appeal against them? No such despotic power could be granted by any people who had been accustomed to live under responsible government. He did not think the Committee were wasting time over the amendment. The part of the Bill they were now considering was the most important part of it, and if it went through they would be tied down and would have to submit. He asked hon. members on the other side to seriously consider what they were going to do. The powers to be placed in the hands of the board were enormous. It had not only to determine values, but to do everything which a landlord could do with his tenants, with even more arbitrary authority—except in one respect. No matter how bad the season or the state of the markets might be—and the selector had to take those things into consideration, and if dealing with a landlord could appeal to him and make an arrangement with him—no matter how those things might be, the board was compelled to raise his rent 10 per cent. or 15 per cent. every five years—it might be 50 per cent. or 100 per cent. for all they knew. But as to reducing the rent in bad times, or under any other circumstances, they had no power whatever. The principal power the board had was that, if a man did not keep up to the conditions of his lease, they would kick him out and take all his improvements and everything else he had put on the land.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said the principle to which the hon. member (Mr. Nelson) objected was to his mind the greatest recommendation of the board. Where a man had made an absolute bargain with the State, the board would see that he kept it. They would not let him off through any favouritism or political influence. They formed the machinery by which a man would be kept to his bargain. A great failing in their previous land administration had been that men had been allowed to break their bargain with the State. Without the board, mercy might be granted to one man and not to another, and it was absolutely necessary to prevent the sway of political influence in matters of that kind. The hon. member for Warrego had used that argument in reference to himself (the Minister for Lands), and the leader of the Opposition asserted that he had shown favour to his political friends. He repudiated altogether the imputation that he had been guilty of anything of the kind in any form. However, he said that it might be done by the best of men. Men were often influenced unconsciously themselves, and he desired it should not be so. If a bargain were made with the State it should be adhered to, and he believed that the machinery framed in this Act would ensure that result.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that the great Napoleon had said, "Scratch a Russian and you will find a Tartar." They had found a Tartar in the Minister for Lands, who had told them that the Bill was framed to provide that no man should go whining to the Government; that no rent should be reduced; that no assessment should be reduced; that it was intended that the Bill should be so constructed that no concessions—no matter how adverse the circumstances might be to the tenant—that no concessions should be given. Had the hon. gentleman acted up to that during the brief time he had been in office? Had not the Minister for Works told them that the Minister for Lands had promised concessions to someone on the Darling Downs? He did not blame him. Had not the Minister for Works promised and boasted that he had got concessions from his colleague to farmers at Dalby and elsewhere for not having paid their rent? Had not the Minister for Lands consented to that? And yet the hon. gentleman got up and told them that he wanted a Bill passed of so strong a character that no matter what adversity might have occurred, or what depressions might have taken place with regard to the produce that might be produced from the agricultural or pastoral industry, that he or those who would succeed him—or the board he or his successor might nominate—would say "We will give you nothing." Nothing more brutal was ever passed by the worst of Irish landlords than had been propounded by the Minister for Lands that night. If that commended itself either to the hearts of the Committee or to the men of the colony he was very much mistaken in them. The hon. member certainly made those remarks that night.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Be honest before you are generous.

Mr. MOREHEAD: The hon. gentleman might be honest. He did not know. The hon. gentleman certainly was not generous. He did not ask him to be generous; he asked him to be honest. And in common honesty it would be the duty of the State, as of any other landlord, when he saw a tenant, from any circumstances utterly beyond his control, come to such a position that he could not pay his rents—the Minister would only be honest in not carrying out the bare letter of the law. He had found that justice and generosity could go hand in hand; that men might be both just and generous wlthout doing any injury to the body politic. Over and over again—not only by individuals, he thanked God, but by the State—not only by the last Government, but by every one that preceded it—where the Government saw there was a case where a judicious concession might be made, not only without injury to the State, but with benefit to the State, that had been done. But the Minister for Lands told them that he wished a law passed to forbid any concession whatever being made by the Government. He

(Mr. Morehead) had never heard of a more brutal policy—he used the word advisedly—enunciated by a Minister of the Crown in that House; and he maintained that no such brutal policy had been enunciated inside the Imperial Parliaments when the dominant party ruled Ireland with an iron hand. He would not deal—because it would be dealt with by others more competent than he—with the utter nonsense spoken by the hon. the Premier with regard to the analogy he attempted to draw between the position taken up under the present proposed Bill and the position taken up under the Irish Land Act. He would not have risen to speak had it not been for the unparalleled language made use of with regard to the Bill by the hon. the Minister for Lands.

The HON. SIR. T. McILWRAITH said the demands made by the Government in order to carry out their scheme were that Ministers—without attributing to them corruption—were necessarily subject to influences that other men would not be; that political pressure would be brought to bear against them that was not brought to bear before; and that the scheme was to be placed outside all political bias whatever. The scheme so far was good, if it could be done; but the Minister for Lands himself had delivered the strongest argument against the scheme that had been heard in the Committee. The hon. gentleman told them that he would have the appointment of the men. That meant that it was to be a political board.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I did not say anything of the kind.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: He gets angry now.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said he understood the hon. gentleman to say so, and before he rose to speak he took the precaution to consult his friends as to whether he had misapprehended the hon. gentleman. If he had, he accepted his not very courteous denial. He understood the hon. gentleman to tell them distinctly that the great advantage was, that not they on the Opposition, but they on the Ministerial side would have the appointment of the board.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I said nothing of the kind.

Mr. MOREHEAD: You did say so.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: The hon. the Premier brought forward an argument, which to him was certainly one of the most daring kind, in bringing an analogy between the present Land Bill and the Land Act passed by the present Government in England with regard to Ireland. The hon. gentleman said, would not the English Government have been considered fools if under that Act they had provided that there was an appeal by either the landlord or the tenant to the Chief Secretary for Ireland, in case that either party did not agree with the judgment given by the court? Were the questions in any degree alike, he (Hon. Sir T. McIlwraith) might try to trace out the analogy; but the analogy, to be one, ought to be like this:—Suppose the lands in Ireland were Crown lands; that they had been badly administered for generations; and that both tenant and landlord and public generally were crying out against the administration of the lands; that there had been a department presided over by the Chief Secretary to administer those lands; that the Ministry brought in an Irish Land Bill in the English Parliament to provide that in future all those disputes should be settled outside, and that no account whatever of the Minister who was responsible for the due administration of those lands should at all be taken—that there should be no appeal granted to either party—would not the question be asked, what was the use of that department that had been administering the lands? The department was administering the lands subject to the responsibility of Parliament; and if they said they would not in the future have the administration of the land interfered with, they would have said—"You have given the strongest possible reason for the abolition of this." That would have been at once the answer. There was no analogy whatever, as pointed out by the hon. member for Northern Downs. That was a case where there were tenant and landlord on the one side. There were no such cases in Queensland. The board would actually be the landlord, and they should certainly provide some means by which a decision could be appealed from. What ran through the whole of the arguments of the hon. Minister for Lands was this—he could not get out of his mind one class of tenants. He believed thoroughly that those lands which were to be subject to the Bill would go into the hands of the big pastoral lessees the same as lands before, and that they would be all squeezable men, to whom he could say, "We will have our pound of flesh." He could not contemplate anything at all like the selectors they had up to the present time. He had admitted himself, with regard to the selectors on the Downs, at Allora, that it would have been a wrong thing in his position to have been exacting. Did he mean by that to say that it would have been a good thing for the State if a harder-hearted man than he was had been in the place? That was what his argument meant. In future the matter would come before the board, and the hon. member said there was a hard-and-fast line laid down from which the board could not deviate. Surely the hon. gentleman could see that it was a good thing to have a Minister who, under some circumstances, could give way to impulse and pity when circumstances justified it. Why should it be made a hard-and-fast rule that the board were not, under the Bill, to show any consideration to cases similar in their nature to those of the Allora selectors? The Premier had always said that nothing at all but matters of price should come before the board, and he had challenged him to point out any case. As he had said before, he could point out a dozen cases. Take, for instance, clause 22, as follows:—

> "No decision of a commissioner shall be final unless and until it has been confirmed by the board; and the board may confirm, vary, or reverse any such decision."

All the powers given to the commissioner were subject to be varied or reversed by the board. Where was the right of appeal there? Still the Premier said that with some slight exceptions the whole of that power was completely in the hands of the Government. It was virtually in the hands of the board, and the Minister for Lands was doing his best to make it a political board; and it would be a political board just as much as the hon. member was a strong political partisan.

Mr. KATES said allusion had been made by the hon. member for Balonne and the leader of the Opposition to the Allora farms. The hon. gentleman forgot to say that those farms had been charged £5 per acre, whereas under the Bill the land would only be 3d. per acre. There was no difficulty for the farmers to pay 3d., but it was very hard to pay £5. The hon. member for Northern Downs wanted to make out that the Bill was leasing pure and simple. It was no such thing, as after the expiration of ten years the selectors of the agricultural area had a right to make it freehold. With regard to the amendment of the hon. member for Warrego, he could not make out whether there was to be

a board or not. If the board were to submit to the decision of the Minister for Lands, he did not think they would find gentlemen willing to submit to that. The board might be honest and the Minister might be corrupt, or perhaps both ways. For those reasons he thought the amendment of the hon. member for Warrego should not be accepted, and he should vote against it.

The PREMIER said he would say one word in answer to the hon. member for Mulgrave, who asked—Where was the appeal from the board? With regard to the matter referred to in the 22nd clause there were two classes of cases to be determined by the commissioner. The approval of applications to select was one. At the present time confirmation by the Minister was purely mechanical, and it was proposed that that should be left to the board. The other matter referred to was with respect to failure in complying with the conditions of leases. On that there was an appeal to the Minister, because, although the decision of the commissioner had to be confirmed by the board before it could be acted upon, nothing could be done except by the Governor in Council, on the recommendation of the board.

Mr. STEVENSON said he was glad that the hon. member for Warrego had introduced the amendment, because they had had some of the most extraordinary opinions given as to how the board should be constituted. The hon. member for South Brisbane gave a most extraordinary reason why the board should be appointed, and why there should be no appeal from it. He even went further than the Minister for Lands, and said that, if the Minister for Lands had not given in so far as he had, the board would have had to come to a decision, because there would have been no appeal. What would have been the result if two men were arguing the matter out and could not come to a decision upon it? One would say to the other, "We will toss for it," or "We will have a game of euchre for it." That would be a nice kind of thing, and there would be no appeal. The hon. Minister for Lands, in replying to the hon. member for Northern Downs, said that the very reasons brought forward by the hon. member for Northern Downs why there should be no appeal from the board, were the very reasons why he should have no appeal to the Minister, and they were that any man could go to the Minister whining. It was as much as to say this: "I will appoint a board. I do not care how low you have got, what the drought has been, how bad the times have been, whether you are to be ruined or not: I will appoint a board without soul or sympathy, and to their decision you must submit. It is no use coming to me. I was 'got at' once. A poor man came to me once with a horse and cart, and said he would have to sell them to pay his rent, and I had not the heart to take the rent out of him. But now I shall appoint a board with neither soul nor sympathy, and make them get any money that man has got, and if he cannot pay his rent he will have to give up his land." That was what they had got out of the Minister for Lands that night. He hoped the hon. members on the other side who professed to be Liberal members would not submit to pass a clause like that after the explanation given by the Minister for Lands. Before he had done with the question he would like to ask the Premier why he had changed his mind on that question since the last night they discussed that Bill. The discussion was as clearly as possible stated in *Hansard*. His hon. friend the member for Bowen said:—

"He would point out that, according to the new clause of the Minister for Lands, the decision of the board was to be final. The hon. member for Warrego did not wish it to be final."

And the Premier distinctly interjected, "We propose to omit that."

The PREMIER: I did not.

Mr. STEVENSON: It is in *Hansard*. If the hon. member did not mean that, what did he mean? He certainly said that.

The PREMIER: I did not say so.

Mr. STEVENSON: Then I suppose the hon. member must have been misreported again.

The PREMIER: The correction appears two or three lines lower down.

Mr. STEVENSON asked, did the hon. gentleman mean the interjection, "I said so to raise the question as to the amendment"?

The PREMIER: Yes.

Mr. STEVENSON said he would like to know what was the use of *Hansard* if it was to be of no use in quoting the speeches of the hon. Premier. They might as well chuck it into the waste-paper basket, as the Minister for Works proposed they should do with the Bill if certain things were not done. The Premier said one thing one night, and next night he came down and told them he never said so, simply because, in the meantime, he had changed his mind, or one of his party told him he had said what was wrong. However, they had had a most extraordinary gospel laid down for them that night by the Minister for Lands, and one which he hoped hon. members of that Committee would not support.

Mr. NORTON said the hon. member for Darling Downs referred just then to the price charged for the Allora lands. Perhaps it would be better if he read for the hon. member what he had himself said in 1879, when the question was under discussion. On the 903rd page of the 30th volume of *Hansard* he found the hon. member said:—

"As to the price to be charged for these lands, hon. members must not think that intending selectors wished to get them for a low figure. He believed they would be prepared to give something like £4 per acre if the Government would give them time to pay."

That was what the hon. member said at one time. At page 908 he found the hon. member said:—

"He agreed with the hon. member at the head of the Opposition, that five years was not long enough to allow selectors for payment. He should himself prefer extending the time to twelve or fifteen years, as the longer the time allowed for payment the more money people would be prepared to give for the land. It would have been better, perhaps, if the Minister for Lands had inserted a clause classifying the land, and valuing it, say, up to £5 an acre."

He thought he had a pretty good recollection of some statement of that kind having been made by the hon. member. That was why he asked him the question as to what value he himself put upon the land at the time. The hon. member had before now complained of the price put upon those lands. He (Mr. Norton) thought the price was too high, but if there was anyone to blame it was the hon. member himself who had encouraged the Government to put that high price upon those lands, by what he had said concerning them. The Minister for Lands had referred to that matter too, and had told the House that he had not the heart to compel the selectors on those lands to pay their rents, although they had not paid up for years. He thought that was a strong argument against the soulless board which the hon. gentleman proposed should compel the selectors to pay whatever rent was owing for their land. The rent fixed for the Allora lands he considered a high rent from the first; but under this Bill, not only might they have a high rent from the first, but

here was a provision by which, after the first ten years, and subsequently after every five years, the rent must be raised.

Mr. KATES said the hon. gentleman had quoted from what he had said in 1879. At that time he was prepared to give £4 an acre.

Mr. NORTON: £5.

Mr. KATES said that was if they were to be allowed fifteen years in which to pay. But the Government of the day indiscriminately valued the land at £5 an acre.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS of the Opposition: That is not the case.

Mr. KATES said it was the case. Land which was not fit for cultivation was valued at £5 an acre. It should be remembered they had good seasons then as well. And whereas they could get £5 per head for cattle then, they could not get 30s. per head in bad seasons. Under this Bill the matter was quite different. The selector would be charged only 3d. per acre for 200 acres, which would amount to 50s.; whereas 200 acres at £5 per acre meant a rent of £100 a year. If those people had only to pay 50s. for 200 acres there would be no demand for relief, as they would not need it. That was where the excellence of the Bill came in. If after ten years the selectors chose to make a freehold of the land they had rented they were enabled by the Bill to do so.

Mr. MOREHEAD said the hon. member appeared to have assumed that the rent to be fixed would be the minimum rent mentioned in the Bill. He did not know whether the hon. member had made any special arrangements. Possibly the board had been already appointed, and had arranged to let the hon. member have his land at 3d. per acre. But the board might make it any amount more than 3d. per acre. That was only the minimum amount fixed by the Bill. Further than that, when he mentioned that it would be easier for those men to pay 3d. instead of 1s., he altogether omitted to state that that money was portion of the payment for the land becoming freehold. The hon. member's memory was fitful; certain things he remembered, while other things he forgot. At all events they ought to congratulate themselves on the expedition which was to characterise the future administration of the Land Act; that was, if the lines upon which it was to be worked were the lines laid down by the Minister for Lands.

Mr. DONALDSON said that the strongest argument in favour of his amendment had been used by the Minister for Lands. Several hon. members held the idea that if there was an appeal from the board to the Minister it would be mainly by the present pastoral lessees. He denied that. The Act provided that selections as well as the present pastoral leases had to be renewed by the board, and it was quite as possible for them, in giving their decision, to make errors with regard to one as with regard to the other, if not more so. The position of the pastoral lessees now would be that of the selectors by-and-by. In ten years the objection that had been pointed out on behalf of the pastoral lessees would be the same in regard to selectors at that time. The hon. member for Darling Downs, Mr. Kates, had said that there was not the slightest difficulty with regard to selectors paying for land hereafter; but he (Mr. Donaldson) wished to remind the hon. member that the minimum rent was fixed by the Act. In all probability, perhaps in two, three, four, or five years, it might be 5s. an acre. How did they know what the opinion of the board would be? They might be of opinion that it should be 5s., and consequently they might fix that rent. But then selectors would be in a better position than the pastoral lessees, for their land was taxed before it was applied for, and therefore, if the rent was too high, the land would not be taken up; and the board, reconsidering the matter, might reduce the rent. But that was not the case with the pastoral lands; the board might take an extreme view with regard to them also. The Premier and the Minister for Lands were of opinion that it was not wise to put into the hands of the Minister the power to fix values; but he disagreed with them. It was quite possible, he contended, for the board to make errors with regard to values or rentals. In all disputes that had taken place hitherto throughout the various colonies, they had usually been referred to arbitration; and certainly, if his amendment was rejected—as he had reason to believe it would be—he hoped the Committee would not give to the board all the powers which the Bill provided; but that a proposal for the introduction of arbitration would be made, so that the final decision would not rest with the board. His chief reason for speaking now was to disabuse the minds of hon. members of the idea that he was speaking on that question entirely as a pastoral lessee. He took considerable interest in it; and he was perfectly satisfied that in future an amendment similar to his would be required.

Question—That the words proposed to be inserted be so inserted—put; and Committee divided, as follows:—

AYES, 16.

Sir T. McIlwraith, Messrs. Macrossan, Norton, Archer, Stevenson, Morehead, Govett, Donaldson, Chubb, Nelson, Palmer, Moreton, Stevens, Ferguson, Wallace, and Lissner.

NOES, 25.

Messrs. Rutledge, Miles, Dickson, Griffith, Dutton, Sheridan, Groom, Brookes, Aland, Buckland, Jordan, Isambert, Bailey, Foote, T. Campbell, White, Grimes, J. Campbell, Beattie, Kates, Mellor, Salkeld, Midgley, Higson, and Foxton.

Question resolved in the negative.

On the motion of the PREMIER, subsection 2 of the clause was verbally amended to bring its terms into conformity with the previous clause.

Mr. CHUBB moved the omission of the words "the assistance of the" in the 2nd subsection. There was, he said, nothing to show what part the members of the board were to play in the hearing before the Minister. It might be that the Minister would sit above as judge, and the members of the board sit below. No doubt it was intended that they should act as assessors, but the clause did not exactly say so; and he thought the words he specified should be left out.

The PREMIER: We have no objection.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. NORTON said there was one matter which he would like to have explained. The selector who took up a selection and did not fulfil the conditions might be ejected by the board.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, not by the board.

Mr. NORTON: Can he not be ejected?

The PREMIER: By the Government on the recommendation of the board.

Mr. NORTON: The matter he wished to refer to was the ejection, however effected. There was no provision under the Bill by which a selector might forfeit his selection—willingly forfeit it. He could refuse to pay his rent, and, in the event of his refusing to pay it, he might be ejected from his selection, and the whole of his improvements could be forfeited. He could

be excused, he took it, for his rent; and it appeared to him that if the board chose they could go on excusing payment.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is a very unlikely thing.

Mr. NORTON said it was very unlikely, but it was very wrong that they should have the power to do so.

The PREMIER: The 105th section deals with that.

Mr. NORTON said he referred to the matter because he was not sure about it. It was a question that might be raised by-and-by, and it was as well to call attention to it now. He presumed that if a selector failed to occupy his selection the board might compel him to pay rent, and might sell off all his property for that purpose. It was a very undesirable power for the board to have. It was most undesirable that they should have the power to persecute a man in that way. There should be some provision by which any man taking up land, when he found the conditions under which he took it up were harder than he intended, should be entitled to forfeit.

The PREMIER said the point did not arise at the present juncture, but if it was thought desirable, a clause might be put in to the effect that a lessee might, on payment of arrears, surrender his selection. He never heard of any instance where such a surrender was refused, but a provision of the kind he mentioned would meet the hon. member's suggestion.

Mr. NORTON: The Government would not have the power to do it.

The PREMIER said the Government had the power. What he understood the hon. member to mean was that it was possible the Government might refuse to accept the surrender of a selection. He never heard of a Government refusing to do so. There were many cases in which the tenant had been willing to surrender either for his own good or that of the neighbourhood. However, a new clause would meet the difficulty.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said, according to his reading of the clause as it now stood, the decision must be given in Brisbane, and nowhere else.

The PREMIER: By the Minister.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN asked why the board should not have power to sit in Townsville or Rockhampton, instead of being obliged to conduct all their business in Brisbane? The whole administration of the land laws was to be centralised in Brisbane. The Minister had the power now to go all over the country arranging and getting information. Why should people be compelled to come to Brisbane to have justice done?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said the court might sit in any other part of the colony. He did not think it desirable that the Minister should be a travelling judge. It was quite enough for the Minister to deal with cases on which the board could not agree.

Mr. STEVENSON said if the Minister was travelling up north, and the board at Rockhampton or Townsville could not agree in a certain case, surely it would not be compulsory upon him to give his decision in Brisbane, and drag all the witnesses down there and put the country to such an expense as that would entail, instead of holding the court on the spot?

Mr. KATES said the Minister might allow the board to sit all over the colony when occasion arose.

The PREMIER said it was impossible to go back and amend the clause, as they had passed a subsequent amendment, so that he would not discuss the subject: but let hon. members imagine the Minister for Lands and the members of the board travelling all over the colony! How would the business of the department be conducted in Brisbane? He did not think it would be desirable.

Mr. STEVENSON said they got the information now that the whole of the work was to be done in Brisbane.

The PREMIER: Nothing of the kind.

Mr. STEVENSON said it was centralisation, pure and simple, that was now proposed. No matter whether the Minister was travelling north or not, and no matter whether he could settle disputes on the spot and with less cost to everybody, the cases were all to be brought to Brisbane.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH said the Minister for Lands had not met the argument of the hon. member for Townsville at all fairly. He said, why should a Minister be required to act as a travelling judge? That was not proposed, but what was objected to was that the Minister was prevented from sitting anywhere except in Brisbane. That was a very strong objection. No matter how advantageous it might be for the Minister, and for the board, and for the witnesses, that the case should be decided in Townsville, or perhaps out at Roma, the Minister was bound to hold the court in Brisbane. The Minister ought to have power to hold the court where it was most convenient to himself.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said it was a very immaterial point, and he understood it was too late now to make the amendment. There might be no objection to the Minister for Lands holding his court where he liked, but it was not likely to be held out of Brisbane.

Mr. NORTON said he did not think it was immaterial to a selector who had to pay all his witnesses' expenses. In some cases under the Bill the litigant would be obliged to pay his own costs, and it was most material that the Minister should be allowed to hold his court at other places than in Brisbane.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said that, if the Premier had no objection, the insertion of the words "or elsewhere" after "Brisbane" would meet the case.

The PREMIER said that, as he had already pointed out, they had got past that portion of the clause.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said the clause could be recommitted for the purpose of inserting the words.

New clause, as amended, put and passed.

On clause 19, as follows:—

"The Governor in Council may by proclamation, on the recommendation of the board, declare any portion or portions of the colony to be a district or districts for the purposes of this Act, and may appoint such and so many land commissioners and land agents for such districts as may be necessary for carrying the provisions of this Act into effect"—

Mr. MOREHEAD asked what the working of the clause was likely to cost the country?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied that he did not suppose it was likely to cost the country any more than the present system of land administration. With the exception of the board, the machinery for working the clause was already in existence. Districts were open now by proclamation, and there were commissioners and other officers for working the Act in the different districts.

Mr. MOREHEAD said surely the hon. gentleman must have seen that the work proposed to be set on the shoulders of the commissioners under the Bill would necessitate the appointment of a much larger number of officers than were provided for on the present Estimates. The Committee were entitled to know what the approximate cost of commissioners and land agents under the clause would be. It was no use telling him that there would be no increase of cost, because the hon. gentleman and the Premier must know very well that there would be a large accession of cost.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said there would probably be a vast increase in the amount of settlement, and in that case there would be an increase necessary in the staff. If settlement went on only in the same ratio as at present, he did not think there would be any increase in the cost. A great deal of the work was very inefficiently done now owing to the districts being too large to be properly supervised, and he should certainly like to see the work carried out under the new Act more efficiently.

Mr. MOREHEAD said the hon. gentleman had had to admit in a sort of half-hearted way that he made a mistake in his first answer—that there would be no increase in the cost, and that the same commissioners would do the work. After consultation with the Premier, apparently, he now told the Committee in a sneering way that if there was to be no increase of settlement the present staff would do, but that if, as he assumed, there was a great increase of settlement, additional commissioners and other officers would be required. He (Mr. Morehead) did not want any information as to the existing state of affairs, but as to the prospective expenditure which would be involved were the Bill to become law; and the Committee were entitled to have that information.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said that if the work increased very much there would have to be an increased staff, and that would be a very satisfactory state of things for the country. The country, he imagined, would be perfectly satisfied if the staff kept pace with the increased settlement; nobody was likely to begrudge the necessary outlay to meet that increased settlement. He, at all events, should not; and he would be perfectly satisfied to find the cost largely increased along with a great increase of settlement.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said he did not consider the reply at all satisfactory. What they wanted to know was a matter of great importance to them all. Had the Minister for Lands considered, from his estimate of the settlement that was likely to take place, the number of districts and the number of officers for which he would have to make provision to meet it? It was a very serious question, and he could not imagine a Land Minister who had not taken it into his most careful consideration before entering upon a measure like the one before them. Connected with that question was another of the gravest importance, on which they had not yet touched; and that was—What were the Government going to do towards surveying, before the land was open for settlement? Large lots of land in all parts of the colony would be thrown open for selection without being selected. It would lead to an immense amount of dummying. The Minister for Lands should bring those lands into the most convenient form for selection by men who were not acquainted with the colony. They would have to deal with men living in towns, with men coming to the colonies; and with such a large amount of land thrown open to selection, what arrangements had the Minister for Lands made to direct them to take up the best land, and to have suitable selections surveyed first? He would like to know whether the hon. gentleman had seriously considered whether it was not possible to have those lands surveyed before they were thrown open to selection at all. It was a matter well worthy of consideration. The present staff was absurdly small to do the work, and the hon. member could not think for a moment that the staff was going to survey those lands.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said that the hon. gentleman had asked a question as to whether they intended to survey the land before it was thrown open to selection. He could answer that he hoped they would do the best they could to meet pressing requirements, and, if they could not, then of course the matter would have to be dealt with in another way.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: You are going to use your best endeavours to survey it before throwing it open to selection?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Certainly; including agricultural land and grazing land. The lands will be surveyed before they are entered upon. The cost of the survey will rest with the selectors. The whole matter of survey is simply a question of everyday concern.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he thought they had not really had a full exposition from the Minister for Lands as to the clauses contained under the head of "Commissioners." It had been said, he thought, by the hon. the Minister for Lands that the powers given to the board should be similar to those given to judges of the Supreme Court. Now, as far as he could see, following out the analogy of the hon. Minister for Lands, the powers given under the head of "Commissioners" were powers similar to those given to the judges of the district court; and he would like to know from the Minister for Lands where he proposed to get such men from. They would require a large number of those men if the work was to be done with advantage to the State. The men must be first-class and highly salaried to get the position of commissioners. He thought the Committee were fairly entitled to know how the cost of administering the Act, so far as the salaries of commissioners to be appointed, was covered. They were fairly entitled to an answer to that question. If the Bill became law, there would be many opportunities of making appointments for friends, possibly; at any rate, for giving billets to their friends; hon. members on the Government side, more particularly the Minister for Works and the Minister for Lands, had not scrupled to say that the present was the time to give appointments to their friends—that it was a very golden opportunity—that they would put in men to suit them; and of course they were not capable of corruption. It was a most important question that should be answered, and he thought, if they had to deal with men who might not inaptly be compared to district court judges, they should know how many were likely to be employed in the immediate future, and what salaries were likely to be paid to them. He thought the questions were pertinent to the Bill, and should be answered by the Minister in charge—and if he was not able to answer them, by the hon. gentleman who ran the whole machine for him—the Minister for Works. They should know how the taxpayer was to be taxed for bringing this portion of the measure into operation.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said when it became law he should be prepared to augment the staff at the time of the appointment of the commissioners the hon. member had been talking about. He looked upon

the matter of cost as a secondary consideration. He had not attempted to approximate the cost of the commissioners; and in the majority of instances he did not think that the commissioners would have larger salaries than those commissioners who were now employed. The duties of land commissioners under the present Act were very similar to those they would have to perform under the Bill. In some respects they had got more important duties to fulfil under the present Act than they would have under the Bill. The present commissioners, for instance, gave certificates, but in the Bill there was no such power given to them. The work of the land commissioners under the Bill would be checked at every point. It would be submitted for the approval or the decision either of the Minister or of the land board.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that the hon. gentleman, he thought, in one way reminded him of the lamented Mr. Mantalini. The hon. member seemed not to care one shilling about the expense to the State, and, in his great, large-minded way of dealing with the lands, he seemed to scorn the expense to the State. But still, he would ask the hon. gentleman and those sitting with him to inform the Committee, who were there to protect the taxpayers of the colony, what the probable cost would be? The hon. gentleman laughed. The hon. gentleman might not be there to protect the taxpayers of the colony; but, when he got angry and shook his head, it amused him. The hon. member did not annoy him. When he saw that the hon. gentleman was annoyed he was always happier. He did not ask the hon. gentleman to give them anything more than the probable estimate of the cost to the taxpayer of the working of the Bill—dealing only with the lands in the schedule. He thought that the hon. member when he came down with the measure should have been in a position to tell them what the increased cost was likely to be. The hon. gentleman must certainly have some estimate, and possibly some of his colleagues could give him some idea of the increased cost. He thought the Committee should not be asked to pass the Bill without that information, because when the Estimates came on next year, when they would be dealing with largely increased expenditure in connection with the public lands, they would be told, "You have passed the Land Bill and you cannot discuss the question now." They should have some idea of the probable increased cost to the colony if the Land Bill should become law. He did not think he was asking too much. He would be failing in his duty if he did not insist upon getting that information.

Mr. JORDAN said the allusion of the hon. member for Balonne was a very happy one, when he compared the Minister for Lands with Mr. Mantalini. The hon. member for Balonne would be acting the part of Madame Mantalini, who insisted in the perpetual grinds which always worried him.

Mr. MOREHEAD: He always got the best of it.

Mr. STEVENSON said, surely the hon. Treasurer could say something about the matter! They could see perfectly well by the boundaries of the schedule of the land which was to be brought under the Bill that those boundaries must have been studied very carefully; and surely some calculation had been made with regard to what the cost would be in bringing that part of the colony under the operation of the Bill. Surely the Minister for Lands, in bringing forward a measure like that, had made some calculation as to what number of selections he expected in the first year, or the second, or third, or fourth! If he had not done so, he ought to have, and it was only fair for the Committee to ask. It was evident that the Government must have entered very closely indeed into the working of the Bill, so far as drawing out that extraordinary schedule was concerned. Considering the minute manner in which they went into that matter, they ought to have made some calculation as to what the expense of carrying out the Bill would be.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he did not think the Treasurer could really understand anything at all about it. He was sure there was not a single member on that side of the Committee who had taken the trouble to estimate the cost to the country of that Land Bill. He was not going to press the Premier, or the Minister for Lands, because he would keep them all night and all the week, before they could tell him, and he did not want to punish himself. He wanted to know what the duties were that were to be performed by the land agents under the Bill. The term was used; but he could not find out what a land agent was. Perhaps the Minister for Lands could tell them something as to how those duties were to be defined.

Mr. MACDONALD-PATERSON said the last speaker was in error in stating that there was no speaker on the Government side who had formed any estimate as to the cost under the Bill. There were some members who had considered, and very seriously, what it would be, although they had not formed such an estimate in that particular to which the hon. member for South Brisbane referred a few minutes ago, as to which was the Mantalini—the hon. Minister for Lands, or the hon. member for Balonne. Although Mr. Mantalini was a grinder he was a good-looking fellow, and he would like to know whether the good looks were to be fixed upon the Minister for Lands or the hon. member for Balonne.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he was very glad there were some hon. members who could give information as to what the cost of the Bill would be. He was sure the hon. member for Moreton must have formed a very good estimate of what it would be. Some hon. members on his side had also formed a very good estimate; but they were not bound to reveal it. He had only compared the Minister for Lands to Mr. Mantalini in regard to his utter disregard to the revenues of the people, and it was only in quoting his celebrated expression where he "demmed the ninepence" that he insulted the memory of the late Mr. Mantalini by comparing him with the Minister for Lands.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said in answer to the hon. member for Townsville that the word "land agent" was used in clause 78.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he had asked for a definition of the duties of the land agent; he did not wish to be told in which particular portion of the Bill the land agent was mentioned. The duties of the commissioner were defined; but those of the land agent were not, and he found in the clause mentioned by the Minister for Lands that the land agent was also an auctioneer. They had a part of the Bill headed "Commissioners," dealing wholly with commissioners, except where the land agents were occasionally mentioned. There was nothing to show what duties they were to perform, and he wanted the Minister for Lands or the Premier to explain what they were to be. He wanted to know that before such officers were appointed. The clause said:—

"The Governor in Council may by proclamation, on the recommendation of the board, declare any portion or portions of the colony to be a district or districts for the purposes of this Act, and may appoint such and so many land commissioners and land agents for such districts as may be necessary for carrying the provisions of this Act into effect."

Were those gentlemen to be appointed under the recommendation of the board?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes; the land commissioner.

The PREMIER said he was glad the hon. member wished to be serious. Hon. members must see that if they were to make any real progress with the Bill, or do any good in the way of legislation, it was necessary for them to apply themselves to it seriously. Hon. members had seen a refusal on the part of a considerable number of hon. members to address themselves to the Bill seriously, and that simply had the effect of preventing any real discussion of the Bill. It prevented amendments being made or suggested; because if a number of hon. members would insist upon talking, plainly for talking's sake, or for some other object which was not conducive to their getting on with the business, they had the effect of preventing discussion on the Bill. He had seen a great many Bills passed through that Parliament, but he had never seen any instance in the consideration of a Bill in committee, where on both sides of the committee, by compulsion, there was so little discussion on a measure.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS of the Opposition: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER said he meant "by compulsion" that hon. members had got up and occupied so much of the time of the Committee without addressing themselves seriously to the measure, that other hon. members had been compelled to hold their peace. That was so, and hon. members who had long experience of the House would bear him out in what he said. He would appeal to hon. members on both sides of the Committee to insist that the discussion of the Bill should be carried on seriously. The hon. member for Townsville asked what the functions of the land agents were. One would suppose that the office was never heard of before; that it was something entirely new. They had had land agents in the colony for the last sixteen years.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: We are aware of that. But they were not under this Bill.

The PREMIER said they had land agents and commissioners as well for the last sixteen years, appointed under a clause almost verbatim the same as the one they were discussing.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Those Acts are all repealed.

The PREMIER said hon. members must be aware of the way in which the clerical work of the Lands Department was carried on; and they must also be aware that land agents were in many respects clerks to the commissioners. There were certain duties expressly conferred upon a land agent by the clauses of the Act relating to auction sales. Those were the only duties expressly imposed upon him by the Act, and his other duties were, as was well known, to act as clerk to the commissioner. It was quite unnecessary to say that in the present Bill, any more than in the Act of 1876 or the Act of 1868. As to the number of land agents who would be required under the Bill, they could not say how many would be wanted at the present time. For some time he expected that the present number would be sufficient; but he certainly hoped that, before many months were over, the extension of settlement would be so great as to require a good many more. It was certainly impossible to make any precise estimate as to the rate at which they would be increased.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH said it was a wonder hon. members could retain their gravity when they heard the hon. member presuming to lecture in the way in which he had done, and talk about their wasting the time of the Committee. Why, the very amendments given notice of by the Minister for Lands, and which they were discussing at present, showed whether they had not, by the discussions they had raised, materially affected the Land Bill before them. When the Bill was put before them there were deficiencies in it which men of experience in the administration of land would have seen at once. They had laboured exceedingly to point them out to the Government, but the terms upon which the Bill was to be discussed were so laid down by the Minister for Lands, who when introducing the Bill said they would stand by it and make it a party question, that it was only by dogged perseverance they had been listened to at last. They were listened to at last, as could be seen by the amendments which the Minister for Lands had brought down; and so far as a very bad Bill could possibly be made workable it was owing entirely to the action of the Opposition, and that without one single suggestion from the opposite side of the Committee. Hon. members opposite might laugh, and the hon. member for Cook laughed as if he had had a great deal to do with the Bill. He would like to see the effects of that hon. member's legislation in the Bill. It had been tacitly understood that the discussion on the Government side was to be left to the leader of the Government and the Minister for Lands. Hon. members on the other side had been actually muzzled, and there was not the slightest doubt of it.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS on the Government Benches: No, no!

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH said the whole action on the Government side of the Committee proved incontestably that they had been muzzled, and were not allowed to speak. But at last public opinion had commenced to assert itself, and even the Government organs that were most slavish in the praise of the present Government adverted to the fact that the voices of the supporters of the Government were never heard. At the last moment they saw that two or three on the other side were allowed to speak. There was the Minister for—still, he was not a Minister yet—but the hon. member for South Brisbane had risen several times, as if he were a Minister, and beyond him very few members on the Government side had said a word, and for very good reasons. He believed himself that if they uttered their opinions on that Land Bill they would digress so much from the dicta laid down by the Minister for Lands and the Premier that there would be no agreement on that side of the Committee at all with the principles of the Bill. He told the Premier plainly that the Bill was not approved of by his own side of the House. The Opposition had forced the discussion so far as to make the Minister bring in his own amendments. Take for instance the 1st subsection of clause 37. They had pointed out that the maximum amount was too high, and a good deal of discussion had taken place on it, with the result that the Minister for Lands gave in and said they were going to reduce it by one-half.

The PREMIER: That was never mentioned in the debate.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH said it was mentioned repeatedly in the debate, and was forced upon the attention of the Government. Then it was pointed out at the same time that there might be as many as forty districts in the colony, and under the Bill one individual could hold the maximum amount of 20,000 acres in each one of the forty districts; so that he

might altogether hold as much as 800,000 acres at one time. That was pointed out by the Opposition, and at last the Minister gave in, and brought in an amendment to prevent men selecting in more than two districts, and making the maximum area to be selected 20,000 acres, instead of 1,000,000, as it might have been—or, at all events, supposing there to be forty districts, 800,000 acres. Then it was pointed out that it was a ridiculous part of the arrangement that the only improvement to be acknowledged was fencing. They had an old squatter making a land law for the colony, and giving them no improvement that could be reckoned except fencing. That was remedied by the amendment in clause 52 of which the hon. member had given notice. Homestead selection was abolished by the Bill, and it was considered so great an improvement on the present law that the Minister for Works advised his colleague to withdraw the Bill, and put it into the waste-paper basket, if it could not be carried. There was a good deal of discussion upon that, very much to the disgust of the Minister for Lands and the Premier; and the result was that they had issued printed notices of amendments—dictated, he believed, by the *Telegraph* newspaper—reinstating in the Bill the homestead clause. After that explanation he would like to know in what way they could be said to have wasted the time of the Committee. They had been addressing themselves all along to the Bill, and if the Government had listened to them a great deal more than they had they would have had a better Bill. The actual results of their discussion of the measure had been shown by the amendments of which the Minister for Lands had given notice. It was a piece of unexampled impertinence for the Premier to talk to them in the way he had done about wasting time. He complained that in the speeches of hon. members so much had been said to so little effect; at least, that was the effect of it. Why, did not everyone remember that when he (Hon. Sir T. McIlwraith) was in power, on every Bill he brought in the hon. member carped about even the slightest deviation from what he considered was the most correct language that could be used? He wasted hours over petty little details which were unworthy of the position he occupied as leader of the Opposition; and he encouraged his followers to do the same, and block every Bill, and talk on every subject while a Bill was in committee. He (Hon. Sir T. McIlwraith) knew perfectly well that hon. members now on the Opposition side had spoken on the Bill with a considerable amount of effect; and if the Premier would lecture his colleagues and hon. members on that side, and try to instil into them the real principles of the Bill, he would make a great deal more progress. It was only by straightforward acting that they would get through the Bill; but he denied that the Premier had acted straightforwardly. The very last night the Bill was before them they forced an explanation out of the hon. member which he never intended to make, and they would force a great deal fuller explanation from him before the clauses passed. It was not by keeping back information that progress would be made with the Bill. He had offered every facility for getting on with the Bill, and it was only the gross mismanagement of the Minister for Lands, and the unfortunate blunders of the Premier, that had landed the Committee in the present pass.

The PREMIER said the hon. member must have a surprising memory. Everyone who had been in the House during the last few years must have heard with amazement the hon. gentleman's statement as to the assistance he got from the Opposition in carrying his Bills through Parliament. The hon. member's memory with respect to that was about as accurate as, according to what appeared in the public Press, his statement with respect to the apocryphal story of obstruction, when sixteen members on the Government side went to sleep on the other side of the House; the hon. member's memory in the one case was just about as accurate as in the other. It was possible that the story about word having gone round to the members on the Government side not to speak, might be found in some experience of the hon. gentleman's; it was not found in anything that had happened among those at present on the Government side, any more than any other part of the hon. gentleman's narrative. As he (the Premier) had pointed out, some hon. members on the other side were so determined to decline to discuss the matters under consideration as to effectively prevent hon. members on the Government side from taking any part in this debate. That had been notorious ever since they had been in committee. He fully admitted the great advantages that followed the discussion of every Bill; and he regretted that some parts of that Bill had not been more fully discussed; but they had not been so, for the reason he had given. He was quite aware that very valuable suggestions had arisen out of the discussion; but they arose during the discussion on the second reading. Since they had been in committee scarcely any amendments had been suggested. He, of course, excepted that proposed by the hon. member for Warrego, which was an important one, and a very proper one for discussion. He also excepted the amendments moved by the leader of the Opposition, which were also important, and well worthy of serious discussion. He did not complain in any way of discussions taking place on the matters before the Committee; but he spoke with the view of asking the assistance of hon. members in getting on with the business, and setting their faces against discussions that had nothing to do with the clauses under consideration. Many hon. members would find it extremely inconvenient to remain there all the summer, and therefore he appealed to the Committee to confine the discussion to the clauses before them, and not talk on things in general.

Mr. ARCHER said that the style of the speech which the hon. member had just made was far better than that of the speech he had made before. He (Mr. Archer) was most anxious that the Bill should pass in the best form; he had read it carefully, and he was prepared to help in getting it through. But when the hon. gentleman talked in the way he did in his former speech he was going far from advancing the Bill; nor did the Minister for Lands either, by the way he spoke on the second reading. The hon. gentleman did not advance the Bill by speaking disparagingly of his opponents. In his very first speech in that House, the hon. gentleman took occasion to insult a gentleman who was a member of a certain firm, and since then he had over and over again spoken as if not one of those who held the office of Minister for Lands before him had been decently honourable men. From that, he (Mr. Archer) came to the conclusion that the hon. gentleman believed that he himself was really the only honourable man who had ever held that office. The hon. gentleman had besides taken special delight in speaking of men belonging to the same class as himself, as men who were not honest. He (Mr. Archer) was quite sure that in that class there were men just as honest as the hon. gentleman was. It was that kind of talking that was really the cause of a great deal of the discussion that had taken place. If the Minister for Lands would only be courteous and would not so often speak

of squatters as if they were necessarily corrupt, the Committee would get on better; the style in which he spoke of the labours of those men was that they tried to carry on their business for their own sakes instead of for the benefit of the colony; as if any man in the world ever started in business for anything else than for his own benefit. When a person spoke in that way he was sure to raise up enemies. He (Mr. Archer) was not now seeking to prolong the discussion; but he thought both the Premier and the Minister for Lands would do well to remember that hon. members were not so thin-skinned that they could bear those things continually without replying to them. If those things were not said the Bill would go through more quickly.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said that the leader of the Government had taken to preach a homily on a word he used—the word "serious." The hon. member had lectured the Committee on that. It was enough to make one laugh. He could not help laughing himself. They had now lost about half-an-hour over the serious discussion, and they might have passed a clause or two during that half-hour. He was not satisfied with what the Premier told them—that they had land agents in other Land Acts. They were repealing those Acts, and when the Bill became law it would stand on its own bottom without reference to any other Act. It was not sufficient to say that the land agent was simply a clerical assistant to the commissioner. Hitherto the land agents had been appointed by the Minister, and he could define their duties as he pleased; but there was no such power here.

The PREMIER: It will be exactly the same as all the other Acts.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: But where was it? They should have their duties defined, as they were creating a new department—taking the power from the Minister and giving it to a board over which they had no control. In answer to another question, he was told that the commissioners were to be appointed on the recommendation of the board. That was an extraordinary power added to the already very great powers given to the board by the Bill; and it seemed to be an additional reason why they should demand that the Government should tell them, before the Bill went very much further, who were to be the members of the board which was to exercise such powers. He would again remind the House that when the Irish Land Bill was before the House of Commons, Mr. Gladstone was compelled to postpone the clause appointing the land commission, until he had made up his mind whom he was going to appoint, and that clause was considered after the Bill had passed through committee; he was obliged to give the names of the commissioners and define their duties before the Bill was allowed to leave the House of Commons. If the hon. leader of the Opposition would not demand from the Minister for Lands whom he was going to appoint as members of that almost irresponsible board, he should do it himself. He hoped the hon. leader of the Opposition would do it, as it was that hon. member's duty and not his. He wanted from the hon. the Premier some explanation about the duties of those land agents. It must be something more than simply selling land by auction, because that could be done by any Government auctioneer in the town where land was to be sold.

Mr. STEVENSON said he knew the hon. member for Townsville was very anxious to get back to the Bill; but if the Premier raised a discussion he did not see why it should not be carried out. He had something to say about the charges the hon. member made against members on the Opposition side of delaying the passage of the Bill. If they did not know how to delay its passage the Premier certainly did, and he was always giving them fresh ground to go upon. What the hon. member said as to no serious argument having been brought to bear on the Bill, except under compulsion, was perfectly true so far as the other side of the Committee was concerned. All the information they had succeeded in getting from the Premier and the Minister for Lands had to be dragged out of them; they had not given one piece of voluntary information since the Bill came into committee. On a question being put to the Minister for Lands the other night by the hon. member for Gregory, with regard to compensation for improvements, he had tried to get out of it by evasive answers; and, but for his (Mr. Stevenson's) insisting upon having an answer, they would not have got the information at all, though it turned out to be so important that the discussion on it lasted the whole night. He thought the Premier should be a little more careful, and teach his colleagues to be a little more careful, and give information which was required by hon. members on that side of the Committee who understood the Bill. It was a good thing for the country that there were a few members on the Opposition side of the Committee who understood the Bill, as they were showing that the Premier and the Minister for Lands did not understand it. If the Ministers wished to get on with the Bill they should give information when it was asked for, or, if they were not in a position to give it, promise to find out and give it on a future day. It was no use for the Minister for Lands, when he raised a point himself, to refuse to answer any questions on it and say, "That has nothing to do with this clause; I will explain it when we reach the 100th clause," or something of that kind.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that he would keep to the 19th clause, so as not to fall under the lash of the Premier's tongue; and as there seemed to be some divergence of opinion between the hon. gentleman and the Minister for Lands, he would ask him how those land commissioners and land agents were to be appointed? The hon. Minister for Lands said they were to be appointed by the land board; but the clause did not appear to bear that interpretation, and he sincerely hoped it was not so intended. The board had plenty of power without being allowed to appoint their own subordinates—under judges, as it were—whose decisions were to be referred to them in case of appeal. He did not believe that was meant by the wording of the clause; at any rate it should be clearly explained. The clause said distinctly the power should be vested in the Crown. However, it was a point upon which the Committee should have an explanation from the Premier. It appeared to be a pretty mixed point, but his interpretation was that the power did not rest in the board; but they should have the authoritative opinion of the Government on the matter.

The PREMIER said that of course the board had no such power. There was nothing in the clause stating that they should have the power of recommending commissioners, neither did he hear the Minister for Lands say that they possessed the power. Patronage could not be vested in anyone but the Governor in Council. The board were not a board of patronage—they were not a Civil Service board or anything of that kind. Another question was asked by the member for Townsville as to the functions of land agents. "Land agent" was the name by which the commissioner's clerk was called. The functions were well known, and he could not define them all. The functions of commissioners under the Bill were exactly

analogous to those under existing Acts, and it was proposed to continue the clerks under the same name. They might be called commissioners' clerks, and they would then have exactly the same functions to perform. The only way to define what all the duties of a land agent were, would be to get one of them to state how he spent his time, or to produce his diary if he had one.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said if the Premier looked at his Bills with the same critical care as he looked at his opponents' he would see that his explanation was worth nothing at all. The member for Townsville asked what were the duties of the land agent, as mentioned in clause 19. He had a reason for asking that, and that was because land agents were not mentioned at all throughout the Bill. There were no other clauses that put on the land agents any special duty, and the only portions of the Bill in which they were referred to were in clauses 78 and 79. In those clauses the land agent and auctioneer were bracketed together, and had to do certain things at an auction sale. Those were the only parts of the Bill where the land agent was mentioned. It was not only the omission to define what the land agent's duties were that was complained of, but in reading the Bill it would be found that the duties imposed upon him under the Act of 1876 were imposed now on the commissioners. They had taken all the duties from the land agent, and left him nothing to do except to act as a kind of auctioneer's clerk. The hon. member was therefore perfectly right in asking his question. Looking at the Act of 1876 it would be found that the duties of the land agent were definitely defined. He had to take charge of all applications made for the use of the Crown lands. Those duties devolved on the commissioner now.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he was surprised to hear the Premier say that he did not hear the Minister for Lands state that the board were to recommend the commissioners. The Minister for Lands, he was certain, would not deny that he said so.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: Oh yes, he will!

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he felt certain the hon. gentleman would not deny it; but he was equally certain that the Premier heard him make the statement, because he (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) saw him try to stop the Minister for Lands from saying so. Perhaps the Premier forgot that there were land agents appointed in places where there were no commissioners. The land agent had a great many duties that should be defined by the clause. There were four clauses referring to the commissioner, and it was not a sufficient answer to say that the land agent's duties were very well known—that he was an officer under existing Acts, and that therefore there was no necessity for defining his duties. He could say the same about the commissioner. His duties were very well known, but they defined him in four clauses. The leader of the Opposition had distinctly shown that the land agent's duties were defined by other Acts of Parliament, and they ought to be defined in the Bill now before the Committee. He had an object in asking his question, and had a perfect right to ask it.

The PREMIER said the hon. gentleman had a perfect right to ask any question tending to elucidate a clause, and he wished hon. gentlemen would ask more questions with that object. The words "land agent" were used in the part of the Act dealing with sales by auction. A land agent being a commissioner's clerk, it made very little difference whether he was called a land agent or a commissioner's clerk. It was a simple matter of words.

Mr. STEVENSON said, as they were invited by the Premier to ask more questions, he would ask the Minister for Lands whether he did say that the commissioners were to be recommended by the board, and whether the Premier was right in saying that he did not say so? It was an important point, and they ought to hear from the Minister for Lands what he really did say.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said, as the hon. member for Townsville had asked the same question, he would say that he had said so.

Mr. STEVENSON said now they wanted to know which interpretation of the clause to accept? What were they to go on?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I was under a misapprehension.

Mr. STEVENSON said that they had to take the interpretation of the Premier now about the Bill, and not that of the Minister for Lands.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he was glad to hear that the board was not to have such a power as that of recommending the commissioners. It was a power that, willing as the present Parliament had been to abrogate its rights, it would be scarcely willing to grant.

Mr. NELSON said that if the commissioners were to be appointed by the Crown the principle would be right, but if appointed by the board they would be simply the toadies of the board; for they would know that the board could dismiss them at any time when they did not do what they wanted them to do. That matter ought to be made particularly clear in the clause. Seeing that the Minister for Lands had been investigating the history of previous land legislation in the colony, he would ask him whether he was quite satisfied, from his experience and inquiries, that that plan of appointing commissioners was really a good one?—because it was a very material part of the old system which the hon. gentleman had so much decried. It was quite possible that the sins which the hon. gentleman laid on the past administration of the land laws of the colony might be quite as much due to the maladministration of the commissioners as to that of the Ministers. His experience was not such as to warrant him in saying whether that was or was not the case, but he had heard of cases where undue influence had been brought to bear on commissioners, and where they had been corrupted to a very large extent.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said he believed the plan of appointing commissioners under the Bill would be a very good one, with the restrictions to be imposed. Under the Bill, the action of the commissioners might be revised by a superior court. Under the present system there was no possibility of revising some of the acts of the commissioners even by the Minister; the commissioner issued his certificate, and it was accepted as final. Under the Bill there was not a single act of the commissioners that could not be looked into and revised by the board.

Mr. NELSON said there were many things the commissioner might do that would never be reported to the Minister or to the board. A commissioner had immense power in his own district, and if cases of unfairness occurred 1,000 miles away it would not pay the person injured to raise any objection.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said that if a man was wronged by the action of a commissioner, and did not choose to avail himself of his right to appeal to the board, he did not think him a particular object for commiseration or sympathy.

Mr. NORTON said the reply of the Minister for Lands confirmed him in the belief that the

commissioners were the men who would work the Act. Their recommendations would be sent down to the board, and passed as a matter of form. The Committee had taken a great deal of trouble in discussing the board, and now it was found that, except in cases where appeals were made or objections raised, the real work of administration would be done by the commissioners. Indeed, unless that were so, it would be impossible for the board to get through the work. Under such circumstances, the appointment of the commissioners was a most important matter, and one which should be very clearly defined.

Mr. NELSON said that not only the rights of private persons, but the interests of the public ought to be protected. A commissioner might rob the public by giving preference to some friends of his own, or by passing applications which ought not to be passed. In cases of that kind the board would have no notice, and the commissioner's report would go almost as a matter of form.

Mr. MACDONALD-PATERSON said that in order to make the clause perfectly clear he would move the omission of the word "and," after the words "purposes of this Act," with the view of commencing a new paragraph with the words, "The Governor in Council."

Question—That the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the clause—put.

Mr. JORDAN said he did not see any objection to the suggestion made by the hon. member for Moreton, but at the same time he did not see that there was any necessity for it. He thought the meaning was perfectly plain as read by the hon. member for Balonne and by the hon. the Premier. The Minister for Lands had said inadvertently, in reply to a question, that the appointment of the commissioners was with the board. No one could mistake the meaning of the clause. It was good English, and was perfectly clear.

Mr. MOREHEAD said if there was the least doubt as to its meaning he thought they had better vote for the amendment of the hon. member for Moreton. The meaning was quite clear to him, but it did not appear to be clear to the Minister for Lands.

Mr. NORTON said he did not think the clause ought to be altered in that way. Its meaning was plain enough.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Some think it is not.

Mr. NORTON: I think it is quite plain.

Question put and negatived.

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

Question—That the clause as amended stand part of the Bill—put.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH said that the Minister for Lands had better leave the words "land agent" out of the clause. The officers were not referred to in any part of the Bill except as "land commissioners." Thus the words "land agent" were perfectly unnecessary.

The PREMIER said there was provision in the Bill for the duties of land agents in cases of sales by auction. There must be a provision for the payment of the balance of the purchase money to some officer. It was not convenient that it should be paid to the commissioner, who would probably not be there; it would not be convenient that he should always be there. There was another provision for anyone applying to take up land by selection under the 83rd section to pay the upset price of the land to the land agent. Some officer must be on the spot to take the money. The commissioner would not be there; he would be a peripatetic person, and he hoped that the commissioner would preside over several land offices. It was necessary to have land agents, unless they were to substitute some other officer to perform those duties.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he would suggest that they leave the words "land agent" in the clause, with the view of recommitting the Bill, to state in the interpretation clause what the position of the land agent was with regard to the Bill. He thought the Premier would then have had time to consider the definition of the term as used in the Bill, and they might now go on with the clause. It was very vague as it stood at present, which he thought the Premier would admit. It was giving enormous power to the commissioner in some cases, and they had not in any way defined it in the interpretation clause. If the Premier would tell them that he would recommit the Bill, with a promise that he would define the words "land agent" so as to cover the objection raised by hon. members, they might get on with the clause.

The PREMIER said he confessed that he did not see how he was to define the term "land agent." The "land agent" was a person appointed by the Governor in Council to be a land agent in the same way that a "commissioner" was defined to be a commissioner.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that officer—the land agent—got mixed up in the Bill with the "auctioneer."

The PREMIER said the matter had been considered, and deserved further consideration whether it should be left to the commissioner or to the land agent. In clause 39 it might be desirable to leave the duty to the land agent.

Mr. MOREHEAD: The land agent has no status under the Bill.

The PREMIER said that the only definition they could give was "a person who was appointed land agent." He thought they might pass the clause now. The duties of the commissioners were not defined there; they were defined all through the Bill.

Mr. MOREHEAD said it would be as well to define "land agent" in the interpretation clause.

The PREMIER said it might be convenient to do that. They could not do it in that part of the Bill. It would be convenient to pass the clause now; and if further on in the Bill they should find that the duties were not sufficiently defined they could define them.

Question put and passed.

On clause 20—"Commissioners to hold a court once a month"—

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH said that he intended to bring before the Committee again the amendment he proposed before. From the nature of the question the discussion which then took place was altogether on the subject he was now bringing before the Committee. He did not want to have the whole thing gone over again, as it had been already thoroughly discussed from most points of view—at any rate, as much as he cared about discussing it, and he did not think he could bring forward any additional arguments. Hon. members would understand that in moving a dozen amendments there was one about which they all hinged, and that was the constitution of the local land board; and although the amendment he moved was not on that point, a discussion took place on that subject which he did not want to go over again. The clause he intended to propose was—

> There shall be constituted in each district a local land board, consisting of the commissioner for the time being, and not less than two nor more than six persons being resident ratepayers of such district, who shall

from time to time be elected by the ratepayers thereof, pursuant to the regulations contained in the schedule to this Act.

The commissioner of the district for the time being shall be chairman, *ex officio*, of the board.

Every local board shall have and exercise the powers and duties hereinafter described.

There was a similar provision to that in the Bill passed recently in New South Wales ; the work was not confined to the commissioners as proposed by the Bill, but local courts were established ; those courts consisted of the commissioners appointed by the Government, the members of the board being appointed also by the Government. He considered that an objection ; but still it would be a great improvement upon the present system by which the duties were performed by the commissioners alone. He had adopted the New South Wales system, and considered the advance they had made in this colony in local government justified them in making the board consist of members of the community who were elected by the people in the various districts. The Minister for Lands expressed his doubts whether he could be able to keep pace with the amount of settlement, by having the different lands surveyed before selection ; he doubted that too, and thought that as the principal evil to be apprehended from the Bill would be from dummied selections in various parts of the colony, they ought to use the best machinery they could for the purpose of preventing it. He held that a commissioner appointed by the Government was not sufficient to prevent it. They ought to have a court to work openly, and to consist of men who had local knowledge, and whose interests lay with the land being disposed of to the advantage, not only of the district itself, but also of the country. They could do that by having a local court, consisting of men elected on the same basis as their present divisional boards. The objection raised to that system would be that, the principal duty being to fix the amount of rent to be paid by the lessees, pastoral and agricultural, they would, in some districts, naturally see that their interest lay in reducing the rents to as low a point as possible, and thus their interest would be opposed to the interest of the country. That objection was got over at once by the fact that he did not intend to refer to the local court the rent that was to be paid by the different selectors ; but proposed that their duties should be confined to those given to commissioners. Even if those duties were to embrace the fixing of rents afterwards—as he had no doubt, by the spread of local government, would ultimately be the case—he thought they had some guarantee for the good faith of the members of the local board in the fact, that it would be for the good of the district that as much ratable property should appear in the district as was possible. The argument against his proposition was that it would be to the interest of the members of the board to reduce the rents. He thought not ; for the reason that, the local rates depending upon the amount of rents paid, it would be rather in the interests of the different boards to make the rents fair, if not as high as they possibly could. He thought that the development of local government in the country justified them doing that. They knew well that the anticipated causes of failure in working local government in some of the districts of the colony consisted in the fact that almost all the land was leased, and there was therefore very little ratable property. In consequence of that and other difficulties the Government subsidised the boards to the extent of £2 to every £1 raised by rates. They ought to anticipate the time when there would be a large amount of revenue coming from the land, and when a large portion of that revenue should go directly to the boards. If such a reform were carried out it would completely answer the objection raised at the present time that it was not to the interests of the boards to get the best rents they possibly could. He had met that objection—that their interests would not be identical with the interests of the colony. Under the present circumstances that would be so ; but they ought to look for the development of local government. The hon. member for Northern Downs used a very strong argument in showing the inefficiency of the commissioner in certain cases, and the chance he would have of doing an injustice. He ought to be assisted by a board ; and the answer given by the Minister for Lands justified the hon. member for Northern Downs in pressing the case, as the only proper answer that could have been given by the Minister was that they were not in the way of helping the commissioner by giving him a local court. Provided the local land boards in the different districts were given an interest in working the Bill for the interests of the districts, the Government could not possibly get better machinery for carrying out its provisions. There would not be a case of dummying that would come under them which they would not be able to deal with effectually, because they would know the whole of the circumstances. They would know the man who was selecting for himself, and the man who was selecting in the interests of others. They would be able to deal with all men justly, and prevent land from being dummied. He did not believe they could get as good means for the prevention of dummying by an addition to the number of Government officers. What he wanted to obtain under the amendment was to get the people themselves to look after the proper working of the Act. He believed the same constituencies which had elected divisional boards would act efficiently in the election of local land boards, and it would be to their interest to see that the lands were taken up according to the law. He believed the great danger under the Bill would be that the lands under it would be dummied ; as he believed that under the system proposed by the Minister for Lands greater facilities were given for dummying land than existed under any previous Act. He believed the system he proposed would be a safeguard which would effectually prevent that ; and it was in that belief he proposed that the clause as read stand part of the Bill.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said the discussion that arose upon the amendments brought forward by the leader of the Opposition the other night centred round one clause, and that was the one he introduced that night. As a theory, a local board to assist the commissioner in the discharge of his duties was very pretty indeed, if practicable or safely workable ; but he maintained still that there was too much danger in entrusting to a local board the administration of a Land Act. The hon. gentleman might say that the men in a district knew best their own wants, and would be prepared to carry out the law in its integrity in the interests of the district and the colony as a whole ; but their experience undoubtedly was that where they got a small knot of men together they were very much more inclined to carry out an Act in the interests of a party than in the interests of the community as a whole. The working of the divisional boards Act had been alluded to in support of the proposition made by the hon. gentleman. He thought that the practical working of the Divisional Boards Act had been an admirable system for the education of the people, and he believed it had been very much more valuable in that respect than in its purely practical working ; but he could not agree with the people of the country being educated at the expense of such a Land Bill as that was, where they might

do mischief which a generation or two could not undo. The divisional boards, in the expenditure of the money, could not do very much mischief, as only a few thousand pounds of the general revenue might be badly spent by them—and he maintained that a good deal of money had been badly spent by divisional boards—but to say that they should carry on the administration of a Land Bill such as that would be simply destructive to the country. He should be very sorry to see such a system in operation in the grazing districts of the country. Once the country was established and the people were settled upon the land, and there would be no necessity to deal with large tracts of land with only temporary occupants, then perhaps they might work such a system as local land boards, but while it was to be settled he did not think such a system would be an advisable one to adopt.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH said he had thought the hon. gentleman was an Australian, but he began to think he was a bit of an Irishman when he spoke of applying the system when they had no Crown lands. It was for Crown lands they wanted it. What was the Bill for but to deal with Crown lands? The hon. member was afraid that those local boards, if they had only a little power, would do such mischief as it would take one or two generations to undo. Well, that was just what that Land Bill was going to do without local land boards. Once put a large proportion of the lands inside the black line under leases of thirty and fifty years, and they would have done an amount of mischief that would take the one or two generations referred to by the Minister for Lands to undo. It was a pity they could not get any acknowledgment from the Minister for Lands that there was any good in local government. It was remarkable also that his only trusty adherent in that was the member for Bundanba, who had been opposed to local government all through, simply because he had seen the rich benefits that might be derived by one district from the old system of centralisation.

Mr. NORTON: It took all the plums away from Ipswich.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH said that the hon. member for Bundanba had a great deal of longing to get back to the old system again; but he did not believe there was one member of the Committee who thought as he did upon the question of local government. The Local Government Act had been the cause of an immense amount of good, and the work done by the divisional boards had been much better done than it would ever have been done by the Government. They had expended money raised in their own districts for the benefit of their own districts, and of the country at large; and they had been a benefit whether they were close to the capital or not. He thought the same advantages which had attended local self-government, in the form of divisional boards throughout the colony, would accrue to the colony generally if they entrusted the same men with the administration of their land laws. Take a place 1,000 miles away from Brisbane; the commissioners or the board would have very little influence there. The decisions they would give would not be conducive to the good of the districts, and if they were it would only be by chance. But let the people of the different districts look after the working of the Act in those districts themselves, and they would do it well; and would see that no one infringed on the general interests of the colony; and it would be in the interests of all of them that the Act should be carried out properly in their respective districts.

Mr. MOREHEAD said the Minister for Lands was continually reminding him of old stories. He reminded him just then very much of a story he must have learned in his childhood, about a certain hen—and when he spoke of the hen he did not mean in any way to refer in a slighting manner to the hon. the Premier, who, he was sorry to say, was not in his place. On one occasion they learned that a hen went down to her nest, and saw in it a very large egg. She remarked what a splendid egg it was, and had no doubt that when it was hatched it would produce something wonderful. She set about hatching it, and it produced; and subsequently, when the hen went with her chicks to the water for a drink, the one which had been produced from the big egg—and the one which she had looked upon with so much tender affection actually plunged into the water and swam away. It was really a duck she had raised, and not a chicken at all. He thought the story applied particularly well to the hon. the Minister for Lands. He (Mr. Morehead) fancied that the hon. the Premier must have thought he had got hold of a very big egg, but he had found after hatching it that he had hatched a duck instead of a chicken. He had come to that conclusion from the remarks which the hon. the Minister for Lands had made just now, and the way in which he had utterly cast himself adrift from his party after ignoring the benefits which had accrued to the colony—and that, he thought, would be agreed to by every member of the Committee—from the passing of the Divisional Boards Act. He himself was an opponent of that Bill, and he had lived to regret the opposition he gave to it, and to admit that great good had been done to the colony by it. The proposal now made by the leader of the Opposition was only a step further in self-government, and therefore he should support it.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said there was something that had probably done more harm than dummying, and that was "peacocking." That was what New South Wales had suffered from. Men took up pieces of land in different parts, and for miles around blocked everybody else. The appointment of local land boards would prevent anything like that being done. At present there was no guarantee whatever that the commissioners or the land agent would know enough about any district to prevent "peacocking." The Minister for Lands laughed when he (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) mentioned the commissioners. He really thought the hon. gentleman believed that nobody could do his duty but himself; could he not give credit to other men for trying to do their duty? He (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) believed the hon. gentleman tried to do his duty according to his lights, but the hon. gentleman's lights were not his (Hon. J. M. Macrossan's) lights. He believed, as he had said, that members of local land boards would prevent "peacocking"; it would be to their interest to do so, just as the members of the Committee tried to do their best for the country although they had really no personal interest in it.

The PREMIER said that in some cases it might be to the interest of local land boards to prevent dummying and "peacocking"; but in other cases it might be to their interest rather to encourage both. He confessed that he did not see that a local land board elected by persons interested in securing or in keeping the land—persons who had an immediate interest in the land—would be the best to entrust the administration of the law to. It would be in danger of becoming a local clique. In many cases the members of the board would actually be the representatives of the dominant class. Take for instance a

squatting district the inhabitants of which regarded selectors as intruders, or take a district in which dummying was very prevalent; would they be likely to elect a board which would effectually prevent that practice being carried on? In some cases, of course, assistance might be obtained in dealing with applications for selections. The hon. member for Townsville spoke of dealing with dummying. In that respect the local land boards would be elective courts of justice. That was an innovation about which a good deal might be said both ways. The general feeling in English communities was against them, and in the present case they would be specially objectionable, because the electors would be the persons who were most likely to be brought up before them. However, the matter had been fully discussed the other evening, and it was not desirable that it should be fully discussed again.

Mr. ARCHER said he regretted that the Minister for Lands had inculcated into the mind of the Premier the idea that there were no honest men amongst those who had an interest in any part of the colony. Why, even on the Darling Downs—which was the only part of the colony in which there had been dummying—there were a few honest men. There were enough, at any rate, to save them from any serious calamity. Both the Premier and the Minister for Lands were entirely mistaken when they talked about dummying having been general in Queensland. As far as his knowledge went it was entirely confined to the southern part of the colony.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Do you speak personally?

Mr. ARCHER: There had been no dummying anywhere else except by a strong supporter of the present Government, who had recently been paid a large sum of money—a matter which, he thought, ought to have been settled long ago; the judgment of the court ought to have been fulfilled. Not a single man, except that gentleman, had dummied in the Central district. Dummying was confined strictly to where the greatest rogues were found, and that was in the southern part of the colony. But they were legislating for all Queensland, and not alone for the Darling Downs. Queensland did not now consist of the Darling Downs and Ipswich; they had discovered more country. He wanted the Minister for Lands to say whether there had been any dummying in the Central district except by the gentleman he had referred to. He did not say that so much for the purpose of bringing that matter forward, as of showing distinctly that, in spite of what the Premier and the Minister for Lands had said, and seeing that local self-government had been a success, he would never allow a single opportunity to pass without supporting it. He should do all in his power to combat the idea which appeared to be held by what was called the liberal section of the community, that the people were afraid to manage their own affairs. The ratepayers of a district would always be the dominant party. In his own district he was quite certain that the dominant party—if by that was meant the dummiers—would consist of one man against thousands of ratepayers. The ratepayers outnumbered the men called the dominant party. A vote was a vote in every instance, and the body of ratepayers would outvote the men whose possessions, though they might give them a higher position in social life, could not do so in political life. The wealthy men in the district were usually only one in a hundred, and their power was very limited; and to show fear or distrust of the people was an exceedingly bad thing, as coming from the side of the Committee which was occupied by those who proclaimed themselves as the great Liberal party. He himself was very anxious to see the clause inserted as proposed. He did not believe in the hon. the Minister for Lands' suggestion that the boards might be appointed after the work was done; they should be appointed to bring their local knowledge to bear, and see the Bill brought properly into force, when it might be of immense benefit to the colony.

Mr. JORDAN said that what was called "peacocking" would be, he thought, effectually cured by the surveys of those small squattages. He was glad to hear the Minister for Lands say that the system of survey before selection would be carried out wherever practicable. Unless that became the law, there would be an immense waste of country; and he hoped there would be a thorough system of survey all over the country before the land was taken up. Hon. members on the Government side of the Committee were not afraid of the people; they were afraid of the large pastoral tenants. Not that he considered them dishonest; on the contrary, he had a great respect for the pastoral tenants of the Crown. They were wealthy educated gentleman, and as honest as other people, but they had a peculiar way of looking at the question of settlement, and as a rule were averse to what he called family settlement. They had not yet got rid of the idea that a cabbage could not grow in the country. If the amendment of the hon. member for Warrego were carried, and those matters left to the administration of local land boards, he was very much afraid that those boards would be formed, generally speaking, of the pastoral tenants of the Crown, and those more or less under their influence. They were the most influential in their own locality, from the fact that they were gentlemen of education and property, and that many of the electors were employed by them, or were engaged in business which were to a large extent created by the pastoral tenants. He very much feared that boards constituted in that way would not act so as to promote close settlement. Pastoral tenants of the Crown did not generally believe in small men; he questioned whether even the Minister for Lands believed in them to the same extent that he did himself, otherwise he would have supported his amendment intended to introduce a large number of small men with a little money from Great Britain. It was almost an impossibility for a gentleman educated all his lifetime as a squatter to believe in small men. If those boards were constituted largely of great Crown lessees and those under their influence they would not promote family settlement in the colony. On those grounds he should not be able to support the amendment.

Mr. NORTON said that the hon. members on the other side seemed to be very much afraid that the dominant party in the various districts would have the control of the elections in their own hands. He presumed the dominant party would be the party which was in the majority; but if hon. members meant something else—if they meant the pastoral lessees—he could assure them they were very much mistaken. He had never known a single instance where the pastoral lessees in a district had been able to combine for any object—even for the promotion of their own interests. Besides, if a matter of this sort were settled by the ratepayers in any district, it would be found that the pastoral tenants would not get a majority. They could not command the votes of their employés; men were not to be got at in that way. There was bound to be division amongst themselves, and a large amount of opposition from the men employed by them; and he did not think there was the

slightest chance of the squatting party ever becoming the dominant party in any district. There was one very strong reason why those boards should be appointed and it was this. Under the Bill all the officers concerned in administrating the law were to be appointed by the Crown; and against the power of the Crown there was not the slightest protection to people taking up lands. They had a right to some sort of protection, and the only way it could be given was by allowing them some sort of voice in the disposition of the lands in their own districts. The system might not work very easily at first; but taking it altogether, a board of the proposed kind would work for the benefit of their own district and of the colony at large; and in addition to that the system would have the recommendation of giving the people interested some little voice in the control of those matters, which otherwise would be taken completely out of their hands, and fixed in the most arbitrary way by the action of the Crown.

Question—That the new clause as read stand part of the Bill—put; and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 11.

The Hon. Sir T. McIlwraith, Messrs. Norton, Archer, Chubb, Palmer, Donaldson, Lissner, Govett, Morehead, Stevenson, and Nelson.

NOES, 25.

Messrs. Rutledge, Dutton, Griffith, Dickson, Sheridan, Buckland, Higson, Midgley, Macdonald-Paterson, Grimes, T. Campbell, Bailey, Mellor, White, Foxton, Moreton, Wallace, Kates, Miles, Foote, Isambert, Jordan, Aland, Groom, and Salkeld.

Question resolved in the negative.

Clause 20 put.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said there was another amendment which it was intended to propose, making the boards nominee instead of elective. There would not be time to deal with it that night.

The PREMIER said it was extremely inconvenient that the Government had not been favoured with the amendment before. There had been two nights' discussion on the one subject, and they were now threatened with a third. He must express a hope that the amendment would be ready, and that they should know what was going to be proposed.

Mr. NORTON: They have taken twelve months with their Land Bill in New South Wales.

The PREMIER said he hoped the hon. gentleman did not mean that it was desirable they should take the same length of time here. He hoped they would deal with the question now before the Committee finally to-morrow.

Mr. MOREHEAD said the hon. gentleman's strictures were hardly fair or just. Most of the amendments, so far, had been brought in by the Government themselves. When the hon. gentleman said he hoped that Parliament would not emulate the New South Wales Parliament, he (Mr. Morehead) hoped it would, in so far as they had to deal with a much larger question than New South Wales. He hoped the measure would be given every due consideration, and that it would not be hurried through the Committee, though the Premier had such a large majority at his back.

On the motion of the MINISTER FOR LANDS, the House resumed, the CHAIRMAN reported progress, and obtained leave to sit again to-morrow.

MESSAGES FROM LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

The SPEAKER announced that he had received messages from the Legislative Council to the effect that the Council had passed, without amendment, the Wages Bill, the Local Authorities Bill, the Gympie Gas Company Bill, the Maryborough Town Hall Bill, and the Pettigrew Estate Enabling Bill; and had agreed to the Assembly's amendments in the Patents, Designs, and Trade Marks Bill, and the Native Birds Protection Act Amendment Bill.

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER, in moving the adjournment of the House, stated that the first business to-morrow would be the Vote on Account, notice of which had been given by the Colonial Treasurer; after which the discussion on the Land Bill would be proceeded with.

The House adjourned at four minutes past 11 o'clock.