

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 20 AUGUST 1885

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, 20 August, 1885.

Petitions.—Questions.—Brisbane Bridge Act Amendment Bill.—Rabbit Bill—third reading.—Acquisition of Westbrook and Canning Downs Estates.—Local Government Act of 1878 Amendment Bill.—Adjournment.

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

PETITIONS.

Mr. KATES presented a petition on behalf of 520 freeholders, leaseholders, and residents of Beauraba, Condamine Plains, and West Creek, praying that the Drayton deviation of the Warwick line might be carried out as surveyed; and moved that it be read.

Question put and passed, and petition read by the Clerk.

On the motion of Mr. KATES, the petition was received.

Mr. ARCHER presented a petition from residents of Rockhampton and surrounding districts, praying that in the construction of the Rockhampton and Emu Park Railway the western route might be adopted; and moved that it be read.

Question put and passed, and petition read by the Clerk.

On the motion of Mr. ARCHER, the petition was received.

QUESTIONS.

Mr. ALAND asked the Minister for Works—

Has the Colonial Architect received instructions to prepare plans and specifications for the proposed lunatic asylum at Toowoomba?—if so, when is it expected that tenders will be called for the work?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. Miles) replied—

The Colonial Architect has received instructions to prepare plans and specifications for the proposed lunatic asylum at Toowoomba, which will be attended to as early as the press of work in his office will permit. It is expected that tenders will be called in about three months.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN (for the Hon. Sir T. McIlwraith) asked the Minister for Works—

What is the probable cost of the new railway station at Ipswich?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied—

The estimated probable cost of the new station at Ipswich is £31,189.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN (for the Hon. Sir T. McIlwraith) asked the Minister for Works—

1. Is it the intention of the Government to shift the station at the Eagle Farm Junction to the old Sandgate road, on the Thoroldtown Estate?

2. Is it contemplated to remove the Lutwyche station to the Thoroldtown Estate, and what other changes are contemplated in that locality?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied—

1. The matter is now under consideration.

2. No; but the erection of a platform at Thoroldtown is under consideration.

Mr. NORTON (for Mr. Hamilton) asked the Colonial Treasurer—

Whether it is his intention to grant the use of a steamer for harbour service at the port of Cooktown?

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

There is no steamer available at present for this service, nor is there sufficient work at this port to keep a steamer employed there advantageously.

Mr. NORTON (for Mr. Hamilton) asked the Minister for Works—

Whether it is his intention to bring in during this session a Bill to amend the Mineral Leases Act as regards the working of coal?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied—

It is not the intention of the Government to bring in during this session an Act to amend the Mineral Leases Act as regards the working of coal.

BRISBANE BRIDGE ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

On the motion of the PREMIER (Hon. S. W. Griffith), leave was given to introduce a Bill to amend the Brisbane Bridge Act, and to provide for the permanent closure of the Victoria Bridge.

The Bill was presented, read a first time, and the second reading made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

RABBIT BILL—THIRD READING.

On the motion of the MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. C. B. Dutton), this Bill was read a third time, passed, and ordered to be returned to the Legislative Council, by message intimating that the Assembly had agreed to the Bill without amendment.

ACQUISITION OF WESTBROOK AND CANNING DOWNS ESTATES.

Mr. KATES, in moving—

That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the following resolutions:—

1. That, in the interest of close settlement, the acquisition of Westbrook Estate, on Darling Downs, comprising about 80,000 acres, and situated on two lines of railway, is highly desirable.

2. That, in the interest of close settlement, the acquisition of Canning Downs Estate, on Darling Downs, comprising about 60,000 acres, situated on the Condamine River, with the Killarney Railway running through for a distance of twenty-six miles, is also desirable.

3. That, in the opinion of this House, if these estates can be acquired by debentures payable fourteen years after date it will prove advantageous to the colony, as the subdivision and sale of the two estates named will not only recoup the purchase money, with interest added, but also be highly beneficial in furthering close settlement and adding largely to the traffic of these railways.

4. That an Address be presented to His Excellency the Governor, praying that His Excellency will be pleased to cause a Bill to be introduced to give effect to the foregoing resolutions.

—said: Mr. Speaker,—The question I intend to introduce this evening is not altogether a new one. In the year 1881 I introduced certain resolutions, less commendable and less acceptable than the present, and yet they were in the first instance adopted by a majority of 19 votes to 15. The resolutions of 1881 were to borrow £500,000 in the English money market to recover some of those valuable rich Darling Downs estates alongside the railway; but the present resolutions are much more modified and deal with two estates only; and affirm that if they can be acquired by debentures payable fourteen years after date for the purposes of close settlement, it will be beneficial not only for Darling Downs but for the whole colony. Before I enter fully into the question I will give to hon. members the names of those gentlemen who so cordially supported me on a similar question raised in 1881. We find the Hon. Samuel Walker Griffith, the Hon. J. R. Dickson, W. Miles, J. F. Garrick, A. Rutledge, T. Macdonald-Paterson; yourself, Mr. Speaker; and Messrs. Fraser, Foote, Bailey, Grimes, Aland, Beattie, De Satgé, De Poix-Tyrel, O'Sullivan, Horvitz, and Rea. I have great hopes that the gentlemen who so cordially supported me at that time will not in this instance change their opinions, because in the meantime nothing has intervened to induce them to change their opinion, or if anything has intervened it has only been such as should strengthen their opinion. I intend to give a few extracts from the speeches of the most prominent members of the House—from the

speeches of the Premier, the Colonial Treasurer, and the hon. member for Townsville. At that time the hon. Premier, in connection with my resolution, said :—

“He held that the Darling Downs was one of many parts of the colony which were eminently suitable for agriculture and the land of which would ultimately have to be devoted to agriculture. It was within the province of the Government, if they found large tracts of land not being put to the use which ought to be made of it, to interfere in order to enable the colony to get the best advantage it could from those lands. It was quite certain that the colony could not afford to carry on extensive public works for the benefit of tracts which were practically waste lands. He should support the resolution.”

Those were the utterances of the present Premier of the colony, and they were wise words and worthy of a statesman. The Colonial Treasurer spoke still more strongly on the subject. That hon. gentleman said at that time :—

“The true object of the motion was to endeavour to settle population upon the large fertile tracts of territory which had been for many years absolutely unoccupied by human beings, and which, should it remain under its present ownership, would for years remain in the same position. He conceived that it was true statesmanship to endeavour by every reasonable and legitimate means to encourage population to settle in such parts of the colony as would give them a fair opportunity of commencing colonial life under encouraging circumstances; and he believed that no part of the colony offered more encouraging circumstances for the settlement of such population than that portion of the lands of this colony on the Darling Downs which was the subject of their present discussion; and he would most heartily support the resolution.”

The Colonial Treasurer is a gentleman known for his consistency, and I hope on this occasion he will sustain his reputation. I will next read some remarks made by the hon. member for Townsville just a few weeks before I brought forward my resolution in 1881, and after that gentleman, in his official capacity at the time, had visited the country between Warwick and Killarney, inspecting the route of Killarney Railway. The hon. gentleman was so enraptured with that district that he could not help ejaculating that—

“It was scandalous that such a tremendous area of such fine rich lands should be in the hands of one man, and if possible they should be re-purchased for the purpose of closer settlement. The land was all suitable for tillage, and he considered it a pity that previous land legislation should have allowed so much of this fine country to pass into one man's hands. He fully believed that a scheme could be arranged and carried out successfully by which these lands could be secured for the benefit of the people.”

“Of the people,” that is to say of the people of the colony, not of the people on the Darling Downs only—

“of the people and of the Treasury.”

That is the opinion of the hon. member for Townsville—a gentleman well known for his clear-headedness and shrewdness—after personal observation. He could not help crying out that it was a scandalous thing—and I, too, say it is a scandalous thing—to see these fine lands in the hands of one man. Only recently we were told that the Crown lands left on the Darling Downs are of a very inferior quality—“sterile ridges,” and so on. At the same time we find half-a-million of acres of the finest land, not only in Australia, but in the whole world, left as a barren wilderness—a sheep-walk; and where there should be a multitude of people settled and benefiting themselves, we see large open paddocks and a few overseers and boundary-riders to take charge of a few thousand sheep. I am sure it is time something was done to remedy the mischief caused by previous bad land legislation and worse administration. It will be in the interests of the whole colony to secure those estates—the best on the Darling Downs—for the

purpose of close settlement. If I were of opinion that in carrying out this scheme the country would lose one shilling, or that there would be the slightest risk of any injury being done to the colony, I would have nothing to do with it. I am informed that the owners of these estates are prepared to take fourteen years' debentures at a very low interest—I think 4 per cent.—and therefore now is the time to seize the opportunity and recover some of those fine estates for the purpose of close settlement. The price the owners ask is from 40s. to 45s. per acre; to my mind a very low price. I will now point out that in acquiring these lands there can be no risk so far as the State is concerned; because when these lands are cut up and selected, the moment the selector goes upon the land he fences, cultivates, erects buildings, and provides water, if necessary, either by sinking or by conservation, and all these works will form additional securities to the State. I have no hesitation in saying that before the expiration of this term the value of the lands will be doubled and trebled. Again, sir, I can say that since my residence on the Darling Downs the desire to settle on the Darling Downs lands has been greater every year. Only recently, when thirteen small pieces of land were open for selection near Warwick, no less than forty applicants made their appearance in the Land Office at Warwick to obtain them, and only recently some of the farmers there paid as much as £15 an acre for land alongside Canning Downs. In support of my resolution I will further refer to the Allora exchange lands, and I take this opportunity of saying that no part of the colony has been so badly slandered as the self-same Allora exchange lands. That is without rhyme or reason, because I am able to prove, and I challenge contradiction, that there was never a greater success in the colony in the way of land legislation than the Allora exchange. When Mr. Douglas was at the head of the Government, in 1879, he secured 20,000 acres of these Allora lands in exchange for 40,000 acres at Jondaryan. And now we find that nearly the whole of these Allora lands have been taken up by *bona fide* selectors, the population is increasing along the railway, they are producing the necessities of life, and they are in every way advantageous to the colony. On the other hand, the Jondaryan paddock is just about the same as it was twenty years ago, and is likely to remain so for the next twenty years. Not only has settlement been promoted, but I also find that the Government have made a very good financial speculation. The Jondaryan lands were valued at the time at 15s. an acre.

The Hon. Sir T. McILWRAITH : By whom?

Mr. KATES : By the Government. The hon. gentleman asks by whom? I shall prove to the hon. gentleman that they were not worth 15s. per acre, because at that time the adjoining lands of West Prairie and East Prairie were open to selection, and we find that a great number of selectors got those lands at 10s. and 7s. 6d. an acre. I can give the hon. gentleman the names of the selectors. 1,401 was secured by Mr. Davenport, 640 acres at 7s. 6d. an acre. That is better land than the Jondaryan. 1,402 also by Mr. Davenport, 640 acres at 7s. 6d.; 1,403 by Mr. Falconer, 640 acres at 7s. 6d.; the next, 634 acres at 7s. 6d., by Mr. Falconer also; then Mr. D. McLaughlin took up 640 acres at 7s. 6d.; Mr. Hourigan took up 640 acres at 7s. 6d.; Mr. Weinholt took up 320, 160, and 2,060 acres, at 10s. an acre. On the West Prairie, Mr. Harcourt took up 640 acres at 10s.; Mr. Shacroft, 640 acres at 10s.; C. Lyons, 640 acres at 10s.; Mr. McLennon, 640 acres at 10s.; and many others. Besides those, seventeen volunteers took up land

adjoining, and not one of them settled on it. So that if I allow 15s. an acre for Jondaryan I am 5s. beyond the figures mentioned by me in connection with these selections. The Government should not want to make a profit; they should be satisfied with the settlement; but in this instance I find the Government so far have cleared £14,977. As I pointed out in one of the newspapers, forty selectors took up 2,967 acres at £5 an acre, and not one shilling of this purchasing money has ever been remitted; a great many of them have paid in full and the money is now in the Treasury. Ten selectors took up 523 acres at £4, eighty 603 acres at £3, and 129 selected 14,995 acres at an average of 35s. That amounted to £44,977, and taking from that the price of the Jondaryan lands, valued at 15s., there is a profit of £14,977 in connection with the Allora exchange. The Government have yet 1,000 acres reserved for recreation grounds, for firewood, and for police barracks. I think I have been able to prove that it has been a great success, not only as far as settlement is concerned, but also from a financial point of view. Now, sir, these lands on Darling Downs are as good in quality as the Allora lands; and I believe people would rather take small selections on Westbrook and Canning Downs than ten times the quantity in the far western district. I have no doubt that within twelve months of the land being thrown open for selection every acre of it will be taken up by *bonâ fide* tillers of the soil. I may be asked why the owners do not cut the land up into lots themselves? To that I answer that the owners prefer to sell it in one lot, and they want cash, or debentures equal to cash. In many instances the owners could not afford to give such long terms as the Government—twelve or fourteen years—and it is very necessary that people should have long terms to become successful farmers. Besides, in my experience, I have found that farmers and selectors do not like buying from private persons or companies. They do not feel so safe as with the Government. There may, perhaps, be a year or two of bad seasons, and they run the risk of having their agreements cancelled, their deposits forfeited, and the result of years of toil swept away in a day. Then what do private companies care for increased population or increased traffic on the railways? They would just as soon sell to-morrow to another company if they only got a profit on the original cost. The farmers and selectors prefer to have the Government as their landlord; they know the Government can get the money cheaper than private companies would charge them. They know that the Government, in dealing with such estates as these, would not look so much to profit as to settlement; the profit the Government look for is an increase of population and an increase of railway traffic. They say that the difference in the interest alone which the Government would charge them, and that which private companies would charge them, would be 6 or 7 per cent. per annum, which would go into their pockets and enable them to meet their liabilities. They have more confidence in the Government. If these lands go into the hands of private syndicates, and the farmers or selectors should fail to meet their engagements—as I said before—they will run the risk of having the money they have deposited, and all their labour, lost. They will be told by the agent of the syndicate, "You must either clear out or accept a tenancy at so much per acre per annum." This is a state of things I should not like to see in a young colony like Queensland. I do not like to see those large syndicates, with long rent-rolls, squeezing and screwing as much as they can out of the farmers. They have no sympathy with the

farmers, but all they look for are stiff profits or large dividends. I may also be told, and I suppose I shall be by some hon. members opposite, that it is monstrous and preposterous to buy back estates on the Darling Downs when there are so many hundreds of millions of acres of land in the colony unalienated. We have constructed railways on the Darling Downs, but there is no population there; and I maintain that the people would rather have 160 acres or 320 acres alongside those railways than ten times the area on the western districts—away from civilisation, away from schools, away from markets. Another fact I wish to call attention to is, that there is only one district in Queensland suitable for wheat-growing, and that is the Darling Downs. We must look to the Darling Downs as the future granary of the colony. On the Darling Downs we shall have to grow all our bread-stuffs—in fact, the staff of life. Therefore it is desirable that every available acre should be secured there, it being so well situated, so near the markets and so near the coast. We have it on official authority that no place in the colony has been so successful in the growth of wheat as the Darling Downs. There may be as good soil, perhaps, on the Barcoo, the Gregory, or the Thompson, but wheat-growing will not thrive there; and even if it did, the long distance from markets and from the coast would leave a very poor margin of profit.

Mr. DONALDSON: What about the rainfall?

Mr. KATES: I am very glad the hon. gentleman has reminded me of that. The rainfall on the Darling Downs is much surer than in the West; that is another reason why we should secure every available acre of land on the Downs for close settlement. The district of the Darling Downs is also eminently suited for the growth of lucerne and other artificial grasses. Where do the best and fattest sheep come from which supply the Brisbane people with mutton? Some of the Canning Downs sheep have fetched as much as 25s. a head. How is it that New Zealand is the only colony in the Australian group that can send home meat and sell it at a profit? Because in New Zealand they have laid down large areas under artificial grasses on which sheep and cattle thrive best. That is what can be done on the Darling Downs. The black soil there is eminently suited for the growth of lucerne and other fattening grasses. To show what a steady and industrious man can do on the Darling Downs I will refer to a gentleman who is well known to many hon. members and to a great many people outside the House, and whose property is adjacent to the Westbrook Estate. I refer to Mr. William Crawford. Mr. Crawford, in reply to the toast of "Agriculture," proposed by His Excellency the Governor at the Toowoomba Show last year, stated that in the year 1882 he had under crop 14 acres of wheat, 2 of which he cut in the spring for his horses; 23 acres of oats reaped for seed, 7 acres under potatoes, 22 acres of maize, 40 acres of lucerne, a large quantity of which was used for cattle; and 2 acres of orchard fruit; making a total amount under cultivation of 180 acres. Mr. Crawford is one of those men who keep books, putting down carefully all his incomings and outgoings. I wish a great many other farmers would follow his example in that respect. His account-sales of that year showed as follows:—314½ bushels of wheat, £75 10s. 9d.; 821 bushels of oats, £137 13s. 6d.; 586 bushels of maize, £96 12s. 2d.; 51 bushels of chaff, £182 0s. 4d.; 98 cwt. potatoes, £22 16s. 2d.; 4 horses, sold for £73 15s.; 15 young pigs, for £7 10s.; the stock of maize unsold was worth £30, and the stock of hay unsold was worth

£10; making a total of £665 2s. 11d. No one who knows Mr. Crawford will doubt his veracity; he is well known on the Darling Downs and highly respected, and his property adjoins the Westbrook Estate, now under discussion. Mr. Crawford came to the colony in 1862, and is now a man of independent means, chiefly acquired by the tillage of the soil. On the occasion referred to Mr. Crawford also said, "These facts, he thought, should convince men that farming on the Darling Downs was not so bad as had been painted." I shall also be asked by hon. members opposite—"What will our London creditors say when they hear we are about pledging our credit for such purposes?" I will tell you what they will say if both sides of the case are fairly laid before them. When they are told that twenty years ago we made a most serious mistake in allowing our best agricultural lands in such large areas to fall into the hands of a few persons, and that since that time we have spent nearly a million of money in constructing railways there out of money borrowed from them, and if they are told that by these proposals we are trying to get back those lands for closer settlement to increase our population and to increase the traffic on our railways—they will say it is a step in the right direction, and one that should have been taken long ago, knowing that the larger the population the better would be the investment. As additional evidence in support of my argument, I will refer to the report sent in not long since by Mr. Hume, of the Lands Department. That gentleman, in his report, says that the average price of land throughout the whole colony was 11s. 8½d., and that the highest price obtained was in the Warwick and Allora districts—27s. per acre. He also says that there are 71,568 acres under cultivation, as far as selected land is concerned; and out of that the area in the districts of Toowoomba and Warwick is nearly one-half, 31,500 acres—Warwick and Allora 17,500 acres, Toowoomba 14,000; so that of selected land under cultivation throughout the whole colony the Darling Downs—Toowoomba and Warwick—has nearly one-half. Mr. Hume also reports that the percentage of area under cultivation is highest in the Warwick and Allora districts—namely, 16·787; the next being Toowoomba, 7·33, and then Mackay with 2·75, and other places which gradually become less and less until they disappear altogether. The Registrar-General, sir, also reports most favourably as far as the Darling Downs is concerned. He says that the total extent of land under cultivation throughout the colony, leased and freehold, is 199,580 acres, out of which Toowoomba, Warwick, and Allora represent 48,111 acres, or nearly one-fourth of the whole colony. Hon. members will, I feel sure, admit that these figures show that as far as agriculture and the value of the land is concerned the Darling Downs rank first in the whole colony. But what I would like to see, Mr. Speaker, is the whole colony supplied with the necessities of life produced in the colony itself; and we have a great deal to do before we achieve that, because I find from the latest statistics to hand that in 1883 we imported 27,253 tons of flour, value £340,402; 25,000 bushels bran, value £13,674; 44,549 bushels maize, value £7,415; 1,570 tons of hay, £6,331; 905 tons chaff, £5,360; 6,095 tons potatoes, £24,770; 41,532 bushels oats, £5,826; 730,000 lbs. butter, £43,821; 812,000 lbs. cheese, £26,327; and 184 packages eggs, £125; total, £470,071. Surely, sir, we ought to make some effort to try and retain all that money in the colony! What a number of people we could employ with it; and where, sir, is there a better place for it than the Darling Downs, alongside the railway? I know the hon. member for Port Curtis has not much sympathy with the farmers on the Darling

Downs, but I am sure that if he goes there and judges for himself he will come back a converted man. I think, sir, it will be just as well for me to give hon. members a description of these two estates now to be had on such easy terms. The Westbrook Estate comprises an area of 84,000 acres more or less, extending from the Warwick Railway on the east—to which it has a frontage of six miles—to the main Southern and Western line—to which it has a frontage of nine miles, including the Oaky Creek railway station, extending to within one mile of Jondaryan railway station. The Westbrook, Oaky, and Spring Creeks run right through the centre of the property, giving a never-failing water supply to the whole; besides which, on the northern side of the Dalby line, there are two large permanent lagoons. The whole property is fenced in and subdivided into thirty-seven paddocks with many hundred miles of fencing. The estate is intersected by five main roads—(1) from Westbrook Homestead Area to Westbrook railway station and Toowoomba; (2) from the Westbrook Homestead to the Well Camp railway station and Toowoomba; (3) from Westbrook Homestead No. 13 to Oaky Creek railway station; (4) from Oaky Creek railway station to Boah Waterholes; (5) the main road from Toowoomba to Dalby. I may as well state that the improvements on this estate are numerous and valuable, and that there is not an acre of decent land to be had within thirty miles of Toowoomba. The Canning Downs Estate adjoins the town of Warwick, and is almost entirely first-class agricultural land. It is permanently watered by the Condamine River, to which it has a frontage of thirty miles, also by Emu, Swan, and Farm Creeks. The Killarney Railway intersects the property twice on the western side for four miles; and again on the eastern side, between the Emu Vale and Killarney railway station, for twelve miles. There are 700 acres laid down under lucerne within the area offered for sale, some of the farms being let on leases which terminate at the end of this year at 10s. per acre per annum, so that we have tenants already on the land paying that rent.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: What is the area of Canning Downs?

Mr. KATES: 60,000 acres.

Mr. DONALDSON: Is that the whole estate?

Mr. KATES: Yes; about 60,000 acres.

The Hon. Sir T. McILWRAITH: Canning Downs Estate is more than 60,000 acres.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: About 65,000.

Mr. KATES: It may be 65,000 or 66,000. I took the area in round numbers—60,000 acres. We now come to a very important point, sir, in connection with the Canning Downs Estate. I maintain that there is no place in the colony that is better suited for irrigation than that self-same estate. It has a double frontage of thirty miles to the Condamine River; it has long frontages to three large creeks—Farm Creek, Emu Creek, and Swan Creek—with rich agricultural lands on each side; and a system of irrigation could be introduced there the results of which would be simply marvellous. I find, sir, that not long since—only last week—a deputation of no fewer than 800 people waited upon Mr. Service, in Victoria, to urge upon him the necessity of borrowing £3,000,000 for a system of irrigation and water supply. Mr. Service told them that they would have to wait until the water commission had sent in their report. I maintain, sir, that the irrigation question is one that must come to the front at

once—one that will force itself on the attention of the Government whether they like it or not; and I hold, also, that there is no place more suited for the introduction of a system of irrigation than the self-same Canning Downs, because one knows that after eighteen or twenty hours' heavy rain the Condamine River rises from 15 to 18 feet, and we have allowed thousands of tons of water to roll down that river and lose itself in the western sands and swamps. If this water could be stored at the source of the Condamine, all the rich lands alongside the railway line could be brought under the influence of irrigation by means of canals or pipes. Then, I have no doubt that land alongside, coming under the influence of irrigation, would be worth something like £50 or £100 per acre, because crops could be raised to almost anything. I am very anxious that these lands shall not go into the hands of private companies, and I am very anxious that they should not be lost at the present time when they have been offered to the Government upon such easy terms, because the selectors—overburdened with high purchasing prices, high interest, and with little time granted to them to pay up—would be more likely to fail than they would be under the Government with a less purchasing price, and reasonable interest and long terms. Now, sir, I shall say a few words in connection with the Darling Downs land legislation of the past. I maintain that in no part of the colony have the lands been so shamefully manipulated as they have been upon the Darling Downs. In the Land Act of 1868 it was proposed that the Government should resume the better half for close settlement, and what happened? Why that, in resuming half, the officials of the time resumed the worst half, and of the remaining half the owners—I do not want to say all, but most of them—managed, by dummies and by walking fences, and in other ways, to secure the very best portions, until there was nothing left but waterless country and mountains and barren ridges. It is high time that this was rectified, and there will never be another opportunity of doing so. Now, sir, there is another point I shall call your attention to—that twenty years ago these lands of Westbrook and Canning Downs and others were sold by the Government at, in some instances, 20s. per acre; so that the Government, in giving 50s. an acre, will be actually paying only 30s., besides having had the use of the money for nearly a quarter of a century. Before concluding, I will summarise, in the shape of recapitulation, the reasons upon which my resolutions are based:—

1. The success which has attended the Allora exchanges;
 2. The eagerness of all people to select upon the Darling Downs, and the high price they are prepared to give when getting long terms;
 3. That the Darling Downs is the only spot in Queensland likely to become the granary of the colony;
 4. That there are four lines of railway already constructed, and there will be a consequent increase to the railway traffic;
 5. Its proximity to markets;
 6. The fair rainfall, and the ease with which water may be obtained by sinking;
 7. There is no place in the colony better suited for irrigation, in connection with the fine lands alongside the rivers I have named;
 8. That the acquisition of these estates by the Government will benefit the whole of the colony.
- It has been said by some newspapers that this is a scheme which will benefit only the Darling Downs people and towns; but it is to the advantage of every farmer in the whole colony

that these lands should be open to them. Why should it be said that it will only benefit the Darling Downs people?

9. The almost impossibility of the State incurring the slightest risk by the adoption of these resolutions.

In connection with this, I will also say I was very glad to hear His Excellency the Governor last week, in Toowoomba, and also upon a previous occasion, in Warwick, make the remarks he did. His Excellency has travelled through many parts of the world—he has been in Jamaica, Newfoundland, British Columbia, Natal, and South Australia—and he said that the farming community here has not been sufficiently well supported hitherto by any Government. I was pleased to hear him say so, and I hope the Government will take notice of it. By supporting these resolutions the Government are not committing themselves in any way.

Mr. NORTON: More or less, they will.

Mr. KATES: A Bill will have to be introduced, and if the Government find that the propositions made by the present owners of these estates are not of such very great benefit to the whole of the country, there is an end of it. But a Bill will have to be introduced, and that Bill will have to pass the ordeal of both Houses of Parliament, and will be subjected to much criticism. These resolutions are merely introductory and initiatory; and I hope sincerely and heartily that hon. members will think them worthy of consideration.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—It was impossible, I am sure, to listen to the very able speech with which the hon. member for Darling Downs introduced his motion without being impressed by the sincerity of his convictions, and the earnestness with which he has brought the matter forward. It is difficult—impossible for me, and, I think, for everyone else—not to feel a very great deal of sympathy with the hon. gentleman in the object he has in view. There can be no doubt that in the cases of many of the estates on the Darling Downs—those two particularly to which our attention has been called, being the most conspicuous—the result of our land laws has been that some of the most valuable lands in the colony are not being put to the uses to which they ought to be, and that they were allowed to get into the hands of private owners by all kinds of curious practices which we used to hear a great deal of in times past. All the efforts of different Governments to recover them from the persons into whose hands they had fallen have been unsuccessful. The present owners, I believe, are innocent of any improper practices in the acquisition of the land; but, for the country, the fact remains that these lands, instead of being occupied by the large number of persons they might be, and almost entirely put to the uses of agriculture, are used as great pastoral estates and put to the least profitable uses they can be. If they were settled thickly, undoubtedly the general prosperity of that part of the colony would be very much increased, and the whole colony would share in the benefit. There is no doubt either that the traffic upon our railways would also be very largely increased. All these advantages are patent. If we can recover these lands, and make use of them profitably for the State, it will be a good thing to do. But the matter must be considered from another point of view: one is tempted to yield to the arguments of the hon. gentleman; but in dealing with matters of importance of this kind it is necessary to look at the question from more points of view than one. Some of the advantages of this proposal are apparent, but the Government and Parliament are bound to consider the matter from other points of

view. I assume, Mr. Speaker, that very few people indeed differ from the proposition that it would be desirable, if practicable, to put these lands to a better use. There is, however, one consolation that may be derived from the existing state of affairs which we may infer from some of the observations of the hon. member as to the willingness of the present owners to sell these lands to the country, and that is, that the proprietors find that the lands are not being put to their most profitable use—that it is not a profitable thing for them to keep these large areas of country. That is a satisfactory conclusion to arrive at, because it will be a great discouragement to the acquisition of unduly large tracts of land if people find that they cannot put them to a profitable use. This the persons who own these lands evidently cannot do. I infer that from the observations of the hon. member in reference to the willingness of the owners to sell them. But we are not altogether without experience as to the value of land on the Darling Downs and as to the acquisition of these lands for the purposes of disposal. Since the matter was before the House in 1881 some gentlemen, known to be very shrewd business men, went in for the purchase of one of these estates—the Canning Downs Estate—at a very large price, I think £2 or £2 10s. per acre. The area of that estate is 65,000 acres, of which 5,000 acres are especially valuable; and at present a part of this very valuable portion is under cultivation, as stated by the hon. member for Darling Downs. This 5,000 acres was included in the bargain made by those gentlemen, but I understand that in the proposition made to the Government lately this part of the estate is reserved, as the proprietor wishes to keep it. The negotiations entered into by the gentlemen I have referred to for the purchase of this estate were broken off after investigation, and they preferred to pay a heavy forfeit of some thousands rather than go on with the purchase. Those gentlemen no doubt knew their own business best, and I suppose they came to the conclusion that it was better for them to lose their deposit money than to go on with the negotiations. If that is so I do not suppose the Government could do any better as a pecuniary speculation; probably they would do worse. With respect to the value of the land proposed to be acquired I do not know much, and I am not aware what price is desired by the proprietors. I hear the hon. member say £25s. per acre. Well, I believe that is more than some of it is worth. Before going on with this question, however, I want just to say a word or two about the Allora lands. The hon. gentleman stated that by these exchanges the Government have made a profit of about £14,000. That estimate is arrived at by taking the value of the lands given in exchange for the Allora lands, at 15s. an acre; but when that bargain was made the value upon which the transaction was based was 30s. per acre. I have in my hand all the papers in connection with that exchange. They were laid upon the table of the House on the 14th of August, 1878. Looking through these papers, I find that the Allora lands were valued, first by Mr. Commissioner Hume and afterwards by Mr. Commissioner Smith, at £3 per acre. Afterwards, a formal appraisalment was made by Mr. Hume, who was appointed appraiser on behalf both of the Government and Mr. Wienholt. The valuation is contained in these papers, and he valued the lands to be surrendered by Mr. Wienholt—which are what are called the Allora lands, and which consist of 20,877 acres—at £62,631; and he valued the land to be granted by the Crown, which was just double the quantity, also at £62,631. The value of the Allora lands, therefore, was £3 an acre, and the other, 30s. per acre.

I do not intend to trouble the House with the reasons given for the valuation at 30s. per acre. Of course, if you take 15s. as a basis, you will make it appear that there was a large profit on the transaction; but if 30s. is taken as the proper value, then the country has sustained a rather heavy loss. I did not take down the figures the hon. gentleman quoted, in detail, but it is quite clear that the difference between 15s. and 30s. for the whole area would make a very large loss to the Government instead of a profit of £14,000. But supposing the Government were to acquire the lands referred to in the resolutions before the House at £2 or £2 10s. per acre, what could they expect to do with them? Supposing they were paid for by debentures at 4 per cent.—a scheme with regard to which I have some doubt—we should incur a liability of £300,000, bearing interest at the rate of 4 per cent. per annum. What probability is there that the rent received from these lands would be sufficient to pay the interest on that sum? On this point, however, I do not know that we have any very accurate data to go upon. We know what the prices were for the Allora lands; that in some cases the price was as high as £5 per acre. The selecting price varied from £1 10s. to £5 per acre.

Mr. KATES: £6 or £8 an acre was the highest.

The PREMIER: Yes; some went as high as £6 an acre, but some were as low as 30s. But we have some additional information with regard to these Allora lands. We find that some selectors have applied since last year to take advantage of the provisions of the Land Act of 1884. The Land Board has assessed the rent of the lands proposed to be brought under that statute; and I find that the highest rent is fixed at 1s. per acre—that is, 5 per cent. on the capital value of 20s.; and this price has been fixed in some cases where the selecting price was as high as £5 per acre. I do not suppose then that the land could have been worth £5. If £5 per acre was not too much, then 1s. per acre rent is grossly undervaluing it. But these valuations have been made in cool blood after hearing both parties—the commissioner and the selector; and the decision has been arrived at, I believe, after personal inspection of the land. I think we can scarcely expect to get a much higher price fixed on any similar lands that may be acquired, and that would leave a heavy interest on these debentures to be paid out of the revenue. Possibly some other mode of administration might be discovered; possibly a higher rent might be exacted.

Mr. KATES: By appraisalment.

The PREMIER: The price of these Allora lands is the result of appraisalment, and I confess I am very much disappointed at the result. At £2 10s. an acre we should require a rental of 2s. 6d. per acre to meet the interest and expenses, and then we should have afterwards to pay the debentures when they became due. A transaction of this kind certainly ought not to be carried out unless we are sure that the Government will be protected against loss. I do not see how that can be done. But if anything is to be done I think it ought to be done by a commission who would deal with the matter on purely commercial principles. It would be very inconvenient for the Government to buy the land for cash—or debentures, which are as good as cash—and then to lay it out in farms and receive a rent insufficient to pay the interest. There is another point in connection with this subject. I can quite understand that in a country like Holland, or Belgium, or even some parts of Germany, where the quantity of land available is very limited, because large tracts have got

into the hands of private persons, it might be a necessity, and almost the imperative duty, of the State to take the land out of the hands of private proprietors, and subdivide it amongst persons who would make a better use of it. Even in the colony of Tasmania I can understand that it might be the duty of the State, where in some parts of the island there are large estates lying idle in the hands of companies or individuals, to take it in order to put it to a good purpose. I confess, however, I am not satisfied that it would be wise, under our present circumstances in this colony, to recognise or to admit that we are under such a necessity. We have millions of acres of land in this colony still available for settlement, and though there is none perhaps just as good, or exactly equal in all particulars to this land on the Darling Downs, of which these two estates are a fair sample—yet that there is land in the colony worth a great deal more than £2 or £3 per acre we all know; and while we are trying to bring out people to settle upon our Crown lands, it appears to me it would be a foolish thing to say—unless we are absolutely obliged to say it, and we are not—that we are reduced to such a position that we are obliged to buy back land already sold to provide land for settlement. That would be an extremely injudicious thing to say; and if we did not want to say it we could only disguise it as a raid upon large estates, to buy them up and apportion them amongst smaller men. It would never do to say we were obliged to buy back this land except under some such disguise as that, and if it came to that I do not think these two estates could be made an exception. No doubt these people would be glad to sell their land if they could get a satisfactory price for it; but there might be others who would be glad to sell their land if they could get a satisfactory price for it. I do not give these men any credit for motives of philanthropy in their desire to sell their land to the Government; though possibly they are as philanthropic as other people. The hon. gentleman says that farmers will not buy the land from these persons.

Mr. KATES: Do not care to.

The PREMIER: Yes; he says they prefer not to buy it from private owners or companies. I can quite understand that. Private owners or companies are obdurate, and when persons purchase from them they see that their instalments and rents are paid up. But in some of the returns laid on the table recently I saw that some of the rents and instalments were in arrears several years.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: The Allora lands too.

The PREMIER: Yes; I allude to the Allora lands. It is not imperative upon the Government to buy these lands. It would be a great advantage I know if we could get those lands to settle people upon; on the other hand, it would be manifestly inconvenient to attempt to do it at the present time. However much we might try to disguise the real motive for what we should be doing, as an attempt to break up large estates, we should find that the attempt would injure our credit very seriously indeed. We are boasting of the resources of the colony and the amount of land we have for settlement, and at the same time if it could be truly said of us that we were obliged to borrow money to buy back land for agricultural settlement that had been already sold, that one fact could not be explained away. We here know that that is not the case. We know that we have plenty of land in the colony, and we know that such action would be taken simply because there is no available land in that particular part of the colony; but we could not explain that in the money market, and I think it would be a very dangerous

thing to do anything that would require so much explanation, although practically no explanation could be given. With respect to allowing debentures to be issued for fourteen years, I think that would be rather inconvenient also; but it is, after all, a matter of small moment, though they would form part of our debt, of course. Under the circumstances, then, it appears to me that the arguments against this proposition are at the present time much stronger than those in favour of it, and I believe it to be the duty of the Government to oppose this motion. I do so with reluctance, because I am fully aware of the advantage it would be could we obtain this land and have it put to a better use than it is put to at the present time. At the same time, however reluctant we may be to do a duty of that kind, we are bound to do it. The hon. gentleman alluded to speeches made upon the resolution he brought forward in 1881 by a number of hon. members, by the Colonial Treasurer and myself amongst others. Those speeches appear to me to express a general sympathy with the object the hon. gentleman had in proposing his resolution, but beyond that I do not think the speeches go. The hon. gentleman, in quoting my speech on the occasion, left out a good deal of connecting matter. What I said was simply that I sympathised with the object the hon. gentleman had in view, but even if I had said a great deal more I do not consider that what I said on that occasion should preclude me from doing what I believe to be my duty on the present occasion. I am reported to have said:—

“He understood that the meaning of the motion was mainly to call the attention of the House and of the country, and the owners of those large estates, to the fact that owners of land had their duties as well as their rights, and that it was within the province of the Government, if they found large tracts of land not being put to the use which ought to be made of it, to interfere, in order to enable the country to get the best advantage it could from these lands.”

That is substantially what I said. My hon. friend, the Treasurer, spoke much to the same effect. I fancy we shall have to wait a little, and I believe, as I have said, that there are signs that these lands will not be kept much longer in the way they are now. The owners of them are beginning to find out that it does not pay to keep them in that way, and when they are satisfied that it does not pay, they will put them to a better use than they are put to at the present time. I think it would be dangerous and undesirable for us at the present time to enter into any such speculation on the part of the Government as the hon. member's motion really amounts to. It is a kind of speculation which, if the Government once entered into it, might have very large results. I do not know how many estates there are in the country that the Government might have an opportunity of buying; I know some that might be bought with as much advantage as these. I am disposed to think that we have not yet at any rate arrived at the period when it is desirable for the Government to take this matter up; and, for the reasons I have given, the Government are bound to oppose the motion.

Mr. ALAND said: Mr. Speaker,—I am somewhat disappointed at the speech of the Colonial Secretary, and I can only account for the tenor of that speech on the ground that the hon. member is now sitting on this side of the House instead of the other. Of course, lawyer-like, he has explained away what he said on this subject some few years ago, and I have no doubt the Colonial Treasurer will also explain away what he said; but the fact remains that both these hon. gentlemen gave this matter their very full and very free support. As the hon. member

for Darling Downs has stated, when he brought this matter before the House on a previous occasion it was in a somewhat different form, and certainly not so good a form. Hon. members are well aware that the proposition then was that we should go to the London money market and borrow half-a-million of money for the purchase of certain estates on the Darling Downs. The hon. member now comes to the House with what I think may be considered a very feasible scheme indeed. There are certain estates on the Darling Downs, which I think the House is agreed would be more advantageous to the country if they were in the possession of the State than in the hands of private individuals; and the hon. member comes down with a very feasible scheme by which they can be secured. In thinking over this matter, the two difficulties presented by the Premier forced themselves on my notice. The two principal objections he referred to, I think, are these—first, what effect would the purchase of these estates by the Government have upon our credit at home? and second, supposing we purchased these estates at the price shadowed forth—£2 5s. or £2 10s. an acre—would the Government be able to recoup themselves by selling them over again? Now, as to the effect upon our credit I am not prepared to speak. I admit it does not look the correct thing to be telling the people of England what a very large public estate we have, and in the same breath to tell them that we are repurchasing some of our estate. The two things do not seem to me to sound very harmoniously together; still, as the hon. member who introduced the motion has said, the people in England can understand things. It was made out here the other day that when certain adverse statements were made the people at home understood them; and I think if the matter were thoroughly explained by our Agent-General it would not have any bad effect on our borrowing powers when we go into the London money market. I think I can speak with more certainty as to the lands recouping the Government if they purchased them at £2 5s. or £2 10s. an acre. With regard to the Canning Downs, I believe all the hon. member for Darling Downs has said; and I believe also the Minister for Works, who has often told us that the lands were the pick and choice of Darling Downs. I feel sure that if the lands were cut into sections of a certain number of acres there are plenty of persons who would willingly give such a rental as would amply repay the Government their expense in the matter, and meet the debentures. Now, the Premier referred to a little transaction which took place a few years ago, in which, I think, the Minister for Works was interested. I must say that when I heard of that purchase, and then heard that the Minister for Works was one of two or three gentlemen who forfeited £4,000 or £5,000 rather than carry out the transaction, I thought they must have paid too much or were going to pay too much for their bargain, and that it was not the bargain they thought it would be. But we know that when private individuals like the Minister for Works, and especially the two gentlemen who were with him, go into a venture of from £120,000 to £150,000, they expect to make what is called "a pot of money" out of it. In this case they found they were not going to make a pot of money out of it, and I can quite understand that. But I can also understand that the Government, who do not want to make a pot of money out of it, might make a very fair thing out of it. All the Government want to see is that the interest will be paid, and at the end of a certain time the capital value of the land; and in the meantime there is all the indirect profit accruing

to the country. We cannot settle persons on the land without those persons contributing their fair share towards the government of the country, and towards all its numerous expenses. The Premier also referred to the Allora exchanges, and to the land at Jondaryan. He stated that the value of the land at Jondaryan was fixed at 30s. an acre, and that therefore that was the value of the land. But they might fix the amount at £3 an acre, or even a higher sum, and say that that was the value of the land. But the evidence produced by the hon. member for Darling Downs shows that the lands immediately adjoining Jimbour were sold for 7s. 6d. and 10s. an acre—the highest price was 12s. 6d.; and he calculated that he would make his profit on the Allora exchange not too large. He did not wish to make the profit look too large, and therefore he valued this land at Jondaryan at from 15s. an acre. I do not think it fair that, if the land anywhere about realised 30s. an acre, this particular land, because it happened to be given in exchange for the Allora lands, should be rated at so large a figure. Looking through this document—and I wish hon. members had had it placed in their hands before, but I suppose that was impossible—looking through it carelessly, it does not perhaps look so well as we might like it to look; but if hon. members will just glance down the column showing the extent to which conditions have been performed, they will find that a very considerable amount of money has been expended on those selections, by which the country must have benefited very largely indeed. We also know that, as far as these Allora lands are concerned, a very large number of the selectors have really fulfilled all their conditions, both as to payment of rent and all the other conditions that were imposed upon them. The hon. member who introduced the motion has dealt with the question very fully, and I can only say I regret extremely that the Government are not disposed to take this matter in hand. I think they are making a mistake. When we know that at the present time very large importations are being made into the colony of all kinds of agricultural produce, dairy produce, and everything of that kind, the Government ought to offer all the facilities they possibly can in order to secure this land for the people, so that such things may be produced in the colony. I would not like the House, more especially the hon. member for Warrego, to imagine that we look upon the Darling Downs as the whole of the colony. I daresay there was a time when really the Darling Downs was the greater part of the colony.

MR. DONALDSON: I must correct the hon. gentleman. I never said so. What I said was that I had heard it stated on this side of the House that the hon. members for that part of the colony imagined that the Darling Downs was the whole of Queensland.

THE HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH: And there is a great deal of truth in it, too.

MR. ALAND: I beg the hon. member's pardon. I was under the impression that he himself had made the assertion. What I want to say on this subject is that the reason why the Darling Downs has been so often mentioned in this House in matters appertaining to agriculture and land, is because it is in that part of the colony, as has been pointed out by the hon. member for Darling Downs, that the gravest abuses have been carried out in the times which are passed. Unfortunately, or rather fortunately, the persons who perpetrated those abuses, or a good many of them, have left the Darling Downs; but the evil effects remain behind them. We know the unfair manner, when the resuming of the runs took place, in which those resumptions were made. We know

that certain gentlemen went to those runs, and in dividing them apportioned the very best portions to the pastoral tenant and gave the worthless land to the selector. From time immemorial—from the time that this has been a colony—the principle on which these matters were conducted was, that anything was good enough for people who were going into agriculture. The worst portions of the land everywhere were set apart for agricultural purposes. There is no good land left on the Darling Downs except what is in the hands of private persons, and held by them in large quantities. To accept these resolutions would be good for the whole country. Very likely Warwick and Toowoomba may benefit more than the rest of the colony; but, at the same time, the entire colony would largely benefit by having these vast estates bought and cut up and settled by an industrious agricultural population. Again, sir, I say I regret that the Government have not seen their way to accept the resolutions of the hon. member, more especially seeing that, some few years ago, they supported similar resolutions when presented to the House in a somewhat different form.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said: Mr. Speaker,—This motion is not a very new one to me, or to the Premier either. The same motion, only covering much larger ground, was brought forward by the hon. member in 1881, and it received the warmest support, not only from the members of the Ministry who were in the House at that time, but from the entire party, every one of whom voted for the resolution. It was a much wider resolution than the one now before us. It was as follows:—

“That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of an Address to the Governor, praying that His Excellency will be pleased to recommend that a sum of £500,000 be placed on the first Loan Estimates to provide for the gradual recovery, either by repurchase or exchange, of the large arable properties now held by private land-owners on the Darling Downs.”

That resolution was much wider than the present; it covered much more ground; it involved a larger amount of money; and it included within its lines the most obnoxious principle that has ever been at work on the Darling Downs—that of exchanging land for the purpose of getting other land for agricultural settlement. I am sorry I ever had anything to do with the Allora exchange. I never approved of it. The Ministry over which I presided came into power when the exchange had been affirmed, and all we had to do with it was to frame laws for properly regulating how the public should get possession of those lands. The hon. member for Darling Downs had on that occasion the thorough approval of the present Premier, who expressed his sympathy, as he said, with the motion over and over again; and when a member expresses his sympathy with a motion it means that he approves of that motion. That hon. member spoke very cautiously, but he approved of it. Not only did he approve of the motion, but he voted for it; and not only did he vote for the motion, but he claimed the result of the division as a victory over the Government, and no members of the victorious party were more exuberant about it than the present Treasurer and the Premier. I remember the night very well. When the matter was brought forward again, in the following week, I had taken good care that we would not be caught napping again. We would not be caught again with a minority; and when we succeeded in opposing the motion most effectually the present Premier denounced it as the most dastardly trick that had ever been perpetrated in the colony. The motion was brought forward on the first occasion in a thin House, but it was a

thin House owing to causes over which I had no control. However, the result was that they carried the motion against the Government.

Mr. KATES: Two of your supporters voted for it.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: Who were they?

Mr. KATES: Oscar de Satgé and—

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: Oscar de Satgé was never a supporter of mine.

Mr. KATES: And P. O'Sullivan.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: Oscar de Satgé! He was never a supporter of mine; I did not want him. Well, on account of that the hon. member, Mr. Kates, carried his motion, and it was put down as an Order of the Day for the following Thursday. When it came on he saw that my followers were present. The supporters of the motion had not been able to pack the House as they did before, and they were willing to put it off and trust to Providence that they would catch us in the same way some other Thursday night when the followers of the Government were absent. But when the Order of the Day was called I insisted on it being brought forward, and moved that it be expunged from the paper, which was carried. The Premier went to that extent as showing his sympathy for the hon. member for Darling Downs; and the Treasurer, with more exuberance and unction in his manner than usual, became the advocate, in the most extraordinary way, of everything proposed by that hon. member; foreshadowing something that he did not anticipate at the time—that the very same hon. member would again come forward and endeavour to fasten the responsibility of the undertaking upon him. There is an old proverb that “Curses, like crows, come home to roost,” and the Government have got one of those curses following them now, for look at the lamentable position they occupy! Even the old Minister for Works—fresh from the disastrous results of a similar movement, in which he was privately concerned instead of the Government, and in which he sacrificed £5,000 rather than go on with the purchase—was one of the leading members who advocated the scheme by his vote, although he did not say much for it. I am now referring to what occurred in 1881.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: You are making a woful mistake.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: At all events the hon. member advocated it strongly then; and I can quite understand that he was willing enough to saddle the Government with the responsibility of a transaction of this kind while it was to be paid for with Government money, or Government debentures; but when it had to be paid for by a cheque drawn by himself and others, he thought better of it, and I do not think the transaction is likely to be carried out. If he acted according to his experience he would go dead against the proposition of the hon. member for Darling Downs. The Government have now the responsibility of having advocated, and encouraged members to advocate, propositions which are thoroughly impracticable. If the Premier had made the speech in 1881 that he has made to-day, the hon. member, Mr. Kates, would have been silent upon the question for ever, and we should have heard no more of it. I have not altered my opinion on the matter. I fully admit that it would be a good thing if the Government could, without any loss to themselves, recover—or rather be the means of cutting up—the large estates of the colony into smaller ones. I believe that it would be an advantage to the country, and, indirectly, an advantage to the Government; but the persons who proposed that would

have one important duty to perform. In the first place, they would have to show the financial basis upon which the scheme rests—because it is purely a financial question. Certain advantages might arise from it indirectly, but the Government will never be justified in going into a transaction of this sort unless it has a sound financial basis. For instance, if the Government of Great Britain were justified in lending to the Scottish farmers or landlords money upon long terms for the purpose of improving their lands, it was because the scheme was based upon the certainty of interest and principal being paid back within a certain time. But, sir, what prospect have we of anything like a foundation of that kind for the proposition now before the House? The hon. member has given us statistics based on the Allora exchange, and they are very dismal to look upon in almost any view in which they can possibly be placed. Do those lands pay interest on the transaction? The hon. member says that the Jondaryan lands that were exchanged were valued at 15s. an acre at the time. The Government, in giving one acre of Allora land for that on Jondaryan, were repurchasing the land at 30s. an acre. Well, 30s. at 4 per cent. per annum comes to 1s. 2½d. an acre. I am sorry, sir, that hon. members have not had time to digest the statistics which I asked the Government to furnish regarding those lands, and which have only been laid upon the table this afternoon, because they would see at once the effect of the transaction. Let them look down the last column and see what the Government have got now. Supposing the land to have been worth 15s. an acre, the annual interest, without making any provision for repayment, is 1s. 2½d.; and, as the Premier remarked just now, there is not a single acre put down at a higher price than 1s. The prices are mostly 9d., 6d., 4d., 7d., 5d., and 3d.—a great many at that price. Now a large proportion of these lands have come under the Act of 1884.

Mr. KATES: A very small proportion—not one-third.

The Hon. Sir T. McILWRAITH: Far more than one-third—more than one-half. However, that is a matter of detail. At all events, the average rent of those that have come under the Act seems to be about 6d. per acre; and 1s. 2½d. is the price that the Government gave for the land, reckoning the money at 4 per cent. per annum. I think that it is conceding a great deal too much to estimate those lands at so low a price. We know that when the question was debated it was conceded and contended, in fact, by gentlemen occupying the same position and holding the same opinion as the hon. member (Mr. Kates), that the lands in the Allora exchange were well worth £3; and some went further, and said they were worth £5 an acre—from £3 to £5. But taking it at £3 an acre, the annual rent that the Government ought to have got for it is about 2s. 5d. That is the amount that ought to be obtained in order to pay 4 per cent on £3. I will ask hon. members to look at the kind of price we are likely to get as a fair rental for these lands. Very likely these men who elect to come under the Act of 1884 are fair representatives of the kind of men we now have to deal with in the case of Canning Downs and Westbrook, out of whom a great proportion have failed to keep their engagements. The proposition we are asked to assent to is this: that we are to buy the Canning Downs and Westbrook Estates at 50s. an acre. The hon. member was very hazy about the price—first saying 45s. and finally 50s.—but I think it is more likely to be 50s. But let us take it at 50s.: 50s., at 4 per cent., gives 2s. an acre, and we will therefore have to have a class of

tenants who, on the average, will give 2s. an acre rent. There must be some provision made for the ultimate payment of the debentures, and the selectors must pay an annual amount to wipe off that responsibility. They must pay for the ground in some way. They will then be required to pay 2s. per annum rent, and pay for their farms besides in the course of twenty years. Now, are they able to do that?

Mr. KATES: Yes.

The Hon. Sir T. McILWRAITH: If the hon. member had gone into a little calculation he would not make that answer. Well, I have not prepared a calculation showing what they will have to pay, but I will draw hon. members' attention to the fact that the interest on the amount at 4 per cent. will come to 2s. per acre and I question very much whether the farms will ever be paid for. We can now understand what the hon. gentleman means. He says the Government ought to buy this land because farmers do not like buying from private individuals. Now, that shows the weakness of his whole argument, because he knows perfectly well that these farmers would have to pay private individuals, whereas if they were dealing with the Government they might bring pressure to bear to have their rents remitted. The hon. gentleman, in fact, admits that under those circumstances they will not have to pay at all. Let him look at the return which I asked for and which has been laid upon the table of the House. I asked for a return showing the extent to which the conditions had been performed on the Allora exchange lands, but one of the most important things I wanted to find out was the condition of payment. One of the most important conditions is the annual payment, and that is omitted from the return altogether.

Mr. KATES: I can give the hon. gentleman the information.

The Hon. Sir T. McILWRAITH: I can get the information for myself from the last *Gazette*, published in March, in which the March rents are shown. If hon. members will look at that list they will find that something like 25 per cent. of the whole of the Allora selectors are behindhand in their payments.

Mr. KATES: Twenty-two out of 187.

The Hon. Sir T. McILWRAITH: How can the hon. member fly in the face of the return published in the *Gazette*, and say there are only 22 defaulters out of 187? I say there are 25 per cent. of them behindhand in their payments.

Mr. KATES: Those are not Allora selectors.

The Hon. Sir T. McILWRAITH: Yes; 25 per cent. of the Allora land selectors.

Mr. KATES: The hon. member for Blackall called for a return that will show the percentage very clearly. Twenty-two out of 187 were behindhand in their payments, and of these some were widows who had lost their husbands.

The Hon. Sir T. McILWRAITH: I did not ask in my return for the social position of the selectors, whether there were widows or not. I only know that according to the return forty-six are defaulters, and that shows that even the arrangement by which we lost so much was not carried out. The hon. member in forcing this proposition upon us seemed to glory in the fact that the country had locked up a lot of land at Jondaryan so as to make Allora a prosperous town, and so it will be with Warwick and Toowoomba; but there other places besides Warwick and Toowoomba, and that is one point of view from which we must look at the question. We can quite understand how these schemes are got

up, and I can quite believe that the hon. member is sincere in desiring that these purchases should be effected. I believe they would do a large amount of good to Toowoomba and Warwick, but the hon. member must devise some other scheme by which the whole of the colony will not have to pay for the glorification of those towns. He has not shown us their scheme up to the present time, but he has laid before us a scheme that will result inevitably in a great loss to the country, because we shall not get a class of farmers who will and can pay a rent that they will be required to pay under this scheme—that is to say, 2s. per acre and the principal sum as well. We shall, if we adopt this scheme, have tenants coming forward to have their rents reduced, and they will be reduced just as we have seen the rents remitted and reduced before. Then there is another point—the hon. member's views are pretty much obscured by the interests of the district. I do not mean to say that he is selfish, but in the locality in which he lives he sees what goes on, and naturally his attention is directed to the interests of those about him. If it would be a good thing for the Government to buy land they could buy plenty quite as good as Canning Downs or Westbrook, on more favourable conditions. I have been offered good agricultural land within the last few days at 30s. an acre; land as good as anything on Westbrook and just as close to railway communication. Reference has been made to the purchase and cutting-up of the land by private individuals; and it is difficult to see why it should not be the work of private individuals. The only reasons why capitalists or syndicates do not buy such lands and offer them to farmers at increased prices is that they do not see the farmers coming forward to buy land. But the Government are asked to do it, because the Government can do without a profit, and probably at the sacrifice even of the principal. Clifton has been bought for the purpose of re-selling at a profit—a legitimate business transaction deserving of success.

MR. KATES : They are asking from £5 to £6 an acre now.

THE HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH : And if they do ask that price, what has the hon. member to say against it if they can get it? Is he able to quote a single instance in which during his life he sold anything for £5 when he could get £6, or in which he sold for £6 when he thought that by holding on for another month he could get £6 1s.? Of course the purchasers of Clifton go in for a profit. This is the weak part of the hon. member's argument. He complains that those people ask the market value for their land, and he asks the Government to buy land and lose a certain amount to enable certain farmers to get it cheap. That would be an injustice to other parts of the country quite as deserving of Government aid in regard to the purchase of land as Toowoomba and Warwick. Then the hon. member was wrong in saying that the evil was caused by the Act of 1868. Some of the biggest estates aggregated on the Darling Downs were acquired under the Railway Reserves Act.

MR. KATES : Not in that part.

THE HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH : Not in that part, but in other parts, big estates were aggregated under the Railway Reserves Act—a piece of legislation for which members on the other side of the House are responsible. I say it would be an injustice not only to other parts of the colony for the Government to buy this land, but it would also be unjust to men whose legitimate business it is to buy, cut up, and sell land. Why should we interrupt the natural operations

in regard to land falling into the hands of small people, when the Darling Downs will soon come to the point at which it will have to be done without the intervention of Government? The time will come when no man can make interest on the Darling Downs with the natural grasses, and men will have to cultivate to a certain extent in order to make interest on their money. That time is fast approaching; and as agriculture increases, so will the price of land. But no encouragement will be given to the country by the Government taking it in hand and finding men in cheaper farms than they can afford to pay for. The hon. member quoted statistics to show that we introduce so much farm produce. Does he want to draw the conclusion that if we buy back this land and sell it to farmers at a low price that state of things will be remedied?

MR. KATES : Of course it will.

THE HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH : The hon. member is going a long way from his premises when he says anything of the sort. The idea of parting with 7,000,000 acres of agricultural land, when less than 500,000 will supply everything that is eaten in Queensland—when 10 per cent. of the land cultivated will supply all our wants! He says our wants are not supplied because two particular places on the Darling Downs are in the hands of men who do not find it profitable to cultivate those lands; but the hon. member will see that his conclusion is very wide of his premises, for those particular lands have but an infinitesimal effect that way. This proposition will, I think, be condemned by the House.

MR. KATES : Not by the whole House.

THE HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH : When the hon. gentleman made a similar motion in 1881 he was looked upon as a sort of doubtful fish, and those who voted with him having no responsibility, were willing to pat him on the back and say, "Go on, you are all right; carry your resolution and we will help you with a Bill"; and the result was that there was actually a majority against the Government. But the hon. gentleman is in quite a different position now, because many of those who then voted with him are in a more responsible position, and are not likely to agree to any such proposition.

MR. NORTON said : Mr. Speaker,—I do not intend to make a speech on the question before the House, but I cannot help expressing my surprise that the hon. member for Darling Downs (Mr. Kates) should have exclaimed some time ago that he knew I had no sympathy with the Darling Downs. I can inform the hon. member that I have a good deal of sympathy with his motion and the aims he has in view, but I will not go to the extent he does in proposing to obtain these lands again by the method contained in the motion. I had a conversation with the hon. member some time ago—which I dare say he remembers—shortly after the Land Board paid its visit to the Downs. The conversation was private, but it was a public matter, and I do not think I shall be guilty of a breach of confidence in referring to it now. If I ever entertained any doubt before in regard to exchanges or repurchases by the Government, the hon. member's conversation would have satisfied me that he is making a mistake in proposing a motion of this kind. The statement made was as to the action of the Land Board in connection with the Allora lands—which has already been made public—and those facts would be enough to convince anyone but an enthusiast that the Government should not buy back the land. I have great sympathy with the motion, and wish it could be carried out in a practical form, because the farmers have to submit to unusual disadvantages in the business they carry on.

I say that it is to the greatest credit of these men that they have attempted, under the difficulties which they have had to contend with, to have cultivated land to the large extent they have; but the mere fact that they have contended with these difficulties does not, I think, entitle the hon. gentleman to hope that all members in this House will support him in his proposal to enable the Government to throw open more land for cultivation in the manner proposed. At the present time there are in the whole colony 200,000 acres under cultivation, and if the hon. gentleman's argument with regard to the produce that is imported into the colony goes for anything at all, its contention is that there is no land left—in this part of the colony, at any rate—from which produce might be supplied without repurchasing this land. In the hands of the farmers and selectors, at the present time, there is, even in the districts from here up to the Darling Downs, twenty times the amount of land not cultivated that would produce that quantity of produce. A great portion of that land is lost to the country, not because it is not farming land, but simply because the seasons have been so bad that the farmers have been prevented from getting or deriving returns from it. In the remarks I have made, sir, I am perfectly sincere in telling the hon. gentleman that I have great sympathy with the Darling Downs—with the farmers most particularly; but because I have that sympathy I am not going to set aside the sympathy which members in this House must have for other members of the community. I think that sympathy is very properly shown by considering whether the Government will sustain a loss or not. There is not the slightest doubt that the Government will have to submit to a loss if they repurchase this land as proposed, and the result of that loss will be that the whole of the taxpayers in the colony will, in some form or other, have to make up the interest and the loss of revenue upon the money borrowed and also make up the balance of the money itself. That is the view I take of the case. I do not oppose it simply because I have have no sympathy with the Darling Downs, as the hon. gentleman erroneously suggested.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said: Mr. Speaker,—I feel called upon to make a few remarks upon this question, as a speech of mine has been referred to which I made upon a previous occasion when a similar motion came on for consideration. I must say that I do not regret the vote I gave then, nor do I regret what I said. I have since then gained a little fuller experience. We have all had a fuller light thrown upon the tendency which such motions as the present must have—not only with regard to landed estates, but with regard to disturbing the financial position of the colony. Since that motion was passed our land administration has been entirely altered. In the motion that was submitted to this House by the hon. member for Darling Downs, in 1881, there was a mere abstract proposition submitted—not one dealing with any particular estates, but merely having in view the fact that these rich lands were closed to settlement at that time and that they would support a large population. There was everything, I think, in favour of considering the question whether the State should not accept the position of dealing generally with large areas throughout the colony, and making provision for the opening up of these estates. To-night we are asked to deal with two particular estates, and even if we were to come to a favourable decision generally I should object to the motion upon that ground. A question of this sort ought to be a larger one, and one which will deal generally with large areas throughout the whole colony. The Darling Downs does not contain the only available land

for agricultural settlement that is to be found throughout this colony, and I contend that since 1881, by the introduction of the Land Act of 1884, we have placed such an action in a very disadvantageous position. We are now debarred from selling, as we could have done under the Act of 1876. Under the present Act, if we purchase these lands we shall have to lease them to the agricultural tenants in perpetuity. I consider, sir, that the altered conditions of our land legislation are such that we cannot, at present, deal as favourably with these lands as we could have done under the Act of 1876. There is a second position. In 1881 we were on the threshold of a large additional loan. We have passed that position; we have just now entered into the market with the first instalment of a very large loan, and it is highly undesirable, at the present time, that we should formulate loan proposals in any shape—even if they were in a shape which would commend themselves much more clearly to the English capitalist than this would—and without which we could not deal with this question. But I may be also permitted to say that agricultural tenants are not inclined to pay such large prices for these lands as has been represented. The very fact of their surrendering their freehold tenure under the new Land Act for a leasehold tenure is sufficient to show, to my satisfaction, that as a financial transaction the present scheme will not be successful. I am disposed to think that if the Government were inclined to entertain this proposal favourably, judging from the pressure brought to bear by agricultural tenants, in all probability a large proportion of this land would have to be submitted as homestead selections at 2s. 6d. per acre, which would not be a very profitable transaction, seeing that the purchase is estimated to cost 50s. per acre. I am sure that would be the tendency, and having that apprehension I do not think that the matter is one that I should support, or that I am not at liberty to express my opinion upon without showing any very gross or grave inconsistency in my vote upon this occasion. The hon. gentleman has this matter thoroughly at heart, and I think that the question is one well worthy of consideration. It it were dealt with—as has been referred to by my hon. friend the Premier—by a board or commission, it might be different from the State dealing with large agricultural lands under the present land laws throughout the colony. At present there is sufficient agricultural land for the purpose belonging to the colony.

Mr. KATES: Not wheat land.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I think we have large areas even of wheat land, the property of the Crown, which no doubt will be sufficient to carry many millions of population without necessitating our going to the Darling Downs to increase our supply. I have merely to add to what I have already said, that I think the hon. gentleman has not taken a favourable time for the consideration of this question of the purchase by the State of large territorial areas. There is at the present time a tendency to land speculation, and it is not desirable that the State should encourage that feeling by becoming also a factor in these speculations. The real objection, however, to this proposal is that it is not likely to be attended with any satisfactory financial result. It has been well pointed out by the leader of the Opposition that, assuming these lands to be valued at £2 10s. per acre, a rental of 4 per cent. would be 2s. per acre per annum; and if to that be added an amount necessary for a sinking fund to pay off the debentures at the end of fourteen years, the agricultural tenants would virtually

be under a charge of 10 per cent. on the capital value; so that in order to acquire the land as freehold they would have to pay 5s. per acre per annum for fourteen years. With such a prospect before us I think it is undesirable to entertain the proposal. We have our hands full of other matters of more pressing urgency; and while I am free to admit that if the agricultural area of the colony were limited, and we were unable to provide sufficient land for selectors, we might very wisely and properly secure the acquisition of land belonging to private freeholders for the purpose of furthering settlement, I think the proposal before the House is not only undesirable in view of the circumstances I have stated, but also because it really prevents any negotiations by the State with the owners of the land referred to in the resolutions. The mere mention of the concurrence of Parliament in such a proposition would at once harden the price, and prevent any satisfactory negotiations with the owners of these properties for their purchase by the State. The matter has been so fully discussed already that I need not occupy the time of the House in dealing with it much further. I do not think at the present time that it would be convenient that this motion should pass. Transactions such as this would be much better dealt with by such institutions as the German Land Banks, known as the Credit Foncier Banks, with which the hon. gentleman is no doubt acquainted. A transaction of this kind is one that comes completely within the character of their transactions, and could be dealt with by such an institution as that in a much more complete and satisfactory form than it could be by the State. Such institutions may yet arise in Queensland, and such transactions as the hon. member's motion refers to would be much more satisfactorily carried out by them. I trust the hon. gentleman will not press his motion. It is a matter which the Government could not entertain, unless very strong reasons were urged to induce them to accept the responsibility; and those reasons the hon. gentleman has not advanced, notwithstanding he has shown his wholeheartedness in the matter and his earnest desire to increase agricultural settlement.

Mr. HORWITZ said: Mr. Speaker,—The motion which the hon. member for Darling Downs has brought forward this afternoon is one for which I hope hon. members on both sides will give him their best support. It is well known that the best lands on the Darling Downs were taken from us many years ago, and, as the hon. member has shown, close settlement on these lands will be for the benefit, not only of Toowoomba and Warwick, but of the whole colony. Hon. members know as well as I do that it will give the greatest assistance to people who desire to settle on the land. Although the motion brought before the House in 1881 by the hon. member of Darling Downs was in some respects similar, it was really a different motion altogether. At that time the hon. member proposed to borrow half-a-million in the home market to buy some estates on the Darling Downs; on this occasion the hon. member's proposition is a different one. It is not the hon. member's intention that we should borrow money in the home market to purchase these estates at all, but it is his intention that these estates should be purchased by debentures for fourteen years at 4 per cent. in the case of the Canning Downs Estate, and in the case of the Westbrook lands somewhat similar, the terms being fourteen years' debentures at 5 per cent. I am of opinion that if this is done there will be no loss to the colony. If the proposal was to borrow money in the home market, no doubt the people at home who lend money would say,

"If Queensland has such a large estate, why should they come to borrow money to buy estates back again?" I will not detain the House very long, as the hon. member for Darling Downs has so ably explained his views already. I hope he will not withdraw his motion; and I would advise him to take a division on it as it is so important. If the hon. member's intention is carried out I know there are persons in other parts of the colony who will be only too glad to go on to the Darling Downs if they can get land there. I notice that we have imported grain—barley, oats, maize, hay, butter, and other produce—to the amount of £700,000 annually. Would it not be better to buy these estates on the Darling Downs—where all these things can be produced—and keep this amount in the colony, and thus save £700,000 in the year? I will not further detain the House, but I promise the hon. member for Darling Downs that if he will press his motion I will vote in favour of it.

Mr. MIDGLEY said: Mr. Speaker,—I regard the motion introduced by the hon. member for Darling Downs as being the most important proposal that we have had to deal with during the present Parliament. I think it will be conceded on all sides that the hon. gentleman has stated his case and introduced his subject for the consideration of the House with clearness, ability, and moderation. I regret that, while feeling constrained to congratulate the hon. member upon the way in which he introduced his subject, I cannot congratulate the members of the Government who have spoken on this subject, so far, since the hon. member addressed the House. If the utterances of public men, representatives of the people, upon important matters such as this, are not to have in them any element of permanency or stability, neither the House nor the country will ever know where public men are or what they are. I can understand that there are reasons why a man should, as he grows older and probably wiser, change his views upon certain subjects; and if reasons were given to the House why those opinions have been changed, we should all have listened to them with attention and respect. The Colonial Secretary asked a question of this kind: "Are we so much deficient in land we can dispose of, that is still in the hands of the State, that we are necessitated to purchase these lands from their present owners?" If that question is taken relatively with the vast amount of land we have, the answer to it would at once be "No." But it is a question that has to be answered with regard to the surroundings of the case; and I maintain that, with regard to land suited for close settlement and situated close to railways where produce can be grown within a paying distance and at paying rates of transit, or disposal in a reliable market, we are deficient at the present time in good lands which we can give over to the small farmer or selector. I do not know that this question is at all affected by the consideration that if we bought these lands we might with equal readiness be asked to buy other lands. I believe that while on existing railways there are many hundreds and thousands of acres of good land on either side there are also many thousands of acres which it would never be desirable to purchase. We may take a trip from Brisbane to the Logan, as far as the Logan line has been constructed, and there is nothing there on either side of the line that would be tempting to the State to purchase. We may travel from Brisbane to Ipswich, and the same would apply with equal force. We may travel from Ipswich to Toowoomba, and the same would apply with equal force. But the case is entirely reversed when we get to the line between Toowoomba and Warwick, and Toowoomba and Dalby. Adjacent to the railway

line to these places there is no land we need care about buying for agricultural settlement, but when we get to Toowoomba, and proceed thence towards Warwick or Roma or Dalby, there is nothing but land which is available for agricultural settlement. If the State is only able to do a little in this direction at present, and that little is desirable, we ought to decide upon the matter without further consideration as to what we may be called upon to do subsequently. We deem it expedient to dredge our rivers for a certain period to a certain depth, and then, if we find the demands of our commerce justify us in deepening the channel even more, we go on adding expense to expense as the circumstances warrant. So, if it should be found, after we have bought all these lands between Toowoomba and Warwick, and Toowoomba and Dalby, that we require more, let us buy more as there is a demand for it. The hon. leader of the Opposition, in alluding to the rentals for the Allora exchange lands, said there had been a good deal of shortcoming in various ways on the part of the selectors. We must bear in mind in considering this—what is not a claptrap cry or a mere pretence but a stern stubborn fact—that we have been passing through two or three years of terrible drought. If we had had ordinarily good seasons the case would in all probability have been different. We make provision in our Land Acts for possible failure of farmers or squatters to pay their rents, as we all know that the country in which we live is subject to the calamity of terrible droughts. I believe if those people who took up the Allora exchange lands had had ordinarily good seasons they would have paid up like men and had a nice thing to the good. Allusion has been made also to our large importations every year of farm and daily produce. I find in the produce trade this mischief—almost inevitable perhaps—that farmers can only produce a certain amount; many of them cannot afford to employ labour and do all that is required on their farms themselves. So far we have had an almost continuous hand-to-mouth method of farming, insufficient altogether to meet the wants of our own population when there is any great demand, as in the case of bad seasons such as we are passing through now. If we had more farmers in the country, then in good seasons the production would be greater; and as this would probably affect the market and lower the prices there would not be the rushing of produce into market that there is now. Then in time of drought, instead of a man not having one stack, he would have two or three stacks of hay in reserve; and instead of having to go to Sydney or Melbourne as soon as there was anything of depression, we should have resources of our own to fall back on. Though prices would go up, the money would largely remain among our own producers. The fact is, that in face of all this importation of farm produce we are exporting nothing or next to nothing. The gain is all on one side. We have not the agricultural settlement and the agricultural production we ought to have in the colony. Now I have long had some such ideas in my mind as those so ably and clearly given expression to this afternoon by the hon. member for Darling Downs. I believe that the acquisition by purchase of these valuable agricultural lands on the Downs, with the best modern means of transit running right through them, must take place sooner or later, and the sooner the better. I know we are fighting a terribly uphill battle to-night in advocating this cause, as when the Government are averse to it, and the Opposition, almost to a man, are against it, there is very little likelihood of carrying these regulations; but I think it is the duty of hon. members to reason the matter out,

say what is to be said on it, and then leave it to the verdict of the constituencies. The questions the House has to consider, I take it, are—Can this purchase be made?—if it can be done, ought it to be done?—and if it can be done and ought to be done, what advantages are likely to arise to the State from doing it? Now, in regard to the possibility of purchasing these freeholds, I think the House will have very little difficulty in coming to a decision. We are informed by the mover of these resolutions that these properties are in the market. In order to make a bargain there must be a buyer and a seller. If the Government can see its way to repurchase these lands by any means, there will be no difficulty in inducing the owners to part with them for a reasonable price. So far from there being any disposition on the part of the holders of these estates to cling tenaciously to them, there seems to be a disposition to part with them to the State on fair terms. I am not going to enter this evening into the question, which has so often been dwelt upon, as to how these lands were obtained originally. The colony parted with them prematurely, unwisely, and cheaply, in many instances, and the very best thing the colony can do is to reacquire them on the best terms. I think it would be very unwise to defer to the future what ought to be done at once, because with the increase of population these properties on the Downs will assuredly share in the enhancement of value which all freehold properties will experience. It would be a mistake to consider that this advance of value is confined to city and suburban properties. I believe it has been quite as marked with regard to farming properties near a railway line, and within a moderate distance of a reliable market. I know of farms situated as I have indicated, which have sold at from £5 and £8 to £15 and £20 per acre, which did not cost the fortunate owners as many shillings only a few years ago. So that as a commercial transaction the purchase of these lands would be perfectly safe, and could be made, if desired, highly profitable. I do not think there would be anything objectionable in the colony seeking to derive some direct profit out of the sale of these lands, apart from the indirect profit that would arise in other ways. The owners of these stations are willing to sell them in their entirety, but not otherwise, and the State would be perfectly justified in obtaining the profit which would be natural and fitting as between a large wholesale purchase of thousands of acres, and the retail disposal of hundreds of acres to small farmers. I am not advocating that the Government should become what, according to the Colonial Treasurer, seems to have fallen into disrepute and discredit—a large land syndicate; but that simply in view of the trouble and responsibility and the departmental work that would arise in the disposing of these lands, there should be some reasonable margin of profit left between the purchasing price of them and the selling price. It would be unfair to the other parts of the colony if anything else than that were done. It would be unfair to the farmers in other parts of the colony, who pay 8, 10, or 12 per cent. for their money, and pay it readily, and who, when they have good farms near the railway lines, soon pay both interest and principal and obtain their freeholds. To return to the subject: Those men are willing to sell these lands, and they probably could not do better than sell them at the present time. Owing to the drought through which we have passed, pastoral occupation on these lands does not pay. Pastoralists have suffered perhaps more than any other class of the community, and their extremity is the colony's opportunity—an opportunity which ought not to be lost.

Without alluding particularly to these two estates that have been brought prominently before the House in these resolutions, I believe that hundreds of thousands of acres could be obtained on the Darling Downs for the purpose of closer settlement. If the Government does not obtain these lands, the probabilities are that, sooner or later, private syndicates will. This has been spoken of by some hon. members as something that almost seems to be desired. That may be so, I have no doubt, as far as the syndicates are concerned, but in the interests of the farmers such a state of things is not to be desired. On the contrary, it is highly objectionable. If private syndicates get possession of these lands they will naturally and properly look for a much larger profit from them—which the farmer will have to pay—than the State need look for. The buyers will probably have to pay a higher rate of interest, and they will have to deal with a more stern and a more stubborn vendor—which is not desirable in the interests of agriculturists. The money that would be forthcoming to enable private syndicates to acquire these lands would probably be the money of southern capitalists, and the farmers' money would find its way down south, to be spent there instead of getting into circulation in our own colony. The hon. member who moved the resolution gave a number of good reasons why the colony should acquire these lands. The most important consideration in my mind is that the land is undoubtedly thoroughly suitable for agricultural purposes. That is the very first consideration with a would-be farmer or selector. There would be no heart-breaking and back-breaking clearing to do, or at least not a great deal of it. With a favourable season, after erecting a wire fence, a crop would be produced within a few weeks after putting in the seed, and a man with a good heart would soon be able to make his way, and to make himself a home. Supposing a 100-acre farm on one of these runs is sold at £3 an acre, and the Government made a charge of 5 per cent., that would be £15 as a sort of rental which the farmer would have to pay. With such a farm within easy distance of the railway line—and that is a consideration which must not be lost sight of in doing justice to the resolution—and with an ordinary fair run of seasons, a man would not only be able to pay the interest but would very soon be able to pay the principal sum and have his farm secured. I am not so sanguine as the hon. member for Darling Downs as to what would be the result of carrying this motion, but I believe there would be an immediate demand for these lands—a rush for them. The young Queenslander would be prepared to try his fortune there, would make his home there, would marry his wife there, would be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth there, and would “bless the day when he went that way, to be a farmer's boy.” As to the resolution, I understood that the introducer and a number of his friends had an interview with the Premier on the subject. I was to have formed one of the deputation, but somehow or other it slipped my memory. I understood from the hon. member that the Government were in favour of the resolution, and it has been a disappointment to me, in more ways than one, to hear the speeches that have been made. If the resolution is carried, the Government might make a speciality of these lands. After subdividing them, and clearly indicating where and what they were, they might send particulars home to the agents and the Agent-General, and I believe we should find scores of men at home who would very readily try their fortune on such lands as these. We could have in all its entirety the much-to-be-desired system of survey before selection. The land

should be laid out and allotted as clearly as allotments of towns and suburban property, and that is something the selector desires to have. He desires to know what he is getting, and what he has got to pay. To a new chum, especially, the idea is appalling of having to go into the bush and find out the posts and marks and boundaries and blazes, and everything else he is asked to find out. How is he to know what land is open for selection, what has been withdrawn, and so on? On account of these uncertainties many a man has remained in town—remained as a labourer or a loafer—who would otherwise have probably been a farmer. Another consideration we ought to bear in mind is the very large increase of railway traffic that would result from the closer settlement of these lands. I commend that especially to the attention of the Minister for Works. Supposing that in six years' time only one-fourth of Westbrook and one-fourth of Canning Downs were under cultivation—say 35,000 acres in all—and that these produced for the Brisbane market only two tons of produce each per annum. That would be 70,000 tons, and if that was carried at the rate of £1 per ton there would be £70,000 additional traffic returns. Supposing 140,000 acres of the land were disposed of in 1,400 farms of 100 acres each, and supposing there were five members in the family on each one of these farms—that would mean an additional 7,000 of population, with their mouths to be filled and their bodies to be clothed. How much additional traffic would that make? I suppose the Minister for Works has never gone into the subject, but it is one which this House should consider. We are spending money constantly on our railway lines, and we shall not get the return we ought to have until there are probabilities of closer settlement. I think it was the leader of the Opposition who said some time ago that, looked at in a thoroughly business point of view, the Southern and Western Railway was being worked at a constant and ever increasing, ever accumulating loss. I think that quotation is in substance what the hon. gentleman said. If it is so, sir, it is a grievous fault. If that statement is true it is something to be sorry for, but hardly to be wondered at. How can we look for a line to pay which runs through long stretches of grand country, such as that between Toowoomba and Warwick, and Toowoomba and Dalby—when it runs through nothing else but a succession of squattages? The idea that grand trunk lines, of necessity, are going to be a grand investment has ample refutation in the present state of the Darling Downs. The initial radical mistake was making railways through vast stretches of freehold property. Before the line was made some understanding should have been arrived at with the owners of that property that the State should be allowed the right to repurchase it or the line should not be constructed, and I for one, sir, will give the most determined opposition to any future proposal to construct long stretches of railway lines, at the expense of the State, through vast areas of freehold property. Before constructing these lines, the Government should say to the proposers—the agitators—“We will not construct a line of railway through your property which will have no other effect than enhancing its value and increasing your wealth; we must have opportunities for settlement, opportunities for traffic and trade, and life and development along the course of the line, before we will consent to the construction of it.” While looking up the subject, Mr. Speaker, I took into my pitiful consideration the present state of the towns on the Darling Downs; and I have here some figures—very few, very brief—which I will read. The township of Allora, in the midst of agricultural

settlement, in the year 1871, had a population of 412 people; in 1876 it had 456, an increase in five years of 44 people; and in 1881, 477. The town of Drayton, which perhaps suffers from being eclipsed by the greater luminary near it, had, in 1871, a population of 792; in 1876, 870, an increase of 78; and for 1881 I could not find any return given in the records. The town of Toowoomba, in 1871, had a population of 3,543; in 1876, 4,709, an increase in five years in a town like that, of 1,166; and in 1881, 5,207, or an increase of 512. Warwick in 1871 had 2,473 inhabitants; in 1876, 3,144; increase 671; and in 1881, 3,596, or an increase of 444. Now, sir, is there anything at all like the increase of population that there should have been in towns situated in districts such as these are the centre of? Is there anything answering to what there ought to have been—anything corresponding to the growth and development of towns and villages, and manufacturing centres, as there is in America? Some members seem to think that these figures are foreign to the subject; but, sir, I maintain that the town lives by the field, and that, if there had been possibilities of closer settlement round those places, instead of being miserable little towns and villages such as they are they would have grown and developed, with the surrounding country, into splendid thriving towns. Some of the towns and villages there seem to have been conceived in thought but never to have been born; others come into existence—they are born and live a feeble, miserable existence, never growing or developing as they ought to do in a young community like this—nothing like the way in which towns and villages do in the renowned place from which the hon. gentleman came. In other places villages and townships grow for a little while and then die away like poor old Drayton. If I, Mr. Speaker, passed over the Darling Downs one-half or one-quarter the number of times the hon. member for Darling Downs has passed over them, and had seen what he has seen every week, it would not only have caused me to inflict upon myself some such barbarism as he has done to himself, but I believe it would have caused me to shave my head and also go into some place where I could live alone and wonder at the perverseness and selfishness of man, and—after the speeches that have been made—the perverseness, obtuseness, and fickleness of the leaders of the Great Liberal party in this colony. I say, let us get these lands and apply them to the purpose for which they were intended—make them accessible to those who will make use of them and undo the wrong which ought to have been undone long since.

Mr. JORDAN said: Mr. Speaker,—After the speech which has been made by the hon. member for Fassifern, I am afraid that anything I can say will appear very small indeed by comparison. If I consulted my own feelings, I would not put my speech by the side of his. However, I cannot allow this question to pass without saying a word or two upon it, because the proposal is one which has commended itself to my judgment and feelings very strongly. I am afraid, sir, that although we have passed the best Land Act in the Australian colonies—for although the other colonies have passed very good Acts recently, I think ours is the best—I am afraid that after all agricultural settlement in Queensland under the Act of 1884, on a large scale, will not be realised. The principle of leasing the land instead of selling it I believe to be thoroughly sound, and that, if applied to pastoral lands, pure and simple, it would be a grand success in this colony. But, sir, there is another principle, which is unquestionable. The first principle of political economy, as laid down by Adam Smith in his "Wealth of Nations," is that all real

wealth comes out of the land. The hon. the leader of the Opposition recently told the Premier in this House that all the land of the colony is occupied. I was struck by that remark, sir. It is literally true. A small portion of it continues to be occupied by the aboriginals of the country, but the vast area of the colony is occupied by pastoral tenants of the Crown, who pay a nominal rent to the Government, while here and there there are places dotted over with agricultural settlement. The hon. the leader of the Opposition has recently said, or is reported to have said, in some of those able speeches he made in different parts of the country, that he fears that under the Land Act of 1884 the land will speedily be locked up for ten, fifteen, and thirty years, under the indefeasible leases which are offered to people under that Act. Under that Act the great pastoral tenants of the Crown, who have had a monopoly of the lands of the colony for the last twenty-five years, have been induced—because they are coming under the Act, the leader of the Opposition tells us, generally—they have been induced to give up one-half, one-third, or one-fourth of their runs for close settlement. But still the leader of the Opposition is afraid that the land generally would again be locked up under these long leases and that there will be nothing left for the future settlement of the colony—by which he means, I believe, agricultural settlement. In reply, it has been said that as long as the land is occupied what matters it how it is occupied; but some of us on this side think it matters a great deal as to the manner of occupation. We have been told to-night that it costs this colony something like half-a-million sterling for agricultural produce, which we do not grow ourselves. Is that not a shame to us? With the 400,000,000 acres of land that we have, at least one-tenth, or 40,000,000, are suitable for agricultural settlement. Is it not, therefore, a disgrace to us that in the little colony of Victoria, about one-seventh of the size of Queensland, they raise nearly fourteen times as much agricultural produce as we do? I think so, but the reason is not far to seek—Agricultural settlement, I say, without fear of successful contradiction, in this colony, has been systematically discouraged, ridiculed, and legislated against. The homestead areas under the Act of 1868 were introduced by the Liberal party, when they made what was called an "unholy alliance" with the Conservative party, to pass the Act of 1868, which, as Mr. Macalister used to say, was an Act to give cheap land to the squatter. That had the effect of putting millions of acres of some of the best of the agricultural land to which I have referred into the hands of a few country gentlemen for almost nothing—6d. an acre, for ten years, and then they had the fee-simple of that magnificent land alluded to by the hon. member for Darling Downs, in that beautiful agricultural district. Now, is the Land Act of 1884 in its working out to be productive of something like the same result? Is it to have this effect—that the land is to be locked up—the great bulk of it in thirty-year leases—in small squattages? The leader of the Opposition is afraid that this will be the case. Is that to be so? It is possible to lock up the land in the hands of small pastoralists for thirty years, and if all the rest of the pastoral land is to be locked up for ten or fifteen years, then it will have that effect, and where will the land be left for agricultural settlement? Let me illustrate that by this: We will suppose that this Act of 1884—because we intended that it would realise close settlement in the colony, and the leader of the Opposition stated the reverse—but let us suppose it will throw open 100,000,000 acres for close settlement.

Suppose half of that, or 50,000,000 acres, is specially suited for pastoral purposes, how many people will it settle on this quantity of land? I take it that room will be made for 5,000 families. Say there are five persons in each family, that would represent 25,000 persons, and allow 25,000 more for their servants and their servants' children, and we get 50,000 as the whole number that can be settled on 50,000,000 acres. Suppose, now, the other 50,000,000 are suitable for agricultural settlement, how many farmers will this settle on the land? Suppose the farms have an average of 100 acres each—because I say now, as I have always said, that successful farming can only be accomplished when a man contents himself with a moderately small quantity of land. That makes room for 500,000 farms. Multiply that by 5 and you get 2,500,000 people; allow them 500,000 servants and you have 3,000,000 people settled on those 50,000,000 acres. Will anyone tell me, that it does not matter whether we settle the land with 50,000 or with 3,000,000 people, so long as it is settled somehow? I say it makes all the difference, and the difference shows to a fraction the difference between the policy of the Conservative party in this colony, who have kept back agricultural settlement for twenty-five years, and the professed policy of the Liberal party. Sir, I was struck with the admirable, temperate, able, and lucid manner in which the hon. member for Darling Downs introduced this question. I do not think there was anything misty about his speech, and I take exception to the remark made by the leader of the Opposition to that effect. I think the hon. member's statement was particularly clear, and I regretted exceedingly to find that the Premier, with his great ability, used his wonderful power of advocacy and opposed the proposal of the hon. member. I believe, sir, that this was a grand opportunity for the Liberal party to have shown the country that they had a deep sympathy with agricultural settlement in Queensland, because we have not had much evidence of it yet. Some people are very much afraid that after all our Liberal Land Bill, the leader and members of the Opposition were right, and that it will not realise agricultural settlement on a large scale. I regret that the Minister for Lands did not go into this question. I think he could have advocated it surely, because he has so sincerely advocated the principle of leasing instead of selling our land. If that principle were carried out to its legitimate conclusion we should have to buy back all alienated lands if we have the means. I believe in the correctness and philosophy of Henry George's theories, and if we had adopted them twenty-five years ago they would have proved a grand success. I believe we ought to buy back all alienated land and start afresh on that principle if we could, but it appears now impossible after alienating some ten millions of acres. Now, this proposal of to-night is quite consistent with Henry George's theories. I wanted to hear the Minister for Works, too, because I believe he must agree with us for this reason—he is satisfied that to borrow ten millions of money more, after spending eight millions upon our railways, will prove a grand failure, for it will not work unless we get a very much larger population. I do not think the leader of the Opposition was so happy in his speech as he generally is; his advocacy was essentially weak. If it be possible to conceive of such a thing in regard to that gentleman, I may say that his speech was eminently small; his great contention was that the transaction would not pay. He said unless we could get 2s. an acre it could not pay. That is a pitiful way of looking at the question. The land would settle 1,400 families

with 100 acres each, and if there were five in each family that would be 7,000 people. Every soul in this colony, as the Treasurer knows—and I wonder he did not support the resolutions, with his clear perception, great knowledge of figures, and masterly way of dealing with the fiscal policy of the Government—that these people will pay direct taxation, to say nothing of taxation in other directions, of £3 7s. a head, according to the figures he gave us the other day. Call it £3 5s. a head, and that would make upwards of £22,000 a year, which those 7,000 people would pay by direct taxation. I assume that if we bought this land back at 50s. an acre it would be the means of increasing the population to that extent. People coming from Great Britain want to know if the land is ready for them; and if we furnished the Agent-General with proper plans and descriptions, I know from my own experience of six years in working the department that there would be thousands of farmers ready to buy it in the Agent-General's office. The question as to whether it would pay unless we could get 4 or 5 per cent. is a pitiful one to raise, and it was only because he had a weak cause that the leader of the Opposition made use of such an argument. I believe it would be most opportune at this particular time, after we have passed this Act of leasing—which, strictly speaking, involved buying back the land if we could—to do so in this case for the benefit of the whole colony. I believe that in order to justify us in borrowing ten millions of money we ought to have at this moment a population of 1,000,000 or 2,000,000 in this colony. Allusion has been made to former land legislation. Well, it will not bear investigation, and the less we say about it the better. Twenty-five years ago, when we were without experience, we passed an Act which would have suited the colony for a hundred years to come. It respected the rights and privileges of the squatting class and provided for agricultural settlement in all parts of the colony where a market could be found. It gave land to those who came to the colony for nothing, and they brought an immense quantity of money with them. During the first three years the average was £30,000 in each ship, and a large proportion of those who came out were *bona fide* farmers. But, as Sir Arthur Palmer used to say, "it is administration we want in the colony and not so much legislation." In consequence of the maladministration of the first Land Act the agricultural reserves consisted of the worst land to be found in the colony; and people who came with money and with farming experience went on to the land, lost their money, almost broke their hearts, and sent back accounts to England accordingly. That Act was summarily brought to a close by passing the Act of 1868, which Mr. Macalister said, when he wrote to me, was an Act for selling cheap land to the great pastoral tenants of the Crown. I say it will not bear looking at and the less we say about it the better, but on such an occasion as this we cannot help speaking of it. I am sorry that the Premier of the colony did not adhere to the policy he announced in the great meeting held at the Town Hall before this Parliament was elected, when he said he intended to revert to the system of bringing the farming class from the old country; and unless we get a large number of them the fears of the leader of the Opposition will be realised, and the land will be locked up in the hands of the small squatters. The large squatters will get indefeasible leases for ten or fifteen years, and the small ones for thirty years, so that there will be no land left for the farmer. I am afraid things are tending in that direction, and I feel it on my conscience to say so; I therefore take this opportunity of saying

what my fears are in this respect. We want a great population in Queensland, but I am afraid—because the Minister for Lands intimated that we should get all the people we want to settle under the new Act of 1884, from the other colonies—it is evident that he does not expect many people. All the surplus population from the other colonies, which have a total population of only 3,000,000, will not be many; and all we should get from colonies where Land Acts equal to our own have been passed will be very few. Like the hon. member for Darling Downs, I want to see a multitude of people; and the Minister for Works wants very many people—a large accession to the population of the colony—in order to justify that stupendous railway policy he has inaugurated; and I believe that in his heart he would like to see them come from the opposite side of the globe—from England, Ireland, Scotland, and Germany—and settle in hundreds and thousands; otherwise his grand policy will be a grand failure. And our grand Land Act, without population—without an enormous accession of population—will also prove a grand failure and make us the laughing-stock of the world. I say the leader of the Opposition has laid us under a great obligation by pointing out the danger; and we on this side feel the danger. All things considered, I would keep in a Liberal Ministry—if I were sure that they were sound. If I were afraid they were going to retard settlement I should look about me and doubt the evidence of my own senses; but I know what the Opposition side would do. I admit they are just as sincere as I am. I have never said a discourteous thing of them, and never will. Their motives are good, but they look at things in the wrong way—they are in antediluvian darkness on the subject of settlement. They believe that this grand colony—stretching out in millions of acres—was made by Providence for the owners of sheep and cattle, and in order that a few gentlemen may realise enormous fortunes and spend them in England. That is the beginning and the end of their politics. We believe in having hundreds of thousands of yeomanry settled upon the land—we believe that these 100,000,000 acres of land should be thrown open. Half of it would be settled by those 3,000,000 people I spoke of, and we shall be content if the other half be settled by 50,000 people. Let us live and let live. I maintain, and have always maintained for the last twenty-five years, that the establishment of a great agricultural settlement in the country will be the grandest thing for the pastoral interest it could possibly have. Now, the hon. member for Darling Downs simply means this—that these lands are specially suited for the growth of wheat. It is a curious thing that twenty-five years ago, when the party now in Opposition were in power—at least they were unfortunately on the Government side at that time—it was the Liberals' preponderance and the weight of their intelligence that made them pass the first Land Act. It was not the Act of the squatting party; we turned their Bill into a cocked hat and made it the opposite of what it was intended to be; we carried a thoroughly liberal land policy; we determined to introduce a great farming population and give it a fair trial, not without a fair amount of trouble from the gentlemen on the other side of the House, who said, "What an absurdity; a cabbage will not grow on the Downs soil!" However, we had a select committee of the House; and Mr. Evans, a gentleman who was living near Warwick then, said that he had been growing wheat for a number of years, and that it was very fine in quality and not liable to the disease of smut or any other disease. There has been rust since then—not a great deal, I know—

the rust comes about every five years. I can give the figures, if necessary, to show that the rust prevails once in every five years; in the intervening years it amounts to little. I can show, too, that the average yield in this colony, excepting that affected by rust, is very nearly double that of South Australia, and I can show, also, that for every acre in this colony—I made the calculation in 1876—there were 180 acres in South Australia under wheat, and that their yield was not more than half ours. Yet we are told that wheat will not pay now. Mr. Evans said twenty-five years ago—and I can read all that he said—he said that wheat of very fine quality was produced on the Downs and paid very well; that he knew a number of farmers there who had realised wealth even twenty-five years ago by the growth of wheat. Now, sir, the land in these estates is specially suitable for the growth of wheat. We have had this fact put before us to-night by the hon. member for Darling Downs in the able speech that he gave us. £370,000 a year is paid in Queensland for breadstuffs more than we grow ourselves, and yet, although our average yield is very much higher than in South Australia, we had only one acre of wheat in Queensland for 180 acres in South Australia, in the year 1876, when I made the calculation. Now, there is some radical defect in this. The fact is the Conservative party have been united to a man to keep out a farming population. They have done it ingeniously and persistently, as one man, and we—the Liberal party—though holding the opposite theory, have been asleep. The first year the Act of 1860 was in operation there were 5,000 full-paying passengers who came into the colony, most of them farmers; but that sort of immigration was very soon strangled. Regulations were made—hostile to the successful operation of that Act, in violation of its spirit, its intention, and letter—to choke it off, and that sort of thing was continued six years. Then came the Land Act of 1868. To justify the passing of the Act of 1884, and to justify the borrowing of £10,000,000 when we have already a debt of £16,000,000, I say we must import large numbers of capitalist farmers capable of working the country, otherwise we shall soon be burdened with debt. I am a great believer in the railway policy of the Minister for Works, and a great believer in the Land Act—in its possibilities; I advocated it because it ought to be a means of settling a large agricultural population upon the land. I believe in the railway policy still; but I believe the Minister for Works has something more in his mind—I do not know for certain whether he has or not. However, I think this—that the canal through the Isthmus of Panama will soon make Brisbane the highroad of commerce direct from Great Britain to the southern cities of Australia. The line to Warwick, I suppose, will be upon that road, and I hope it will be a double line, and I wish it could be on the broad gauge. I trust that the Minister will push it on rapidly to Goondiwindi, and to the southwestern corner of the colony. Brisbane will then be the last point of departure and the first of arrival on the great highway from Great Britain to the rich cities of the southern parts of Australia and New Zealand. That is a very different thing from the transcontinental line. After we had built three trunk lines at an expenditure of £3,000,000, all the traffic by that line would have been diverted *via* the Gulf of Carpentaria direct to Sydney, leaving out our great cities upon the eastern seaboard. I believe this proposal of Mr. Kates is a step in the right direction. We should set about growing these £370,000 worth of breadstuffs our-

elves, that we are now importing, and these lands are specially suited for their growth. After listening to the hon. member for Darling Downs, no one can doubt that it is our bounden duty to buy them back at a fair price and pay for them in fourteen years. Under the present Act those lands could be bought at the end of ten years, when they will fetch very much more, and the transaction will be a direct and immediate success financially, besides allowing of so many more farmers to be settled in the country. What we should do in reference to those lands at Westbrook and Canning Downs is what we should do all over the colony. We have a grand Act, and we must get people of the right sort here in hundreds of thousands and give them every facility for settling upon the land. We want, as the hon. gentleman said, a "multitude—a great number of small settlers in the colony."

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said: Mr. Speaker,—After the speech of the hon. member for South Brisbane—which, I must say, was rather a speech upon the Land Act than upon the question before the House—I must, at all events, correct him in one or two points in reference to that Act. He seems to have been very much afraid of some public expression of opinion made by the hon. leader of the Opposition that the land is to be locked up for a number of years all over the country. I should have thought the hon. gentleman would have known what was the opinion of the leader of the Opposition as to the Land Act too well to have been afraid when he heard that hon. gentleman cry "wolf!" He must have known very well that the object of that gentleman was to scare people and excite their fears, and that there is no danger of such results coming from the Land Act at all, unless there were any irrational method of administration with it; and that it is in a great measure safe from any mischief that may arise in that way from the fact of its administration being under a board and not left wholly to a Government, who might be inimical to or who disbelieved in its principles. Provisions will continue to be made by the Land Board for every possible requirement of agricultural settlement wherever there is any agricultural land to be dealt with—land dealt with in such quantities as will not allow it to be monopolised by those who desire to monopolise it, and who have succeeded in that course under previous Acts. The hon. member alluded to the Act of 1868, and said it would have been an admirable Act if it had been properly administered.

Mr. JORDAN: I said the Act of 1860.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Even under that Act the land got into the hands of monopolists. As soon as a man secured the deeds of his selection, he handed the land over to the capitalist, and went elsewhere, and went through the same process over and over again. That has been done under every Act we have had in this colony. However, to come back to the question before the House: I must say that the hon. member for South Brisbane as well as the hon. member for Darling Downs, and I will include the hon. member for Fassifern, have looked at this question from one side only. They have carefully eschewed turning the picture over and looking at it from the other side; they have refused to consider it from anything like a business point of view. The hon. member for South Brisbane objected to the view the leader of the Opposition took of this matter when he wanted to apply the ordinary principles of business and finance to it. But I contend that when we are dealing with other people's money, when we are dealing with the money

of the people of the colony, we are bound to look at the proposal from a financial point of view. In support of his argument the hon. member for Darling Downs brought forward the case of the Allora exchange lands, and it has been dwelt upon by almost every speaker who knows anything about those exchanges. There is nothing in the result of that transaction to assure us that the scheme now submitted to the House will be a success; there is nothing in it to induce us to go into anything approaching it for the purpose of securing land for agricultural settlement. The Premier explained that when that exchange was made the Jondaryan lands were valued at £1 10s. per acre and the Allora lands at £3 per acre. I do not mean to say that those were the actual values of those lands, but they were the comparative values. The values might be reduced from £1 10s. to £1 and from £3 to £2, and the fact would remain that the comparative values are correct and were the same then as they are now, and this would not put the country in any better position as far as finances are concerned. Upon that transaction the colony has suffered a loss of £14,000. I will give the House some figures in connection with this matter to show what the actual position of affairs is. On the Allora lands there are forty-nine selectors who have taken up an aggregate of 3,388 acres at £5 per acre. Of these forty-nine selectors, there are twenty-one who are now from one to four years in arrears with their rents. A great many of them only paid their first year's rent in 1880, and have not paid a shilling since. Then there are twenty-two selectors who have taken up an aggregate of 1,455 acres at £4 per acre, and of these twenty-two selectors, there are fifteen who are from one to three years in arrears with their rents. There are also eighteen selectors, the aggregate of whose holdings amounts to 982 acres, and the price at which they selected was £3 per acre. Of these eighteen, there are twelve whose rents are from one to three years in arrears. And, lastly, there are 115 selectors who have taken an aggregate area of 13,264 acres at prices varying from £1 to £2 11s. 8d., and of these 115 there are only twenty-two in arrears with their rents, and these only for one year. These figures show conclusively that where men got land at anything like a fair valuation they were able to enter upon it, improve it, and prosper; but in other cases, where the price of land was £4 or £5 per acre, the men were absolutely debarred from anything like success. The fact that the men who held this land for five years and only paid one year's rent out of the five shows conclusively, I think, that they are in a very unsatisfactory condition.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Because of the long droughts.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: And long droughts will come hereafter. If the Westbrook Estate is purchased as proposed by the hon. member for Darling Downs, selectors will not be able to get it for anything less than £4 per acre. Some part of the estate is not fit for anything but grazing purposes. There is also some part of the Canning Downs Estate which is not fit for anything else than grazing, and the agricultural land on that estate will have to be sold at the rate of £5 per acre in order to recoup anybody the expense of purchasing, subdividing, and reselling it. What results can be expected from purchasing these properties under such conditions? Only one result—namely, that there would be no chance of getting back the purchase money: if there were, probably the owners would subdivide the land and sell it themselves. There is not so great a difference between the amount of interest that a private person would be satisfied with and the

amount that would be considered sufficient for the Government to obtain, and the management by a private individual would probably be more careful than by the State. But there is a more serious aspect of this question. I cannot see any reason to justify the Government, or the House, in buying two large freeholds in one particular locality, and requiring the whole of the people of the colony to secure the payment of the purchase money on those properties, which would simply be a benefit to the locality in which they are situated. If the principle is a good one, it ought to be applied to many other districts, and such a proposal as this would be equally applicable to East and West Moreton, to the Burnett, and to the district round Rockhampton. We might go as far north as Cairns, and we should find the principle equally applicable there. All the land there which was in accessible positions for settlement in those districts has already been alienated. People have picked out the choicest spots in it, and the area of Crown lands at present available there for agricultural settlement is limited. The land that may be made available to the State soon, by the resumption of runs, is too far distant from the centres of population to enable agriculturists to carry on their occupation profitably, but that we should attempt to rectify that by the purchase of large properties and accept all the responsibilities and risks of subdividing the land, either for leasing or selling, is, as I have already said, outside the province of any Government. Certainly such a course is not desirable in the present position of affairs. The hon. member for Darling Downs, I can see from the whole tenor of his arguments, sees nothing but the country in his immediate neighbourhood; his horizon is bounded by Warwick and that district, and he sees nothing beyond; because, if he did, he would see that if his argument is a good one it will apply to every part of the colony, and not to the Darling Downs alone. If the people know that land is purchased in one particular district for the benefit of the people there, how will the Government be able to meet the dissatisfaction and discontent there would be in every other part of the colony where it is not purchased for a similar purpose? They know perfectly well that they are suffering from the same disabilities that at present exist on the Downs. They know that the same evil and mischievous principle which has gone on since the colony was started has been as effective in preventing settlement in the northern portions of the colony as in the South. They know that if the proposition put forward can be applied in the southern portions of the colony it can be applied equally well in the northern portions. There are very few towns along the coast anywhere you go up north where you will not find the big estates come right down almost to the boundaries of the town reserves, and all those are places in which close settlement could be carried on with the greatest success. It is the same if you go inland—as far, at all events, as the Barcoo. You will find that freeholds are taken up where there is most likely to be an increase in the value of the land. If that principle is to be applied on the Darling Downs we must extend or expand it to other parts of the colony, for by confining it to the Darling Downs alone we should do an injustice to every other portion of the colony to which the principle is applicable; and unless it is recognised that it is equally applicable in the South and in the North we have no business to entertain it at all.

Mr. FRASER said: Mr. Speaker,—I did not intend to take any part in this discussion, but having been one of those who, in 1881, supported the motion of the hon. member for Darling Downs, I might be considered inconsistent if,

without saying something, I were to vote against the resolution this evening, as I feel inclined to do. Although I gave the hon. member my support on that occasion it was a very qualified support, and in the course of my few observations I stated this:—

“Various plans might be suggested by which the whole of the lands on the Darling Downs might be repurchased and thrown open to selection without any appeal being made to the Government at all, to the advantage both of settlers and of those who might enter upon the speculation or enterprise.”

What I meant by that is this: that I believed it would pay companies to buy back from the owners of these large estates their lands at a moderate price and subdivide them and sell them to farmers at a reasonable figure. Well, I believe something of the kind has recently been done, and I was rather surprised that, in the course of his very able and very clear speech, the hon. member for Darling Downs did not allude to what has been done and is being done at the present time on the Clifton Estate. I understand that that estate has been purchased and subdivided, and that a very considerable area of it has already been offered to the public by public auction and purchased, and I understand that a second sale is to take effect either this week or next week. If that has been done in the case of the Clifton Estate, why not apply the same principle to other estates on the Darling Downs? I think it a sound principle, and, although I sympathise to the full with the farmers and the agricultural industry of the colony, I think the time has arrived when we should not treat that class in any more favoured manner than others, or—to use a more homely expression—I do not think it is complimentary to those engaged in the agricultural industry of the colony to be continually coddling them as if they were unable to take care of themselves or to walk without crutches. The hon. member for Fassifern, in a very eloquent speech, told us that he knew of farms being sold at £15 or £20 an acre that did not cost the original owners more than £1 or £2 per acre. I am aware that that is the case, but the hon. member omitted to state one thing, and that is that such farms as he has alluded to were probably scrub farms, which must have cost the owners from £8 to £10 an acre to clear them. I put it at a moderate figure, but there is another view to take of it, and it is this: If a farmer can afford to pay £15 or £20 per acre for agricultural land, surely a farmer, having an opportunity of securing a farm upon the Darling Downs, about which we have heard so much this session—and it would appear from the speech of the hon. member for Fassifern that the Darling Downs must be a perfect Utopia, and that if we get a few feet of land there we should have a perfect paradise—I say, if a man could afford to pay for improved or cleared scrub land at the rate of £15 or £20 an acre for agricultural purposes he could surely afford to pay £4 or £5 an acre for this splendid land on the Darling Downs. The inference of the hon. member's argument is therefore entirely against himself. It will be admitted by all that in the case of the Allora exchange lands the agriculturist has had pretty nearly all the advantages he could have. He has had the pick of the land on the Darling Downs thrown open to him for settlement, and yet the hon. member for Fassifern tells us that the population of that township, with all these advantages in its favour, has only increased—in I do not know how many years he said—from 412 to 477. I believe that the very same thing would apply in the case of the Westbrook and Canning Downs lands. Let them be thrown open in the same way and what guarantee have we that a similar result will not follow? I said that I had supported the hon. member in 1881 in the

resolution he brought forward at that time; but I maintain that since that time the circumstances of the colony have entirely changed. Take the case of the Allora exchange lands, and you will see in what a different position the agriculturist is now placed compared with the position in which he was before under the conditions connected with the locality. Take the very first farm that is alluded to in this return that we have had upon the subject. It is a farm of 80 acres, and what do we find? According to the previous system the annual rental for that farm was put down at £40. The owner of this farm, it appears, has accepted the conditions of the Act of 1884 and brought his farm under the conditions of that Act, and what is he now assessed at? He is assessed at 1s. per acre, or £4 a year, instead of £40, as under the previous conditions. I maintain that, with the Act of 1884 fairly carried out, the agriculturist has enormous advantages over any he previously enjoyed, and I cannot help feeling surprised at the alarm felt by my hon. colleague, Mr. Jordan, with respect to that Act. The hon. member has seized upon some remarks made by the leader of the Opposition on, I believe, an after-dinner occasion, to the effect that under that Act we shall have the whole of the lands of the colony locked up. Does my hon. colleague forget that according to that Act districts have to be allocated for agricultural or pastoral purposes, and that in those agricultural districts no selection is to take place until the land is surveyed, and surveyed into sections none exceeding 1,280 acres, and ranging, at all events, from 40 to 1,280 acres? So that my hon. friend has forgotten that, whatever Government is in, so long as the Act receives fair play it is impossible for the land to be locked up except by close agricultural settlement. If this were accomplished in one month we should all rejoice, but there is no fear of that taking place. Now, sir, it has been said that one reason why this should be done is that, supposing a syndicate to take these lands and offer them for agricultural settlement, they would make such rigid terms that in such seasons as we have now the poor agriculturist would have no chance whatever. I venture to say that, in the case of a syndicate or capitalist, he would so far consult his own interest as to meet the views of the agriculturists, and, so long as he got a fair return for his money, accommodate himself to their conditions. In fact, I know a case in this very neighbourhood where an agricultural property was cut up in this way; and several people who have not been able to comply with the conditions have been treated as leniently and as liberally as if they were in the hands of the Government.

Mr. ALAND: No, never!

Mr. FRASER: I am giving it as a fact and I am prepared to prove it. Perhaps the hon. gentleman's experience with regard to agricultural settlement may be different from mine, and he may be conversant with syndicates or companies who would not treat them so leniently. The matter has been discussed eloquently and exhaustively, and many other matters have been introduced that I do not intend to touch upon now; but before sitting down I should like to make one observation. My hon. colleague questioned the soundness of the sympathy of the Liberal party with the agricultural industry. I think if any proof is required of the soundness and sincerity of that sympathy it is to be found in the Act of 1884. It is unfair to come to any conclusion upon the results of that Act until it has come into operation; and it has scarcely come into operation yet. I am perfectly satisfied that if it has a fair chance we shall find that no Act has ever been passed in any Australian colony likely to pro-

duce such satisfactory results on the agricultural interests of the colony. Also, I should like to say that the Darling Downs is not by any means the only part of the colony suitable for wheat-growing.

Mr. ALAND: Yes.

Mr. FRASER: The hon. member is entitled to his opinion, but I have good reason for differing with him. Since ever I have been in the House I do not think it will be denied that one of the greatest bones of contention has been the Darling Downs. Like the English statesman who wished that Ireland was under the sea for twenty-four hours, I have often wished that the Darling Downs would disappear somewhere for twenty-four hours. I venture to say it would be a relief to this House, and an enormous relief to the hon. member for Darling Downs. I quite admit that it would be a great boon to this southern part of the colony, and the colony at large, if we could get those large estates on the Darling Downs settled with an agricultural population; and I am quite sure also that the day is not far distant when they must be so settled. As has been stated already, they are far too valuable to be left much longer simply for grazing purposes, and the day is not far distant when the owners in their own interest must dispose of them in this way. I cannot see that the fact that the owners are willing to sell the lands in the lump is any reason why we should purchase them, and why they should not sell them retail to the agriculturist as we would. Then there is another thing: Suppose we had these lands, have we the population ready to settle on them? My hon. colleague says we have not, and I agree that we have not except to a limited extent. We are introducing population; we have steamer after steamer continually landing population in hundreds, and I am credibly informed we are getting a class of people suited for agriculture. I hope that by the time they have arrived in any quantity the arrangements in connection with the Act of 1884 will be so far completed and developed that we shall be able to place these people on such land as will be profitable to them, and make them profitable to the colony.

Mr. KELLETT said: Mr. Speaker,—This is a matter upon which I should not like to give a silent vote, because I consider that there has been no resolution before the House for some time which, if carried, would be more beneficial to the general interests of the colony. No one can say for one moment that I am in any way interested in these Darling Downs. I can agree with the last speaker that the Darling Downs has been too much of a cry in this House. It has not been so much so of late, since our worthy Speaker has been off the floor of the House. I believe that accounts for it, for he has pretty well advocated this particular corner of the colony for many years. But this is not a matter in connection with Darling Downs alone; it is simply an experiment we wish to try, and I believe it would be successful and be extended beyond Darling Downs. We should be anxious to purchase back every choice spot in the country. The reason, I think, why Westbrook and Canning Downs have been specially picked out is that in the first place they are well known as good agricultural land, and in the second place they are both near large centres of population. I am very sorry to say, from my very intimate knowledge of a great portion of Queensland, that there are very few spots in the southern portion of the colony at all suited for agriculture. All the best lands on the Downs were taken up long ago—most of them in very large blocks—and there is no way of getting at them unless a judicious and wise Government should adopt this way of purchasing them and retailing them to farmers.

I do not want to plead anything for farmers more than for any other class of the community; but I think they are the class of the community that are of most benefit to any young colony. It is a generally recognised fact that men who till the soil do more to benefit a new country than any other class of people in it. I wish the owners of Westbrook would only take my paper for fourteen years, even at a higher rate of interest than the Government would have to pay, and I am certain I would make a very handsome profit out of it. The fact of the Allora exchange not having been so successful as it might have been is no argument against the present project. It is well known that when that exchange was made there was a great fight as to how the acquired land should be dealt with. The proposition of the new Ministry was that the land should be sold, and that residence should be by bailiff; but the intelligence of the House carried that question against the Ministry, and it was decided that there should be *bonâ fide* residence. Then came in that beautiful administration which is talked of so often, and they took care that the prices they put on were so high that it stopped selection at a time when the people were ripe for it. Since that time, unfortunately, we have had three or four bad seasons, and that has been the reason, and the only reason, why those men have been unable to pay their rents. I know, of my own knowledge, that farming land has been sold lately at from £10 up to £15 an acre, and not scrub or cleared land either. Those prices have been realised simply because men are beginning to understand the real value of good soil. But there are very few farmers who can afford to do that. The men who purchased at those prices were men who had been working farmers first, with very little capital when they started, and who had made money out of the soil by their own labour, and had so put themselves in a position which enabled them to purchase at a high price land near their own homesteads. It is also well known that land is being rented at the present time at a sum equal to £1 per acre per annum. But the class of men we have as farmers, and are likely to have for some time, are not men of means. They are really small working men who have saved a little out of their wages, purchased a small piece of land, and had to work very hard for some years before they were in a decent position. If we could get capitalists to buy agricultural land and till it, there would be no necessity to put such a project as this before us. But they will not, and to get farmers to settle on the land you must give them easy terms. I am sorry to find that the wisdom of the Government does not carry them in this direction. I understood they had considered the matter in quite a different way from what they now seem to have done. I was led to believe that they had favourably considered the resolution and would give it their support. But what do we find them doing in another part of the colony? There is a sum of £50,000 on the Estimates for erecting mills in the interests of the sugar-planters of the North. Is this a sop to the sugar-planters after having been at loggerheads with them for some time? I do not believe it is; it is a nice stroke of policy to foster an industry. Why not repeat the same fostering policy in another portion of the colony? I suppose it is simply because great pressure has been brought to bear by the sugar-planters, who showed them what they could do. It was seen that the big planters were making a large amount of money, and that the only way to give the small planters a chance was to assist them in

this way. It is on just this principle that we are asking the Government to lend a fostering hand to the farmers on the Darling Downs, who cannot grow so profitable a crop as sugar. It is not very likely that this motion will be carried to-night, but the time will come when a wiser Government than the present will buy back some of this land and benefit the country by throwing it open for closer settlement.

Mr. KATES: It will be too late then.

Mr. KELLETT: It will never be too late, but it would be better to do it now than later on. I only hope that before next session the Government will reconsider the matter and decide upon giving it their support. If in their intelligence they do so decide, it will prove an inestimable advantage to the country. If there were as much agricultural land in the colony as some hon. members appear to think, a project of this kind would be unnecessary; but the quantity is very limited, and I am satisfied that when the commissioners come to allot the agricultural land of the colony under the Land Act of 1884 they will find far less of it than is expected. I have great pleasure in supporting the resolution.

Mr. SALKELD said: Mr. Speaker,—I should not like this question to go to a division without giving my reasons for the course I intend to pursue. I certainly sympathise with the hon. member for Darling Downs in the object he has in view, and would be very glad if all these lands could be put to the use which would be best for the entire colony. The hon. member for Stanley said he looked on this as an experiment. Experiments, as we all know, are sometimes costly affairs, and when anyone has to depend upon an experiment he always takes advantage, if possible, of the experiment that has been made by somebody else. We have had a little experiment in this direction, and I was not aware until I saw the return moved for by the leader of the Opposition how utterly that experiment had failed. We have a return here of the lands taken up in the Allora exchange area which have come under the Act of 1884. I find that 5,216 acres of that land have been brought under that Act. Under the previous leases, as originally issued, they paid an annual rental of £1,716 for ten years. The rental they are assessed at under the Act of 1884 is £212 a year. The hon. member informs us that the Canning Downs and Westbrook Estates can be got for 45s. or 50s. an acre, but we have heard nothing to show that those lands are better than the Allora exchange lands, that they will carry a higher rental, have better soil, or will be more productive. If we take these 5,216 acres, at the rate of £2 10s. per acre, it would amount to £13,040; and then with regard to the rental, I suppose we cannot expect to get more than the Land Board has fixed.

Mr. KATES: Yes.

Mr. SALKELD: I do not know how we are to get it. We have passed an Act empowering the board to appraise the value of land; they have fixed the rental of the Allora lands at £212, which rental will return a little over 1½ per cent. on the purchase money, to say nothing of the expenses that must be incurred in connection with the matter. Then we have been informed that a great deal of the land is not first-class. In an estate of 60,000 or 80,000 acres we can quite understand that a considerable portion would not be first-class and would not be taken up for agricultural purposes. Therefore, on the same basis as the Allora exchange lands, which have been brought under the Act of 1884, we cannot reckon on more than 1 or 1½ per cent. return, and certainly I am not going to vote for such a scheme as that. It has not got a basis of

financial soundness about it, and I do not think it right to squander the money of the whole of the colony for the benefit of one particular district. As far as I can see, the transaction would be a dead loss for a great number of years; and when the capital money came to be paid up it would have to be paid by the taxpayers of the colony.

MR. KATES : No.

MR. SALKELD : I cannot see it in any other way, if the rental fixed by the Land Board in the Allora exchange lands is taken as the basis. If it can be shown that these lands would be so much better than the Allora exchange lands brought under the Act of 1884, there would be some reason in it; but I have heard nothing whatever during the course of the debate to lead me to suppose that we shall be able to get a higher rental than we did for the Allora exchange lands; and that experiment, so far as the financial aspect of it is concerned, has certainly been a failure. I am prepared to admit, as an argument in favour of the scheme, that our revenue from Customs duties and railway traffic might be increased by the settlement of a large population on these lands, but even supposing that a measure of this kind would settle, say, 5,000 people on the land, it must be borne in mind that that would not be a clear gain of 5,000 to our population who are consumers of dutiable goods, because it would be sure to attract people from other parts of the colony.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS : No, no !

MR. SALKELD : I think that would certainly be the case. Although some people might come from the other colonies—wheat-growers—it would be sure to divert settlement from other parts of this colony; and for those reasons I cannot support the motion.

MR. ISAMBERT said : Mr. Speaker,—The debate on the motion before the House has been a great contrast to the rest of the debates that have taken place up to the present time. It has been marked by that fire and feeling usually incidental to any great question by which the vital interests of the people are affected. I will not detain the House very long on the subject, because it has been so ably debated; and with every sentiment and opinion expressed in favour of the motion I heartily concur. The two most remarkable speeches made this evening, Mr. Speaker, fell from the hon. senior member for South Brisbane and from the Minister for Lands. A greater insult, I reckon, was never offered to the farmers of the colony than was uttered by the hon. member for South Brisbane to night, when he stated that they had been coddled. By Heavens! there has been no class in the community who have been more neglected, or who have had their interests more acted against than the farmers of the colony.

MR. FRASER : I wish to say that I made no such statement.

MR. ISAMBERT : Nobody, I feel sure, will have the hardihood to assert that the farmers of this colony have been coddled. Communities that have centuries of experience to assist them find it necessary to establish agricultural colleges, and we, who have so much to learn in agriculture, starting in entirely new regions, leave the farmers to take care of themselves and find out knowledge for themselves by experience. We have attracted people of all classes to the colony, and induced them to settle on the land. Many of them have never been farmers, and they require instruction and direction by a paternal Government more than any other people in settled countries. Where this instruction—this knowledge—is most required it is most withheld. Anybody is considered good enough to be a farmer;

yet there is not an occupation I know of that requires so much knowledge and so much forethought as farming. Every branch of agriculture requires not only agricultural knowledge but also manufacturing knowledge. In every branch of trade a young man has to bind himself for some years to learn it, but anyone may go into farming and no one will stand by his side and instruct or guide him. He has to make all costly experiments himself, and this in a great measure is the cause of so many failures. The speeches against this motion have been remarkable for their lameness. Not one sound argument has been adduced in opposition to it; and I consider that the best argument in favour of it came from the mouth of the hon. the Minister for Lands. That hon. gentleman ought to know more about the question than anybody else in the House, and we may take his word, particularly in this instance, when he states that the best lands for close settlement, in all districts of the colony, have been appropriated by land-sharks. Could any argument be advanced more strongly in favour of the motion of the hon. member for Darling Downs than that? The Government, it appears, seem to acknowledge that it would be a great benefit if these lands were settled on by farmers, yet they somehow confess that they have to oppose the present motion; at the same time they seem to be not very happy in the reasons they give for their opposition. To me it seems that they have had a bad experience in the raising of their last loan, and are fearfully sensitive of the opinions of the money-lenders. Every time I hear the English money-lender spoken of I feel deeply ashamed that the country should be so very sensitive, and I sometimes wish, if it were not for the panic that would ensue, that our loans were failures, for we should then open our eyes to the immense riches which Queensland possesses. By wise administration I feel sure we could be independent of any money-lenders and of any country. That these accumulations of large estates have taken place is a wrong that past Governments are to blame for, and it behoves present and future Governments to redress the wrongs; and the sooner that is done the better for the colony. If the Government cannot see their way to purchasing these lands there is another way of meeting the difficulty, and that is by putting on a land tax, which would soon bring these holders of large estates to their senses. That is what has been done in Victoria, where holders of estates of more than 5,000 or 10,000 acres are taxed. If the Government do not intend to accede to the motion of the hon. member for Darling Downs they are in duty bound to bring in some measure to make good the wrongs that have been committed. In regard to the financial question, the hon. member for Stanley has said he only wished the owners would accept his paper in payment for the estates; and I should think that the collective wisdom of the country ought to be quite as well able to ensure the successful working and cutting up of these estates as an auctioneer. If hon. members as a whole are not capable of dealing with the question, then the country has made a mistake in electing them as members of Parliament. In regard to the undertaking being a money failure, I admit that the Government would not realise as much from the settlement that would take place as the interest on the money would amount to in the first few years, but even if they lost the interest for three or four years the general gain to the country would more than compensate for the loss. The completion of the transaction would make the railways more valuable, and in many other ways would be advantageous. The hon. member for Fassifern stated that farms had been sold at as many pounds as a few years ago

they cost shillings; and I know also, from my own experience, that in the Rosewood as well as Fassifern and Stanley districts farms are sold now at from £5 to £10 per acre. But why? Because there settlement has taken place. The land may be quite as good on the Darling Downs, but it is not settled. These estates in question, being near the railways and near civilisation, would in a very few years acquire such value that the Government would find it a very safe bargain to acquire them. Moreover, the money will not have to be borrowed, although in some respects the whole credit of the colony would be pledged. Eventually, however, the Government would find that only the credit of those settlers who purchased the land would be collectively guaranteed. The railway that is now passing from Toowoomba to Warwick and Roma to a large extent goes through agricultural land, but it might as well pass through a desert. Now, would it not pay well for the Government to try and convert what is now a desert into a state of things that it ought to represent? Thousands of people would be settled there, and what the Government would lose in one respect they would gain in many other respects. Firstly, they would make the railway more profitable; and secondly, the Treasurer would get more taxpayers.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said: I should not like this question to be settled without expressing my views upon it. I can assure the hon. member for Darling Downs that I am just as anxious as he is to see this land, which is mentioned in the motion, put to its proper use. I am perfectly satisfied that there is no one who travels along the railway line from Toowoomba to Warwick who does not feel disgusted when he sees the large tracts of land that are lying idle, or are simply being used for the purpose of grazing stock upon. I think it is to be very much regretted that that land was not reserved and put to its proper use, and I think that I, at all events, showed some little sympathy with the movement, because I was one of those who purchased Canning Downs Estate, although unfortunately the transaction fell through.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: You did not make much out of it.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: At all events that showed that I had as much anxiety as the hon. member for Darling Downs, Mr. Kates, to endeavour to put that land to its proper use. Now, the hon. member for Mulgrave, who always in an ingenious way tries to misrepresent anything I have done, got up in his place and said I was one of the purchasers, and afterwards endeavoured to get the estate bought by the Government. I can assure hon. members that it was after he expunged the motion of the hon. member for Darling Downs from the paper that I was one of the three who bought it.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: If the hon. member had listened, he would have heard me admit my mistake and apologise.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: If he did, he did not intend to. He has a peculiar way whenever he rises of endeavouring to express himself in the most offensive way towards myself. I do not care a straw about him, or how he expresses himself. He has alluded to me as the old Minister for Works. I presume the hon. member will be as old as I if he lives long enough; and I only hope he will be as good a bicker as I am; but I think his head is too big. He alluded on a previous occasion to my skull being bald; his skull is all flabby. With regard to the question before the House, I must say that the most extraordinary speech I ever heard was delivered by the hon. member for South Brisbane (Mr.

Jordan), who sometimes makes extraordinary speeches. A short time ago he was addressing his constituents at South Brisbane, and while holding out the good qualities of the Land Act of 1884, he told them we were going to get £6,000,000 a year rental from the Crown lands under this Act.

Mr. JORDAN: Might get that amount.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is most extraordinary that, within a few weeks, the hon. member who had such a good opinion of the Act should condemn it in the language he used to-night. I am under the impression that the hon. member is demented. I never had the opinion held by the hon. member of the great amount of revenue to be derived from the Act.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: You said you had.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I never said we should get £6,000,000 rental; I said that within a few years the country would derive from £1,000,000 to £2,000,000 rental from the Crown lands, and I say so now. But the Act has not come into operation yet, and cannot come into operation till the beginning of next month. I have no desire to criticise what the hon. member said, because he has such extraordinary opinions, holding one opinion to-day and another to-morrow. He is always courteous and civil, but those changes of front I do not understand. I do not think there is a single member of the House who threw so much heart and soul into the passing of the Land Act as the hon. member for South Brisbane, and he gets up to-night because he has read some speech of the leader of the Opposition, after dinner, as he admitted, and makes the most extraordinary statements regarding the new Land Act. I have read the hon. member's speeches after dinner too. On one occasion he said, "This Land Act will be the cause of the whole of the land of the colony being taken up, and there would be none left for anyone else." That was the object of the Act, and if it attains that object I for one shall be satisfied. I need not say anything more about the Land Act, because it is premature to condemn the measure before it comes into operation. The Government cannot take a single acre until after the 1st of next month, and then the runs will have to be divided and surveyed before the land can be thrown open to selection. How the hon. member for South Brisbane made the mistake he made to-night, I cannot understand. With reference to my hon. colleague's motion for repurchasing these two estates, I may say that I am satisfied that one-third of Canning Downs is worthless except for grazing purposes; but I am satisfied that if the gentlemen who were connected with me had concluded the purchase I would have made it a great success. I do not like to refer to private matters, but as the leader of the Opposition has alluded to it I have not the slightest hesitation in stating the whole facts of the case. After the purchase was concluded, I was asked by the two gentlemen connected with me to state how I intended to work it out. It must be understood that the Canning Downs Estate is enclosed and subdivided into paddocks, a considerable quantity being laid down under lucerne. What I intended to do was to stock the country with store cattle, fatten them, and dispose of them as the land was sold. However, the gentlemen connected with me did not understand anything about grazing pursuits; and when I said, "I will bring you out right; I will make you a profit if you will allow me to manage it," one of them said, "Suppose anything happens to you, what will become of us?" I said, "That is your lookout." And I consider there was a great deal of force in the question put to

me. I believe a handsome profit could be made by cutting up that large estate for agricultural purposes. I was quite willing, whether there was a profit or not, to carry it out, and that shows my sympathy with the object of the motion before the House. When the hon. member brought forward a similar resolution some time ago, I voted with him, but the case is very different now. The House last session authorised the Government to borrow ten millions of money for the purpose of carrying out public works, railways, etc., and opening up the country. In putting that loan on the London market, we endeavoured to show the capitalists at home that we had a certain quantity of land, and I believe there was nothing assisted more to float that loan successfully, with all the influence brought to bear against it, than the passing of the Land Act of 1884. We announced to the people that we were not going to sell any more land; that we would keep the public estate to meet the liabilities of the country. Supposing this motion were carried, and that the Government completed the purchase, which I hope they will not do, and issued debentures for half-a-million of money for the purchase of Westbrook and Canning Downs, what will the English capitalists say? They will say, "What is the meaning of this? We understood that they had millions of acres of land; but it appears now that they have got to borrow money to buy back the land they have sold." I will try all in my power to make that ten-million loan a success; but what will be the result, Mr. Speaker, if we want another million of money, after having bought these estates? We shall be met with the saying, that we have led the English capitalists astray, and have borrowed half-a-million to buy back land that had been sold. What will be the result? The loan will be a failure, and if so the country will be ruined. It will be impossible to get over it. Hon. gentlemen must understand that the Government have a great responsibility upon their shoulders. This House has authorised them to borrow £10,000,000, and if there be any hitch, or anything occurs to cause any suspicion on the part of the money-lenders, what will be the result? We are undertaking a great many public works. I have got the table covered with plans and specifications of railways, and if the loan be a failure none of them can be carried out. Are we going to risk all this for the sake of having two estates on the Darling Downs? My sympathies are with the agriculturists, and have always been, and ever will be; but we have a great responsibility, and I can assure the hon. gentleman that my vote will be against him. It would put the Government in a very grave position if they did anything which would bring about a failure of that loan. The hon. member for South Brisbane complimented me on my railway policy. I am perfectly certain it will turn out a success, and make this a great country, if we are not hampered by trifling little petty matters of this kind. I will not shirk my duty. I should be sorry indeed to incur the displeasure of my constituents; but if I have got to do it in the interests of the country, I have the manly courage to do what I think is right, and put up with the consequences.

Mr. KATES, in reply, said: I hope that I shall never again witness such a miserable exhibition as I have seen to-day on the Treasury benches. I pity the Colonial Treasurer. That hon. gentleman's sympathies are entirely with my resolution I know; his heart is with my resolution, but he has been so hampered with those ten millions of money that he thinks this is a scheme he cannot entertain. Now, I should like to know, sir, how he will pay the interest on those millions of money, unless we increase our population? Why, we have only been separated about twenty-

six years, and we have borrowed already twenty millions, and he is going on borrowing every year a million of money. We shall have to stop some time or other unless we increase our population, or there will be a collapse. A great deal has been said this evening about the Allora lands, and I have something to say again about those lands. I will stand my ground, and say they have been one of the greatest successes. The Minister for Lands brought forward items showing that some of those people are in arrears. Why, sir, those people have spent more money on their selections already than they owe! He holds the title-deeds of those selections as an additional security, and I have no doubt that in a few years, if they have a couple of good seasons, they will pay their money and be only too glad to get their deeds. There has been a lot of talk about the twopences and threepences and two-and-two-pences; but every family, with five in a family, is worth £20 a head in the shape of indirect taxation. I have no patience with these arguments. This, too, from the Great Liberal party! They are too frightened of Queen street and the Queen-street Press to do anything that is really for the welfare of the country. We have these two estates offered to us on most moderate terms—fourteen years' debentures; they are alongside railways, with really the finest soil in the world, as I have pointed out already; and what will be the consequence if the Government turn their backs on these agriculturists? These estates will fall into the hands of syndicates, and the result will be that it will lead to a system of landlordism and tenantry. Their charges will be so high, and the terms so limited, that these people will in a bad season not be able to meet their engagements; and the moment the agent of these syndicates finds these properties are well improved, he will say, "You will have to give up your land;" and if the farmer does not want to go he will say, "If you don't like to go, we will allow you to stay at so much per acre per annum." We all know that a tenant farmer will not work his holding with the same heart and energy as if he was his own master and landlord. I am sorry to see that the Government have taken this step to-night. They might, in the first instance, have seen the case in its true light, and gone into the matter of increased population on the Darling Downs. The hon. member for South Brisbane (Mr. Fraser) made a very great mistake when he told us that the 80-acre men upon these exchanges paid £40 a year, and are now paying ever so much less. He forgets to mention that by paying £40 a year they have been paying part of the capital, and in ten years it will be all paid; whereas rental is perpetual and subject to increase and appraisal. That is a mistake the hon. gentleman made. I am very sorry that the Government do not see their way clear to support these resolutions. It was a step in the right direction. It appears to me that the Premier has got an idea that the Opposition do not understand the real purport of my resolutions. They are not general: they refer to two estates on the Darling Downs. These two estates are suitable for the growth of wheat, and wheat cannot be grown in any other part of the colony—at least it has not been proved as yet—and being alongside of railway lines and offered on moderate terms, I think the Government might safely have entertained the offer. Were I a creditor or debenture holder I would be very pleased to see the Government take steps to increase the population, because that would increase my security. The hon. Minister for Works bought Canning Downs in connection with two other gentlemen in Brisbane, and when they found they could not cut up the estate into

14-perch allotments and turn over and double their money in six months they dropped it. Canning Downs is not to be cut up into 14-perch allotments. If for no other purpose than introducing irrigation, for which Canning Downs is particularly suitable, the Government should go in for it. I suppose it is no use saying anything more on the subject. The Government have decided against me and there is no hope of carrying the motion. At the same time, I shall go to a division. I will let the country see who really have the interests of the colony at heart. This motion is not for the benefit of Darling Downs, but for the agriculturists of the whole colony. There may be some persons, for instance, in the constituencies of Bundamba and West Moreton, or elsewhere, who would like to secure a piece of land for wheat-growing. I shall certainly go to a division.

Question put, and the House divided :—

AYES, 10.

Messrs. Alaud, Isambert, Jordan, Kellett, J. Campbell, Horwitz, Kates, Foxton, Midgley, and Macfarlane.

NOES, 29.

Sir T. McIlwraith, Messrs. Archer, Chubb, Norton, Dickson, Fraser, Miles, Griffith, Dutton, Moreton, Sheridan, Stevens, Smyth, Mellor, Salkeld, Ferguson, Lissner, Govett, Wakelield, Bailey, Beattie, Buckland, Brookes, Foote, Lalor, Macrossan, Rutledge, White, and Black.

Question resolved in the negative.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT OF 1878 AMENDMENT BILL.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of a message from the Legislative Council, intimating that the Council had agreed to this Bill with certain amendments, with which they invited the concurrence of the Legislative Assembly.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the message was ordered to be taken into consideration in committee on Tuesday next.

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER said : With the permission of the House, not having given notice of it this afternoon, I beg to move that the House do now adjourn until Tuesday next. Committee of Ways and Means will be first on the paper for that day, and after that we will take the Elections Bill.

The House adjourned at seven minutes to 10 o'clock until Tuesday next.