Queensland

Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 5 OCTOBER 1886

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, 5 *October*, 1886.

Petition.—Railway Policy of the Government.—Liquor Bill.—Messages from the Legislative Council—Mining Companies Bill—Gold Fields Act Amendment Bill.—Marsupials Destruction Act Continuation Bill—consideration of Legislative Council's amendments.—Oyster Bill—second reading.—Crown Lands Act Amendment Bill—second reading.—Adjournment.

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

PETITION.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. A. Rutledge) presented a petition from certain residents of Charters Towers in public meeting assembled, praying for the passing of such laws as will prohibit Chinese from coming to the colony, diminish the number of those in the colony, and confine them to such quarters as the local authority may determine; and moved that the petition be read.

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

On motion of the ATTORNEY-GENERAL, the petition was received.

RAILWAY POLICY OF THE GOVERNMENT.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. Miles) said: Mr. Speaker,—With the permission of the House I desire to make a statement on behalf of the Government, for the information of hon. members, as to the mode the Government propose to deal with the railways which will be placed before Parliament during the present session. The parliamentary plans and books of reference of the following lines will be ready for laying on the table of the House this day week:—Normanton to Cloncurry, 38 miles; deviation of the Northern Railway at Hughenden, 2 miles; deviation Fassifern branch, 62 chains 56½ links; extension Southern and Western Railway through Fortitude Valley, 2 miles 17 chains 60 links; Warwick towards St. George, 25 miles 37 chains 44 links; Laidley Creek branch, 10 miles 68 chains 17 links; North Coast Railway, section 5, Gympie towards Brisbane, 17 miles 28 chains 72 links. The following will be dealt with secondly. The parliamentary plans and books of reference will be laid on the table of the House after progress has been made with those named in the first list:—Mungarr towards Gayndah, 25 miles 27 chains 50 links; Bundaberg to Gladstone, 106 miles 46 chains 50 links; Bowen towards Ayr, 30 miles; Cooktown towards Maytown, 18 miles; Cleveland branch, 21 miles 40 chains. I may mention, with reference to the last, that this will depend to some extent on the willingness of the owners of land through which the railway will pass to treat liberally with the Government.

The Drayton deviation and the Sandgate extension are not considered by the Government to be of a pressing nature, and therefore the plans with respect to them will not be laid on the table this session. The line from South Brisbane to Melbourne street has been under the serious consideration of the Government for some time, and we have come to the conclusion that, in view of the large amount of traffic expected from the South Coast line and its branches, it will be desirable to deviate near the open bridge, passing close by the new gaol, and thence by tunnel into Melbourne street; and the plans of that cannot be got ready this session. With respect to the direct line to Warwick, the Government will not move in that matter at present. They have just received the report of the Chief Engineer, and it will require some consideration. But the determination of the Government is to introduce the plans and specifications of the lines I have indicated early next session. I hope this will be satisfactory to hon. members, and I am prepared to give any information they may require.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said: Mr. Speaker,—I intend to give the hon. gentleman the opportunity of answering any questions that may be put to him, by moving the adjournment of the House. I understood him to say that the plans and sections of the lines mentioned in the first list he read were to be on the table this day week, and that the plans and sections of those in the list he read afterwards were to be tabled only when progress had been made with the first batch.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Now, that seems to me to be placing the construction of the second batch of lines entirely in the hands of the Minister himself.

The PREMIER: No.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: And if this House does not pass those lines the others will not be brought forward. That is doing the very same thing which was done years ago, when a certain bunch of railways was brought forward and members were told to take them all or take none.

Mr. FOOTE: Hear, hear!

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: They could not get one, or two: they must take the lot; and amongst the lot we know there are some that have never paid. That is a very unfair system to pursue, and a very unparliamentary system. I think each line should stand entirely upon its own merits, and that each member should be at liberty to give his vote on each particular line independently of how he may vote upon others. There is one line mentioned here, the plans and sections of which have been ready for years, and yet it is in the second batch. That is the line from Bowen towards Ayr. The plans and sections of that line were ready, I think, when the present Government came into office, or, if not just then, shortly afterwards, and yet it is put in the second batch; so that it will be dependent upon the action of the House—of the Ministry—in regard to the first batch of lines. I should like to know from the hon. gentleman if such is to be the case. If it is we know what it means. I beg to move the adjournment of the House.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said: The Government have not the slightest intention of bunching these lines. I presume the House will be able to deal with them one way or another. They will be either passed or thrown out. Surely that is making progress. The Government have no intention of bunching these lines. They will be put before the House in such a way that the House can deal with them upon their merits. Of course, the hon. member is bound to find some fault with the Government.

Mr. JORDAN said: Mr. Speaker,—The hon. Minister for Works said he hoped this programme will be satisfactory to hon. members. It is not satisfactory to me, sir, and certainly it will not be to the people of South Brisbane, represented by myself and my hon. colleague (Mr. Fraser). We have been kept for three years now on promises made by the Government, none of which have been fulfilled that I know of.

The PREMIER: What are they?

Mr. JORDAN: The extension into Melbourne street. At the beginning of last session I had a definite promise from the Minister for Works that the plans of that railway should be laid upon the table that session, and at the end of the session I called the attention of the Premier to the matter, and he expressed surprise that they had not been; he had forgotten it, I think, or did not see the importance of insisting upon the promise being carried out. However, after having got such an absolute promise, I called the attention of the Minister to it and asked him to fulfil his promise; but no further notice was taken of it. Then, at the beginning of this session, I asked if the plans and sections would be laid upon the table of the House during the session, and the answer was that the Government were proceeding with the work—alluding to the deviation referred to to-day—and the plans would probably be laid upon the table this session. Now, we are told that the Government have had this matter under their consideration, and that the plans will not be laid upon the table this session. I do not suppose we shall have them laid upon the table of the House for the next year or two. The idea of the Government is that we are nice, amiable, gentle people in South Brisbane.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: Very good people!

Mr. JORDAN: That we are enthusiastic supporters of the Government, and would not vote against them for our lives! That is the opinion they have, and they will give us simply nothing. I protest against that, sir. I believe it to be ridiculously unjust. The Government do not scruple to place themselves in a most absurd position with reference to this matter by telling us now, when we are near the end of the session, that those plans will not be placed upon the table this session. I do not believe they ever will be whilst the present Government are in power, because they are sure of us. I hope my hon. colleague will not allow such an opportunity as this of saying something on the matter I have mentioned to slip by. He is generally in the chair when these discussions come up, but he is not to-day. Then there is the Bowen railway; that was promised—absolutely promised—by the former Government, and the people were led to expect it. They did not suppose that the following Government would violate a promise made by the former Government. That is not the ordinary practice of parliamentary proceedings. They did not suppose for a moment that the present Government would refuse to make the railway from Bowen, which had been promised long before they came into office, and which the people had calculated upon. But now, as the hon. member for Townsville points out, it is placed in the second batch, and the people will have to wait a long time, I am afraid, before they get any railway from Bowen, unless hon. members of this House insist upon something like justice being done in the matter. I have not much to do with Bowen—nothing, in fact—and I am glad the hon. member for Towns-

ville called attention to the matter. I think if any community has been treated unjustly, first of all it is my constituency, and next to that, Bowen.

Mr. FRASER said: Mr. Speaker,—As my hon. colleague has brought this matter so prominently forward, I am expected to say something upon it. I am obliged to him for having done so, although I cannot see with him eye to eye in this matter. It is true that the Government have broken faith to a considerable extent; but I think my hon. colleague must admit that they are doing something in fulfilment of their promises. I see that already the extension of the Dry Dock has been commenced, and that tenders have been called and the contract let for the extension of the coal wharf up to the dock. That is something. Now, I have felt as sore upon the delay in connection with the extension of this railway as my hon. colleague possibly could; but sometimes good comes out of evil, and I believe that, so far as South Brisbane and the convenience of the traffic is concerned, the delay that has occurred will ultimately prove a very considerable advantage in this way: Up to a very recent period we were all under the impression that the coal wharf in South Brisbane would be ample for the convenience of the coal traffic, and that the extension of that wharf would meet all the requirements of trade and commerce in connection with the railway to our southern borders. But we find that the increase in the coal traffic has been at such a rate, lately, that the whole of that wharf, when it is completed, will be scarcely sufficient for that trade alone; and consequently it is necessary to look out for some other mode of taking the railway into Melbourne street, and a mode that will not clash with the other traffic. I believe that upon fully considering the matter the engineer has decided, as was indicated by the Minister for Works to-day, to start that branch, not from the wharf, as was intended formerly, and along South Brisbane into Grey street and on to Melbourne street, but to start it from the new gaol, bring it along an easier route, then by tunnel under the hill near Mr. Blakeney's house, and bring it in a direct line to Melbourne street, which will be far less expensive in the way of interfering with private property, and will ultimately answer the purpose far better than the plan originally intended; so that if we can hold the Minister to the indication that has been given to-day—that no delay will take place in carrying out this idea—it will be far better and more advantageous to the southern traffic than the plan originally intended. I do not justify the delay by any means. I believe that these public works, especially the wharves and the extension of the Dry Dock, might have been undertaken and carried out long ago.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: No.

Mr. FRASER: I believe they might. I know how the delay occurred; I do not blame the Minister. It occurred in official quarters — in the want of harmony between some of the departments. One engineer wanted one thing, another engineer wanted another, and between the two this very necessary work has been delayed. However, we have got over that; the departments have become reconciled, and one has consented to what the other required; so that the work is now going on, and I hope —in fact I may say that my colleague and our constituents in South Brisbane will keep a sharp lookout upon the Minister and see that the line he has now indicated will be carried out in due time.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir S. W. Griffith) said: Mr. Speaker,—The speech of the hon. member for South Brisbane, Mr. Jordan, reminded me of the observation the Tempter is said to have made to Job—"Doth Job serve God for nought?" I have a higher opinion of the constituents of the electorate of South Brisbane and of the constituents of the colony generally than to believe that they support one party in power rather than another, simply because of the amount of money they spend in their districts. I should be very sorry indeed to be at the head of a party kept in power by any such means. We have never resorted to such means either to obtain or to retain office, and I shall be very glad, Mr. Speaker, to leave office when I can only hold it upon such condition. The hon. member for South Brisbane said the Government has broken every promise they made to South Brisbane, and when I asked him what they were he could only mention one, and that is the railway extension. Surely that is not the only thing South Brisbane exists for! As a matter of fact, what was proposed at first was that the railway should be extended from the present station underneath Stanley street to Melbourne street. Plans were prepared of the work, but on further consideration it was found that that would be a very great mistake, and that if carried out the railway would afterwards have to be taken up. At South Brisbane there must be a railway station sufficiently large to deal with a great deal of traffic—the traffic from the southern border, and I hope from other branch lines, and the present station would be found to be entirely inadequate. That being the case, we thought it better to delay a little and get a good route than to "keep the word of promise to the ear and break it to the hope"; by at once building a railway that would be perfectly useless and would have to be taken up again as soon as made. I do not think there is any justification at all for the speech made by the hon. member for South Brisbane, and upon further consideration I think he will be sorry for having made that speech. The criticism of the hon. member for Townsville I do not think fair either. We cannot deal with twelve railways all at once. The Government, in bringing forward these railways, propose to deal with them in the order they consider most convenient for the conduct of public business; and they propose to get them all through as quickly as they can. The plans of some will be laid on the table next week, and of others, I hope, the week after; and, at any rate, I shall be very much disappointed if, before the end of the session, all these railways are not sanctioned by both Houses of Parliament.

Mr. FOOTE said: Mr. Speaker,—I understood the Minister for Works to say that the plans, sections, and books of reference of the last batch of railways he mentioned are not to be laid on the table this session.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No; until some progress is made with the others.

Mr. FOOTE: The hon. gentleman mentioned a first batch, the plans of which he said were to be laid on the table this session, and then he mentioned a third batch which were not to come on this session.

The PREMIER: Some at the end.

Mr. FOOTE: And amongst them was the line from Harrisville to Warwick.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes.

Mr. FOOTE: And one from Warwick to St. George is to come on this session. That is a prominent one, the plans of which are referred to in the first batch. However, we will deal with that question when it comes before the House, and I will not, therefore, go into it now. I call the attention of the Government to the fact that for

the last ten years, not only this but previous Governments have been making preparation for carrying on the coal trade. One wharf has been made, and found utterly inadequate, and another wharf is now nearly completed, and before it is completed we find that it will be utterly inadequate to meet the requirements of the trade. I would refer the Government to the time when it was advocated in this House to deal with the coal traffic below the city altogether. We could not impress the necessity for that upon the Government at the time, nor even up to the present time. I mention this to show that ultimately we will have to go lower down the river to deal with the coal trade, and I suggest that when making this railway to Cleveland, whether *viâ* Wynnum or any other place. they might see if they cannot find a suitable place down the line and away from the city altogether to deal with the coal traffic. If this can be done it will be found to be a very great convenience to South Brisbane and North Brisbane, and of considerable convenience also to the coal trade. We know that as yet the coal trade has not fairly begun, and in five years' time a very large export trade will have taken place that has not been reached up to the present time. I hope the Government will not lose sight of this matter.

Mr. HAMILTON said : Mr. Speaker,—The hon. member for South Brisbane has complained that the Government have kept this railway dangling before his constituents for three years, as a bunch of green fodder is dangled before a donkey—though, of course, I do not intend to compare the hon. member's constituents with that animal. The other hon. member for South Brisbane attempts to seek consolation in the comforts of religion for them, and refers to that truly Christian principle, "Out of good comes evil."

An HONOURABLE MEMBER : No ; the reverse.

Mr. HAMILTON : I am not well up in these Christian principles, but I think it is that good comes sometimes out of evil. At any rate, it is evident there is something very evil in the conduct of the Minister for Works in this matter. The excuse given for the delay is that since last year the engineer has discovered another route ; but surely the engineer, during the last two years, must have known as well as he does now that the route at present proposed was the best. I have no doubt that by next year the engineer will have discovered another route, and that will be a fresh excuse for delaying the work for another year or two. I notice that the Northern lines are in the second batch, and in connection with the line from Bowen towards Ayr I was struck with a remark made by the Premier, who said that the Ministry thought more of the constituencies than to suppose that they could be bribed by giving them railways. It appears very singular that the Ministry decided that the Bowen railway should not be constructed until a deputation met some of the Ministry at Bowen, and informed them that their politics were guided by the question whether this railway should be constructed or not ; and if the Government promised to construct it they might look for their support. Since that statement was made the Government had decided that the line is to be constructed I notice that the Northern lines are in the second batch, and the Minister informed us that only when progress has been made with those in the first batch will these be passed. The natural interpretation of that is that if progress is not made with the first batch of lines the second will not be passed, but I am glad to see that in answer to the hon. member for Townsville the hon. gentleman has explained that he did not mean what he stated, and that the progress with the second batch will not depend upon the progress made with the first.

Mr. ALAND said : Mr. Speaker,—I do not know that I have any particular fault to find with the manner in which these railways have been brought before the House, but it does appear to me a very singular procedure on the part of the Ministry. I think it is the first time since we began to make railways that the Minister for Works has come down and made an announcement in the manner in which the Minister for Works has done to-day. I do not know whether the Government have found that their supporters are beginning to get restless, anxious, or obstreperous, because they have not been in a very great hurry to push forward these lines of railway ; but my opinion is that that really has had something to do with it. The Minister for Works, I have no doubt, has been bothered, and button-holed, and earwigged, and threatened with all manner of pains and penalties unless he made some announcement in reference to his railways. Well, like my friend the member for Ipswich, I shall wait until these railways are brought forward, and I shall reserve to myself the right to criticise any of these railways and to object to them, if I think fit.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN, in reply, said : Mr. Speaker,—I made the inquiry I put to the Minister, not because of the railways being put on the table in a batch, but in consequence of the Minister's own statement. The hon. gentleman read out a list of railways which he said would be gone on with this day week, and then read a second list which he said would be taken when progress had been made with the first lot. What interpretation could I put upon that statement except that the tabling of one batch depended on the progress made with the other? I asked the question for the information of myself and the House generally. I am satisfied with what the Premier has said, and also with the reply of the Minister for Works. If the hon. gentleman had at first made such a statement as he made the second time, I should not have asked the question. With the permission of the House, I will withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

LIQUOR BILL.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the Speaker left the chair, and the House resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the desirableness of introducing a Bill to amend the laws relating to the sale of intoxicating liquors by wholesale, and to amend the Licensing Act of 1885.

The PREMIER said : Mr. Fraser,—In moving that it is desirable to introduce a Bill to amend the law relating to the sale of intoxicating liquors by wholesale, and to amend the Licensing Act of 1885, it may be convenient if I explain very briefly the chief provisions of the Bill. The Bill is not simply one to amend the Licensing Act of 1885. There are some other matters connected with the liquor law which are at present in a very unsatisfactory condition, particularly with regard to the sale of liquor by wholesale and the registration of brewers. The law at present is only that a man who proposes to sell liquor by wholesale must register his place of business and pay a fee. A man might notify a place 100 miles off in the bush as the place where he intended to sell spirits. The law on the subject is contained in the 13th Victoriæ, No. 26, which is one of the Distillation Acts. The 13th section provides for the registration of brewers, reciting that an unlawful distillery

might be carried on in a brewery. By the 14th section it is provided that it shall not be lawful for any person to sell spirits upon which the duty has been paid, in quantities of two gallons or upwards, unless holding a publican's license, without having first registered his name and a particular description of the place in which he intends to sell spirits. Those are the provisions with reference to the registration of spirit merchants and brewers under the Distillers Act. The Beer Duties Act passed last year also contains provisions for the registration of brewers. It is very inconvenient that there should be two separate provisions on the subject, and it is proposed, therefore, to put in this Bill all the provisions relating to the registration of brewers and spirit merchants. This is no substantial change in the law; but the law as it now stands is simply put together in a more convenient form. With respect to the Licensing Act itself, it is proposed to make certain amendments in it. A great number of amendments have been suggested to the Government, and the following are the amendments embodied in the Bill:—It is proposed to allow monthly meetings of the licensing authorities to be held for certain purposes only—that is to say, for the transfer of licenses, and things connected with them for granting permission to the representatives of deceased persons to carry on the business, but not for granting fresh licenses. It is proposed also to deal with the subject of clubs. Various institutions have been started in Brisbane and other towns called clubs, and it is proposed to define what clubs are, and to require a fee for their registration. With regard to wine licenses, it is proposed to limit them to colonial wine as was originally intended. The clause requiring labels to be put on bottles it is proposed to repeal, as it has been found a source of irritation and of no practical use. It is also proposed to forbid gaming on licensed premises, and that in the case of certain offences notice must be given to the person intended to be prosecuted within fourteen days after the commission of the offence, in order that no injustice may be done by a long delay; and it is proposed to give an appeal to a district court where a penalty of more than five pounds has been imposed. There are also one or two other provisions, one of which prohibits the supply of liquor to Her Majesty's ships of war, and another supplies a defect existing in the present law which only prohibits licensees and not other persons from supplying liquor to Polynesians and aboriginals. These are the chief provisions of the Bill, and I believe they will commend themselves to hon. members. They deal, I think, with all the real grievances under the present Act. Some other things have been mentioned, but I do not consider they are grievances. I move that it is desirable to introduce a Bill to amend the laws relating to the sale of intoxicating liquors, and to amend the Licensing Act of 1885.

Question put and passed.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the resolution was reported to the House. The report was adopted, and the Bill was introduced, read a first time, and its second reading made an Order of the Day for Thursday next.

MESSAGES FROM THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

MINING COMPANIES BILL.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of a message from the Legislative Council, returning this Bill without amendment.

GOLD FIELDS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of a message from the Legislative Council, returning this Bill with an amendment indicated in an accompanying schedule, in which amendment they requested the concurrence of the Legislative Assembly.

On the motion of the MINISTER FOR WORKS, the message was ordered to be taken into consideration to-morrow.

MARSUPIALS DESTRUCTION ACT CONTINUATION BILL.

CONSIDERATION OF LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL'S AMENDMENTS.

On the motion of the COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. B. B. Moreton), the Speaker left the chair, and the House went into committee to consider the Legislative Council's amendments in this Bill.

On clause 1, as follows:—

"The Marsupials Destruction Act of 1881, as amended by the Marsupials Destruction Act Continuation Act of 1885, shall be further amended as hereinafter provided, and shall remain in force until the thirty-first day of December, one thousand eight hundred and eighty-seven, and thenceforth until the end of the then next session of Parliament."

—which the Legislative Council had amended by the omission of the words, "shall be further amended as hereinafter provided and"—

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the only amendments made by the other House were in excising clause 2 and introducing a consequential amendment into clause 1. The clause struck out was one which had been inserted in this House on the motion of the hon. member for Carnarvon. He (the Colonial Secretary) regretted very much that the other House had seen fit to cut it out; but there seemed no great reason for not accepting the amendment, and he therefore moved that it be agreed to.

Mr. FOXTON said that, as the father of the clause, he was not inclined to agree with the motion before the Committee. He would, of course, be very sorry to see the Bill thrown out, as it might be if the Assembly insisted on the retention of the clause; but he thought it was a most valuable clause, and that was the opinion of those gentlemen who knew most about the subject-matter of the clause and the management of marsupial boards. He need not go over the reasons at any length, as he had given them before, when they had seemed to meet with the unanimous approval of the House. He had pointed out that the skins of the larger marsupials had now become so valuable that it was a matter of greater profit to the scalp-hunters to sell the skins than to be paid for the scalps; and the consequence was that the smaller game, which destroyed as much grass as the larger, and probably increased at a greater rate, were neglected for the sake of the kangaroos and wallaroos, whose skins were valuable. He would therefore be very sorry to see the clause go, more especially as it was sought for by many of the marsupial boards which did the most business; but that was not his only objection to the Council's action. It was a very minor question whether the clause was a good one or a bad one; but he was one of those who denied the right of the Council to make that amendment, and he was surprised that the Government had not taken that ground. He fully expected to hear the Colonial Secretary object to the interference of the Council in such a measure, and he was prepared with authorities on the point. He would quote from the last edition of "May," page 642, on questions of Supply:—

"In Bills not confined to matters of aid or taxation, but in which pecuniary burdens are imposed on the people, the Lords may make any amendments, provided they do not alter the intention of the Commons with

regard to the amount of the rate or charge, whether by increase or reduction, its duration, its mode of assessment, levy, collection, appropriation, or management; or the persons who shall pay, receive, manage, or control it; or the limits within which it is proposed to be levied."

Now, the amendment of the Legislative Council clearly limited the appropriation of the rate or tax. The funds for the administration of the Act were contributed by the people; it was a rate levied on certain persons in various parts of the colony; and it was proposed by the clause that the boards, if they thought fit, might decide not to appropriate any portion of the tax or levy in payment for the scalps of kangaroos or wallaroos, for which a minimum limit was fixed under the Marsupials Act of 8d. per scalp. The amendment of the Council, on the other hand, forced them to do so; so that it was not merely an amendment which affected the appropriation of the tax, but which forced the appropriation upon them whether they liked it or not. It was a direct infringement of the privileges of that House. The limits of the functions of the Upper House with regard to amending money Bills were clear with regard to the amount of the rate or charge, whether by increase or reduction. The whole tendency of the Council's amendment was not even to reduce the burden of the taxpayer, but to increase it. The Bill was very similar to a Poor Law Bill. "May," page 521, had the following;—

"Bills relating to the relief and management of the poor, for example, involve, almost necessarily, some charge upon the people, and generally originate in the Commons. Prior to 1868, two Bills only relating to the poor had been sent to the Commons by the Lords during the present century. . . . In 1868 a Poor Relief Bill was received from the Lords with all the rating clauses printed in red ink, according to a comparatively recent custom. But amendments involving the principle of a charge upon the people have frequently been made to such Bills by the Lords, which, on account of the extreme difficulty of separating them from other legislative provisions to which there was no objection, have been assented to by the Commons. Such amendments, however, ought not to interfere with regard to the amount of the tax, the mode of levying or collecting it, the persons who shall pay or receive it, the manner of its appropriation, or the persons who shall have the control and management of it. In any of these cases the Commons may insist upon their privileges."

Hatsell, who was no doubt the authority on which May based his remarks, said at page 154 of his "Precedents and Proceedings in the House of Commons":—

"In Bills which are not for the special grant of supply, but which, however, impose pecuniary burthens upon the people, such as Bills for turnpike roads, for navigation, for paving, for managing the poor, or for rebuilding churches, etc., for which purposes tolls and rates must be collected—in these, though the Lords may make amendments, these amendments must not make any alteration in the quantum of the toll or rate, in the disposition or duration of it, or in the persons, commissioners, or collectors appointed to manage it."

As he had said before, it must not be lost sight of that the fund was, by the amendment, to be appropriated, whether the ratepayers liked it or not, as a fund levied on the people by virtue of the Marsupials Destruction Act. He held distinctly that the Council had no right to make the amendment.

The PREMIER said the question was one which had not escaped the notice of the Government. The amendment of the Legislative Council appeared to him to be rather on the border line of amendments which might be made by that House and those which might not. The Bill, as introduced into the Assembly, was one for continuing the existing law for twelve months, and clause 2, inserted subsequently by the Assembly, provided that the law should be continued with an alteration. The Legislative Council said, "We are willing to continue the law, but we do not agree to the alteration." The clause was in a manner separated from the rest of the Bill, and it might fairly be argued that it came within the power of the Council to reject it. On a previous occasion he had quoted from a speech of Viscount Eversley, who, as Mr. Denison, was for many years Speaker of the British House of Commons. In volume 189 of "Hansard's Parliamentary Debates," for 1867, page 417, Lord Eversley was reported as having spoken as follows:—

"Viscount EVERSLEY said, in answer to the question put to him by the noble Earl, that he was the last person to question the power of their Lordships to make amendments to any Bill sent up to them by the House of Commons. But that House might reasonably object to amendments affecting rates or taxes as interfering with their privileges. In the present instance, however, it was not proposed to interfere with the amount of any rate, or with its disposition or management, but simply to omit the clause under discussion; and in his opinion this could not be objected to by the Commons, on the ground of privilege, as it related to a subject separate from the main object of the Bill, and it was quite as competent for their lordships to reject this clause as to reject a money Bill, which they could not amend without infringing the privileges of the other House of Parliament."

The question was, whether the amendment now under consideration came within that exception, and he was disposed, after considering the matter very fully, to think that it did. It did not interfere with the amount of the rate or tax paid by the people, nor with the amount of the endowment paid out of consolidated revenue. It might be said that it affected both in a roundabout way; that if no money was paid for kangaroos or wallaroos, there would be more money in the hands of the boards, which would thereby be enabled to levy a smaller rate, on which would be paid a smaller endowment. But that was so circuitous a way of arriving at an interference with taxation, that he did not think they ought to insist upon their privileges on a point like that. In a certain sense it did affect the appropriation, but on the whole he thought that clause was separable from the rest of the Bill. The Council, while agreeing to continue the law, objected to the alteration which the clause made in it. The question being on the border-line, and the point being one hardly worth arguing, he thought it would not be worth while to take that objection to the Legislative Council's amendment.

Mr. KATES said he did not happen to be in the House when clause 2 was adopted, or he should certainly have opposed it. It would make the law partial in its operation, and the people in one district might have to pay the tax, while in the very next division they might not.

Mr. FOOTE said he thought clause 2 of the Bill a very good one, inasmuch as some districts were infested with marsupials while others were not. Those who wished to destroy the pest would take advantage of the Act, while those districts in which marsupials did not exist in any number would not be taxed for a useless purpose, whereas in other districts a very small rate might be quite sufficient. He thought the amendment inserted in the Bill, with the full consent of the House, by the hon. member for Carnarvon, was a very good amendment, and he should be disposed to press this matter to a point as to whether the House should agree with the Council's amendment or not. For his part, he was disposed to disagree with the Council's amendment, and if it went to a division he should support the clause.

Mr. FOXTON said he had scarcely thought it necessary to dwell at any great length on the merits of the clause, because it had been unanimously adopted—there not being even a dissentient voice against it. He believed it was

admitted by those who knew most about it to be a valuable clause, because it relieved the boards from a burden which they had to bear, inasmuch as it would enable them to get the larger marsupials killed without giving to the scalp-hunter the minimum amount allowed by the schedule in the Marsupials Destruction Act. He understood that there was a further very strong argument in favour of the clause. He had been informed by the Chief Secretary that the Stock Conference in Sydney had actually, since the clause had been sent up to the other House, passed a resolution that it was inadvisable to continue to pay sums by way of bonus for scalps, because the skins of marsupials had become so valuable. Nothing could be stronger. These were men who collectively might be said to know as much about the matter as any set of men in the whole of the colonies, and that, as he understood, was the opinion which they held. In regard to the other question, this might be upon the border line—that debatable land as to where the right of the Council to make amendments came in—but he did not think that the instance quoted by the Chief Secretary was a happy one; because Lord Eversley, speaking in that debate in the course of the speech quoted from, said:—

"In the present instance, however, it was not proposed to interfere with the amount of any rate or with its disposition or management."

That was just what the Council did propose in this case. They proposed to interfere with the disposition and management of the rate. It was not part of the revenue—he did not say that—but part of the rate levied on the people under the Marsupials Destruction Act. They proposed to interfere with its disposition, if not with its management. Lord Eversley went on:—

"but simply to omit the clause under discussion; and in his opinion this omission could not be objected to by the Commons on the ground of privilege, as it related to a subject separate from the main object of the Bill."

He asked any hon. gentleman whether this amendment related to that which was separate from the main object of the Bill? The main object of the Bill was to continue the Marsupials Destruction Act for twelve months. That was practically the re-enactment of the Marsupials Destruction Act for twelve months just as though the whole Bill had been re-enacted, or as though it were introduced as a new Bill, with this addition proposed. That did not appear to him to be—to use Lord Eversley's own words—"a subject separate from the main object of the Bill." The main object of the Bill, as it left that House, was to continue the Marsupials Destruction Act for twelve months with this amendment, and so far as the Council was concerned that addition was part of the Bill. The Council proposed to throw it out, and as regarded the argument that it was a subject separate from the main object of the Bill, it was the biggest part of the Bill. He thought that, all things considered, the House should insist on its right to deal with money Bills, and not allow its privileges to be infringed upon, notwithstanding what fell from the Chief Secretary. Everyone must acknowledge, going back to the merits of the clause, that it certainly could do no harm. Of course, that was a weak argument to use in its favour; but the arguments of those who proposed to reject it were to the effect that it would do harm by allowing the boards to kill no marsupials in their own district, while their neighbours were killing them in theirs. But surely they had already a considerable amount of discretion in that respect. They could adopt the minimum or maximum rate for scalps; but this amendment was to enable them to relieve themselves of a burden which, however, the other House proposed to insist on their bearing.

Mr. MURPHY said that so far as the question of privilege was concerned the hon. member for Carnarvon had got very much the best of the argument, and so far as the clause was concerned he thought the amendment that had been inserted by the hon. member for Carnarvon was a very good one. As an inhabitant of one of the districts to which the Bill applied, and as a stockowner—and he believed he spoke for most other stockowners—he thought the amendment was a very useful one, and well worth insisting on, even if the question of privilege were out of the case altogether. The Chief Secretary did not appear to desire to make any quarrel on the matter with the Council. No more did he; but he thought the clause itself was well worth insisting upon, and for that reason they should disagree with the amendment of the Upper House.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he agreed with the hon. member for Carnarvon both on the question of privilege and on the question of the utility of the clause, and if he pressed the matter to a division he should certainly vote with him.

Question put and negatived.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY, in moving that the Chairman leave the chair and report to the House that the Committee did not agree with the amendment of the Legislative Council, said that in moving that the Committee should agree with the amendment of the Council he did so with the understanding that the majority of the Committee were in favour of the amendment of the Upper House being accepted.

The House resumed; the CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee did not agree with the amendment of the Legislative Council, and the Bill was ordered to be returned with the following message:—

Because in any case the minimum bonus now fixed by the Bill for the destruction of kangaroos and wallaroos is found to be unnecessarily large, and in other cases it is no longer necessary to offer bonuses for their destruction.

OYSTER BILL.

SECOND READING.

The COLONIAL TREASURER (Hon. J. R. Dickson) said: Mr. Speaker,—It is now twelve years since the Act of 1874 was passed for the protection and encouragement of the oyster fisheries of this colony, and although the principles of that Act have proved satisfactory in regard to the protection and encouragement of those fisheries during the interval that has elapsed, larger experience has brought to light the practical defects that have existed in the carrying out of that Act, and necessitated a revision of the present system under which oyster leases and licenses are held. It is with a view of remedying those defects that legislation is now invited upon the subject. The legislation in 1874 was to a certain extent of a tentative character—to provide that oyster-beds should be successfully cultivated and profitably worked; and although that Act has proved a very beneficial measure, yet in some respects it has been shown that it has not been entirely equal to the requirements of oyster fisheries as they now exist in this colony. I may say that a considerable portion of the present Act is incorporated in the new Bill. It has been deemed advisable so to do rather than to have two measures, one amending the other, in the hands of men who require almost to read as they run, and to have an accurate knowledge of the existing law upon the subject in their possession, without any unnecessary mystification. Therefore it has been deemed advisable that the present Bill should not only introduce amended clauses, but also re-enact those clauses of the present Act which are found satisfactory.

One of the chief defects in the present law, Mr. Speaker, was the tenure of the leases, which was too short to induce profitable cultivation. At the time the Act of 1874 was passed the opinion was held that seven years would be amply sufficient for the purpose, and an experiment was sought to be introduced under that Act, by which the Governor in Council could, at the expiration of the fourth year of the lease, subdivide the lease into two equal portions, submitting one moiety for a further period of seven years. But it has been found that in practical operation this provision was unnecessary, in fact unworkable, and the power has never been exercised. Moreover, it has been found that seven years of itself was too short a term, because the oyster requires at least three years to mature, and therefore, if the lease insists upon the condition that cultivation shall be a *sine quâ non*, the leaseholder will really only possess a profitable holding about the time his lease expires by effluxion of time. The present Bill provides that the lease shall be for fourteen years. Another defect which arose in the management, or, rather, administration of the oyster fisheries was in regard to determining what were "oysters for sale." Under the old Act there was a difficulty attached to the interpretation of these words, and, in prosecuting any person for removing oysters otherwise than for sale, the onus was thrown upon the department to successfully prove that the oysters were not for sale. The boats engaged in the oyster fishery required to be watched from their working places into town, and the further disposition of the oysters traced. There were one or two cases brought forward in the police court, with a view to enforce penalties for the removal of oysters for the purposes of exportation ; but those prosecutions fell through owing to some technical fault in the Act at present in existence. However, that weakness or imperfection in the Act has engaged the attention of the authorities, and in the present measure the term "oysters for sale" is introduced into the interpretation clause, and the onus of proof that they are not for sale is thrown upon the parties accused. The third difficulty arose in connection with the boundaries of leases and licenses for bank purposes. The grounds now held under leases extended to two feet below low-water mark. What are called "bank oyster" grounds extend from the shore down to two feet below low-water mark, and I would remind hon. members that the line of demarcation is so uncertain and defective, by reason of the tides, that constant disputes arise as to what portion of the ground is held under lease, and what portion under license. That is sought to be prevented by granting all leases for the future up to high-water mark, and there will be no further cause for contention between those who hold leases and those who hold licenses. There is a further provision in the new Act for persons who discover oyster-beds. They will obtain leases without competition, as a sort of compensation for prospecting—a privilege which has been denied to them up to the present time, and of which they complain, not altogether without grounds, inasmuch as any oysterman or fisherman discovering a new bed does not receive a reward or partake of a reward for his discovery. The bed is put up at auction, and he stands in the same category as a bidder who has not discovered it ; therefore it has been deemed desirable by the department that, as a reward for prospecting along the shores of our bays, the man who discovers an oyster-bed should have the first lease for five years at a moderate rental. Again, the present Bill requires every person, whether engaged in deep oyster-fishing—dredging—or bank oyster-collecting, to hold a license, so that they may be amenable to the authorities, and in case any breach of the law is committed they shall be liable to have their licenses cancelled or suspended. It is also deemed advisable that all boats engaged in this industry shall be marked in a uniform manner. At the present time boats engaged in dredge-fishing are marked in one way, and those engaged as depôts for oysters collected on banks are differently marked. The principal amendments will be found in the following clauses of the Bill :—First of all, in the interpretation clause, hon. members will observe that the term "for sale" includes the purposes of sale and cultivation, and "oyster culture" means the cultivation of oysters and the taking of oysters for sale from the land in question. Clause 4 refers to what I have already stated as to the carrying of leases of dredge oyster-grounds up to high-water mark. The 5th clause, dealing with the term of leases, provides that they shall extend for fourteen years from the time they are put up for sale. There is a new proviso to the clause to this effect :—

"Provided always that any new oyster-ground may be leased for a term of five years to the person finding the same, without the lease being put up to public auction, and such lessee shall pay such annual rent, being not less than five pounds per annum, as may be fixed by the Governor in Council, but otherwise the lease shall be subject to the same conditions as a lease put up to public auction."

No. 10 is a new clause, and a very important provision ; it states :—

"Every licensee holding bank oyster-ground shall cultivate oysters thereon by placing suitable material or apparatus for the catchment of spat, and if any licensee neglects to cultivate oysters thereon as aforesaid, or strips all the oysters off his bank oyster-ground, his license may be cancelled by the board."

There is then a provision in clause 11 which carries out the intention of the Bill with regard to oysters for sale, to the effect that—

"Provided that, in case any question arises as to whether oysters so taken are intended for sale, the burden of proof that they are not so intended shall lie upon the person in whose possession the oysters are found."

The 12th is also a very important clause prohibiting the destruction or removal of small oysters. I may say that at the present time there is no adequate check upon the removal of small oysters from oyster-grounds, and consequently several of those grounds are now depreciating. The clause states :—

"Any person who removes, except for purposes of cultivation only within the colony, or sells or exposes for sale, oysters the shells of which are less in length than two inches, shall forfeit and pay the sum of ten shillings for every dozen of such oysters so found in his possession, and every bag or other package or receptacle containing oysters, and every heap or other collection of oysters, in which any such oysters are found, shall be forfeited.

"And every officer of police, inspector, or officer authorised by the board is hereby empowered to examine any oysters collected, obtained, carried away, or exposed for sale."

Then again, in the 13th clause, which is also a new clause, provision is made for the marking of the bags, so that those engaged in the industry may be at once known, and if they have removed any oysters unfit for sale or smaller than the specified size they shall at once become amenable to the penal clauses of the Act. The 22nd clause prohibits any person who does not hold a lease or license from carrying any dredge plant or other implement for lifting oysters, under a penalty of not less than £20, and the dredge or other implement may be forfeited. The Bill has been very carefully considered by the department, and copies of it have been furnished to all engaged in the industry throughout the colony. We have received opinions from Wide Bay, Moreton Bay, and other parts of the colony as to the practical effect of the Bill, and all concur in expressing the opinion that the Bill is

a very great improvement on the present Act. Certain suggestions have been received which are not included in this Bill, but upon which I intend to have the advice of the Port Office authorities before the Bill goes through the committee. These suggestions are made by a person who conducts oyster-fishing on a large scale in Wide Bay, and I have promised to give attention to them and shall do so before the Bill goes into committee, when they will be dealt with on their merits. Hon. gentlemen will agree with me that it is desirable to protect and encourage our oyster fisheries by every legitimate means. The industry has now attained very considerable dimensions, and if the cultivation of oysters is properly carried out, the position the industry has attained at the present time will be largely exceeded in the early future. At the present time there are forty-one leases, producing an annual revenue of £1,049 10s.; 271 bank licenses, producing an annual revenue of £1,355; twenty-three boat licenses and sixty-seven working licenses, producing jointly £61; or a total revenue from leases and licenses of £2,465. All these leases have been taken up under the Act of 1874. Many people who are desirous to see oysters protected in this colony have advocated the impost of an export duty. Such a tax, I may say, would to my mind greatly embarrass those engaged in the industry. I have had an opportunity of learning the opinions of a very large section of those engaged in the industry, and their opinion is that such a duty would be a very great hardship indeed. Hon. gentlemen who may feel inclined to impose such a duty should remember that it will fall upon those engaged in the industry. At the present time I think it is well to endeavour to encourage the industry and not to unduly oppress those who have embarked a considerable amount of capital in it. They will, no doubt, continue to expend capital in its development, and I am therefore not disposed to oppress them in this manner. If hon. gentlemen will give attention to the Bill before them they will find that all that is necessary at the present time will be effected by such a measure. The measure is held by the oyster-fishers themselves to be a very great relief to them and a great encouragement to the expenditure of capital in the industry. I beg to move that the Bill be now read a second time.

Mr. CHUBB said: Mr. Speaker,—This is a subject upon which hon. members, I suppose, do not know very much technically, but I think we may accept the Bill as a great improvement upon the existing law. I have gone very carefully through it, and compared it with the law now in force, and I have observed that a great portion of the old Act—in fact, all that is good in it—has been embodied in this Bill, with some new clauses which appear to me of great importance and necessity. There are two things that may perhaps be referred to in connection with this matter; they do not affect the Bill, but they affect the subject dealt with in the Bill. It is a well-known fact that for some years past the oysters, at any rate those brought to Brisbane, have got smaller in size and worse in quality. Why that is I do not know, but such is the fact, and I believe it is considered by many persons who do possess a knowledge of the subject, that it is because the natural enemies of the oyster are so numerous in Moreton Bay as to render oyster culture a matter of great difficulty. In fact, I think there is, in the report of Captain Fison, reference made to a Mr. Ching—I am not sure whether I have got the right name or not—who was compelled to abandon the cultivation of oysters because he found that the whelk-tingle and other natural enemies of the oyster were so numerous that it was impossible to carry on the work successfully. This Bill, however, cannot deal with that matter; it only gives those engaged in the oyster trade greater facilities for carrying on their business successfully. The Colonial Treasurer referred to the question of an export duty on oysters. I intended to refer to that subject myself. The same difficulty struck me as that mentioned by the hon. gentleman; but, without wishing to appear selfish, it does appear very hard lines that the best of our oysters should be exported to the southern colonies, which is the case at the present time. A short time ago there were between thirty and fifty bags sent away from Wide Bay in one steamer to the South, and I believe the attention of the Government was directed to the fact that many of those oysters were under the size provided for in this Bill. I do not know how we can deal with that part of the question; it is a matter of supply and demand, and if people will pay more for their oysters than they do now, they will stand a chance of getting a better quality. However, it is the case that our best oysters are taken away to the southern colonies. I think the penal clauses and the provisions relating to the examination of oysters by inspectors will be found very useful. There is one thing that ought to be abolished, and that is the power given to the Government by the present law to subdivide a lease at the end of the fourth year. I do not know whether that has been acted upon hitherto.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: It has not.

Mr. CHUBB: Such a provision is hardly likely to encourage the formation and improvement of oyster-beds, which the preamble of the Act says it is expedient to do. The present law provides that in the middle of the term of a lease the Government may cut up the lease and sell it to the highest bidder, putting the unfortunate lessee, after all his trouble, to the necessity of competing with a new comer for the possession of half of his lease. That seems to be a curious way of encouraging the cultivation of oysters, and I am very glad to see that it is proposed to abolish it in this Bill, and also to extend the term of the lease to fourteen years. I hope that under this Bill those persons who are engaged in this business will be able to make it more profitable than it has been in the past, and that those persons not engaged in the cultivation of oysters, but who indulge in the luxury of oysters, may also have an opportunity of benefiting by their improved style of business.

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

The committal of the Bill was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

CROWN LANDS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING.

On the Order of the day being read for the resumption of adjourned debate on Mr. Dutton's motion—"That the Bill be now read a second time"—

Mr. BROWN said: Mr. Speaker,—I need not say that I intend to support the second reading of the Bill before the House, although I feel somewhat disappointed with the amendments suggested, particularly in respect to the amendments to aid and assist the pastoral lessees. It has been said, both inside and outside the House, that the best amendment would be to do away with the principal Act altogether. But I do not go so far as that. I think it is a great improvement on previous laws. I know I am not considered quite orthodox in my views on the land question, but I contend,

and always will contend, that the policy of leasing lands is financially sound. If we look back at the history of the colony we will find that for the last twenty years we have borrowed money in Great Britain to spend here on unproductive works, and at the same time we have been selling our lands at a very rapid rate and treating the proceeds as revenue. I should not object to the sale of land if the proceeds of the sales were treated as capital, but to treat them as revenue and go to England to borrow for unproductive public works seems to me financially unsound. I think that one of the best arguments for retaining the lands in the hands of the Crown is this—that the railways of this colony are being constructed by the State, and as long as the railways have to be constructed by the State it is quite reasonable that the State should retain the control of Crown lands until the railways have been constructed. The effect of alienating our lands has been this: that land has been sold in every direction, and, after we have alienated a large quantity in any particular district, we have found that considerable pressure is brought to bear upon the Government to expend a large sum of money on the construction of a railway in that district. It is quite immaterial whether the railway will pay or not, and, as a matter of fact, many of our railways do not pay; but such pressure is brought to bear upon the Government that they have to yield and construct those railways. In many instances we have seen that had the sale of land been delayed until after the construction of the railways the result would have been that the value of the land would have been greatly enhanced, and that increased value would have been secured to the State instead of being obtained by private individuals. Look at any of the seaport towns of the colony. There we find that when there has been an expenditure of Government money upon public works, either on railways, or bridges, or roads, or anything else, the enhanced value of the land has been considerable. Take Townsville as an illustration. The land on Ross Island was sold for very small sums of money. After the greater portion was sold the Government continued the railway through the land and have undertaken to build an elaborate bridge across Ross Creek. Of course, that considerably enhanced the value of the land, but it has already passed out of the hands of the State. I think, if we look at all these things, hon. members will admit that it is desirable for the State to retain control of the Crown lands until they have built their railways. Now, look at some of the railways that are being constructed out of Brisbane—the railway to Beaudesert, for instance. It is a very desirable line, but almost the whole of the land in that district has been alienated. I do not suppose any hon. member will contend that that railway will be a profitable one; but if the land were in possession of the State, the loss on the railway would be nothing in comparison with the profit the State would derive from the enhanced value of the land; and that would apply to many places in Queensland. I think, therefore, that the policy of the Government in proposing to lease their lands instead of selling them is financially a sound one. Many hon. members will be found to advocate wholesale alienation; they say the correct policy is to sell the lands of the colony, get rid of them, and let the people do what they like with them. That, no doubt, is a very correct policy from an administrator's point of view, but it would not be a good thing for the community. It would be a capital thing for the Government; it would do away with a lot of the costly machinery connected with the administration of the land; the Treasury would be overflowing with money, and we know that money would be treated as income. Look through the history of the Australian colonies. All the money received from the Crown lands has been treated as income, and it has had a very unsettling effect on the policy of the different colonies. At one time a colony has an enormous surplus—they call it surplus revenue, but it is really capital; in favourable years hundreds of thousands of pounds flow in from the sale of land, and it is treated as income. I say that policy is financially unsound. I think, then, we must admit that there can be no great harm in the State retaining the control of these lands; and another thing must be taken into consideration, which has not always been pointed out by those who are opposed to the principle of leasing. We have the lands still; we can sell them when we like. So that if we are getting returns in the shape of rent, and still keeping the land, I maintain we are doing very much better than we did before. It has been stated, of course, that this Act has been responsible for the great falling-off in the revenue. Now, that I cannot admit. It was a great innovation on the existing law, and it was introduced at an unfortunate time, during a period of depression, but the causes which have led to its not being successful are these: First of all, the drought. We know that was enough to deter selectors from taking up land, particularly the class we wanted to encourage—those who were expected to take up grazing farms. Naturally when they saw the pastoral lessee suffering so severely, they could see it would be perfectly impossible for them to hope to succeed on grazing farms. Another cause was the absence of any machinery in the Bill to enable the Government to lease town lands. Now, that is a thing which should have been done at the very first. People talk about sentiment, and the desire to own land, but nobody pretends that there is any great sentiment about the possession of a town allotment. Almost anybody that buys a town allotment for business purposes or purposes of residence is quite willing to sell it when he can get sufficient profit. The sentiment is connected more with small suburban and country lots, land that people desire as a home. The sentiment does apply to some extent there, and the Bill has provided for people acquiring small freeholds near the towns and in the country. Another cause for the want of success of the Bill was the great change in the matter of survey before selection. That was a very violent change, and after people had got accustomed to be allowed to select where they liked, it was not likely that the change would find favour in the colony. It is objectionable also, because a great deal of money is spent in surveying land that will not be selected. Perhaps out of 200 blocks of land surveyed in any particular district only fifty may be taken up. It would be far better to let the people take the lands and survey them themselves—of course under Government supervision. I do not mean to say, Mr. Speaker, that indiscriminate selection all over the colony is a good thing; quite the reverse. I think selection should be confined to certain areas, because if you allow people to spread themselves out over a large colony the cost of government is very much increased, and there is a demand for railways in every direction. I think people should be encouraged to select in communities as far as possible. I think this amended Bill, so far as it allows selection before survey, is an improvement on the existing law. I think also that the concession the Government have made to selectors on grazing and agricultural farms is well intended; but I do not like it, because it is a departure from the principle the Government laid down when they introduced their land policy. That principle was leasing, but in the Bill

before us it is provided that the rent paid during the ten years of tenancy shall be treated as part payment. Of course, that simply means that we shall get so much less for the land. It would have been very much better if the Government, even in this trifling matter, had adhered to their principle and said they would reduce the ultimate purchase money by 5s. an acre, because I do not suppose the amount paid will ever exceed 6d. an acre, and that for ten years amounts to 5s. Then instead of making the minimum amount at which selectors might buy 20s., they might have made it 15s., and so adhered to their principle. Another feature in the Bill is the sale by auction of blocks of forty acres. Well, there seems to be an impression that this might be availed of by the Government to supply the necessities of the Treasurer. I admit that it is necessary for the Government to have a power of this sort. Cases frequently arise in which people urgently require — and for the benefit of the colony require—to be able to buy small lots of land. A person wants to put up a sugar-mill in the centre of a farming district, or erect a boiling-down establishment, and it is absolutely necessary that he should acquire a small piece of freehold for the purpose. If the clause is fairly administered, and is only intended to meet cases of that sort, it is a very good one; but if the Treasurer is going to make use of it to fill up his exhausted coffers I think it may be a rather dangerous one. Now, Mr. Speaker, the discussion the other night on this Bill showed clearly that a certain class in the community—the pastoral lessees—had been clamouring for some amendment in the Act, and I contend that in this Bill there is no concession made to them whatever. First of all, there is no attempt to lengthen their leases. The Government say they will give a concession in the shape of rents—the board are not to increase the rent more than 50 per cent. upon the existing rate. That is no concession. I contend that the board would never have dared to put 50 per cent. on those high rents, but when they see this in the Bill they will very likely do it. They will say, "If the pastoral tenants are prepared to accept 50 per cent. we will put it on." That is the way I look at it. I contend that there is absolutely no concession to the pastoral tenants. We may say it is a concession to allow them for the improvements on the resumed portion of their runs that they are to lease; but I do not think that is much of a concession. At any rate it was a very necessary one, for men could not be expected to take up these blocks of land unless they could get some compensation for improvements they may have to make. I ask hon. members whether the pastoral tenants have not made out any case for a better tenure? Why do they ask for this increased tenure? Has the country outside supported them in their application? Do we not know that a large number of petitions have been received by the House on this very subject; that public meetings have been held upon it all over the colony; that deputations have waited upon the Minister for Lands to ask for better terms for these pastoral tenants? I think they have made out a very good case indeed. For whom are we, in this House, legislating? Are we legislating for people whom we are going to bring into the colony at some future time, or for the people who are here now? Surely we should consider this important industry that we are really all living on. It is the backbone of the colony, this pastoral industry; and surely we are going to foster it! Can any hon. member tell me what these pastoral tenants have lost during the past two or three years? I do not believe anyone can, and hon. members will perhaps be rather astonished if I tell them. I say that the pastoral tenants, through the fall in wool, through the loss of stock, and loss of increase, and loss of wool on that increase, have lost £6,000,000 during the last two years and a-half.

Mr. WALLACE: More than that.

Mr. BROWN: I am moderate, and put down the loss at £6,000,000. Surely this class which we are all living on, who are carrying on the one great industry on which the whole colony is dependent, surely they have a right to say, "We have lost £6,000,000 at a time when the Government are depriving us of a portion of our runs, and increasing our rents in some cases fourfold, and we come to the House and ask for relief." Have they got that relief? I say they have not, and that they must have it if we want to restore prosperity to this colony. We see lots of legislation in the direction of introducing people into the colony from Europe. What we really ought to do is to build up the producing interests of the country. The sugar-planters have lost a million of money during the last three or four years from the fall in the price of sugar, and the pastoral tenants six millions. These are the people to whom we should hold out a helping hand. It is proposed to issue land-orders to bring people into the country. What is the use of bringing them here unless they have something to do? I am not going to oppose the proposition, which emanated in the first instance from the hon. member for South Brisbane, although I reserved the right to do so if I thought proper. The hon. member, I know, means well, and if the provision is worked in its present form it will do no harm. But if we want to bring back prosperity it will not be by bringing people from Great Britain. We must make the lot of the people here better, and put our producing industries into such a condition that the people engaged in those industries can make money out of them. If you make the colony attractive you will not want to bring people here. You will not be able to keep them away. If I wanted to amend the condition of things from an agricultural point of view, I should not offer land-orders. I should push on that Herberton railway, where there are thousands of acres of good land. I should offer a premium to the first men who put up a flour-mill there and turned out 100 tons of flour. I should open up the rich agricultural district between Townsville and Ingham, putting it in communication with Townsville and Charters Towers. What is the use of our having good land if people are prevented from settling upon it on account of the impossibility of getting their goods to market? Some hon. members may say, "You have got water carriage." So they have, but I was informed only the other day that it cost 28s. a ton to get the produce down the Herbert River, and that it had then to be taken by steamer to Townsville and thence by rail to Charters Towers. It is not want of people. The people will flock into the colony quite fast enough if you make it attractive for them. Look at the increase in North Queensland during the last four or five years. It did not require any great exertions on our part to bring people there: if we offer attractions we can bring people there quite as fast as we want them. We are legislating in a wrong direction. Let us build up the industries we have in the colony, and then we shall have no trouble about either population or revenue. It is absolutely necessary that these pastoral tenants should have some relief. It is the principal interest in the colony, and it should be relieved first of all. I heard of a case the other day where a pastoral tenant took up dry country, or comparatively dry country, at 10s. per square mile——

Mr. DONALDSON: Five shillings it was.

Mr. BROWN: At 5s. per square mile, and after he had spent £30 or £40 per square mile to make the country productive, he suddenly found his rent increased under the new Act to 10s. per square mile; while one of his neighbours, whose run has natural water, and who had not to go to a great outlay to procure it, is assessed at the same rent. And the Land Board may clap on 20s. at the end of five years, and 30s. five years later. That would be an enormous rent, which these men cannot possibly stand. If we are to be prosperous we must make them prosperous. With the Bill generally I agree, and intend to vote for its second reading, but I shall strive very hard to get some amendments introduced into it in committee.

Mr. CAMPBELL said: Mr. Speaker,—I think most hon. members will agree with me when I say that the Land Act of 1884 has been thus far almost a failure. It has been a failure financially up to this, and if something is not done to amend it, I believe it will continue to be a failure. It has been a thorough failure so far as the fourth part of it is concerned—that relating to agricultural farms. That is the part that the Colonial Treasurer, at least, expected to receive a very large revenue indeed from. Thus far there has been a large expenditure in surveys, and no one has come forward to take up the farms. There must be some fault somewhere.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: The drought.

Mr. CAMPBELL: No doubt the drought had something to do with it, but the drought has so far broken up that if there was not something wrong somebody would have come forward by this time to take some of the farms up. I am rather surprised that hon. members, particularly those interested in pastoral pursuits, did not touch more generally upon the Bill. With the exception of the hon. member for Warrego, they confined themselves entirely to the pastoral lessees. I may tell you, sir, that I am in sympathy with them in that particular; still I think it would have been better if they had taken a broader view than they did. I am also in sympathy with the provisions for encouraging immigrants to pay their own passage from the old country on condition that they receive grants of 160 acres of land on their arrival; and I am sure that it must be gratifying to the hon. member for South Brisbane, Mr. Jordan, that the Minister for Lands has introduced it into this amending Bill. I think there is good in all the amendments, but I do not think they are liberal enough. They might have gone further with reference to the proposal to sell blocks of forty acres of land; that, I think the Government must admit, has somewhat undermined the principle of the Act. But so far as I am concerned, I am rather pleased that they have done so, and I am disposed to encourage them to increase that area to 640 acres, for there are many indeed who are most anxious to purchase land in this colony. I think we are coming to find out that the leasing principle is not acceptable to the people——

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. CAMPBELL: For I know that if I wanted to settle on the land to-morrow I would not like to go into a district and become a lessee under the Government when I found all my neighbours held their land in freehold. I should feel uncomfortable; and I think the wives of those people who take up land believe in the freehold principle. I know that every woman whose husband takes up land has a strong desire to get that piece of parchment given to them at the end of the term. I think that for revenue purposes it would be a very good thing. I am sure it would be pleasing to the Treasurer, fo we may all expect next year that the Treasurer will be compelled to come down to the House again for fresh taxation, and that is a most undesirable thing. I think this House should give power to the Government to sell land up to 640-acre blocks, but not to exceed perhaps from £150,000 to £200,000 a year for revenue purposes. I think in these hard times that would relieve the country very much indeed. Now we come to the agricultural farms, and I think that although the Government have made some concessions there they might have fairly gone further. The price of the land is too high; the rent is too high. In some instances the rental charged now for agricultural farms is up to 9d., 1s., and in some cases as high as 1s. 6d. per acre, I believe. We remember that in days gone by we could go and select land in the very best districts of the colony for 10s. per acre on deferred payments. But now, since this new Act has come out, the minimum price is £1 per acre, and the minimum rental 3d.—and goodness knows what the maximum may be. I know that the maximum in some cases is £3 and £4 per acre capital value. I may tell you that in the district I have the honour to represent, you can go to-day and buy any farm—improved, fenced, with a house upon it, and perhaps 20 or 30 acres of land under cultivation, for less money than the Government are asking to-day for bush land. That is no encouragement for people to settle on the land; none whatever. I think it would only be common justice if the Government reduced the price of land to at least 10s. an acre with deferred payments. As they have broken into the principle of the Act they may as well go further. That is my opinion. I omitted to speak of the homestead man. The Government have made some little concession to him in the shape of survey fees, but it is so small that it is not really worth talking about. I think the time has arrived when the area of homesteads should be extended from 160 acres to 320 acres. I do not mean to say that they should get the extra 160 acres at 2s. 6d. an acre, but they might fairly get them at 5s. an acre, payment extending over a period of ten years at a rental of 6d. per acre. That is a concession that might fairly be given, and for this reason: The whole of the best of the agricultural lands in the southern part of Queensland—and, I believe, I may say in Northern Queensland as well, but particularly in Southern Queensland—have been taken up. Any that is in close proximity to market or to railway communication is all in the hands of private individuals. Those who take up land in future must go further afield. They have not the choice which the early settlers had. Consequently they are at a disadvantage, and it would tend to encourage them in pursuits that very few at the present day enter upon—that is, dairy-farming, bacon-raising, and so forth. For these commodities we have to pay very largely indeed to the other colonies. I believe £60,000 to £70,000 a year is sent out of the colony for that kind of produce. I think it would be wise, now that we are amending the Bill, to make it as perfect as we can, and we might do so by extending the area of homesteads. To come to the pastoral tenants, I tell you, as I did before, that I sympathise with them, for I know what they are suffering and what they have suffered through a long drought extending over four years—I suppose such a drought as has never been felt in Queensland before; and combined with that was the depressed wool market, by which I am quite sure many of them are all but ruined. There is no hon. gentleman connected with the colony but will admit I am right when I say that two-thirds of the pastoral lessees of the colony are to-day brought almost to the brink of

ruin. It is too well known unfortunately for them, and I think it is time we took their case into consideration, and gave them an extension of their leases, which I believe would be a benefit to them. It would be a benefit to them in this way: the capitalists of the old country would look at their position. It would not be so much a benefit as it may seem, but they would be able to go on to the home market with more confidence when their leases were for twenty-one years than they could with fifteen years' leases—and two years of that expired. But I am not prepared to grant an extension of the lease as asked for by some hon. members on the other side of the House. I think there should be a reservation clause—not that I think that it will ever be required. But I think the Government should reserve the right, if they extend the leases, to insert a clause that at the expiration of fifteen years they would be able to resume a fourth of the holding. That would, I am sure, meet the case. I do not believe for one moment that the land will be required, when you remember that there are 100,000,000 acres of land resumed; and when you remember that there is no one coming forward to take it up, I think that you may fairly concede to them what they ask. I do not endorse the amendments which the hon. member for Cook put forth the other night. I think it would have been better for him and those whom he represents had he confined himself more to the amendment of the Land Bill, and had not introduced the small amendments at the latter part of his speech. I do not think that they will be accepted by this House. I know that I will not accept them. Although I am in sympathy with the hon. member in what he is seeking for, I certainly will not accept these amendments. We must all admit, and I do not think anyone will dare to deny, either inside or outside of this House, that the pastoral industry of the colony to-day is an industry that all the others combined are not equal to. I think I am right in saying that nobody will dispute that all the other industries in the colony are not equal to the pastoral industry, nor will they be for a considerable time yet. For at least forty years I consider that that will continue to be the leading industry of the colony. I sincerely hope that the House will consider—that hon. members will shake off, as it were, the feeling that I know does exist amongst certain members of the community, representatives of town constituencies, and sometimes of farming constituencies, against the pastoral tenants. I hope they will lose sight of all that, and consider the greatness of the industry itself—consider what these pastoral tenants—the lessees under the Government—have suffered during the last seven or eight years. This depression has existed over seven or eight years, although the drought has only lasted four years; but the climax came last year when the staple product of the colony was reduced to lower than it had been for the last seventy years. Look at the third series of last year's sales! They were at a lower rate than they had been during the last seventy years.

Mr. DONALDSON: Sixty-eight.

Mr. CAMPBELL: I think it is certainly our duty to grant all the concessions we can to assist them to pull up to what they were before this disaster came upon them.

Mr. JESSOP said: Mr. Speaker,—I listened with a very greal deal of pleasure to the speech made by the hon. member for Aubigny. I think he has made some remarks that ought to be taken notice of by the House when it goes into committee on this Bill. He has given some advice which I am sure will be of great use, and offered suggestions which, if followed out, will benefit the colony. I am not going to say much, because this Bill has been discussed so much by abler and better men than myself, and if I were to say what I really intended to say, in the first place, I should only be reiterating the statements already made by hon. members. I do not think it is necessary that I should go into the Act of 1884. That has been so fully gone into that I do not think that I need express my opinion upon it. I will mention two or three items in the present Bill, and refer to two or three clauses, some of which I agree with and some of which I do not agree with. The first one I refer to is clause 3, which refers to the extension of the time for coming under the principal Act. I think that is a very wise provision—that the clause is a very good one—and I hope it will be accepted by the Committee when the time comes. Clause 4, I think, is a very good one; it provides for the modification of the provisions relating to the division of runs. In clause 5—"Maximum rents for second and third periods"—I think the amount is too large; I do not agree with it. The maximum, if carried out, and no doubt it will be carried out in a good many instances—50 per cent. added—will be so high a price that it will be impossible to pay it. Then, with reference to the 160 acres. I think that will be a very beneficial clause—some portions of it. In one thing, I imagine, it hardly goes far enough, as the hon. member for Aubigny has pointed out. I think farmers who selected under the Act of 1876, and whom circumstances have compelled to come under the Act of 1884, should also be allowed to reside by bailiff. Lots of people have had selections who lived in town—business men—and when they came under this Act they had to reside upon their selections. They either had to forfeit their land or leave their business. They had to go away, perhaps a long distance from the place where their families lived, and from where they could send their children to school. Consequently, either the business or the selection would come to grief. I would like to see some amendment to that clause brought forward. The clauses I have most objection to are in Part V. in reference to land-orders, and I would suggest to the Committee that that part of the Bill should be wiped out. I cannot see why the native-born part of the population should not have the same benefits as strangers. There are men who have been in the colony for twenty-five years or thirty years, who have worked hard, reared up families, borne all the toil and burden, and surely if any land is to be given away they should have it. Those people who pay their passages receive some land, and who receives the benefit of it? We do not. There is one thing I would call the attention of the Minister for Lands to, and that is the fact that a very small amount of land has been thrown open. Nearly every day when I am at home I am pressed by people asking me when land is to be thrown open in our district, and I cannot answer the question. I hope to see a great many amendments brought forward in committee, so that the Bill may be made more workable and complete.

Mr. KELLETT said: Mr. Speaker,—I am very pleased that the Government have thought fit to introduce an amendment to the Land Act of 1884. This is a small measure in itself, but I think it is better to take half-a-loaf than no bread, and whenever the Government have made an alteration they are moving in what I call the right direction. I hope the time will come before long when we will have some further amendments than are in this Bill. One hon. member on the other side said he thought this was the last amendment the Minister for Lands would bring in, but I hope it is not the last

amendment the present Minister for Lands will introduce. I think he is now getting to see the error of his ways to a certain extent, and to find out that what he at one time thought was an immaculate Bill is not so good as he thought it was in the first instance. For that reason I hope that, having carefully considered the matter in the meantime, the hon. gentleman will see very early that there are many more amendments which it is advisable should be brought in. It strikes me that I may liken the Minister for Lands to a man who has been married for a long time, and has been childless. The great wish of his life was to have an offspring, and after many years Providence was very good to him and granted him the great wish of his life. The offspring is granted to him after he has read all the books on the subject of rearing children and made it his study to know how he will bring up his offspring. After training his child up in the way he thought it should go, he finds his offspring turns out a very bad lot, and the unfortunate father is in a worse state than ever, and he thinks that the sooner he leaves this world the better. He takes a "cup of cold poison" or something of the kind to get away from it. The cup he takes is evidently very strong, but he rallies, and while on his bed of sickness it occurs to him that he has not gone the right way about teaching his child. The hon. gentleman has now come to that stage. His offspring has turned out badly, but to upset the work he has been engaged in for so long a time is like tooth extraction. Drawing a tooth is very painful, and the first tooth the Minister for Lands has extracted is the alteration with respect to the homestead leases. That is a small one, but we come to a very big tooth when we find in this Bill he has given up the leasing system and allowed the selectors' rents to be part payment of the principal. That is going back to the 1868 and 1876 Acts where each annual payment is regarded as part of the principal. I see in this Bill that it is proposed in one clause to allow rents paid to be part of the principal, but only in the case of lands on which the men are residing themselves. The hon. gentleman will not permit that where a bailiff is employed. He has not drawn that tooth yet. I hope he will permit that tooth to be extracted also, because I am satisfied it is for the advantage of the country that we should make it as easy as possible for men to settle on the land. We are told there is great distress about Brisbane, and I think that if people could more easily get on to the land than they can at present we would not have so many unemployed in Brisbane and other towns of the colony. I believe we should make it as simple as possible for men to get on to the land, with of course proper restrictions, so that the land may not be taken up in too large quantities. In the Bill before us those living on the land are allowed to have their annual payments considered as part of the principal, but I hold that others living in the towns—people who have sons growing up, and would like to obtain land for them, and begin improvements on it while their sons are getting some education, which is just as necessary for them if they go on the land as if they engage in other business—they should be able to get the land so that they might be able to send their sons out to it after they have received some education. They will be prevented entirely from that, simply because in these agricultural areas the land will be all gone by the time their sons are twenty-one years of age. I am perfectly satisfied from my knowledge of the people of this colony—and I have travelled through most of it—that this leasing system of agricultural lands will not suit, and the sooner the Minister and the Ministry make up their minds to that fact the better for them and for the country. What has brought most of the people out to this country has been the feeling that this was a country where they could obtain land for themselves, having lived in other countries where it was most difficult to get land of their own. Every facility should be given them to get land here in the easiest form possible and at the lowest possible rent. Whether the Minister for Lands will make a further amendment in that part of the Bill I do not know. I hope that as his good sense is getting the better of him now, he will allow us to amend the Bill in this respect. We might have three different kinds of land. One the homestead—one where we actually make a present of the land in small portions to those who will cultivate it; the second is the agricultural area where a man must live on the land, and his annual payments are regarded as part of the principal. The homestead area at 2s. 6d. an acre, the agricultural area at £1 an acre. There is no reason why a third form should not be introduced and allow people to get land in some shape or another without living on it, and it need not be in larger areas than the agricultural areas—that is, 1,280 acres. All men should be able to obtain such land by putting a bailiff on it if they cannot reside on it themselves. There was a great deal very fairly said on the other side on the question of pastoral lessees. It is not necessary for me to go over ground traversed before, but it is well known how many of them have suffered for some years, and it is a perfect wonder to me how a good many of them have managed to pull through as they have done. I hope now that, as the seasons have changed and as things are beginning to look much better, they will continue to improve their position. One of the first clauses in the Bill is with reference to alterations in the pastoral leases, and I think it is very advisable that the maximum of rent should be fixed for each term; I agree with the Bill in this part. I do not agree with some hon. members on the other side who have spoken, who seem to try to make out that the Act of 1884 was a very bad one for the squatters. I think the best lease the squatters ever had in Queensland is given by that Act. The opinion of the country when it was passed was that it was entirely a squatters' Act; that he was given such a good and indefeasible lease as no Government in Queensland had granted before, and it was generally considered inadvisable—nevertheless, it was granted. I myself did not think it was ill-advised to give them that lease, because I thought that what was taken away—over one-third and up to one-half—was as much as would be required for other purposes during the fifteen years. They got their fifteen years' lease for a certain portion, which was not to be touched during that time, and they also got paid for improvements on the resumed portion. The pastoralists were put in a better position than they ever were in before; but within the last couple of years especially we know the difficulties they have gone through, and I think the whole country would like to see them assisted in any possible way which would not be detrimental to the general public. I think the first alteration that would be advisable is in the valuations of the runs at the present time. In many instances they are increased from three to four fold. I do not think a great many of those men in the outside districts are in the position to pay that rent at the present time, and I am afraid that in consequence of this increase a number of runs may be thrown up. I think that in a time like this, in making these amendments we might advisedly say that the increase should not be greater for the present than 50 per cent. on the rent previously paid. I think that would be a great assistance to a

good many of them at the present time. I am also of opinion that the maximum rent fixed by this Bill for the second term is too high, and might very fairly be reduced from 50 to 25 per cent. I think we ought to encourage the pastoral tenants in every way, so long as we do nothing that will be against the settlement of other parts of the community. I am a great believer in making them improving tenants, not in trying to get out of them the last shilling of rent it is possible to get, but in encouraging them to improve their properties. The rent should be a secondary consideration. If they were not pressed too heavily by high rents they would do that; they would lay out considerable sums of money on their runs, and I think the reduction of the maximum increase of rent for the second term from 50 to 25 per cent. will fairly meet the exigencies of the present occasion. A remark fell from the hon. member for Aubigny with respect to the extension of the tenure, which I was very pleased to hear and which I consider a very sensible one. The objection the Government have, as I take it, from the speech of the Minister for Lands, to increasing the leases to twenty-one years is that we do not know, in a colony like this, in what direction settlement may suddenly spring up; otherwise I believe the Government would be perfectly satisfied to extend the leases to twenty-one years. But with our railways going through the country in every direction, and with the question of irrigation that is likely to crop up, there may be parts of the colony which are now thought of very little use for anything else than pastoral occupation that during the next fifteen years may be required by the people for other purposes, and there the difficulty of extending the leases comes in. At the present time there is not the slightest doubt that, no matter what party may be in power, at the end of fifteen years, if the land is not required for settlement, the lessee will have a renewal of his lease.

Mr. DONALDSON: Thank you for nothing.

Mr. KELLETT: At the same time the pastoral tenants say they want further security than that. I alluded just now to a proposition of the hon. member for Aubigny, which I consider a very sensible one, and one that will meet the emergency; and that is, that the Government should grant the lessee a twenty-one years' lease, with the condition that, if at the end of fifteen years any portion of his land is required for settlement, one-fourth of it should be resumed. I think that is a very reasonable proposition, and one that cannot damage any interest in the community. I myself was against the twenty-one years' lease as at first proposed, simply for the reason that we do not know where settlement may come. But if a lease is granted for twenty-one years, and the right is reserved to the people to take away one-fourth of the run at the end of the fifteen years, I think that will be a very fair arrangement. That, with the reduction in the maximum rental which I have suggested, would put the pastoral tenant in a very fair position. The right is also given to the lessee to be paid for his improvements on the resumed portion of his run, and that provision, I think, is a very good one indeed, because it will be to their interest to put improvements on their lands which they would not make under other circumstances. I am satisfied that it would benefit the country to make it as easy as possible for men to acquire small portions of land in agricultural areas. The Government in their wisdom have thought it advisable to make a concession in one direction, and I think they might extend it further. If they had travelled about the country as much as I have done and met the selectors they would be in a better position to know what are their opinions on the present land law. The leasing system they do not understand. One man said to me, "I have taken up this land for a long term. I see that they have taken away the squatters' leases; they may do the same thing with us." The consequence is that these men who take up agricultural farms will not make any improvements on them. They will just use them as grazing areas from year to year, and do nothing on them but what is necessary in order to make a living out of the land. They will put up bark humpies on the land, but will not make any permanent improvements. The system is a new one, and, as I have said, they do not understand it. If it had been started with separation, it might by this time have become a system in which people might believe. If the Minister wants really to advocate a system like that, the place for him is New Guinea, where he would start with a grand field. If he would introduce the system there it might work very well; but we are a stubborn people, and it is very hard to drive new ideas into our heads. He must see the difficulty, and I know the Treasurer has seen it long ago, so far as revenue is concerned; so I hope the Government, in their wisdom, will see fit to alter that part of the Act. The 13th clause says:—

> "All sums of money which have been paid in respect of the rent of the holding for the ten years next preceding the time when he becomes so entitled shall be credited to him in part payment."

Well, it seems that only those ten years count. I understood that all rents up to thirty years would be credited; and I think the longer they pay the better, because it shows they are *bonâ fide* settlers, and not dummies. We know that under the 1876 Act there were bad seasons, and some people had to be allowed to go on one year or two years without paying up; and for that reason I think it would be advisable to let them go on paying as long as they like. Now, sir, I come to Part IV., the sale of country lands by auction. I alluded to-night to the Minister's teeth being drawn, and certainly it is the eye-tooth this time, for to my mind this does away entirely with the principles of the original Act. I do not know how the hon. member can salve his conscience at all, because one of his principles was that there was to be no auction outside townships. I believe it is advisable, and I believe the Treasurer will agree with me that it will be very handy at times to have a auction sale. But I think this forty acres will give too much trouble, and it might be increased to 320. If we do not go beyond that, no big holdings could be got; and it would lead to a great expense surveying a lot of forty-acre allotments, without very much gain to the revenue. If the area were increased to 320 acres it would encourage settlement, and it might at times be conducive to the Treasurer's budget by preventing extra *ad valorem* duties which, if things go on as they are at present, might have to be increased next year. I must congratulate the Premier on the speech he made on this Bill the other evening; it was certainly the best speech I ever heard him make in this House. He warmed up to the subject; he is generally cool, but he rose to the occasion, and I think that showed his training. Whenever an advocate has a bad case, he shows his mettle; and the Premier saw that these amendments were going clean outside the original Act, so he warmed up to the occasion to prove that the law was not being altered. But, sir, I contend that he could not have made such an able speech, only he knew that the principles of the Act from beginning to end were being altered, and he was trying to make the best of it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: You don't know the principles of the Act.

Mr. KELLETT: I would not like to tell the hon. member I know as much as he does. I only go by the principles as printed in the Act; I cannot go inside and fathom the Minister for Lands. I have tried to fathom him many times, but he is a very difficult nut to crack. I am glad to see he is coming round to new ideas. As far as land-orders are concerned, I see no objection to them whatever; people who pay their own passages to this country are entitled to land-grants, and now we have them on a better line so that they cannot be transferred. Some hon. members say they cannot see why people who have been born in the country should not also get land-grants, and I cannot see it either. There was an hon. member in this House many years ago, Mr. Speaker, holding the same position as you do, who tried hard to pass a measure that all children in the country should have land-grants given to them. I thoroughly believed in it then, when I had not so many additions to my household as I have now, and I believe in it more now. I think that people from the other colonies who come here, or people who are born here and who pay taxes, or have taxes paid for them till they are twenty-one, have a better right to land-grants than those who pay their passages; because the taxes paid for a child till he becomes twenty-one amount to much more than the cost of the passage. Well, sir, I am pleased to see some amendment brought in, and I hope a good many more will be made in committee; and I hope the Minister in his wisdom will see that settlement is likely to take place much more quickly on the land if it is easy to get. I think that should be a great inducement. We hear a good deal just now about the unemployed in Brisbane—although I do not believe there are nearly so many as some people would make out, because they will not accept a fair day's wages for a fair day's work. This would be the means of getting many of these men out of town by settling them on the land—if it could be made easier for them to get on. Whether it is done now, or next session, or left over for another party or another Parliament, these leases in the inside agricultural settlements must and will be done away with. We are "piling up the agony" by keeping people off the land, and it is bound to be altered, if not now, later on. I hope that even now the concentrated wisdom of the House—particularly aided by the Minister for Lands, who might use his great brain-power to some good purpose in this direction—will deal with this question, and do away with those leaseholds. Freehold is what the people want, and they will not be satisfied with anything else.

Mr. ISAMBERT said: Mr. Speaker,—Scarcely an hon. member, up to the present, has had a good word to say for the Land Act of 1884. Most speakers have confined themselves entirely to the pastoral leases, and anyone not acquainted with the provisions of that Act as affecting pastoral lessees and listening to these debates would necessarily be under the impression that the pastoral lessees were the worst treated people under the sun. But up to the present time the pastoral lessees have, more or less, had pretty much their own way. Great concessions were given to them under the Act of 1884, and we can all see what is the true meaning of the present contention for further concessions. Under former Acts their runs could be resumed at any time, while the Act of 1884 gave them a certain tenure for fifteen years. But the true secret of their opposition to that Act is that before it became law pastoral lessees had the right of pre-emption, and when their runs were resumed they exercised that right in such a way that the land became practically useless to any other than the men who bought the pre-emptive right. Although they have got an equivalent for that right under the new Act, they continue asking for further concessions. The prevalent idea in the country is that the Act gives more concessions to the pastoral lessees than any previous Land Act of this colony; and that the concessions now sought for would be most fatal to our future prosperity. We have no right to commit the country to such an extent. I would not object to make concessions to pastoral lessees in such disastrous times as those we have lately gone through; and the country would be justified in remitting half or any portion of their annual rent, but not to extend the leases. We know what we are doing then, but to extend the leases another five years would be to commit the country to what might be very injurious to its best interests, particularly, as no future Government would go against the interests of the pastoral tenants. Their interests to a great extent are ours, and I am certain that no Government, whether so-called Conservative or Liberal, would wilfully do anything which would injure them in the least. Practically all reasonable concessions have been made, and they are really as secure in their holdings as if they held the parchment for them. I am quite of the opinion of the Minister for Lands on this subject. Great diversity of opinion exists with regard to the question of survey before selection. The objection raised against it is that it is detrimental to settlement. I hold that it is a great assistance to settlement. I have lately had an opportunity of inspecting some of this land thrown open for selection, and have seen from practical experience how advantageous it is to the selector if the land is surveyed and laid down on a map. He has not to wander all over the country looking for a piece of land, only to find in the end that somebody else has spotted the same piece of land before him. When an area is thrown open and properly surveyed he knows exactly where the land is for which he wants to apply. Another great advantage is that means of communication can be made easier than if selection goes on in a haphazard manner. But indiscriminate survey is not advisable. Before survey takes place the country should be carefully prospected, and the good portions of it surveyed for agricultural farms, and the rest of the land might be thrown open for selection before survey. That would save a large amount of needless survey expenditure. With regard to the land-order system, I was inclined to vote for this alteration, not that I believed in it, but in order to bring this agitation to a close, feeling convinced that if it was allowed to come into operation for a short time it would be seen to be so impracticable that it would be abolished for all time to come. We have had a very bitter experience in the past of the amount of abuse to which the land-order system gave rise. We all know how the Darling Downs and other districts have been dummied and appropriated under that system. Of late I met my constituents, and they are decidedly opposed to it. To show you the absurdity that is embodied in this land-order system, we hear everyone claim, and with justice that those who are born here ought to have the same privilege as those who have paid their passage to the colony; and in some respects I think that those who are here are better entitled to such a land-order than those who come here, because before an immigrant is really useful, and can be entrusted with the holding of land, he has first to get used to our ways and to gain colonial experience, which cannot be easily got under two or three years, unless

he has relatives here to show him how to go about settling on the land. My constituents being decidedly opposed to the land-order system, I shall vote against it, and particularly as it is not necessary. The facilities for acquiring land under the homestead clauses of the Bill, and under this amended Bill, render this land-order system quite unnecessary. There was some sense in the land-order system when the hon. member for South Brisbane was Agent-General and gave such benefit to the colony by his land-order system. In his time land could not be appropriated under £1 an acre, and his land-order system, if it had been worked properly, would have given great facilities for settlement. In those times, under the Act of 1868, the privilege was only reserved to those who had been for some time in the colony, proving that the immigrant was only really valuable and entitled to the privilege of holding land after having been here for a certain time. I consider, therefore, the land-order system quite unnecessary. I am glad the Government have adopted my suggestion for the better facilitating settlement under the homestead clauses and also for extending the payment of the survey fees over five annual instalments, which is certainly a step in the right direction. I would like to see a further amendment introduced in this Act. Settlement in the North will be particularly difficult on account of the few townships there are there, because settlement has to take place far away from the centres of civilisation, and because the blacks, the natives of the soil, are much more dangerous there than here. Instead of allowing settlement to go on in a haphazard fashion, and then gradually, after years of struggle, form centres of civilisation like townships, the idea was impressed on my mind when travelling in the North that it would be far better to start in the opposite direction. First form centres of civilisation, and after the nucleus of a township had been established settlement would take place in a natural way. This I believe would greatly facilitate the settlement of the best class of people in the North. When the Bill is in committee I shall certainly propose such amendments as will carry this into effect.

Mr. McMASTER said: I shall not detain the House very long with this Bill; but it appears to me that, so far as the speeches hon. members have delivered, they seemed to be all condemning the Act of 1884, and it would almost appear as if that Act was responsible for all the ills which have befallen the colony. Now, I do not think the Act ought to be blamed for all our present difficulties. An Act of Parliament is not like a steam-engine, which once put together and the steam applied, together with a little oil, off it goes. But an Act of Parliament requires to have a little time before we can feel its effects, and I take it for granted that that is the way with this Land Bill.

The PREMIER: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMASTER: It has not had a fair trial. It cannot possibly have had a fair trial in eighteen months, or two years at the outside. I think myself that the amendments that are introduced now will be a great improvement.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMASTER: I do not agree with the hon. member for Rosewood in opposing the land-orders. I think that is one of the best principles of the Bill. I do not understand why he, representing a farming district, should oppose land-orders except on this ground: that the district he represents is fully settled, that there is no more land to be taken up, and that his constituents want no other person to settle down in that district and wish to keep it to themselves. I believe we ought to encourage parties to settle on the land as much as possible. To my mind, a great mistake was made in the colony in years past in settling the people on the land. Inferior land was thrown open for selection, and put at the disposal of those who wished to settle for farming purposes. I know for a fact that land has been set apart for agricultural areas that was unfit for any man to till with the prospect of making a living out of it. I think the Government should be very careful, in setting land apart for agricultural settlement, to choose the very best land they possibly can get. No doubt, for agricultural settlement, the colony has got a bad name. Many reported to their friends that it was not a suitable place for farmers to settle down in on account of the inferior land they unfortunately had settled upon. To my mind we cannot give too much encouragement to people to settle on the land. We hear a good deal about our sugar industry, our pastoral industry, our gold-mining industry, and our coal industry. They are all very good in themselves, but I look upon the farming and agricultural industry as equal to any of them, and I believe that it will eventually be the industry that will be the backbone of our colony. I have nothing to say against the pastoralists. In fact, I believe myself that they ought to be encouraged in every way possible, having due regard for the interests of other individuals. I could not help thinking last week, from the tone of the speeches on the other side of the House, that some hon. members on that side seemed to imagine that every member on this side was opposed to the pastoral industry, and seemed to be almost determined that nothing good should be allowed to the pastoral tenants. But I believe that every member on this side of the House is anxious to do justice to all parties and all industries in the colony. I am sure that if I can see my way clear to relieve the pastoral tenants without injuring any other industry I shall be very willing to do it. There is no doubt that the pastoral industry, during the last few years, has suffered very much; but the Land Act is not entirely at fault for that. The hon. member for Warrego made the most temperate speech from that side of the House. He admitted that the drought had had something to do with it; but I do not think that, because the pastoral industry has suffered so severely, this House is called upon to sacrifice every other industry in order to relieve it. At the same time I am prepared to help to relieve the pastoral tenants if I can, that is to say if it will not injure any other industry. I agree to some extent with the remarks that fell from the hon. member for Aubigny. I think his suggestion is a very good one. I thought it over in my own mind, when I was quietly reading the Bill at home, and I came to the conclusion that if the pastoral tenants are suffering, as we believe they are, if we can help them out of their difficulties in any way it is our duty to do so. I agree that a fifteen years' lease is almost more than they expected under the Act which they condemned. I think, Mr. Speaker, if the Minister for Lands can see his way clear to extend their leases, when the Bill is in committee, if they are in difficulties——

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, no!

Mr. McMASTER: The hon. gentleman says "No, no!" I say, that if he can see his way clear to extend the leases to twenty-one years, on certain conditions—that if the land is required it can be resumed after six months' notice, or a certain amount of it—I do not think many hon. members will object to it. If the land is not required, it is an extension that will give the

pastoral tenant a twenty-one years' lease. I believe the pastoral tenants would willingly give it up if it were required for settlement.

Mr. BULCOCK: Would they? No fear!

Mr. McMASTER: I think so. I think the pastoral tenants are like other people. I am well aware that they will take all the land they can possibly get hold of; but I think they are anxious to see other industries prosper as well as their own. I do not believe they are as selfish as they are talked about. We are told many of them are very selfish; that they will grab all the land they possibly can; but I do not know that hon. members on this side, if they were connected with pastoral pursuits, would not do likewise. I am not certain that they would. I say that we are in duty bound to assist all industries if we see them suffering, and if this extension of five years, leaving it under the control of the Government to resume the land if it is required, will assist the pastoral tenants, I do not see why the House should not grant it. Under the Act of 1869 they were liable to have a portion of their runs resumed by giving six months' notice—I think one-half of it—and if they were given another five years, and the land were not required, they would have a lease for twenty-one years. I think myself that many hon. members would back up such an amendment. I do not pledge myself to vote for the amendments of the hon. member for Cook. Evidently he intends to hand the public estate over to every person in the colony. It appeared to me as if he meant to divide it. I believe in the land-orders. I believe we are doing well to give land-orders to immigrants—to men who will come out with their families and pay hard cash for bringing them out—as, when we have them out here, they will settle upon the land and will assist the Colonial Treasurer in filling up the Treasury more than if we gave them land-orders under the old system and allowed them to be transferred. I do not believe in transferring land-orders, which should only be allowed as rent or payment for the fee-simple of their holdings. I should like to assist the pastoral tenants and get them out of the difficulties we hear they are in just now.

Mr. FOOTE said: Mr. Speaker,—I do not agree with the gentleman who has just sat down as to the extension of the tenure of pastoral lessees, more especially on the principle on which he has advocated it. If we are going to give them an extension, let us give them an extension of tenure; but it certainly should not be as a lease with the Government having power to resume it at any time they choose—that is to say, by giving six, or even twelve, months' notice of resumption. I think the leases that the pastoral tenants hold now are better than they have ever held since I have had anything to do with legislation. They now hold an indefeasible lease of fifteen years in the outside districts, and they are also paid for improvements. I think that, so far as security is concerned, they are very well secured, and the only difference that the extension of leases would make to them would be that it would increase the value of their holdings, simply because they would have a longer period to run. I do not think that extension can affect them beneficially to any great extent in that sense, because I am sure that no Legislature that may occupy this Chamber within the next ten years, or even fifteen years, will try to deprive them of their runs if the land is not required. On the other hand, they will grant them a further lease—I am satisfied of that. What could the country do without them? The country would be comparatively nothing without the grazing interest. As to the statement that there is opposition between one class and another, I do not know of it. Of course one party contends for one interest, and another party contends for another. The party on this side contends for an increase of settlement upon the lands of the country. They want population, and of course population is wealth. It gives value to our lands; without population the lands would be worth little or nothing; and if the colony is to grow it must be by increasing the population. Population means the enhanced prosperity of every interest in the colony, and therefore I maintain that it would not be discreet upon the present occasion, in my opinion, to extend the tenure of the pastoral lessees. Another observation I wish to make is this: The Bill has been dragging its weary length during three nights, and I am sure if the opinions set forth by every member in this House were incorporated in a Bill it would be one of the most curious things that had ever been manifested to mankind. It would become a perfect puzzle; there would be no possibility of understanding it from any point of view. Therefore I maintain, Mr. Speaker, that it is necessary that we should see the course we are going, and try to pursue that course. I do not mean to say to the very letter, as there are compromises that require to be made, and which it is very necessary should be made. It is only in debate that these ideas can be brought forward and put into a form which is beneficial to the very best interests of the country. Hon. members have spoken of the failure of this Act, but I do not term it a failure. The Act never suited my ideas exactly, nor yet anything near it. You will remember, sir, that when the Bill was before the House I said it would produce a revolution in our land legislation, and it has pretty well done that. But when a new measure is brought forward it takes a great deal of trouble to educate the populace on it, and it is often a very long time before a new Act begins to run well, and before the people understand and know how to deal with it. Some of us on this side of the House were very careful to see that provision was made for the homestead class. Well, I find out that we have been "sold," though I do not know whether intentionally or otherwise. I have read the Act again and again and tried to understand it, and I have advocated its principles in some districts, and tried to show that it contained conditions that suited every class of settlers in the colony. But I have been greatly taken aback by selectors going to the Lands Office and asking for homestead land, and being told by the land agents that there was no such thing. Land office after land office selectors have gone to ask to be allowed to take up a homestead selection of 160 acres, and were told they could not get one, as the Act contained no such provision. I say upon this point that the Government have defeated their own Bill.

The PREMIER: We are not responsible for that.

Mr. FOOTE: The Government have defeated their own Bill. I like this amending Bill in this respect, because in it we have a plain homestead clause, such as the people are accustomed to and knew in the former Act, which was one of the best Acts the Legislature of this colony ever passed. More settlement took place under that Act and the conditional purchase clauses than under all the previous Acts of the colony. I am therefore prepared to support this Bill in reference to the homestead clause as a great improvement on the Act at present in existence, simply because, as I have said, the Government have, not by their tactics I suppose, but by their mode of carrying out the provisions

of the Act, defeated their own measure. I had come to the conclusion that I made a mistake —that is to say, I at one time thought the Minister for Lands was trying to induce settlement upon the land, but I afterwards found that he altered his mind, and that his attention has not been directed to that class of settlement. He has had his mind's eye upon another class of settler—the settler upon grazing farms and large agricultural farms—and he has lost sight of the very best sort of settlement which takes place in this colony. I would suggest, if the Government wish their Bill to be a success, that they should survey homestead areas in various places, and not select the worst land in the colony. They should do just the contrary, and select the best agricultural land they can find—that is to say, if they want settlement—and if they select that land reasonably near land and water carriage, I am quite satisfied their Land Act will soon show signs of success. The same remarks will apply to agricultural farms. Those farms, however, are of such a character that the people who will take them up can afford to go much farther afield, because their operations will be carried on on a greater scale, and they will in most cases be men of some capital. The contrast between these two classes of settlers will be that the homestead man will have nothing but his bone and sinew to put forth by way of capital, and the other will be a capitalist to some extent and an employer of labour. I like that portion of the clause which permits the annual payment of the *bonâ fide* agricultural selector who resides on his land to be regarded as a portion of the amount payable for the fee-simple of the land when he wishes to purchase it. I believe in that principle. There is another matter I wish to speak of here, and that is that 1,280 acres of land is a large area to get in any one selection, and it is not easy to get it in any place. A man may get 200 acres of good land, and the rest may be middling or very bad. If he is compelled to take the whole, I would like to see a provision made in this clause, when the Bill is in committee, to the effect that a selector selecting 1,280 acres of land may be considered to be residing on his selection if he resides on one portion of it, and is within, say, ten or fifteen miles of the rest of it. He should not be compelled, I think, to reside on one portion of it himself and have to employ a bailiff to reside on the other parts of the selection. I trust the Bill will be amended somewhat in that way when in committee. In reference to the land-orders which have been introduced into this Bill, I presume, as the result of the motion of the hon. member for South Brisbane, I cannot say that I see very much in them. A person in England, Ireland, or any part of Europe, getting one of these land-orders, may consider that he will have a portion of land given him by paying his passage, and may be very much disappointed in that when he comes to the colony. He may find that he will have to go into the interior, and, being a new chum, he will know nothing about the country, and the most he can do, in many instances, will be to simply reside upon the land for the period stipulated until he can get the fee-simple, and then leave it. That will not be of any great advantage to the colony, and will tell against the colony in the long run, because those people are the very persons who write home and give a very bad account of the state of things in the colony. Oftentimes persons coming out in that way are not accustomed to farms—people from cities with dreams of country life, and farms, and so on, but without the slightest idea what it is—who do not know bad land from good. Instead of doing us good they do us harm. Certainly, during their stay, they would be a source of revenue, but beyond that they would be of no benefit to the colony, except in a very few rare instances. Of course the agriculturist who understood his business in the old country would soon understand it here; he would know the use of the implements, and could tell good land from bad; but, as a rule, the colonist who comes here with his false ideas fails, and turns to some other occupation. To me this looks like deceiving the public, and therefore I cannot say that I shall support that portion of the Bill That old subject has cropped up again, which has always cropped up on the land question for a considerable time past—the land-orders for the native-born. It looks to me very much like apportioning the colony. I suppose it would apply to those born in cities as well as those in the interior, and it would require very formidable regulations to carry it out. I think the New Guinea idea is the best; give them their portion there, and let them or their parents go and find it when they reached years of maturity. There is another portion of the Bill I have passed over—the clauses giving power to the Government to sell under certain conditions. I think that power is too limited, though I would not extend it, as some hon. gentlemen propose, to 640 acres. Many cases arise where the Government should have power to sell, not only in suburban lands, but adjoining suburban lands, places perhaps four or five miles or even more from the towns. Where the country lands have been taken up, there is often an odd lot left worth sometimes £3 to £6 an acre. There are plenty of applications to lease those lots, but that would be tantamount to giving them away. There are sometimes many applications for the one piece of land, and it would greatly obviate difficulties if the Government had power to sell under such circumstances to the highest bidder. It would often facilitate matters, and it would also benefit the Treasury in some degree, which would be better than letting them lie idle, or be used by the populace without the Government receiving a solitary farthing for them. I have read the amendment of the hon. member for Rosewood, and it certainly has some good ideas in it; but it is like one of those puzzles that you must carefully work out. It certainly provides for the settlement of population in the interior, but I am afraid it would not work. I think it is one of those things which could do neither good nor harm, and I am inclined to think that if passed it would simply remain as a dead-letter on the Statute-book. I trust, Mr. Speaker, that notwithstanding the great variety of opinions which have been expressed in this debate, we shall be able to make a good Bill, and so progress another step towards making the present Land Act a success. Before sitting down I wish to refer to the Land Act of 1876. The hon. member for Fortitude Valley said that if this extension of lease were granted to the pastoral lessee he was quite sure that if the land was wanted it would be readily given up. Had he been in the House when that measure was being passed, containing the homestead selection and conditional purchase clauses, he would have seen two hon. members on the other side, who are not in the House now, jumping up night after night, and almost hour after hour, and the whole burden of theirsong was repudiation and spoliation. A liberal measure was being passed to settle the populace on the lands of the colony, yet even at that distant date, when it might be said that the whole colony was held by them, they were afraid to pass a measure that they thought would take a few miles of the interior from them. I think it is only right that the Government should hold the power; and whatever Government may be in power, I am quite satisfied that they will not deal harshly, or indifferently, or improperly with the pastora

lessees of the Crown, but will meet them not only in all fairness but will seek to promote their interests so far as they possibly can consistently with the general interests of the colony.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said: Mr. Speaker,—When this Bill was introduced by the Minister for Lands I had no intention of speaking on the subject. I thought to take the Bill as a simple admission on the part of the Government that the Land Act of 1884 had been a failure, and that they were willing to retrace their steps, even although to a very short degree. But the speeches that have been made to-night have gratified me exceedingly. There has not been a single member who spoke on the Government side to-night but has in terms more or less strong condemned the Act of 1884. It is a plain proof to me that the dust has at last fallen from the eyes of hon. gentlemen on the other side of the House; that the arguments used on this side of the House against that Bill have taken root and flourished, and are now bearing fruit. Hon. members who recollect the speeches which were made on this side of the House, and the little speaking which there was on the Government side of the House in favour of the Bill of 1884, must recollect that whatever was said on the Government side was in praise of that Bill. No language could be too flowery to depict the future state of the colony under the operation of that Bill. The Minister for Lands had appeared as a new star in the political firmament, with a new theory of land legislation, which was to revolutionise all the land laws, not only of this country, but of all other new countries in the world. Nothing of the like was ever heard or seen before, and he was so plausible and had such a strength of mind that he impressed his views on the plastic minds of his colleagues, who ought to have known much better from their experience here in dealing with the land question. I am extremely sorry to say that they really do not understand the land question, from the head of the Government downwards. Their career in this House has proved to me that whatever else they understand they do not understand the land question. Had they understood it, they would never have allowed the Minister for Lands the free hand which they did allow him in the Bill of 1884. Under that Bill there was to be no more dummying, no more alienation of country lands, no more auction sales; human nature was to be changed; the free selector was to be induced to give up all idea of freehold, and the blessing of a perpetual leasehold was to be put before him in such a way that he would never desire a freehold again. The Treasurer was to be made especially happy—the happiest man in the whole community—from the immense revenue to be derived under the Bill. The Treasurer was to have no more difficulty as to how he should find money to pay the interest on future loans; in fact the Treasury was to be filled to overflowing. The Treasurer was to have so much money that he would not know what to do with it unless by reducing taxation. What has been the actual operation of the Act? In place of what was predicted by the Minister for Lands and his colleagues, the Treasury is empty; the money is running out from the bottom faster than it is being poured in at the top of the chest. The Treasurer has had to impose fresh taxation twice since the Act came into operation, with the prospect—the very dreary prospect—of additional taxation looming in the future. The young men who were waiting to come over our southern border to take up all our best land—the young gentlemen with boots, spurs, and breeches, who were waiting in thousands to rush across the border to take possession—I am afraid they are still toddling about in small clothes; at least they have not yet made their appearance. The Minister for Lands was so much afraid of those gentlemen having the first pick of the land of Queensland, that he actually refused to place the lower portion of the schedule in his Act, because it would give the New South Welshmen an advantage over the native Queenslander. The Treasury, as I said, is empty. The young stockmen who were to indulge in squatting on a small scale have yet to be induced to come. The free selector, instead of having been converted by the Minister for Lands to the idea of a perpetual leasehold, is actually now so prejudiced against the leasehold that the Minister for Lands himself has been converted to the freehold system, and a portion of the rent which the selector pays is to go—and I must say that it meets with my approval—as part of the purchase money, so as to make the freehold more easy of attainment. In addition to that, we have the reintroduction of the auction system upon a very limited scale—only for the building of churches. Judging from the speeches made by some hon. members on the other side to-night, it strikes me that the churches will have very large areas round them—perhaps 160 acres, or even 320 acres, and one hon. member went so far as to say that the limit should be extended to 640 acres. However, limited or unlimited, we have once more the auction system. And yet the Premier has the audacity to tell the House that the Land Act has not been a failure!

The PREMIER: Hear, hear!

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: I repeat, "the audacity." The hon. gentleman has not the power of hoodwinking the House that he had in 1884. That power is gone, but the audacity still remains. The Land Act is a failure, according to the speeches of hon. members on the other side, and according to this bantling of a Bill, as the Minister for Works called it; and the Premier says, "Why did you not save us from this in 1884, although you were in opposition? Why did you not prevent us from passing such a law? You did not assist us in making a good law. You actually gave us the Bill we wanted ourselves. Why did you not make one for us?" Was there ever anything more absurd than to hear the Premier—the leader of the strongest party that ever sat in this House—charging the Opposition with the failure of a legislation which he says has not failed?

The PREMIER: Nothing could be more absurd; only it never happened.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: The hon. gentleman actually charges hon. members on this side with not having prevented him from passing such an Act as he has passed. He says he never saw an Opposition act in such a way before. The hon. gentleman forgets that the Minister for Lands told the House that he did not believe in the doctrine that Land Bills should not be party questions, but that the Land Bill should be a party question, and that if the Opposition did not care to have it it would be rammed down their throats. And yet the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government has the "cheek" to stand up and say that we should have made it a better Bill. Every amendment which we tried to introduce into the Bill was rejected. Why? Because we were looked upon with suspicion. We were told that everything we brought forward was regarded with suspicion, and the Premier told us that our amendments were not rational. What Opposition amendments are rational? Whenever was there an Opposition that was not wicked, and regarded with suspicion? But when the Opposition changes sides it becomes rational, and the other side in its turn becomes very irrational and very wicked indeed. But in this case, if the Opposition had been strong enough to mould

the Bill, it would have been strong enough to turn the hon. gentleman out of office. That was the reason why the Bill was allowed to pass as it did. I am very happy to say that, although we were not strong enough to mould the Bill then, our arguments were strong enough, in conjunction with the operation of the Act, to cause it to be remoulded now, and I am quite certain that the next session of Parliament will see some further amendment in the direction pointed out by us in 1884. A great deal has been said during the debate about what the Bill does not contain. In fact, for two nights the chief part of the debate was not so much on what the Bill contained as on what it did not contain. There is some reason for that. I have the very strongest sympathy with the hon. gentlemen who represent the pastoral interests, and I think they had some reason for the turn they gave to the debate. We know that at the beginning of the session meetings were held in different parts of the colony—in the West chiefly, but also in the Central and Northern districts—in favour of an extension of lease to the pastoral tenants, and other privileges they were asking for to ameliorate their present condition. Many petitions were also presented to the House praying that those privileges might be granted. Whether that was the cause of this Bill being introduced or not, I cannot say, for I do not know; but it certainly was taken as a reason why a Bill of the kind should be introduced. No mention was made of the Bill in His Excellency's Speech with which he opened Parliament. It was not spoken of at any of those meetings or in any of those petitions. And when it was spoken of, what was said about it? The pastoral tenants were to have an extension of their leases. That was certain. Hon. gentlemen who represent the pastoral interest believed that as thoroughly as I believe that you are sitting in that chair, Mr. Speaker; and they believed it on the very best authority. They believe even now, Mr. Speaker, that if it were not for the pressure of a certain section behind the Premier, he would be very willing indeed to grant them twenty-one years' leases. They believe that; but that section which is spoken of believe quite the opposite; they believe that the Premier never had the slightest intention of granting twenty-one years' leases. All I can say on that question is—I know nothing of it unless by hearsay from gentlemen on both sides of the House—all I can say is this: that there must have been deception practised somewhere. And I think that the gentlemen who represent the pastoral interest have much reason not only to be disappointed, but also to find fault with whoever led them astray in thinking that they were going to get an extension of their leases. I do not intend to discuss the question of whether they should have an extension to twenty-one years or not, because it is not in the Bill. Were it in the Bill I would discuss it, and if an attempt be made to introduce it in the Bill I will then discuss it. But I will not discuss it now. Before leaving that part of the question, let me say that I think the suggestion made by the hon. member for Aubigny in that direction is a very good suggestion, and is one well worthy of the consideration of this House. Now, to come to the Bill itself. It is what the hon. the Minister for Works calls a bantling Bill—a very small one; but it contains the germ of principles quite opposed to the large one of 1884. To come to the Bill itself: Part II., which gives an extension of time to leaseholders who have not yet come under the Act, is, I believe, one deserving commendation. I may say the Bill generally receives my approval, inasmuch as it carries out the principles I advocated in opposition two years ago. I cannot, therefore, disapprove of it. Still I think it does not go far enough. Clause 5 is the clause which deals with the rent, and it fixes the maximum rent to be paid for the period of five years at 50 per cent. on the rent paid during the preceding period. Now, it may be within the recollection of hon. members who remember 1884 that I combated very strongly the periods which were put down for the revaluation of the squatters' runs. I combated it then for certain reasons. Perhaps hon. members may have forgotten the reasons which I then gave, but I shall repeat some of them to-night. I do not think that it is a fair thing, once the rent is fixed, that any man, be he squatter, or agricultural farmer, or grazing farmer, should be living in terror of having his rent raised again after five years. I think the period is altogether too short. I think, if hon. gentlemen will take and examine leases everywhere else all over the world, they will find that no such principle exists anywhere—at least, I am not aware of any. If you take the leases given to farmers in the old country — in England, Ireland, and Scotland—you find the leases are fixed, the rents are fixed. Whatever term—seventeen, nineteen, or twenty-one years, as they generally are in Scotland—the lease is for a fixed term and the rent is fixed for that period. The farmer takes his chance of whatever rise or fall in the market may take place in that time, or whatever alteration may take place in the circumstances of the country. If we go to India—the only country under the British Crown where leasehold tenure of land is the law—we find that there the rent is fixed for a period of thirty years. Now, of course, you may say that India is a very old country. It is a very old country, and the conditions of the country do not alter as much as here, no doubt. But when we compare fifteen with thirty years, I think we must come to the conclusion that fifteen years here ought to be looked upon as on an equality with thirty years in India. But even there the ryots complain that the term is too short, although it is a generation of the people of India. I may say that all India is not under that condition, but only some portions of it; but the people in those portions who labour under that condition are in perfect terror for years before the term of thirty years expires. Thinking that the rent will be raised, they cease making improvements; in fact, they take just their bare existence out of the land, proving that the system is not a good one. Although the leasehold system is all very well on paper, a very nice theory to look at, practically, in India and elsewhere, wherever the system has been tried, it has not been the success that the freehold system has been. At any rate it has not been as successful as where leaseholds for a longer period prevailed, such as in the North of Ireland, where there are sometimes leases for periods of three lives. Where the leasehold system is almost equal to freehold, as it is there, it is good; but in India and some countries where the leases are limited to a certain term of years, their operation is always bad and detrimental to the country and to the tenants. But I have been told, why should not the Government have the benefit of what is called the unearned increment? What is the unearned increment? Can anyone tell me what it is? We have heard a great deal of talk about it for many years. For the last eight or ten years it has been spoken of frequently in this House. To the best of my recollection, the Hon. John Douglas was the first to introduce it here, and he used it for a similar purpose to that lately employed. What

is it? It is the sum of the improvements of all the tenants and all the people of the country put together. Now the Act says, no doubt to the pastoral tenant as well as the agricultural tenant, that his rent is not to be raised upon the increment of value which arises from his own improvements. But that does not prevent him from having his rent raised on the increment of value which arises from the improvements of his neighbours. And if you take a whole district—say, 10,000 square miles—or, for instance, a squatting district in which there are twenty or thirty leaseholders, the sum of the improvements of the whole district is the means for raising the rent of each lessee in that district. Although the board will not rate him in proportion to his own improvements, it is actually raised in consequence of those improvements. Say that there are 100 tenants: the hundredth has his rent raised on the improvements made by his ninety-nine neighbours, and each one of the ninety-nine is in the same position as the hundredth. Then take, again, our own colony as regards leases. On what other system of leaseholds do we demand the unearned increment? Take mining: you grant leases of twenty-one years in mining, either for gold or other minerals. Does anyone ever think of raising the rent of a mining lease during the twenty-one years? No, not even if the property becomes a Day Dawn or a Mount Morgan! There is no attempt to take the unearned increment there. And what greater unearned increment is there than the discovery of large quantities of rich quartz or any kind of mineral in the earth? Does any mining lessee do anything towards the increase of that? And yet we do not for a single moment attempt to extort more than £1 an acre for the term during which that lease is held. I say this system of revaluation at all is bad, but as applied every five years it is a monstrous system indeed, and one that should not be sanctioned by this House. I hope in making an improvement on this Bill we will blot it out entirely. Well, sir, the next portion of the Bill which I think of any importance is the clause which does away with free selection before survey. Now, I think that is a bad clause. I think we ought to maintain the principle of free selection before survey. When we adopted that two years ago, it was passed with the unanimous consent of the House. There was certainly no division upon the subject—I do not think there were any dissentient voices—if there were any it was that of the Minister for Lands himself, who was afraid that he would not be able to keep enough land open for selection. But he has had two years under the operation of that Act to have land enough open for selection for all the selectors who are likely to come into the colony, or are in the colony at present. If he has not land enough open it is his fault, because he has had sufficient time. He asked for two years under the Act, and he got two years, and now, when that has expired, he wants to extend the term—in fact, to abolish, so far as he possibly can, the principle of survey before free selection. There is only one colony that I am aware of in Australia that has had free selection before survey, and in that colony it has not been a success. This Bill does not abolish it altogether, but it leaves it in the power of the Minister, which should not be done.

The PREMIER: You are mistaken.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: It should be fixed by the Bill; the Minister should have no power over it. However, in the colony in which free selection before survey has been the law, it has not been a success. It has been the means of raising up antagonisms between classes.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: It certainly has done more injury than any possible good that could have been expected. In every other colony the reverse is the law. If we go to America—the country which has been most successful in settling an agricultural population upon the land—we find that survey precedes selection in every case. There the State employs a sufficient number of surveyors, and the land is surveyed in townships of thirty-six square miles, and these are resurveyed into half-sections and quarter-sections, and any selector can go to the Lands Office, after having been upon the land and seen it, and put his finger upon the map and say, "I want that selection," and that selection becomes his. I say that that is the best system for us to pursue. If we give the Minister for Lands the power given him by this clause — although I am very willing to give the Minister as much power as he can use with benefit to the country, I am certainly not willing to give him this power—the result will be that we will have free selection before survey instead of survey before selection. It will be not only to the detriment of the country, but to that of the pastoral lessee, and of the selector himself. But the other system, the one which we adopted in 1884 after consideration, and with the unanimous consent of the House, is the best system, and the one which we should stand by. With regard to the additional privileges given to the homestead selector, they meet with my approval entirely; but they really do not go far enough. I quite agree with the hon. member for Bundanba, who seems to have been taken by surprise to find that the homestead selector was in such a bad state, as he found that he was, by the operation of the Act. Had it not been for the warning note of gentlemen on this side of the House, and for their strenuous exertions, the homestead selector would be in a much worse state than he is now. I believe there has been no class of selector in the colony who is so successful and beneficial as the homestead selector. Of course, I know that the Minister for Lands thinks otherwise—at least he did in 1884. He certainly did not look upon the homestead selector in 1884 as one who ought to be encouraged. Probably that is the reason why the hon. member for Bundanba has been taken by surprise. The principle was forced upon him by this side of the House, and by his own side of the House too. It was forced upon him by the House, and I suppose has been carried out by him very ungraciously. I believe that the best selector we can get is the homestead selector.

Mr. ISAMBERT: Hear, hear!

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Not only is he the best selector, but he is the selector who does a great deal the least damage to the country. He never attempts to enlarge his estate the same as many other selectors do—the large freeholders of the colony. He is satisfied with his selection and lives upon it; rears his family upon it, and when they come of age they go and select again for themselves. The same thing has happened in America over and over again. The man who owns 160 acres or 320 acres there raises his family on his farm. Frequently he sells his farm. It is not an uncommon thing for him to sell it as an improved farm to a person who comes into the country and wants a farm ready formed, and he goes into the bush and selects another. There are thousands of families who have done that for two or three generations. Why should we not encourage the same thing instead of encouraging new chums to wander into the bush and lose themselves taking up farms? It would be better if we had improved farms to be sold at low rates to men coming

out here with money enough to buy a farm to live upon; so that I think the homestead selector is preferable, to any degree, to either the grazing or agricultural selector under the principal Act. Then we come to clause 13, which provides that the rent for the ten years preceding shall be taken as part of the purchase money. That is one of the principles which we advocated on this side of the House, and we were not listened to; in fact, it was too short a time after the period we were in office for us to be listened to. We were looked upon in those days as being something outrageously bad in the community—worse even than the squatter himself, bad as he was. We told plainly what should be the conditions of selection. We knew what human nature was, but, strange to say, the grey-heads on the other side of the House seemed to have no conception of human nature. They thought that men would prefer living as tenants, the same as they did in parts of India and in Ireland—where tenantry has been so successful! They thought men would prefer living as tenants to being masters of their own destinies and freeholders upon their own land. Now hon. gentlemen opposite have come to the same conclusion. They have come round to our way of thinking, and we cannot do anything else than approve of it, and are heartily glad to find them repent of their evil ways. I hope they will continue to go on in the same direction until they have arrived at the whole of the conclusions we pointed out in 1884. This does not go far enough, but it is a step in the right direction, and as such we are quite willing to accept it. Then we come to Part IV. This is the part which gives the Minister for Lands power to sell land by auction. Well, sir, this is the most wonderful piece of somersaulting that has happened in this House for years. No one would believe, listening to the Minister for Lands in 1884, that ever he would be found selling country lands by auction. Oh no! He had given way to the prejudices of people so far as to allow of the sale of lands in towns and suburbs; but he was quite confident that the day was not very far distant when even that prejudice would fade away, and the people would not ask to buy land. Now he has come round; he has actually come round to sell land himself by public auction, but only in forty-acre blocks. I agree with some hon. members that forty acres is rather too small. I am not an advocate for the aggregation of large estates. I never have been, as is well known to hon. members of this House; but I am not afraid of the aggregation of big estates. I know there are many big estates in the country, but I am not in the slightest degree afraid of them compared with the millions of acres we have as yet unalienated and untouched; the big estates here are a mere bagatelle. If they were even ten times more I would not be afraid of them, because, as one hon. member says, we still have the land. Yes, the land is still ours, and although the gentlemen who hold big estates have the freehold of those estates, we have the power of dealing with them afterwards. We can deal with them as we please, always, of course, in right and justice to the holders. We can deal with them by taxing them, and in taxing them we shall only be doing what is right so long as the tax is a moderate one. I do not mean we should put on such a tax as would actually mean confiscation; but we can tax them to such a degree that it will not be profitable to hold large estates unless they are improved for the benefit of the whole of the people. I am not, then, afraid of these big estates, and we have no law of entail here the same as they have in the old country. We passed a law this session—the Settled Land Act—which to a large extent deals with this question. We need not, therefore, be afraid of the aggregation of big estates; but, at the same time, I would not advocate the sale of large blocks of land by auction, such as 640 acres, though I am not afraid of it in the least degree, because the power of taxation still remains, the land is ours, and the taxation would be ours. The aggregation of big estates is always the same bogey—the same "raw head and bloody bones" used to frighten the people, when hon. gentlemen talk about the aggregation of big estates occurring in this colony, and having an effect similar to the effect of big estates in England and Ireland.

The PREMIER: The same causes produce the same effects.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: The same causes under the same conditions produce the same effects; but the conditions here are altogether different, and therefore the effects cannot be the same. What have been the effects of big estates in America? Where are their big estates? Are they not being burst up every day? Are they not being sold in big blocks? A gentleman leaves a big estate to his children, who divide it, and sell it in blocks, and where we have a big estate to-day we have an aggregation of small farms to-morrow. The same thing will take place here; and therefore I look upon Part IV. as a safety-valve for the Treasurer and as a means of lessening the amount of taxation which he must endeavour to impose upon us to make up the deficiency caused by the failure of the Act of 1884. Now I come to the land-orders; and I have no objection to the land-order system that is about to be applied by the hon. member at the head of the Government. At the same time, I have never been able to see why we should bestow a block of land upon a stranger coming into the country—even an alien it may be—and refuse, at the same time, a similar block to the people already in the colony and their children. Which is really the most deserving, if we are to give away the land? Is it the stranger who comes in here and pays his own passage, or is it the man who has been here, perhaps for twenty years, has paid his own passage, and worked during those twenty years to build up the State to the position which it occupies to-day? I say if we are to give the land away we ought to give it in preference to the people in the colony. They are the best settlers: they have not yet to acquire colonial experience, and will not lose themselves in the bush looking for an allotment. The stranger may; and, while I shall not oppose the principle of land-orders, I shall do my best to introduce into this Bill a similar principle on behalf of the people in this colony—who have paid their own passages—and their children as well over the age of twelve. I think that would only be doing justice. Again, why should we confine this principle to the people coming here from England, Ireland, America, or any part of the Continent? Why should we not include the people coming from the neighbouring colonies? Will they not make better settlers than strangers from Europe? If we are generous enough to put good land into the market—such land as people will be willing to settle upon—they will come here. They will not be like the young men in boots and spurs waiting to come over the border, but there are many men in New South Wales and South Australia—and some even in Victoria—who will be very willing to come here upon the terms we are about to offer to people coming from England, and they will make better settlers for us, and the more likely to be successful themselves than the people to whom we are about to offer the land. Now, with regard to the absurd argument the Premier made use of, about

the Opposition not making the Act of 1884 a good one, even against his big majority, I would remind him of what fell from the lips of his colleague the other evening—the Minister for Works. Hon. members may recollect that in 1884 the idea was that the squatters could pay a much heavier rental than they were then paying—three, four, or five times greater than they were then paying. And there was a foundation for such a belief. The foundation for such a belief was that large sums had been paid for squattages. From the year 1880 to 1884 men with capital had been driven out of Victoria through Berryism, and come over to Queensland, and they were glad to get possession of squattages and to give exorbitant prices for country in a colony where the land laws were settled. The Minister for Works told us the other night that he knew those gentlemen gave ridiculous prices for the land—three or four times the value which he would have given—and he took good care to sell out in time himself; and yet he allowed his colleagues and supporters to run away with the idea that they could raise the rent of the squatters to such a degree as would correspond with those exorbitant prices. Now the Premier accuses us of being the cause of the Land Act being as bad as it is. Why, it was his own colleagues, the Minister for Lands and the Minister for Works. I believe the Minister for Lands sold out. I am not certain, but the Minister for Works confesses that he sold out; he took advantage of the greenhorns who were coming from Victoria, and sold his squattage at a price three or four times its value; and he allowed the Premier and the Treasurer, who know nothing about the land system, and less about the pastoral industry, to believe they could impose rents in proportion to those prices. Well, sir, it is good for the country that the hon. gentleman's eyes are being gradually opened, and I think the people of the country, too, are having their eyes gradually opened. They see, as well as we see, that the Act is a failure; they see what the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government sees, but is unwilling to admit; they see what the Colonial Treasurer has seen long ago—that it is a failure in every respect, but more especially in the way of producing revenue for the country. Instead of the £100,000 he expected the first year, there has been nearly that extent of deficiency. Instead of the 6,000,000 acres that were to be selected the first year, which he calculated upon certain statements made by the Minister for Lands, what has really been the amount of selection? Fortunately, we have a return here to-night, which was printed this morning, and the total number of acres, both grazing and agricultural, selected under this Bill—this Bill which was to bring selectors over the border in troops, and induce every man in the colony to go in for selection—the total number of acres selected is 395,287. Let us compare that with the selection under the system which has been so much maligned, but which is now beginning to be understood by hon. gentlemen on the Government side of the House; let us see what was the actual selection within the last year of the operation of the Act of 1876.

The PREMIER: Do not forget that it was before survey.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: In 1883 the total was 648,000, twice as much as the total selection during the eighteen months this Act has been in operation. There have only been two years since 1868,—and hon. members must remember that in 1868 the population was less than one-half what it is now—it was only about one-third,—there have only been two years since 1868 in which the selection was less than it has been during the eighteen months of the operation of this Act. Yet the hon. gentleman dares to say the Act has not been a failure. The Act of 1884 was a failure in selection, both agricultural and grazing; and it is a failure in the most important part of it—the revenue. I look upon this Bill, small as it is, as being one which, if properly worked, though it will not induce much more selection, will at least help to relieve the Treasury from the great load under which it labours at present, and which is actually becoming like an old man of the sea on the shoulders of the people of Queensland.

Mr. KATES said: Mr. Speaker,—The hon. gentleman who has just sat down certainly omitted one thing; he did not make any reference to the drought. No doubt this drought, which has lasted two or three years, has considerably militated against the success of the Act. I would like to know where a man could be found who would go and take up a selection during a drought such as we have passed through, with such a low price for pastoral products. People were glad to get rid of their selections; they did not go in for fresh ones. The majority of hon. members who have spoken have condemned the Act of 1884; some of them have condemned it entirely. I am not one of those who say that the Act is altogether such a bad one. The principal keynote of that Act was the prevention of the aggregation of large estates. It is all very well for the hon. member who just sat down to say that those large estates will all be dissolved in time. We have found in our district that these large estates have lasted twenty-five years, and it is very difficult to dissolve them or tax them, because we cannot tax the large man without taxing the small one. That is the best part of the Act, the prevention of large estates. I always said that from a financial point of view it would be a failure, and it has proved so.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: The drought.

Mr. KATES: It takes a good many threepenny pieces and sixpences to make up £100,000. Of course, it will be said that after ten years' time we will get a large sum of money when people begin to pay the purchase money; but ten years is a long time to wait, especially when we want the money now to pay the interest on our loans. After all, the Land Act of 1884 is not altogether a Henry George theory Act, because in the agricultural areas selectors have the option of purchasing the freehold after ten years. Looking at this Bill we can see a sincere desire on the part of the Government to improve the Act of 1884, for which I give them credit; and I also think that the Minister for Lands is deserving of credit for retracing his steps and showing the moral courage to improve his Bill, especially in breaking the principle of not selling country land by auction. The principal bone of contention to my mind, when this Bill is in committee, will be the attempt of the pastoral lessees to have their leases extended from fifteen to twenty-one years. I begin to think that the schedule area, as shown in the map opposite, is altogether too large, and that it would be advisable to divide it, allowing for lands to the east of the 143rd degree of longitude up to the Main Dividing Range, and west of the Dividing Range up to the boundary of the schedule, a twenty-one years' lease; whilst land on the east of the line of demarcation shall only have a fifteen years' lease. It is very injudicious to group such districts as the Burnett and the Leichhardt in the same category as the districts of the Thomson, Barcoo, and Western Warrego. The districts east of that line of demarcation are near the settled districts, and are likely to be much

sooner wanted for settlement than the districts west of the Main Dividing Range. That suggestion if carried out would be a compromise, and after all our legislation is nothing else than a series of compromises. The question is, will the land be required before the expiration of twenty years? If I thought it would be required I should certainly oppose any extension of the leases. But in the settled districts we have 70,000,000 acres available, and in the resumptions we have 60,000,000 more, or 130,000,000 acres in all, which, I am sure, will be quite sufficient for the next twenty years. Indeed, if we could settle the people on those 130,000,000 acres during that period it would be beyond the wildest dreams and flights of imagination. Since separation we have only brought 200,000 acres of land under cultivation. In Victoria, where settlement has gone on on a much larger scale, the amount brought under cultivation is only 2,500,000 acres, while in New South Wales it is not much more than 1,000,000. If we can settle 120,000,000 acres in twenty years we shall have no reason to be dissatisfied, but, on the contrary, to rejoice. If my suggestion is accepted it will be satisfactory to all parties, to the pastoral lessees as well as to the other sections of the community. After all, we ought to give encouragement to the pastoral tenants of the Crown. If they prosper, every other section of the community will be prosperous. Moreover, it is possible that in the course of a year or two, when the Water Bill becomes law, smaller areas will be required on account of the conservation of water; and that is a reason why we should, if possible, extend their leases. With conservation of water we shall not require so much land as without it. I come now to another part of the Bill. The latter part of clause 6 provides that—

"When the land upon which any such improvement is made is selected or otherwise disposed of, the lessee shall be entitled to receive as compensation in respect of the improvement such sum as would fairly represent its value to an incoming selector, but not exceeding the amount specified in the license."

I should like to know how that clause will work with the clause in which selection before survey is re-introduced. It appears to me that although the Government have promised the pastoral lessees compensation for improvements on the reserved portions of their runs, anyone who selects before survey may follow up the squatter's fence at a few chains' distance and evade all payment for it, and might even evade payment for a well which he came across. The selector alongside him might do the same, and between the two they will have the use of the wells, and the pastoral lessee will not get one sixpence for his improvements. The same system may be applied to reservoirs, dams, and tanks. I think the Government are making a mistake, notwithstanding what fell from my hon. colleague, the Minister for Works, in abandoning the principle of survey before selection. When this question was before the House in 1884, I introduced that particular clause—clause 44—for various reasons. The first reason was to have the main roads properly defined, that they should be marked out upon high and dry ground so as to save expense to divisional boards, and to prevent the roads from being made through swamps and gullies, as has been the case. By saving this expenditure to the divisional boards a saving is also effected to the Treasury, for if the boards can construct roads on high and dry land at a less cost than otherwise, the Treasurer will not have to contribute so much in the shape of endowment. Another reason was to have townships properly laid out, water reserves proclaimed, and road-making material set aside. A vast amount of unnecessary expense would be saved in this way. Another reason was with regard to future railway construction. Wherever there is a likelihood of a railway being made in the future, main roads should be set apart five or ten chains wide, so as to save the Government afterwards from the expenditure of large sums of money for resumption of land. When I introduced that amendment in 1884 it was unanimously accepted, and I see no reason why the Government should have changed their minds on the subject at this time. You, Mr. Speaker, who have had a very large experience in connection with land and land selection, supported that principle of survey before selection. You said at that time:—

"Anyone who had been regularly attending at the land courts, as he had been, would have noticed many cases in which six or seven individuals entered into competition, each aiming for the same selection. But the result had been that they had had to go to auction, one bidding against the other, and giving prices which were entirely beyond the value of the land which they desired to select."

And so on. You particularly expressed yourself in favour of the principle of survey before selection. The hon. member for Townsville distinctly stated that in America that principle had been a great success, while in New South Wales the principle of general selection before survey had been the cause of all the trouble between the selectors and the squatters. The hon. members for Ipswich, the hon. member for Oxley, the hon. member for Rosewood, the hon. member for Wide Bay—Mr. Mellor—the hon. member for Burke—in fact everyone who spoke—declared that the principle of survey before selection ought to be introduced; and nothing that I can see has happened since to cause the Minister for Lands to change his opinion on this particular point.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: He has changed his views all round since then.

Mr. KATES: With regard to the land-order system, I may say that I believe in it, and shall support it. But some system should be devised by which persons newly arriving from Great Britain may be shown where to go to select their land. To each lot of land there should be a description. There should be said so many acres of arable land, so many acres of timber, so many acres suitable for fruit, so many acres suitable for the vine, so many for potatoes, and so many for cereals. Everything should be put down before him on paper, so that he might select his lot and be put on the land at once so as to prevent him being overlapped by any other applicant, as has been the case. I know in my own district of a man who applied for a piece of land at the land agent's office and after six months, after he had erected a cottage and stock-yard on it, it was found that he had taken another man's piece of land, and he had to clear out. All that would be obviated by survey before selection. The Minister for Lands has surveyed land where it ought never to have been surveyed. Survey before selection applies to good land—the best of the land—and not to inferior land. If the Government can only get people to settle on the land as fast as it is surveyed they will have no reason to be dissatisfied. I come now to that part of the Bill dealing with the sale of land by auction in forty-acre blocks. Now, I admit, and nobody can gainsay it, that this is a breach—a breaking into the principles of the Minister for Lands. Forty acres or 400 acres, it is all the same. But hon. members of this House are in duty bound—matters have gone so far—to come to the rescue of the Treasurer. We must—whether the Government like it or not—we must help them.

I agree with the hon. member for Aubigny that this forty acres should be extended to 640 acres, and that the Government should be limited to sell no more by auction than £100,000 worth per annum. We must put a check in this way on the sale of land by auction. The Minister for Lands may laugh, but the Treasurer does not laugh. I wish to say that the man who buys 640 acres at £1 per acre—if he desires to do so—should have five years' time to pay it in; £128 down and £128 every succeeding year for four years. That would give him the chance to purchase the land. By that means we shall have a considerable income by way of territorial revenue, and it would be a great assistance to the Treasurer if he could save £100,000 in that way and £100,000 by way of immigration—that is, £200,000 in all. It might save us from additional taxation in times to come. In regard to the land-grant system, I agree with hon. members who say that every native-born child who attains the age of eighteen years, and who expresses a willingness to settle on the land and conforms to the regulations, should be entitled to a land-order for £20. I do not believe in giving land-orders to children under twelve years, because the land they could not make use of might be made use of by those who are able to go on the land at once. There is one thing the Minister for Lands omitted to put in this amending Bill, the omission of which had made it very unpopular indeed. That is an impounding clause. The impounding clause in the Act of 1884 had given very considerable dissatisfaction amongst intending grazing farmers. I do not see why grazing farmers, who pay four times as much rent, should not be put on the same footing as the big squatters. Under the principal Act they cannot impound stock trespassing on their selections, while the moment their stock overstep the boundaries on to the squatters' runs the squatters may impound it.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: And will do it.

Mr. KATES: We should prevent them doing it. We should have mutual impounding or none at all. If there is mutual impounding, they are likely to come to a better understanding at once—to come to amicable terms and save hostility and heart-burning. When this Bill goes into committee I shall endeavour, and I hope I shall be supported by members on this side of the House, to amend that impounding clause so as to make the Bill more acceptable to grazing selectors. In regard to the other portion of the Bill—the agricultural portion—we have every reason to be thankful to the Government for introducing the amendments. Clause 11, which allows payment by instalments in regard to survey fees, is a great relief, and will be received with great satisfaction by the people of this country. The 13th clause, allowing the rents to be accepted in payment of the price has also been received, so far as I have been able to ascertain, with considerable satisfaction. In regard to the prevention of cutting down timber, this is also a good amendment, although it has come in rather late. On the whole I can state that this amending Bill has been received on the Darling Downs with considerable satisfaction so far as the agricultural community is concerned. In committee there will be a great deal more to say about it, for we will be better able to criticise the various clauses. I reserve to myself the right when in committee to speak on some other parts in connection with the principal Act, but in the meantime I shall support the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. BLACK said: I am sure the Minister for Lands must have a very good idea now of what ingratitude really means, when we think that only two short years ago that hon. gentleman, with his new principles, was followed—I may say in the most subservient manner—by one of the biggest majorities ever seen in this House. The hon. gentleman has my deepest sympathy to-night when I hear, almost without any exception, those hon. members who so faithfully followed him on that occasion two years ago, have now, to use very mild language, abused him and abused the principles which they were then so enthusiastically in favour of. Why, one of those hon. gentlemen, whom I remember quite well two years ago as an ardent supporter of the principles embodied in this Bill, even suggested—after figuratively drawing several teeth out of the hon. gentleman's head, that he had better go with his new land principle to New Guinea. There is a downfall! That fine new land theory drawn up by the Minister for Lands, and which had been lying dormant, and which the Premier anxiously watched an oppportunity of introducing, was brought to light by him as a land policy which was to save the colony from destruction! But what do we see? As to the amendments proposed in this Bill, I cannot see how the Opposition can strenuously object to any of them. Most of them are such amendments that if any of them had been proposed from this side of the House, and had been carried two years ago, it would have amounted to a defeat of the Government. There is no doubt that to a certain extent the financial failure of this Land Bill may be attributed to the very disastrous seasons that we have had. I admit that more especially in regard to the grazing area portion of the Act. But, Mr. Speaker, now the drought is ended, I am happy to say—now that the present season, at all events, promises to be one of the grandest seasons we have had in Queensland—if the principles embodied in the Land Act of 1884 were of any value, it is just the time they should have a fair trial? But what do we find? That the Government, not having any longer the excuse of the drought, actually bring in an amendment almost entirely reversing the fundamental principles of the Land Act of 1884. I am glad they have seen the error of their ways before it is too late. I can only say that any Government who proposed to go back so entirely upon the principles they advocated two years ago would but for the £10,000,000, and the bribes they held out to constituencies by that loan, be undoubtedly defeated on their general policy. It is a singular thing that the Land Act of 1884 was accompanied by a schedule embodied in the £10,000,000 loan, by which nearly £7,000,000 was devoted to railways, which was the lever that enabled the Land Act of 1884, which has proved so disastrous to the finances of the colony—that enabled those principles to become law; but I notice that it was a singular fact that this afternoon we have had a little schedule of railways brought down, half of which are to be introduced at once, and in the event of progress being fairly favourable with that first schedule, another little schedule is to come on a little later. That is very significant from my point of view, when we consider that the carrying of that Land Act of 1884 was undoubtedly due to that £10,000,000 bribe to constituencies, and that we have had this afternoon this other little schedule of railways, which I look upon as nothing more nor less than a bribe to any hon. members whose constituencies are longing for, and are dependent to a very great extent upon, the expenditure of public money at this time to keep them in existence. Now, I referred to the ingratitude to which the Minister for Lands' followers behind have treated him this evening. It is only on a par with the ingratitude with which the Premier has treated this side

when he said the failure of the Land Act of 1884 is chiefly attributable to the action of the Opposition.

The PREMIER: No.

Mr. BLACK: That, I consider, is really base ingratitude, because all the popular principles contained in the Land Act of 1884 were undoubtedly suggested by, and emanated from this side of the House; and the only thing which made that Act somewhat popular was the reinsertion of the homestead clauses, which was done entirely at the instance of members on this side of the House backed up by popular opinion, undoubtedly, outside. I myself, Mr. Speaker, remember quite well bringing in an amendment by which the homestead selectors—that name does not appear in the Act, but the selector of 160 acres—should not, in any case, pay more than half-a-crown an acre for their land. That amendment emanated from myself. Now, it is a singular thing that in the amendment of the Land Act which we are discussing, the class who are deserving, who through agaitation and by public petitions, and by public meetings, and by the sympathy which, I believe, the whole of the public extend to them—the pastoral community—are the only class whose interests are almost entirely neglected. On the contrary, the class of selectors who are very useful to the community, but who ask for no concessions at all—namely, the homestead selectors—are those who are chiefly considered. We have heard no complaints—I, at any rate, have heard no complaints.

Mr. ISAMBERT: Yes.

Mr. BLACK: They have not complained about the price of their selections being too high—considering that they get their lands at 2s. 6d. an acre. I have not heard any single instance where they have asked that the small survey fee which they have to pay on 160 acres should be extended over five years; but for that class, which is fairly well satisfied with its position, further concessions are being made in this Bill. Another principle which is being inserted is the land-order system, which hitherto has proved a failure, and disastrous to the colony. I have no hesitation in saying that if the land order system is again introduced in like manner, it will be a failure. It is no use saying that these land-orders are not to be transferable. They may not be under this Government, but this Government's tenure of office is—fortunately for the colony—very near its termination; but if they have an opportunity of giving the full effect to the land-order system which they desire, I say that the land-orders will become transferable. They will be given to the people at home, on the distinct understanding that they are worth £20, and when they come out here—when they perhaps find that they cannot get land immediately suitable for them—and they must get it before six months—or they find other occupations give them greater facilities for getting on in life—they will consider that they have a claim to that £20 for something else; and there is no reason why they should be compelled against their will to take up agricultural areas. Supposing that they prefer grazing areas, why should not they be allowed to expend that £20 in paying the rent on a grazing area? There is no provision for it; it is only for agricultural areas. Only men holding from 160 acres downwards are entitled to make use of these land-orders. Why should not they be allowed to make use of their £20 land-orders in the purchase of one of those forty-acre blocks? There is no reason why they should not; but there is no provision made in the Bill for it. I am of opinion that these land-orders will become transferable sooner or later. If this Government does not make them so, some other Government will. Previous land-orders were non-transferable; volunteer land-orders also; but after they were once issued they became an article of commerce. In the same way, these £20 land-orders will be bought for £10, or possibly from £5 upwards; and succeeding Governments will undoubtedly have to recognise these land-orders, which are given undoubtedly as an inducement to people to come out and to pay their own passages. They will be considered of the value of £20, and will become such, to the injury of the revenue of the colony in after years. I am very glad that hon. members, in speaking upon the amending Bill to-night, have criticised it thoroughly. I was not here when the previous debates were on, but, on reading *Hansard*, I saw that nearly all the debates were confined to abuse of the Act of 1884. I must say that probably nothing too severe could have been said upon that Act, but still this is not the occasion for abusing an Act passed by a very large majority of this House. To-night we have had gentlemen confining themselves to this amending Bill, and I propose to review some of the clauses of it, and not again to refer to that pernicious Act of 1884. Clause 5 arranges that the maximum rent for the second and subsequent periods shall not exceed 50 per cent. advance upon that of the previous period. I take it, Mr. Speaker, that that only applies to leases under Part III. of the principal Act. That is the pastoral leases, and I would like, when the time comes to get some information, why the grazing lessee ——

Mr. DONALDSON: They get it.

Mr. BLACK: Or why the agricultural lessee should not have his maximum rent fixed?

The PREMIER: So it is. Try again.

Mr. BLACK: Well, I find the remarks I proposed making on that point are uncalled for. I like to give the Government credit for any good intentions which they display. I notice that the pastoral lessee under clause 7 is to be allowed to make improvements on that portion of the run which he holds under license. No doubt if the lessee can be induced to do it, and if he got a longer security than an annual one, it might prove a very good clause. But I notice lately that the pastoral lessee is debited in the valuation of improvements with 7 per cent. for depreciation, and I point out that a pastoral lessee may make an improvement on the portion of his run held under license; it may be a valuable improvement costing £1,000, and it may be destroyed by flood or by fire if it happened to be a fence, or very likely a grazing-area man may come in in twelve months' time and take that improvement at cost price, less 7 per cent. for depreciation, to the serious detriment of the squatter. I do not know if it was ever intended that the clause should work in that way. It is quite likely that a tank which has cost £1,000 may really be worth to a grazing-area lessee £2,000 or £3,000 on its becoming full; but the actual cost of improvements which the lessee is entitled to put on the licensed portion of his run is to be fixed before he commences his improvement; and I think, in all fair justice to the pastoral lessee, he might be allowed the actual value of that improvement to an incoming tenant, quite irrespective of the sum he is authorised by the Land Board to expend upon it. There is one clause—clause 9, Part III., of this Bill—about which there appears to me to be some misconception. I have seen it stated in the Press, and I have heard hon. members in this House state, that the principle of selection before survey is to be reverted to in this Bill. Now, the principle of selection before survey in the Act of 1876

was this: A selector—I am referring now specially to agricultural selectors—being desirous to get a piece of land, could get his horse and ride about, and when he came to a piece of land which he thought would be suitable he could put down his peg and chain off the area he wanted. He had, of course, to abide by certain regulations as to the direction of boundaries, but having done that he went to the Lands Office, put in his application, and in due course of time, in all probability, his application would be accepted. If he chose to select a bad piece of land it was his own fault; but it having been once proved that he was the prior applicant, before any survey was effected he could commence operations. That was known as selection before survey. When the Act of 1884 was passed that was done away with by an amendment moved by the hon. member for Darling Downs, Mr. Kates, and the principle of survey before selection was introduced. A further clause was introduced—I think the Bill was recommitted for the purpose—as the Minister for Lands pointed out that it would be impossible to get surveys completed to keep pace with the demand for settlement. A clause was therefore introduced by which the Surveyor-General had power for two years to mark off selections on maps in his office. That was some modification of the principle, but it has proved a very unsatisfactory one, because selectors have been unable to identify the blocks when they went on the ground. It gave rise to great uncertainty, and to my own knowledge, especially in the North, it has tended greatly to retard settlement. Then, last session, in the amended Act of 1885, a new principle was introduced, which was the reintroduction of the principle of selection before survey in certain scheduled districts. Those districts extended as far north as Rockhampton, and it has been a complaint amongst the northern residents that selection before survey prevailed in the southern portion of the colony, while survey before selection was regarded as a necessity in the North. It was justly considered an injustice that there should be one land law for the North and another for the South. The principle of office survey was to extend for two years, and will lapse at the end of this year, as far as I can see. Reading this 9th clause it simply continues that principle of office survey, which I consider is one of the most pernicious systems of survey ever introduced. It is not a survey at all, and roads and reserves are mapped out in the office without any regard to the natural features of the country. A road may be laid down over a mountain or through a deep waterhole, and it is impossible for the Surveyor-General to survey the land according to the real requirements of the people in the district. The consequence is that it has been found that selection under that principle has been very much retarded. I think this is a very bad clause, and I hope the Minister for Lands will amend it when the time comes, in this direction. I hope that until the surveys can be actually made on the ground he will extend the schedule, which now ceases at Rockhampton, to the northern portion of the colony, but not as this Bill provides. I think it would be most injurious to allow selection before survey in the pastoral districts of the colony, though it may safely be done in the agricultural districts of the North.

The PREMIER: That is what is proposed.

Mr. BLACK: It is not in the Bill.

The PREMIER: Yes, it is!

Mr. BLACK: Perhaps the Premier will tell me where it is proposed in the Bill.

The PREMIER: You had better read it.

Mr. BLACK: The hon. gentleman had better read it himself. Several hon. members have said in this House that the principle of selection before survey is contained in this Bill, but it is nothing of the sort. I know that the *Courier* and *Queenslander* have published the statement to the country that selection before survey is a principle of the Bill. I say it should be, but it is not. It should be in respect of agricultural areas, but not in the pastoral areas. Now, clause 10 has not been particularly referred to by any hon. members. It refers to improvements on unsurveyed land, and provides that their value need not be stated in the proclamation. Now, I believe it has been stated in justification of this, that after land has been gazetted, the improvements may be considerably depreciated during the two or three years that it is open to selection. That may be the reason, but there is no reason why the improvement should not be revalued when it is selected. It is unjust to expect a selector to go to an office—and these selections are not to be marked on the ground—take up a selection which he fancies is unimproved, and afterwards be told that he has to pay a considerable sum for improvements. Why on earth should we not keep to the system of the 1884 Act, that when the land is gazetted as being open for selection the value of the improvements is also to be gazetted? If the land is not selected for three or four years, let there be a revaluation, but let the selector know what he is doing and not be expected to take a pig in a poke. It may turn out, especially on a grazing area, that he is liable for improvements to the extent of £400 or £500, of which he was not aware when he took up the selection. Clause 11 refers to agricultural farms, the area of which does not exceed 160 acres—what are known as homestead selections. Valuable as selectors of this class have undoubtedly proved themselves to be, I maintain that they are not the only class that requires consideration if an amendment is going to be brought in. Hon. gentlemen must bear in mind that they get their land at an unusually low price—half-a-crown an acre; while anyone requiring land of the same quality in an area of 320 acres, or from that to 1,280 acres, has to pay £1 an acre. They get exceptional privileges; they are able easily to acquire the freehold of their land; five years' residence is all that is asked of them; their survey fee is divided into five equal instalments, and added to the rent; so that a freehold is practicable. I know the hon. Minister for Lands had said before, and will probably repeat it, that the freehold system has not been eradicated by the 1884 Land Act; I say it has to a very great extent. Although we are told that a selector up to 1,280 acres can obtain the freehold, I say it is under such conditions as to render it almost impracticable for him to do it. The Act requires no less than ten years' personal residence. Now, I would like to ask hon. gentlemen how many of them are there in the House—how many people are there in the whole colony who would pledge themselves to go and reside for ten years in a particular spot?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: They are not selectors.

Mr. BLACK: How do we know what their necessities may be before ten years elapse? After they have resided seven or eight years their health may fail, especially after residing in the tropics of the North, and they may have to take a change. When they come back they find that their seven or eight years of *bonâ fide* residence have been thrown away; after being absent, say twelve months, they cannot put in the balance of the ten years, but have to recommence. I say it is unjust, and

though this Government may not repeal it, it is perfectly certain that such an unjust condition as that will not long prevail. And now, Mr. Speaker, I shall say a few words about the ideas which I know actuate the majority of those who have been taking up land under the grazing area clause, and also under the agricultural sections of the Act of 1884. They do not believe in the leasehold system ; their hearts are wedded to freeholds, and freeholds they will have. Anyone who wishes to have land, especially the man who can get 20,000 acres, I advise him to take as much land as he can get under this Act ; for we shall see the day, and not at a very distant date, when the whole of these leaseholds will be converted into freeholds.

The PREMIER : Good advice !—disinterested advice !—honest advice !

Mr. BLACK : It is honest advice ; it is for the good of the country. I have no hesitation in saying it. I do not go forth and humbug the people ; I tell them plainly what I think on the subject, and that is the idea that prevails in the minds of the majority of those who select under the Act of 1884. They are told they are never to get freehold. They laugh at the idea, and the man who is now following the advice of the Government and taking up 20,000 acres of land will in ten or fifteen years' time be looked upon as a gigantic land monopolist. When this Bill goes into committee I would like to see the amendment, by which in the case of the homestead selector the survey fee is divided over five years, extended to the case of the selector of a larger area, more especially as he pays eight times as much—that is the minimum —for his land as the smaller man does. Now, it has been said by some hon. members on the other side that it would be a good thing to have large areas of land surveyed for homestead selectors. Well, that might do, and I would have no objection to see the principle tried ; but I know what experience has taught me. The homestead selector, especially in the northern portion of the colony, likes to get alongside a big selector. Mind, it is different down here in the South, where the small selector has a market for his produce ; but the homestead selector in the North looks to his labour. What he wants is a homestead selection to keep his wife and family on, and form a home, while he seeks work elsewhere. Put down 100 homestead selectors in one little group by themselves, to live upon one another, and they will starve. I only say starve figuratively ; they will not really starve, because they can grow enough to feed themselves and their families ; but they will not be satisfied with that, and as soon as they obtain their freeholds, which they do in five years, so soon will they sell out the whole of the homestead selections, if anyone will come and buy. I may tell you why it is the homestead selector takes up this land. He takes it up because he gets for half-a-crown what anyone else has to pay £1 for, and he takes it up for the purpose of making money. It is his home for a certain time until he obtains his deeds ; but in the majority of instances he will be only too ready to sell out to someone who will buy the whole aggregation of homestead selectors out. The 13th clause, which says that the rent paid for ten years preceding the time at which a man becomes entitled to his holding is to be treated as part of the purchase money, applies, of course, to the agricultural selector. I fail to see why only ten years should be credited to him. It is possible he may have to pay fifteen or twenty years' rent before he is able to make it freehold. But I would point out that if he has failed to acquire the freehold, which can only be acquired by ten years' personal residence—if he has only resided, say, eight years personally—his land will be re-assessed, and in proportion as his rental increases so will the purchasing price increase. It is really like dangling a bunch of carrots before a donkey. He will never get any nearer to the freehold. If his rent is increased 50 per cent. by that amount will the purchasing price also be increased. But the most radical alteration in principle in this Bill is that referring to the sale by auction of country lands. Although the Minister for Lands—I read his speech on the second reading of the Bill—intimated that this was merely for the purpose of allowing some churches and chapels to get land, I think it means something very much deeper than that. I notice the Treasurer smiling. No doubt he smiled when he heard that reason given for the re-introduction of the principle. It says that forty acres is to be the maximum area in one survey. That alone is a blot on the Bill. What does it mean ? Does the Treasurer really mean that only a few of these forty-acre blocks are to be sold ? We know perfectly well that this is a clause introduced and brought about by the necessities of the Treasury—to increase the Treasury funds by the sale of country lands by auction ; and hon. members will find before twelve months have elapsed that something like 80,000 or 100,000 acres of land have been sold under this very clause. But we shall amend this clause in committee. To sell the land in forty-acre blocks would be a most injurious system ; it will lead to what they call "peacocking." Anyone wishing to secure the use of a large tract of country can, under this system, take his pick of the very best. He could take the waterholes and leave out the stony ridges. A great deal was said about what the late Government did with regard to selling land on the Peak Downs, and I believe that that was what gave rise to the subsequent intention to prevent the sale of land by auction in the future ; but I feel certain that a majority of those who were supposed to have got their land at the low price of 10s. an acre would be glad—only too glad—to let the Government have it back at the same price if the Government would compensate them for their improvements. That 10s. per acre which the late Government got for this land at 5 per cent., represents an annual sum of 6d. per acre—more than the Minister for Lands is ever likely to get under the leasing clauses of this new Bill. That is a radical change in the land policy of the Government, and I am very glad to see it. We did all we could to get this principle introduced in the Act of 1884, but every suggestion that came from this side was received with the greatest suspicion on the other. About this land-order system, I am not at all certain how it is going to result. If hon. members like to see the principle tried again, I suppose it will have to be tried. It has not been a success in the past, and I have given some reasons why I do not think it is likely to be a success in the future. There is rather a singular clause here—clause 20. I suppose it is intended as a joke, but the Government seem so determined to force these land-orders on persons paying their own passages from home that they are resolved to give them to men even after they are dead :—

"If any person in respect of whom a land-order warrant is issued dies before the issue of the land-order in respect thereof, the Governor in Council may, nevertheless, direct the issue of the land-order to the person to whom the warrant was issued."

There is no doubt about it. It must be given to the man who is dead, even if they have to bury it with him. And if they cannot do that, it may be issued "to any member of his family who emigrated with him from Europe to Queensland, and who is resident in Queensland." I suppose

that is a misprint. I do not fancy the Minister for Lands is much given to joking. This land legislation has been so serious a matter that I do not suppose the hon. gentleman has willingly indulged in jokes since he entered the Lands Office.

The PREMIER: That is the most serious criticism you have made yet.

Mr. BLACK: Seeing the growing impatience of the Premier, I shall not detain the House much longer, especially as I believe some other hon. members wish to speak. There is, however, one very important subject to which I have omitted to refer—that is, the concession which I consider should be made to the pastoral lessees. I should have no hesitation in giving them a twenty-one years' lease, or even a thirty years' lease, subject to a reasonable periodical adjustment of rent—five years is too short a time; I would make it seven years — on the condition that, in the event of any portion of the run being required at some future time, the Government shall have the power—if strictly for the necessities of the country—to resume, on giving due notice and on paying compensation. Indeed, subject to those conditions, I should have no hesitation in giving even a forty years' lease. I consider that the pastoral lessee in occupation has undoubtedly a prior right to be the future tenant of that land, if he is prepared to give what the country thinks at that time is a fair rent that the country should receive.

Mr. STEVENS: I thought of moving the adjournment of the debate, but I understand that the Government are very anxious that the debate should be concluded this evening, and as I believe that no other hon. members wish to speak, I have no objection to say what I have to say now. I think the Government are to be congratulated on bringing in this Bill, not only for some of the subject matter of the Bill, but for having the moral courage to bring it in. I consider that the main feature of the case. It is always a difficulty in a man or a Government, after having once put their foot down firmly in one direction, to have to acknowledge that they were in some measure wrong—more especially when they know the amount of criticism they are bound to receive at the hands of hon. members. Taking the Bill exactly as it is from a squatter's point of view, I say that the concessions proposed to be granted to them are of the very slightest nature indeed. One thing which has been sought to be obtained by the pastoral lessees, but has not been granted, is an extension of their leases. That is the chief thing that they required, and without it all the concessions mentioned in the Bill are a mere trifle. I was very agreeably surprised to find that a great deal of the old rancour and old party feeling has died out since the Act of 1884 was made law. Several members at that time spoke in the very strongest terms of the pastoral lessees, but now, if they cannot say much in their favour, they do not, at any rate, say much against them. I propose to speak on some of the clauses of the Bill, though not to deal with them in their entirety, as that would be impossible, without repeating much that has fallen from hon. members. I approve of the 3rd clause, which deals with the extension of time for coming under the Bill. It gives an opportunity to those lessees, who failed to understand the Act until the time for coming under the Bill had lapsed, to do so now. I think it is a very good thing indeed that they have now an opportunity of coming under the Act. The 4th section is one which might be very dangerously used. It deals with the repeal of the 29th section of the principal Act, subsection 6, paragraph (*c*), which provides that in making a division of a run—

> "The whole resumed part is to be in one block, and where practicable shall be separated from the remainder of the run by one straight line, and at least one-fourth of the external boundaries shall be coincident with the original boundaries of the run."

Under this clause a run can be divided into several portions. I can understand that in the event of townships being formed on a run it would be desirable to divide the run differently from what is done at the present time. But it is just possible that the clause might be used in a very bad way indeed as regards pastoral tenants. There has not been a great deal of discussion on that, and I am not prepared to say that I will vote against the clause, but it is worthy of very great consideration. One of the clauses of most importance is No. 5, which provides that the maximum rent shall not be more than 50 per cent. of the rent of the preceding period. I am one of those who think it would be far better not to have that clause—far better to leave the thing stand as at present than to mention such a high figure as 50 per cent. I do not think any land court or any Government would ever dream of imposing such an increase, but, at the same time, if in the future a Government were pressed for money, or the land board had peculiar views on this subject, they might, in defence of imposing such a tax as 50 per cent. increase, point to the Act and say, "Parliament authorised us to do it, and if it had not been considered by the House that 50 per cent. was not too great it would not have been there." I think it would be far better if this clause was expunged altogether than that it should become law. Clause 6 is a good one. It gives pastoral lessees the opportunity of putting improvements on the resumed portion of a run and obtaining compensation for them in the event of the land being selected. I think it will be the means of large sums of money being expended, and it will be a very great benefit to the country, as that land will be so much improved and rendered more fit for settlement. Clause 7, which deals with giving the Government power to open roads, is one that requires consideration. It does not mention what sort of roads, whether ordinary roads for traffic or large stock roads. I know of more runs than one on a river in the Western interior where a road, I consider, being declared open along the river frontage, would practically ruin the run. In some places the good country only runs along the river and is backed up by ridges and inferior country, and to open up a road through that would practically ruin the run. Clause 10 deals with the valuation of improvements on land which has been selected, and provides that the value of the improvements need not be stated in the proclamation. I think that would act very injuriously indeed in regard to selectors. This was shown with great force a short time ago, but I cannot help saying something on it myself. It is just possible that a selector might apply for a piece of land with valuable improvements on it. The actual value might appear to be little to him, and in the event of his not being able to pay for these improvements on getting the land with the improvements, he would be a considerable loser, as he would forfeit his deposit. That would be bad for the selector. I think this clause should be altered so that these improvements could be valued from time to time, say, perhaps every few months, so that selectors would know exactly what they are doing. With regard to the clauses dealing with homestead selections, I am heartily in accord with them. I think we cannot do too much to encourage selectors of this

class. Every succeeding Government has done its best to encourage men to take up land in small areas for farming purposes. That always should be an object of any Government—to deal with the land so as to encourage that most desirable class of men—the men of most value to us. I cannot agree with subsection 5 of clause 11. I think that selectors should be allowed to obtain their land in fee-simple, even if it has been occupied by a bailiff instead of by themselves. It is impossible for a man to live continuously five or ten years on a selection without leaving it. The man's health may break down, or he may have very important business in some other part of the colony or in the other colonies, or other parts of the world. It might be of greater importance to him to go away for a time than to live on the land in order to obtain the freehold. I think that concession may be very wisely made to the homestead selectors in this instance. With regard to clause 13, I think a selector should be allowed to place his rent towards the purchase of the land. At any time during his lease, either for ten, twenty-five, or fifty years, he should be allowed to place the rent of his land to his credit. Clause 15 is one that I cannot see my way to agree to. It deals with the sale of timber upon agricultural farms, which is prohibited except where permission is granted. I am free to admit that selections are occasionally taken up with the view simply of taking the timber off and abandoning the land. I know that in the Logan district a great number of selectors have taken up land, knowing that they can pay the rent in a great measure by the sale of the timber. If they are prevented from felling the timber and selling it as timber instead of firewood, or for other purposes mentioned in the clause, it will be one of the strongest means I know of for thoroughly crippling them. We should give them every encouragement we can, and if the country loses in a small degree by the destruction of the timber it would be better to allow that, than that the bulk of the selectors in the timbered districts should be placed in difficulties. The second paragraph of the clause gives the commissioner power to give permission, on such conditions as may be prescribed. I do not know how the commissioner is to know whether a man is a *bonâ fide* selector, or simply a timber-getter in the ordinary sense of the word; and why should the power be left in his hands? Two men may come to him, and one may say, "I cannot get on with my selection; I cannot pay the rent, or buy seed corn or implements, and I wish to sell the timber for the purpose of getting the money." The commissioner may say to one, "I believe your tale," and to the other, "I do not believe your tale." I say that a power like that should be at the discretion of no man, and I think that a selector should be allowed to sell his timber to the best advantage that he possibly can. With regard to the land-order system, I may say that I fully approve of it. I do not see the disadvantages that are likely to accrue from it which have been pointed out by several hon. members. I forget which hon. gentleman it was; but one, I think, sitting on the Ministerial side of the House, said that an immigrant on arriving in the colony would be perfectly ignorant as to how to make a living upon a selection, and might wander about for six months looking for land, after which time the land-order would be lost to him. Such a case might be met by extending the period to twelve months. Any immigrant of any ordinary intelligence will learn, long before twelve months has expired, which occupation or land will suit him best. I do not think there is much in the arguments used against the system. I think it may be the means of introducing a very desirable class of immigrants. The men who will come out will be those who intend to follow the pursuit of farming. I do not think that a different class coming out will expect to become farmers here any more than they did in the old country. They will know that they will require certain knowledge in connection with farming, and those who have that will be the men who will avail themselves of this privilege. Another good point about the system is that the men pay their passages in actual coin, and we give them a little more in value as a land-order, and by that means we save so many pounds per head to the Government. That point alone is well worthy of consideration.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: What about posterity?

Mr. STEVENS: What has posterity done for us? That posterity horse can be ridden too far. I do not think that I should detain the House any longer. The Bill has been thoroughly well thrashed out from beginning to end. I will simply say a word or two in reference to what has fallen from some hon. members in regard to the extension of pastoral leases. If surrounded by proper conditions, it will be utterly impossible for any harm to accrue to the country from that. One hon. member suggested that the leases should be extended to twenty-one years—that an increased term of years should be added to the original lease, and that it should be provided that, if the country required it, one-fourth of the land might be resumed as under the present Act. That would be one very good regulation, and there are a dozen other conditions that might be suggested in connection with it. But to say that it is impossible to give a lessee a lease of twenty-one years without serious harm to the country is simply nonsense. We are here to make laws, and we can frame them in such a manner that no harm can come to the country through our so doing. It has been pointed out that large sums of money were obtained by the sales of stations some years ago, and not only the Government but a very large portion of the inhabitants of the colony thought that the pastoral lessees could stand a very much increased rent. But subsequent events have proved that that was a fallacy. There is not the slightest doubt that prices were inflated to a very great extent, and those who purchased have suffered materially since. But it does not prove that because at one time, under very peculiar circumstances, the pastoral tenants were able to get large prices for their runs, they are able to stand the rents which it is proposed to put upon them. I maintain that from the tone of the debate there is a strong probability of such a concession as an extension to twenty-one years' tenure being made, and that it will be so surrounded with conditions that there will not be the slightest danger of any harm accruing to the country.

Mr. GOVETT said: Mr. Speaker,—At the opening of this debate it was said by the hon. member for Cook, Mr. Hill, that the squatters in one or two districts out west had expended in improvements something like £1,500,000. I am quite in accord with what the hon. member stated with regard to the position of the settlers out west. I can speak confidently of what has taken place in the Western country — that £1,500,000 has been expended under my own notice during the last twenty years. We have been told this evening by an hon. member, whom I firmly believe, and whom the majority, or nearly all, the members of this House take considerable notice of—the hon. member for Townsville, Mr. Brown—that the pastoralists of Queensland have lost, during this severe drought,

some six millions of money. That, too, I believe, because I am quite sure that the hon. member who stated it has very good means of ascertaining. Now, what the pastoralists wish for is that the Government should establish confidence with the people who lend money to the pastoralists. That is what we, as squatters, require, and if we do not get assistance in that way the present holders must go down. They will not be able to carry on unless the men who lend them money are given confidence, and I hold that the only way to do that is to treat them liberally. I think that the extension of their leases to twenty-one years would be only a reasonable extension. The Act of 1884 has given the men who are to come in as pastoral tenants of the Crown—grazing farmers—a lease for thirty years. Why, then, I ask, are the members of this House and the Government not willing to give the pastoral tenants a twenty-one years' lease for the unresumed portion of their runs? The men who hold grazing farms have many advantages given them. The roads through grazing farms are to be ten chains wide, whereas the roads through pastoral leases have to be a mile in width. That will make a very great difference. So that the pastoral lessees, if they hold the country for twenty-one years, will still have to contend against greater difficulties than the smaller men —the holders of grazing farms. A great deal has been said about the settlement of people on the land. I remember, when the Act of 1884 was going through, I said I was thoroughly in favour of freeholds. I claim to have as great a desire to see this country settled by a population of small farmers—provided they can do well—as any member of this House. I am a thorough believer in freeholds, and thoroughly approved of the homestead clauses at that time, and I think there was not a squatter on this side of the House who was not in favour of the homestead clauses being inserted in the Bill. I am very pleased to find an amendment brought in by the Government, but I certainly do not think that the Bill in its present form will be of any use at all to the pastoral tenants. I think that after the statement made to-night, that six millions of money have been lost by the pastoral tenants, some concession should be made in the direction of an extension of their leases so as to give confidence to those who lend them money, and I hope the Government will yet see their way to grant it.

Mr. McWHANNELL said: Mr. Speaker,—If it were not that I represent a pastoral constituency I would not, at this late hour, inflict upon the House the remarks I intend to make upon this Bill. I am sorry that I cannot congratulate the Government upon the Bill before us. I find fault not only with what is contained in the Bill, but also, and more especially, that really the principal clause originally drafted in it should have been cut out. I consider that the Premier has not shown any real good cause or justification for his action in this matter. Looking at the Bill as a whole I consider it a very poor production to come from a Liberal Government. They may consider it a liberal measure, but I consider it an illiberal and ill-advised piece of legislation. The principles laid down in this Bill are entirely at variance with the original Act, and I imagine that the colleagues of the Minister for Lands must have given him a very nauseous pill in asking him to bring this Bill before the House. From the coldness and apathy with which he introduced it, and the very meagre description and explanation he gave of it, any hon. member could see that his heart was not with it, and that he did not believe in the production which I presume he was forced to bring forward. He told us, when introducing the Bill, more about his own grievances than anything contained in the Bill. He told us he was maligned and accused of want of sympathy with the class to which he had belonged, and said he was considered a renegade from that class. I am afraid the hon. gentleman was suffering from a guilty conscience, as I did not hear any hon. member abuse him in that way since the Bill was introduced. I give the hon. gentleman my advice, and it is this: If the cap does not fit him he should not wear it. Looking at the principal Act introduced in 1884, I believe it was the means of revolutionising our land laws, and assisted largely in paralysing our leading industry and bringing about the present circumstances of bankruptcy and ruin in the colony. I say it has assisted largely to bring about that. I do not say that the present state of bankruptcy and adversity has been brought about entirely by that Bill, but in a large measure it has. Financial institutions that would before have advanced money on pastoral investments lost confidence when they found that the land laws of the colony were liable to be tampered with by any Government that might come into power. The colony was in very similar circumstances in the years 1868 and 1869. At that time we were suffering from severe depression, and the Government of the day considered it necessary to introduce the Pastoral Leases Act of 1869. That Act was introduced under circumstances very similar to those existing now. That Act was far more advantageous to the pastoral tenants than either this Bill or the principal Act. It restored confidence in the leading industry of the colony, and the settlement, progress, and advancement of the colony travelled hand in hand with the prosperity of our leading industry. We have only to look back to that time to find that the country was settled even to the western boundary. Stations were formed and stocked up; improvements were made, and the whole colony prospered hand in hand with the leading industry. At that time we had a Liberal Government in every sense of the word, and a Government that advanced with the times. I ask hon. members to contrast the policy of that Government with the policy of the present Government; to contrast that Land Act with the Land Act of to-day, and I feel sure they will readily admit that our land policy is one of stagnation and ruin, and that our Government have yet to live and learn how to legislate for a prosperous land policy.

Mr. ANNEAR: Giving the drought in?

Mr. McWHANNELL: I can inform the House, Mr. Speaker, that the drought of 1868 and 1869 was only second to the drought we have just come out of in some parts of the colony. I can assure hon. gentlemen that in the part of the colony I come from we have not suffered less than in 1868, although the loss of stock in that year was not so great. At that time there was a lot of country to the westward to which stock could go and find fresh pasture; in which there were large rivers unoccupied, abundance of water, and although the grass was very dry, yet it was the means of saving the whole of the stock in the Western country. Now I will just turn to the Bill and refer to a few clauses. I notice that by section 3 the pastoral tenants are allowed till the end of the year to come under the Act. I think that is a very necessary concession, but I am not quite sure but that the concession is more apparent than real, because if the Government are to allow this 7 per cent. to be deducted from the value of improvements I fail to see where the saving under the Act comes in; and although I do not go to extremes and do not quite uphold the amendments introduced by the hon. member for Cook, Mr. Hill, yet I think that more tenants

would go from under the Act than would come under it, if they were allowed to do so. However, I hold that when a man makes a bad bargain he has a right to stick to it if possible. With regard to clause 4, I consider that it is a very necessary one to enable the Land Board to make a fair division of runs, but I also think that the suggestion of the hon. member for Warrego (Mr. Donaldson) was a very happy one, that the clause should be surrounded by safeguards so that pastoral tenants should not be made to suffer too much. We know man is only mortal, and although we may have every confidence and trust in our present Land Board, in a few years to come we do not know who may compose the board, and therefore I think it is a very necessary thing to surround the clause with some greater safeguards. The maximum rate fixed by clause 5 I consider a very absurd one, in so far as it is of no practical use whatever to any pastoral tenant. It may suit the whim and fancy of unpractical men, but anyone who has any practical idea of the value of station properties and the returns made from them will see that this 50 per cent. maximum is a rent that no pastoral tenant will ever be able to pay. They will simply have to abandon their holdings and clear out. With regard to clause 6, I give the Government every credit for trying to improve the public estate at the expense of the tenants. Some pastoral tenants may make improvements, but a great many will think twice before they will do any such thing, when a selector can come along and select the land round the improvements, and when there is no certainty that he will be able to pay their full value. Perhaps this 7 per cent. deduction may again come in here. The 7th section in this Bill embraces a much more serious question than hon. members imagine, at least so far as it concerns the pastoral tenant. It will be an utter impossibility for stockowners in the West to get their stock to market, or get their goods up from port, unless they have the usual stock roads of a mile in width. I hold, and have always held, the opinion that pastoral lessees should not be charged any rent on that part of the country used as stock roads. For instance, if the stock road ran through twenty or thirty miles of a holding, the pastoral tenant should be allowed to have that twenty or thirty miles without paying any rent for it. The annoyance that every pastoral tenant is put to on account of these roads running through his property is more than the country is worth. I consider that stock roads throughout the colony should be gazetted, and I hope the Minister for Lands will give that matter his attention during the recess. It is now some two years since he promised to do so, and I trust that he will not allow another session to come round without fixing these roads. Section 9, I take it, means selection before survey. Now, as this has proved the greatest curse in the neighbouring colony, I certainly hope that hon. members will not allow the clause to pass as it stands. If the eyes of the country are allowed to be picked out, the creation of large estates must follow; and I believe it is the object of hon. gentlemen opposite to prevent the aggregation of land in large quantities. There is one thing I would like to bring under the notice of this House, and that is that people travelling with stock in search of grass and water can at any time come in and select land in country open to selection, pay the rent for one year, and then abandon it. That does the pastoral tenants a great injury and it will eventually do the State a great injury. There is no penalty attached to that form of grass pirating throughout the country, and I am afraid it will be found a great and growing nuisance. That part of the original Act under which such things are permissible ought, I think, to be amended, as both the pastoral lessee and the State are injured. Under clause 12, I hope hon. members will be prepared to grant the same privileges to the pastoral tenants that are granted to grazing farmers. I am quite prepared to go so far as to say that I would be very glad to assist hon. members in supporting any clause that will conduce to the settlement of the people on the land. I believe it is generally understood that the pastoral tenants object to settlement on the lands. But I think, sir, quite differently. I should like to see a large yeoman population on the land; they would be found useful many times. We should be able to go and get good labourers in the busy times, and moreover we should have a good market for our stock, at all events for the present. The 4th clause of this Bill is one I cannot understand; it is wonderful how sensitive the state of the Treasury makes the Government. They refused, I believe, £70,000 or £80,000 for land sold under the old Act, and now we see them coming down with forty-acre selections and throwing them at the public for church purposes. I am very much afraid that we shall soon have churches all over the colony to convince the Government of the error of their ways, to convert the wilderness into a heaven, and the lands into large estates. I think I shall reserve a great deal of what I intended to say until the Bill goes into committee; but I shall point out that I believe this Bill was brought in in answer to a general feeling throughout the colony, a feeling the substance of which we have heard day after day in the petitions presented to this House. I look upon this Bill, sir, as no concession to those petitions. The principal clause, or at least the first suggestion in those petitions, was that there should be an extension of tenure to the pastoral tenants. I believe that would remedy all the evil that exists at present; that it would enable the pastoral tenants to go on with improvements; that it would give work to the unemployed; and, in fact, enable the colony to recover its prosperity. Therefore, sir, I trust hon. members will give this Bill their earnest consideration when it gets into committee; that they will look at it from a broad point of view, and not from any narrow and restricted point of view of class prejudice; and that they will have in view the prosperity of the whole colony and the conferring of the greater benefit on the greater number.

Mr. HIGSON: Mr. Speaker,—I beg to move the adjournment of the debate.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: No, no!

Mr. HIGSON: Several hon. members wish to speak yet.

The PREMIER: Mr. Speaker,—It is of very great importance that this debate should close this evening. We have been already a fortnight on this Bill, and hon. members, some of them, deal with it as if it were opening up the whole subject of the land law. If that is to be so we shall not be able to finish the session before February, and I suppose hon. members do not wish the session to last till then. This Bill has been debated at greater length than any Land Bill has ever been debated here before, and I think we should be very wrong if we did not dispose of the second reading this evening.

Mr. BLACK: Mr. Speaker,—Although I quite agree with the Premier that it is desirable to finish to-night, still I do not think the debate has lasted any longer than the importance of the subject requires. In this so-called amended Land Bill, we have virtually a new Bill, dealing with a new principle not embodied in the pre-

vious Act, and therefore hon. members who wish to speak on the subject should not be debarred from doing so, even if we stop up another hour to-night. I do not think the debate should be further adjourned; but at the same time I take exception to the remarks of the Premier that the debate has been unnecessarily prolonged, considering the importance of the Bill.

Mr. HIGSON: Mr. Speaker,—I think I should be failing in my duty if I let such an important measure——

The SPEAKER: The hon. member can only speak by withdrawing the motion.

Mr. HIGSON: I beg to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. HIGSON: I think I should be failing in my duty if I let such an important question as this pass without saying a few words. I think it is one of the most important questions that has come before the House since I have been a member. It means greatly quicker progress to the colony if we legislate the right way. If we look back the last couple of years at the disastrous drought, I think we shall see that it is our duty to try and assist those who have suffered by it, and legislate in the direction that will soonest bring round prosperity. What is the use of borrowing ten millions to construct railways, and taxing ourselves to pay the interest, if we do not legislate to have something to carry on those railways? I consider that the pastoral tenants have been the making of the colony from the first, and are the mainstay of the colony at the present time. If we have no exports to send from the colony, we must go to the wall; and we are in duty bound to assist the pastoral tenants by extending their leases from five to six years more. We shall then induce foreign capital to be invested, and have something to carry on our railways. When the pastoral tenants were numerous there were any amount of carriers on the roads; there were goods going up the country, and there was wool coming down to keep the railways going. But what do we see even now when we have a good season? Our railways are still falling off. If we do not give the pastoral tenants a helping hand it will be years before we are in a prosperous condition again; and by extending their tenure a few years we shall not retard settlement. I believe in settlement, but if the land already resumed is settled, even within the next forty years, we shall be travelling faster than any other colony. There is no other colony so sparsely populated as ours, and in none is there so much land settled upon as we have resumed already. Again, if we extend the leases to twenty-one years, it would not be more than equal to the fifteen years granted at the time; for if we travel over the colony at the present time, where it was beautiful country a few years ago, luxuriantly grassed, now the very roots have died out, and it will take years to re-grass it again. Twenty-one years at the present time would only be equal to fifteen years had there been good seasons all along. Every hon. member ought seriously to consider this matter. The prosperity of the colony hinges upon the pastoralists, and if we were to extend their tenure to twenty-one years we should do an injustice to no one, and should be sending the colony along quicker than by simply ignoring them. I only wish I was able to express my views better. I am not a pastoralist myself, but I have had a good deal to do with matters connected with them, and have watched the rise and fall of the colony at different periods; and I have no hesitation in saying that by granting this extension of tenure we should be forwarding the interests of the entire colony, for every man in the colony, whether wealthy or not, is largely interested in the welfare of the pastoralists.

Question—That the Bill be now read a second time—put and passed; and committal of the Bill made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER, in moving the adjournment of the House, said that to-morrow, after consideration of the message from the Legislative Council, it was proposed to proceed with Committee of Supply.

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