Queensland

Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 18 JUNE 1889

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, 18 *June*, 1889.

Questions.—Petitions—grants to Schools of Art—railway from Brisbane to the Southern border.—Formal Motion.—Crown Lands Acts, 1884 to 1886, Amendment Bill—second reading.—Adjournment.

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

QUESTIONS.

Mr. JESSOP asked the Minister for Railways—

Is it the intention of the Government to lay on the table of the House this session the plan, section, and book of reference for the first section of the Dalby to Bunya Mountain railway?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. H. M. Nelson) replied—

The necessary plans, etc., of the railway from Dalby to the Bunya Mountain will probably be ready in the course of a month; and if so, it is the intention of the Government to lay the same on the table of the House during the present session for approval.

Mr. JESSOP asked the Minister for Lands—

Is it the intention of the Government to throw open for selection under the Mineral Lands Act the reserve known as the coal land at Dingo Point?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. M. H. Black) replied—

This reserve is at present reserved for railway purposes. So soon as the plans are approved by Parliament, the balance not required for railway purposes will be disposed of to the best advantage to the public interest.

PETITIONS.

GRANTS TO SCHOOLS OF ART.

Mr. GRIMES presented a petition from the vice-president and secretary of the School of Arts, Rocklea, having reference to the endowment now granted by the Government to schools of art, and praying that the House would afford such relief as it might think fit. The petition was similar to those previously presented; and he moved that it be received.

Question put and passed.

Mr. SAYERS presented a petition from the chairman and secretary of the School of Arts, Charters Towers, of similar purport and prayer; and moved that it be received.

Question put and passed.

Mr. UNMACK presented a petition from the vice-president and secretary of the School of Arts, Toowong, of similar purport and prayer; and moved that it be received.

Question put and passed.

RAILWAY FROM BRISBANE TO THE SOUTHERN BORDER.

Mr. MORGAN presented a petition from 1,070 electors in the Southern districts, praying for the construction of a direct line of railway between the Southern border and the capital of the colony; and moved that the petition be read.

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

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

FORMAL MOTION.

The following formal motion was agreed to:—

By Mr. BUCKLAND—

1. That the Bill to enable the corporation of the Brisbane Total Abstinence Society (being the trustees of an allotment of land in the city of Brisbane, parish of North Brisbane, granted for the purposes of the erection thereon of a Temperance Hall) to sell the residue of such land now remaining in their hands freed and absolutely discharged from the trusts on which the

same are now held, and to enable the society to sell, mortgage, or lease the same, and for other purposes, be referred for the consideration and report of a select committee.

2. That such committee have power to send for persons and papers, and leave to sit during any adjournment of the House, and that it consist of Messrs. Mellor, Cowley, G. H. Jones, Luya, and the mover.

CROWN LANDS ACTS, 1884 TO 1886, AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said: Mr. Speaker,—In submitting this further amendment of the Crown Lands Acts, 1884 to 1886, to the House, it is not my intention in any way to discuss at any great length the Land Acts, 1884 to 1886. The object the Government have in view in introducing this Bill is to make such amendments as experience has taught me, and I believe has also taught previous Ministers charged with the administration of the Land Act, will be beneficial in giving effect to the intention of the framers of the Act of 1884. It will probably be necessary during the remarks I may make on the various clauses contained in this Bill to draw some comparison between what we hope to attain by some of these amendments in the shape of increasing settlement, and, I hope, adding somewhat to the revenue of the country—it will probably be necessary to make some comparison between the clauses of this Bill and those referring to the same subjects in previous Acts; but I wish to assure the House that in making these amendments my wish is, as far as possible, to carry out what I consider was the intention of the framers of the Act of 1884. And I think the House will give me credit when I say that during the twelve months I have been charged with the administration of the Land Act, I have conscientiously endeavoured by every possible means to throw lands open to selection, to increase settlement, and in every way to carry out the intention of the framers of the Act. There are, however, some anomalies in the Act which I do not think its framers contemplated, and experience has shown that a slight amendment would be an improvement. And although the House may not agree with some of the details which are proposed, I hope hon. members will consider and discuss these amendments in a friendly way, accepting those they consider will be advantageous, and amending those which they think are capable of amendment. This amending Bill is not a long one. It contains only twenty clauses. The first clause to which I will draw the attention of hon. members is the 3rd clause, the 1st subsection of which deals with the rehearing by the Land Board. The 20th clause of the original Act provides that "upon the application of any person aggrieved by a decision of the board the Governor in Council may remit the matter to the board for re-consideration." Hon. gentlemen will see that there is no finality of appeal given, and I do not think the framers of the Act ever intended that the lessee, or the person considering himself aggrieved by a decision of the board, should have the opportunity of asking for a re-hearing at any time.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: Hear, hear!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: When the board has arrived at a decision in connection with the division of a run—one part being the leased portion and the other the resumed portion—the matter is decided in open court, and all the parties interested have the opportunity of appearing before the board and bringing forward witnesses to support their case, and it is considered that as the decision of the Land Board is given in open court, and every facility for protest is afforded, that decision should be final. But it does not say so. Therefore this amendment states that applications to the Governor in Council under section 20 shall be made within ninety days after the decision of the board. It may be that the lessee is not aware of certain evidence to be brought before the board on the hearing of the case, and this amendment will give him ninety days within which to make an appeal. In the way the law stands at present it is extremely doubtful to me whether he has not the right of appeal during the twenty-one years of his lease, or during the thirty years given in the case of a grazing farm. I can assure hon. gentlemen that I have had a case submitted to me three years after the decision of the Land Board had been given. After the appellant had actually appeared in court and heard the whole of the evidence given, he waited for three years and then lodged a request with me for an appeal to the board for a re-hearing of his case. I think there should be some finality, and I propose here that anyone aggrieved should have the right of appeal for a re-hearing within ninety days after the board have given their decision. Subsections 2 and 3 refer to grazing farms. Now there has been in some instances a good deal of competition for these grazing farms. When grazing farms have been thrown open to selection on a fixed day there has been in some instances a great rush to secure them, and we find practically that a great many dummy applications are put in. It has assumed a very serious aspect in some districts, and it frequently happens that the settler who has gone to a great deal of trouble in corresponding with the Land Board and requesting that certain areas of land should be thrown open to selection as grazing farms—it very often happens that that man who is really best entitled, having taken most trouble to secure a farm, is met by a host of dummy applications put in when the land court opens. The farms for which there is competition are then submitted to lot, and unless the *bonâ fide* man connives at the same fraud, I may say, for it is virtually a fraud, and puts in say a dozen dummy applications himself, he has really little chance of getting the land against the twenty, thirty, or forty dummy applications put in by persons outside.

Mr. ARCHER: Against several hundreds in some cases.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Well, we have the present system of lot, we have the auction system, and the tender system which I propose here. The auction system undoubtedly gives the man with the longest purse the greatest chance of securing the piece of land he wants. I do not think the members of this House will consider that a good plan. What is proposed by this amendment is simply this: In the event of there being competition, each applicant puts in with his application, in a sealed envelope, the amount of premium he is prepared to give. In the event of a man's application being accepted, and there being no competition, he will get the grazing farm at the upset price put upon it by the Land Board. Should there be two or more applicants offering the same premium then the grazing farm is offered by auction amongst those only who have tendered the same premium. Although each applicant states in his sealed envelope the amount of premium he is willing to pay he is not called upon to pay that except in the event of there being competition for the farm for which he has applied, otherwise he will get the farm at the upset price. Subsection (3) refers to agricultural and grazing farms. Agricultural farms, as hon. gentlemen will understand, include what are called homestead selections

It was always intended by the framers of the Act of 1884, and it was contended as one of its great advantages, that it would ensure settlement. It was also said that it was going to ensure a considerable increase of revenue to the country. That has not been carried out according to the sanguine anticipations of those who framed the Act. It was, at all events, considered certain that settlement upon the land would be absolutely compulsory. But owing to a slight flaw—and it could not have been anything but a flaw, because I am sure the framers of the Act never intended it—a difference was made in the occupation conditions between licenses and leases, and at present all the compulsory clauses compelling occupation apply only to leases. The question of occupation, so long as the land was held under license, was entirely omitted. The consequence is, that the homestead selector who gets up to 160 acres at only half-a-crown an acre is only compelled to prove five years' residence out of seven. The consequence of that is, that if he chooses he has two years at first within which he need not reside upon the land, and no forfeiture can ensue if he does not, except for non-payment of rent. So long as he pays his rent I fail to see that the department has any power to forfeit for non-residence. He has to prove five years' residence out of seven, but he may take the last five years, and you cannot compel him to take the first two years. A selector of 160 acres can hold his selection for five years under license, and after that time it becomes forfeited if he does not apply for a lease, which he can only get upon proving that he has fenced his selection in. But he has got five years to do that in. He can hold that selection for five years under license, during which occupation is not compulsory. If he likes to go upon his selection, well and good, but we cannot forfeit an agricultural selection except for non-payment of rent. I do not think the framers of the Act intended that. I think they intended that the conditions applying to land held under lease should also apply to land held under license. Then, again, with regard to grazing farms, a man may take up a maximum area of 20,000 acres, and he can also hold his grazing farm for three years under license. If it is then fenced in he applies for a lease; but so long as he holds it under license, residence, so far as I can judge—and I have consulted the law advisers of the Crown on the subject, and they agree with me—is not compulsory. I think hon. gentlemen, admitting, as I am sure they will, that it was the intention of the framers of the Act, as it is the intention of the Government now, that occupation at all events within reasonable limits should be compulsory, will allow the amendment of the law contained in subsection (3) to pass so as to give effect to what I believe the framers of the Act intended. The subsection reads thus:—

"(3.) The following provision shall be added to section fifty-five:—

> Within three months after the issue of a license, the selector must enter upon the land and take possession thereof, and thereafter, during the currency of the license, he shall occupy the land continuously and *bonâ fide* in the manner prescribed by the said Act with respect to occupation by a lessee.
>
> In the event of his failing to perform the condition of occupation hereby prescribed, the same consequences shall ensue with respect to the license as are prescribed in the case of a lease upon the like default."

Referring to section 55 of the Act of 1884, hon. members will see that it reads thus: that "upon the issue of a license the selector may enter upon the land and take possession thereof, but shall not be entitled to impound any stock" of the last outhoused tenant, etc. The selector may enter upon the land, and there is no doubt that a majority of the selectors do so, but it is not compulsory under the Act. The amendment here proposed meets the case, and provides that the same conditions as are imposed on a lessee shall be applied to a licensee. Then we come to subsection 4 in this 3rd clause of the amending Bill. It deals with a matter on which I have no doubt there may be some difference of opinion. At present large areas of land are being locked up for very long periods as grazing farms; they are being locked up, subject to the conditions of the Act, that is subject to re-assessment of rental, for thirty years. I think thirty years is too long, and that before thirty years have elapsed a great many of these very large areas of land will be required for more profitable use than for occupation as grazing farms, especially when we consider the great and important progress which has been made during the last few years in the search for artesian water out West. I think that the time will come when some of those rich plains in the West will be devoted to very much closer settlement than is possible under 20,000-acre grazing farms. Thirty years is almost a lifetime; it is certainly a generation; and when I take into consideration the experience of the past, how dissatisfied the general public become after a few years at the acquisition and holding of large areas of land by individuals, I can see that the time will come when those who, in response to the invitation of our laws, are now doing what they have an undoubted right to do—namely, to select 20,000 acres of land and hold them for thirty years, will be looked upon as huge land monopolists. The term, in my opinion, is too long. Another thing I would point out to the House is, that by these large areas continuing to be selected at the rate they have been selected for the past two years, I am satisfied that the fortunate possessors of these lands will in thirty years become an important political factor in the House and in the country, and what was intended as a leasehold will become by some means, perhaps owing to the necessities of the Government for the time being, converted into freeholds.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: The converse is much more likely.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: What is the converse? Confiscation?

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: Turning freeholds into leaseholds.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Oh, no! Now, since the Act of 1884 came into force—that is, since the 1st of March, 1885, up to the 31st of December last—we have alienated 2,991,895 acres. We must bear in mind that previous to the passing of that Act we had alienated about 10,000,000 acres of land in the colony, out of a total of 428,000,000 acres; and as I say, during the last four years we have alienated nearly another 3,000,000 acres.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: No; not alienated.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Well; we will not differ about what it is, whether it is alienated or not; it is practically alienated, because out of these 3,000,000 acres, 2,164,770 acres have been alienated as grazing farms—alienated certainly for a generation—and I think the time will come when these grazing farms will be converted into freeholds. I have reasons for what I say. I see the avidity with which the general public always buy freehold lands whenever they can possibly get them, and I am very glad to see it, as I am not one of those who deprecate the holding of freeholds. I think it would be better for the country, and that the country would progress at a much more rapid rate than it is doing at present, overburdened as it is with an enormous debt, if we faced the

difficulty manfully and recognised the ineradicable disposition of the people to possess freeholds, and were to alter our policy and alienate far more land than we are doing.

Mr. HUNTER: Tax the land.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I most certainly am not averse to the taxation of land. But suppose the time comes when a land tax should be imposed, are we to be told that such a tax is only to be applied to the 10,000,000 acres of land alienated previous to the passing of the Act of 1884, and not to apply it to those 3,000,000 acres that have since been alienated, or to the 10,000,000 or 15,000,000 acres that may be alienated in the future? I am, however, diverging from the intentions of the Bill, and I have not the least intention to debate upon any other project for alienation. I have given reasons why I hope and trust that hon. members will see the advisability of limiting this thirty years' tenure to twenty years. I believe twenty years will be quite sufficient for all purposes. It is well known that at the expiration of the lease it may easily be renewed, should succeeding Governments think fit, or the holder may obtain full compensation for the improvements which he has effected on the land; and I may say that the shorter term will not in any way prevent settlement. But there are lands out West now which, I firmly believe, will be able to support, I may say, millions of people long before the thirty years has elapsed.

Mr. GROOM: By destroying existing interests?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We cannot break existing arrangements. It may be interesting to hon. members to have a few more details respecting the land taken up under the Act of 1884. The information will, I am certain, also be interesting to the country. The gross area of agricultural farms of 160 acres and under amounts to 427,402 acres, which shows the enormous extent to which the Act has been taken advantage of by what we may call the homestead selector. As against 427,000 acres of what I call homestead selections—although there is no such word in the Act—the quantity over 160 acres has only been 399,493 acres. For some reason, therefore, which I think is very intelligible, the small areas of land have undoubtedly received the preference. One reason no doubt is that the people who take them up are getting for 2s. 6d. an acre what anyone else will have to pay £1 for. That is a very strong reason. Another reason—and I refer to this now, because I wish in a later clause to give the same facilities for the acquisition of freehold to holders of over 160 acres—another reason is, that the love of freehold is so strong that they take up these small areas, knowing that they can make a freehold of them in five years. The number of agricultural farms which have been alienated is 4,144; that is, assuming that settlement necessarily follows the alienation of these agricultural farms, those 4,144 agricultural farms have been added to the wealth and prosperity of the colony since the passing of the Act. Those 4,144 agricultural farms embrace an area of 827,125 acres. But I am sorry to say that, notwithstanding the large area which has been alienated, the amount of revenue, which is to a certain extent a consideration in a country like this, is only £13,747. There are 441 grazing farms, amounting to 2,164,770 acres, of which the rent is only £11,910. The total revenue from agricultural and grazing farms is £25,657. If we add to that the increase of pastoral rents caused by the subdivision of runs—£36,765—since the passing of the Act of 1884, the total amounts to £62,422. So you will see, Mr. Speaker, it has taken four years to get this financial result of £62,422, which is equal to 4 per cent. on a loan of £1,560,000. But it must be borne in mind that this increase of pastoral rents has been the accumulation of four years, and, the runs having been subdivided, there will be no further increase from that source. The revenue derived from agricultural and grazing farms—£25,657—is equal to 4 per cent. on a loan of £640,000. That is briefly the financial result, leaving the occupation result out of the question, of an Act which was honestly believed by its framers at the time to be the justification for a £10,000,000 loan. We cannot shut our eyes to the fact that if we desire settlement to progress—if we desire our public works to be prosecuted with the rapidity which we see the people desire—if our railways are to be extended in accordance with the loudly-expressed wish of the people—which means an additional loan at a very early date—I think hon. members will agree with me that any reasonable, rational method by which we can derive a greater revenue from the enormous area of pastoral land which this colony possesses, is a matter deserving of the greatest and most serious consideration. I do not wish the House to accept any proposition by which lands will be recklessly alienated at anything below its fair value; but I think it is absolutely necessary, if we wish to maintain our credit with the people who lend us money—if we wish to be able to borrow more—it will be absolutely necessary, before very long, for the completion and further extension and construction of new railway lines—it will be absolutely necessary that the House should adopt some means by which our land revenue can be increased.

Mr. HYNE: Cannot the rents be revised every five years?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We shall want to borrow long before five years. There are only two alternatives. Customs taxation is one, and that is not a popular way of raising revenue. I think the public at large, if they were appealed to on this question—if it were pointed out to them calmly and plainly, as I have laid it before the House, how ridiculously small the land revenue is that we are deriving at present from the operation of the Act of 1884—if they were asked whether they would prefer the present taxation through the Customs or to be relieved of a part of that by the alienation of more land, I think there is no doubt that they would consider that a far greater revenue should be derived from the Land Act than we are receiving at the present time.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: Those are not the only alternatives.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: What I am referring to now is apropos of a clause we shall come to later on, in which I ask the House to give the Government power to sell larger areas of land. I would point out that while our territorial revenue in 1883-4 was £619,959, the estimate up to the end of this month—and I believe the amount will be about realised—for territorial revenue is £608,000. This estimate is very likely, indeed, to be exceeded; we may get £9,000 or £11,000 more, and I dare say we shall; but if we do, our total revenue from this source for 1888-9 will be only about equal to that of 1883-4. At the end of four years, therefore, since the Act came into operation, we are obtaining the same revenue that we had in 1883-4, instead of having, as was expected, a much larger revenue. But there is another point in connection with this that I will refer to, and that is that when the Land Act of 1884 came into force, there was a credit of a million and a quarter on rents of selections under the 1876 Act. The territorial

revenue during the last four years has been augmented to the extent of about a quarter of a million every year out of that credit of a million and a quarter, and at the present moment there is only about £277,000 left to the credit of the 1876 Act. That in all probability will be paid; that is, the land held under that Act will become freehold during the next two years. About £140,000 a year is the estimate of the department for the rents which will fall in under the 1876 Act, so that the House has got this position to face: That within two years in all probability the land revenue will suffer a sudden fall—a sudden decrease. If hon. members bear in mind the very small amount of land revenue we are getting at present under the Act, they will see that there is every probability of a very serious diminution in our land revenue taking place at the end of two years. That is a matter, Mr. Speaker, that the House should be made aware of, in order that when this time comes it shall not come as a surprise upon them. I ask the House to take some steps by which our land revenue will be kept up to, I think myself, a basis by which it would pay the interest on the loans for our railways, which have been constructed chiefly for the improvement of the waste lands of the colony. Subsection 6 refers to agricultural farms and the acquisition of freeholds, and reads as follows:—

"So much of section seventy-three as is contained in the words 'or of each of two or more successive lessees' is hereby repealed, and the period of five years is substituted in lieu of the period of ten years therein mentioned."

Now, Mr. Speaker, a selector of 160 acres and under not only obtains his land for half-a-crown an acre on complying with certain conditions, but he is allowed to acquire the freehold in five years. At present a selector whose operations require a larger area than 160 acres has to pay no less than £1 per acre, that is eight times as much as a selector of 160 acres, but he is further debarred from acquiring the freehold until he has performed the conditions of ten years' personal residence. I see no reason, Mr. Speaker, why this anomaly should be allowed to exist. I think it is quite sufficient to penalise a selector whose necessities require more than 160 acres, by making him pay eight times as much as a selector of 160 acres. That is the minimum. He must pay that, and it is quite possible that the Land Board may put such a high value on the land in the shape of annual rental that he will have to pay, as has happened in some cases in the North, very much more than £1 an acre. Hon. members must also notice that the condition of residence is not to be performed by bailiff, it must be personal residence; and I think that a selector of over 160 acres who resides personally—not by bailiff—for a term of five years, should be allowed the same privilege to acquire his freehold as is enjoyed by the selector of 160 acres who gets his land for half-a-crown an acre. Subsection 7 deals with occupation licenses, and the same remarks that I made before with regard to applications for grazing farms apply to applications for these licenses. I have no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that hon. members will have read in the newspapers lately an account of what I think the most scandalous proceedings that took place at Clermont recently, where over 400 applications were put in for one occupation license. There have been other cases, and I am sure hon. members know that what I say has come under their notice. There are men travelling about the country levying blackmail upon the pastoral lessees, and levying blackmail upon anyone who desires to get an occupation license. They put in a score or more applications for occupation licenses, being certain that from the large number they put in, even without a power-of-attorney, that the chances are 10 to 1 they will get the license, and having obtained it, they proceed at once to the individual who is most deserving, or whose necessities require that he should have an additional grazing area, and sell it to him at sums varying up to £200. I think the attention of the House only requires to be directed to this scandalous system which has prevailed during the last few years to ensure an alteration of it, and I trust the alteration which I propose will be found to be a good one. I am sure it will be better for the country. It will be acting fairly towards the pastoral lessees and those who are *bonâ fide* selectors who desire to settle down upon the land. Part III. refers to the amendment of section 2 of the Crown Lands Act of 1884 Amendment Act of 1885, and Parts II., III., and IV. of the Act of 1886, and Part VIII. of the principal Act, and has relation to the closing of roads. Clause 4 provides:—

"When land is resumed from a holding under Part IV. of the principal Act for the purpose of a public road, the lessee shall not be entitled to accept the notice of resumption of such land as a notice of resumption of the entire holding within the meaning of the one hundred and second section of the principal Act."

I think, Mr. Speaker, that in the Crown Lands Act Amendment Act of 1886, clause 10, there was an unintentional mistake made.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: Hear, hear!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That clause states—

"When land is resumed from a holding under Part III. of the principal Act for the purpose of a public road, the lessee shall not be entitled to accept the notice of resumption of such land as a notice of the resumption of the entire holding, within the meaning of the one hundred and second section of the principal Act."

I think, Mr. Speaker, it was intended that that should have read, "from a holding under Parts III. and IV. of the principal Act." The clause provides that the lessee through whose run a road has been made is not to consider the resumption of such road as giving him a right to surrender the whole of his lease, but it should apply with equal force to the holder of a grazing farm. Although large resumptions for roads had been made in these 20,000-acre areas, we know very well that before the thirty years of the leases have expired, that it will be absolutely necessary, in the interests of the public, to proclaim additional roads through them, and, from the way the Act is framed at present, the resumption of a piece of land for road purposes through a grazing farm or an agricultural farm gives the lessee the right to surrender the whole of his holding with the right of compensation. I do not think that clause 10 of the Act of 1886 was intended to apply to Part III. only of the principal Act, and the clause of the Bill which I have read is intended to bring agricultural and grazing farms, when roads are taken out of them, under the same conditions as clause 10 of the 1886 Act, which I have referred to. Clause 6 also refers to resumption of roads. I may say that since we have had these large areas of land selected during the last few years, a very great difficulty has been thrown upon the Roads Department. Roads are being frequently found necessary where the land has been surveyed previous to selection, no proper reservation for roads having been made. Roads are frequently found to be in impracticable and unsuitable places, and this clause lays down some defined rule under which resumptions for roads can be made. I would point out that in this clause the words

"before survey thereof" should be omitted, and I shall propose that in committee. The clause will read then as follows :—

"Where a farm has been selected in any agricultural area, if within the ten years immediately succeeding the date of the application to select the same it shall be deemed necessary to open any public road through such farm, it shall be lawful for the Governor in Council to proclaim by notice in the *Gazette* a public road, not exceeding two chains in width, through such farm."

The next paragraph of the clause provides for compensation, and the compensation is to be twice the amount that the selector has paid for his land; but if the land is enclosed it will be the duty of the Government to fence that road in on both sides. It is necessary in the interests of the public that roads should be made, and it is only fair to the selector that the country should pay the expense of fencing off the road, which is not necessitated by anything the selector himself has done. Clause 7 refers to selection before survey in agricultural areas only. As hon. members know, we have certain districts in the colony known as scheduled districts, within which selection before survey is actually in force—such as the districts of Gympie, Maryborough, Bundaberg, Mackay, Bowen, Townsville, Brisbane, Rockhampton, and Toowoomba—all the coast districts, which have been very considerably picked over by former selectors. There are certain areas of land in these districts which are not of sufficient extent to justify sending a surveyor to survey them, and they remain still unselected, and in those districts selection before survey is allowed to take place. I may say that experience has led me to think that the ordinary agricultural selector very much prefers selecting the piece of land which he thinks best adapted to his requirements. At present it frequently happens in many cases, where we have survey before selection, that great dissatisfaction is felt by the selector, who finds that, while getting a small piece of good land, he is compelled to take a large piece of indifferent land. I think that if we desire to settle a large population on the lands of the colony we should do all we can to make them as contented as possible; and I see no reason why the first comer should not have the advantage of picking out the piece of land he wants, under certain conditions as to length, breadth, and river frontage, which can all be laid down by regulation. I see no reason why a man should not be allowed to have the advantage of what is in many cases his own exploration. At present he finds the land, he asks for the land to be thrown open for selection, and after several months' delay the land is selected, and he then finds that it is not the particular piece he wanted to get, or else there are so many applications for it that perhaps he may not get it at all, and all his time has been lost. But there is another reason why, I think, for a time at least, we should allow selection before survey to take place, and that is that we have a very large extent of land already lying idle which has been surveyed; and when I say that the expenses of the Survey Department for the last twelve months have amounted to the enormous sum of £30,000 for surveying land, keeping it before the public, and having land ready in all parts of the colony for selection, hon. members will see that in the meantime—although a large part of this money will eventually come back to the Treasury—there is a very considerable amount of unnecessary expense being incurred by survey before selection. A great part of this surveyed land will not be taken up for many years, and the marks will become obliterated, pegs will be pulled out of the ground, and when selection does take place a great many of those areas will have to be re-surveyed. To show that we are taking ample steps to provide land for all classes of settlers, at the present time we have open for grazing farm selections, as surveyed under the 44th section of the Act, 3,520,000 acres awaiting selection; and unsurveyed in the coast districts I mentioned, consisting in most instances of land which is not suitable for grazing farm selections, we have 1,216,000 acres. We have open for agricultural farm selection, surveyed under the 44th section of the Act, 1,050,000 acres, and unsurveyed in the coast districts, 2,560,000 acres. We have a total at the present time of just 9,500,000 acres open to selection. Now, I think that it would be a judicious thing to suspend for a reasonable time survey before selection. Mind, this clause is not to apply to grazing farms, but to certain districts, and is not to have universal application. It is only to apply to such agricultural lands as the Land Board may recommend, and is not in any case to apply to grazing farms. Clause 8 deals with sales by auction. It reads as follows :—

"Section twenty-five of the last-mentioned Act shall be read and construed as if instead of the words 'twelve months' inserted therein the words 'three years' had been therein inserted."

This clause should be read in connection with the next clause, which reads—

"So much of section twenty-six of the last-mentioned Act as is contained in the words—

'The area of any portion of country lands so sold shall not exceed forty acres, and the upset price shall not be less than one pound per acre,'

is hereby repealed, and the following provision shall be substituted in the place thereof—

'The area of any portion of country lands so sold shall not exceed three hundred and twenty acres, and the upset price shall be determined by the board.'"

At present we may sell as much land as there is a demand for, but it must be in 40-acre blocks. It must be surveyed into 40-acre blocks, and the average cost of survey of one of these blocks is about six guineas. There is nothing to prevent anyone buying twenty or thirty such blocks; he may acquire as much as he likes, but he is subject to this disadvantage—that he has to pay an unnecessary amount in survey fees. It may be said—it has frequently been said—that the advocates of sales by auction, especially of country lands, desire the power of making a sudden huge addition to the revenue; but hon. members will see that what I propose in section 8 is to extend the term of payment. The auction sales conducted during the last two years—certainly for the last twelve months—have been very successful, and I believe that one cause of that success has been the system introduced by the previous Government of deferred payments extending over twelve months. The public have been very well satisfied; and seeing the advantage that has accrued, I ask the House to extend the system still further and allow us to sell larger areas, say, up to 320 acres; and in order to guard against the danger of any Government selling huge areas for the sake of getting a temporary surplus, extend the payment over three years. I would have no objection to extending the payment over five years; I believe the country would benefit by it, because in many cases people not able to pay cash down would give a good honest price, and competition would be free and brisk if they knew that the payment would be extended over three years. Considering the success the system of deferred payments has been during the last couple of years, I think the House may safely grant this further concession to the investing public who desire to purchase land by auction. We do not attempt in any way to curtail the desire of those who prefer leasehold; but seeing that that system has not been the financial success that was anticipated,

and as I have already pointed out that the revenue under that system is likely to fall off rather than increase, let us try the two systems side by side for a few years, or until it is found that the system we propose is not a good one. And having tried both systems the House and the country will see which is really preferable. It is not anticipated that we shall sell any very large areas. As I pointed out just now, we have already the power to do that in an indirect way; and I ask the House to meet the state of affairs and let us survey those lands in 320-acre blocks, and instead of putting a fixed price on land which is of comparatively small value, let the upset price be decided by the board. Clauses 10, 11, 12, and 13 all refer to artesian wells. The country has had a great deal of experience during the last two or three years with regard to the question of artesian bores, and I think it is a matter of the greatest congratulation to the colony that so much success has crowned the efforts of the Government—and the previous Government—in this direction. At present a pastoral lessee, of course, can sink as many artesian bores as he likes on that part of a run of which he has secured a lease for twenty-one years; but on the resumed portion he can only sink an artesian bore on getting permission from the Land Board. Probably that permission would never be withheld, but the position would be this: Having secured permission and having sunk an artesian bore on the resumed half of his run—having gone to an expense which experience has taught us amounts to between £3,000 and £4,000—if he is successful the first person coming along who desires to obtain a grazing farm, not having incurred any expense or any risk, can obtain a grazing farm with a bore on it—of course paying compensation, but having had no risk or anxiety. If a lessee were foolish enough to do such a thing under the existing law, having secured a supply of artesian water, that would inspire the confidence of those who desire to select in the district, and he would at once lose the use of the resumed half of his run. In short, he attracts settlement, which, however desirable from a public point of view, is most disastrous probably in his case. There are vast tracts of country out West that, owing to the entire absence of water, will not be selected as grazing farms for many years; but there is this anomaly in the Act—that the Crown lessee may go into the next district and take up a grazing farm which he may secure for thirty years, but he is not allowed to hold a grazing farm on the resumed half of his own run. What is proposed therefore is to encourage the lessee to do something to develop the large areas of land held under occupation license by him; and we propose to give him, if he is willing to sink an artesian well on the resumed half of his run, permission to obtain one grazing farm on the resumed half, and one only.

Mr. JORDAN: Without competition?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The price will be fixed by the Land Board, so that there will be no pre-emption in that case. I am not at all certain that many pastoral lessees will be found willing to accept even these terms. However, I have been asked to adopt some means by which the lessee will be encouraged, if he so desires it, to sink artesian bores on the resumed half of his run; and all that is proposed is to give him the same right in his own district which he has without any legislation in the next district. There is no pre-emptive right about that; he is not getting the right to purchase any land at a certain price. And if hon. members will acquiesce in the proposal of the Government to reduce the term of the lease of grazing farms to twenty years, the lessee who acquires such a farm on the resumed half of his run will be in the same position as other selectors, and will have only a twenty years' lease of his farm. I ask any sensible business man to give any good practical reason why a lessee should be allowed to select a grazing farm fifty miles away from his leasehold and not close by it on the resumed half of his run. He is not to be allowed to take up more than one farm; and I say that, in the interests of the country, it is advisable that some such equitable provision as this should be inserted. Whether the pastoral lessees will be willing to take advantage of it or not is another question. I am told by some that they will, but by a great many others that they would never dream of doing so. In section 13 hon. gentlemen will see that the Government reserve the right of making regulations, issuing licenses, and doing everything necessary for the inspection of artesian wells, and for preventing the waste, misuse, or fouling of the water. Part V., dealing with provisions as to mining, contains some very important clauses. In consequence of the alteration in the definition of "Crown lands" it was found that having once granted leases, whether pastoral or grazing farm leases, under the Act, we had to a certain extent debarred the miner from acquiring the right of leasehold which he possessed under previous Acts. It is intended in these clauses to re-establish the miner exactly in the position he occupied previous to the passing of the Land Act of 1884. I do not think it was ever intended by the framers of that Act that the miner was to be in any way prejudiced by it in the rights he enjoyed up to the time of its passing. I believe that that definition of "Crown lands" was never intended to have the effect which it is now contended it has had in this respect.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: The definition had nothing to do with it. It had not that effect.

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS: Lawyers differ upon that.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: As the Minister for Mines and Works says, there is no doubt that there is a difference of opinion amongst legal men upon the subject. I know it has been a bar to miners, and I only ask the House now to give a decision upon the matter. I do not profess to be able to argue from a legal point of view what the correct interpretation of the definition should be. I know that a miner has the right to search for minerals, but the question now arises, Who is to pay the lessee for damage done by disturbance? The legal opinion, I believe, is that at present the miner is obliged to pay compensation, and so far his rights under previous Acts are prejudiced. He cannot get a title to his mine, and if he wishes to get a site on which to put up machinery to work his mine, it is impossible for him to get a lease on top of a lease already granted to the pastoral lessee or grazing farmer by the Land Board.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: A regulation of ten lines would have put it all right.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That may be, but the hon. gentleman's colleague, the hon. member for Charters Towers, Hon. A. Rutledge, says there is a difficulty in the matter.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: There is a difficulty, no doubt.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There is a difficulty, and I hope the hon. gentleman with his undoubted legal knowledge will try to amend these sections, if they require amendment, so as to obviate that difficulty. I am not bound to the particular wording of these clauses, and I

only desire that they should be so framed as to meet the difficulty which has arisen, and re-establish the miner in the position he occupied before the passing of the principal Act. I wish the claim for compensation by the lessee on account of disturbance to be put upon a distinct basis. It is no use for the pastoral lessee or grazing farmer to look to the miners for compensation, because they will not give it. If it is necessary to allow the miners to continue to lease areas for the purpose of searching for minerals, it is far better that the Government should face the difficulty manfully and say we shall pay compensation for disturbance. That is what is intended to be effected by the Bill before the House. Hon. gentlemen will see that the definition which gave rise to this difficulty is the definition of "Crown lands" in the Act of 1884, because it differs from that given in previous Acts. It defines "Crown lands" as—

"All lands vested in Her Majesty which are not for the time being dedicated to any public purpose, or subject to any deed of grant, lease, contract, promise, or engagement, made by or on behalf of Her Majesty; and all lands which are subject to a right of depasturing under Part III. of this Act, or are held under an occupation license under Part V. of this Act."

That covers every lease and license issued under the Act of 1884. Now, in the Gold Fields Act of 1874, which the miners have worked under, and which they believe they are entitled to work under at the present time, "Crown lands" are defined to be—

"All lands vested in Her Majesty which have not been dedicated to any public purpose, or which have not been granted in fee or lawfully contracted to be so granted, or which are not under lease for purposes other than pastoral purposes."

That expression, "other than pastoral purposes," they contend, allows them the right to go upon lands held under pastoral lease or as grazing farms. I am quite prepared to let clause 14 and the clauses appertaining to it come on for discussion, and I invite the able legal criticism of the leader of the Opposition upon them, and I am quite sure he will be able to suggest some scheme by which the difficulty may be met if these clauses do not effect the object we have in view.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: The clauses are remarkably well drawn.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I shall be glad to accept any suggestion from the hon. member to meet the difficulty. By clause 15 it is provided that—

"So much of section one hundred and nine of the principal Act as is contained in the words 'on condition of making compensation to the lessee for any actual damage and all such other conditions as may be prescribed' is hereby repealed."

I think some hon. members interested in pastoral pursuits were under the impression that that was doing away with a right of compensation to them, but that is not so. They will see that in clause 102, while subsections 1, 2, and 3 are repealed, subsections 4, 5, and 6 are retained, and subsection 4 provides:—

"Upon the resumption of the whole or part of a holding the lessee shall be entitled to compensation for the loss thereof, the amount of which shall be determined by the board."

Therefore no pastoral lessee, or selector of a grazing farm, will be in any way prejudiced by the operations of miners upon their leaseholds. They will be entitled to full compensation, to be assessed by the Land Board and paid by the Government. In clause 17 hon. gentlemen will see that it is provided that—

"Where before the passing of this Act a grazing farm or part thereof has been occupied or leased for mining purposes under either of the Acts relating to mining hereinbefore mentioned, the lessee or licensee of such farm may take advantage of the provisions of the last preceding section upon giving such notice as aforesaid within three months after the passing of this Act."

That is to say, that if the holders of grazing farms have been prejudiced to a very serious extent by the operations of miners upon their farms they will be allowed to surrender those farms and obtain compensation. Part VI. refers to general conditions, and clause 18 refers to the correction of errors in deeds of grant. Clause 19 refers to useless reservations for roads, and shows what is to be done in such cases; and clause 20 deals with the vesting of roads in the Crown. These clauses cannot be considered contentious. They are clauses which the working of the department has proved to be necessary in order to facilitate public business. Owing to various causes in connection with the obtaining of deeds of grant and reservations for roads, very great annoyance has been felt by the general public in consequence of the delays which have taken place. It is hoped by the introduction of this amendment to benefit the public and to expedite public business, to reduce delay to a minimum, and, contingent upon that, to reduce the expense which the public are put to in obtaining their deeds of grant. There is one matter to which, perhaps, I should have referred at an earlier stage. Having given the House some statistical information in connection with our present land revenue and our probable future land revenue, I do not think it would be complete unless I alluded to our land order system, in order that the House may be in the possession of information which I am in possession of, and may consider it in connection with the remarks I have made as to the probable diminution in the future of our land revenue. Up to the present time—that is, up to 21st May last, quite a recent date—the revenue from grazing and agricultural farms has been about £25,000 a year. Our future land revenue is furthermore pledged by 1,132 land orders, which are now either in the hands of the public or in the Lands Office waiting distribution, and the value of these land orders is £32,250. Hon. members must bear this in mind in considering our future land revenue, and they will see that at the present rate of selection those land orders will cover one and a-half year's revenue. I have nothing further to add. I must thank the House for the patient hearing accorded me, and I hope that hon. members will take time to consider the few novel principles which are being introduced by this Bill. There is nothing, as I said some time ago, of a very revolutionary nature in this Land Act Amending Bill. It has been framed with the intention of adding to the settlement, and, to a certain extent, of adding to the revenue of the colony. Any further amendments that hon. members may suggest as necessary will certainly receive the most careful consideration from me. I think that in carrying this measure through the House—and I hope it will be carried—hon. members will meet the proposals in the same spirit in which the Bill is framed, as a Bill intended to improve the working of the Land Acts of 1884 and 1886. I beg to move that the Bill be now read a second time.

Mr. JORDAN said: Mr. Speaker,—It is apparently the opinion of the hon. gentleman who has just sat down that this Bill does not make any material alteration in the Land Act of 1884 and the amending Acts of 1885 and 1886. He has, I think, persuaded himself that these alterations, which he hopes will be carried, will be an improvement on the Land Act we have now in force in this colony. I am sorry to say that I cannot agree with the hon. gentleman in that. Further, even if he could substitute a better Act for that we have now in existence, I can see reasons for not making any change at

present. I think that the effect of the kind of legislation we have had in this colony from the very beginning has been a very bad one, so far as encouraging settlement is concerned, if we look at it from the point of view of making frequent changes in our land laws. We have had the Land Act of 1860—a very good Act; the Unoccupied Crown Lands Occupation Act of the same session; the Pastoral Leases Act of 1869; the Land Act of 1868; the Land Act, I think, of 1872; the Land Act of 1876; the Crown Lands Act of 1884; and the amending Acts of 1885 and 1886, and now we are to have another Land Act of 1889. So that we shall have ten Acts of Parliament affecting the settlement and occupation of lands in Queensland, which is quite a new colony, being only twenty-nine years old. About every three years, therefore, we have been interfering with our land legislation, and the consequence has been uncertainty and distrust in the minds of a great many persons who wish to settle on the land. They cannot keep the run of it; they do not understand our land legislation. I have been astonished in talking to many gentlemen, some of them even members of Parliament, to find that they do not understand our land legislation, and do not really know that great facilities for settlement exist under our present Act. I have been surprised at the extraordinary misconceptions there are as to the powers of that Act, and the way persons can take up land under its several provisions. I think this state of things is very undesirable, and I regret very much that this amending Bill has been brought in. There are one or two parts of the Bill which I think are good—namely, those relating to mining and the resumption of land for roads; but the greater part of the Bill is, in my opinion, unnecessary, and I disagree with the hon. gentleman when he says that the proposed changes will encourage settlement on the lands. I think they will have the very opposite effect. In the Land Act of 1884, and the Amending Acts of 1885 and 1886, we aimed at two or three things. We wished in the first place to lessen the vast areas of the squatters' runs; we wished to secure a fair and increasing rent, taking into account the large sums of money expended in making railways to the great pastoral districts in the west, and the fact that we had reason to believe that water could be found over a vast area of that magnificent country—or which would otherwise be magnificent only it had no surface water. Then the Act provided for the gradual increase of rents from 10s. per square mile up to 90s. per square mile. The leaders of the Government, and their foremost supporters, although they have generally united as with one voice to condemn the Act as bad, as utterly bad, until recently, have lately discovered that it is not so bad after all, that there are a great many good things in the Act; and that one of the best things in it is that it gives to the great pastoral lessee security of tenure—what they call an indefeasible lease—and that it gives to him compensation for improvements at the end of his lease if he does not continue at the increased rent. That is what the great pastoral lessees have been asking for ever since this colony came into existence, twenty-nine years ago. Ever since the first session of the first Queensland Parliament we have continually heard from these gentlemen complaints about the want of fixity of tenure, and the want of compensation for improvements. Well, this Act gives them that on a certain reasonable condition that they would give up one-half, or one-third, or one-fourth of their runs to be resumed for close settlement. It was considered very desirable that we should not only have a fairer rent, a regularly increasing rent, from the great pastoral tenants of the Crown under the altered condition of the colony, but that we should endeavour to introduce a better system of pastoral occupation. It was assumed that if the pastoral tenants of the Crown would accept indefeasible leases for twenty-one years, and compensation for improvements, they would be willing to give up a large portion of their runs for close settlement; and no less than 47,000,000 acres have been resumed under that Act for close settlement. That is a remarkable fact. The pastoral tenants of the Crown voluntarily came under the Act; they saw it would suit them. They considered, I suppose, they would have many advantages, and they voluntarily brought their runs under the Act. The great bulk of them have done so—I believe at least 75 per cent., or more. If, having secured that, they, by some ingenious device, get possession again of the resumed portion of their runs, that would be a great stroke of policy. There is danger in that direction, because by the 31st section of the principal Act the pastoral tenants of the Crown may continue to occupy what is called the resumed portions at the old infinitesimal rents, averaging in the outside districts, including what is called unavailable country, three-quarters of a farthing per acre. If they could get possession again of the resumed portions, their rents on the whole would be very greatly reduced, and they would have this further advantage, in their opinion, of keeping out the little men. That is what they want to do; but that is not what we want, on our side of the House at all events. We invite the little men. We believe that if we can get ten men, or a hundred, or a thousand men, in some cases, as pastoral tenants at a fair and increasing rent, we shall do much better for the country by settling a vast population on the land. The Act of 1884 admirably devised, on the lines recommended by the Commission of New South Wales, a plan for establishing a system of pastoral occupation, not the "waterhole squatting" which the hon. member for Barcoo is fond of talking about, but scientific squatting, within fences, where the occupant provides for his own wants; where he is compelled to sink for water, where he may grow winter food for his cattle, where he must expend a very large amount of money and employ a very considerable amount of labour. I will take as an illustration those farms which the leader of the House adduced last session, and spoke of as an illustration of the dummying that was going on under this Act. He will forgive me, I daresay, for alluding to them, because I do so merely to illustrate the advantages of pastoral occupation on small areas. There were 119,010 acres at Aramac taken up by a number of gentlemen, whose families were related. There were two distinct families. It was said that this was done by combination, and it was contended that those gentlemen paid very little more than the old lessees did, that they were simply driving out the original pioneer of the country, or the original Crown lessee, and that the country would derive no benefit from it; and I remember that it was stated that it showed how a gigantic system of dummying could be carried on under the Act. I have found out that those gentlemen who took up these 119,010 acres would be compelled within three years to fence in each separate farm. There were really nine of them, but we will take it that it was only divided into six. It would have to be divided into nine, but for the sake of argument we will say it was divided into six farms. The land contains 186 square miles. I do not know the shape of it, but if it was of an oblong shape it would be 15½ miles long and 12 miles wide. Divided into six farms it would require 94½ running miles of fencing, which must be erected within three years, or else the land is forfeited. This, at £60 a mile, which I suppose

is not an extreme estimate for a good sheep fence, would cost £5,670. Supposing that only half of this amount were spent on the labour of putting up the fence, it would employ ten men during the whole three years at 36s. a week each man. I say that if we could establish such a system as that and extend it very largely, what a benefit it would be to the country. Those men at Aramac paid four times the amount that was paid by the pastoral lessee who was in occupation before. That is a fair way of showing how this system of pastoral occupation on small areas will open up a wide field for labour, and lead to the employment of a great many men. I have said nothing about the men who must be employed cultivating the land for winter food. I have referred simply to the labour required for putting up the fences that must be done before the expiration of three years of the lease. Now, I should like to encourage that system. I do not wish to discourage it by any means, but I am very much afraid that this Bill will discourage it. We cannot expect people to try it unless there is some inducement. The old squatter has now an indefeasible lease for twenty-one years. I am very glad he has; I have no objection at all to the old squatter; I am a believer in the old squatter. They have been the pioneers of the country; we are greatly indebted to them. They are willing to pay a fair rental, and they have been willing to help us in this matter by giving up such large quantities of land. But still they are always looking after their own interests, and if they could again get possession of huge portions of the public estate at infinitesimal rents they would be very glad to do so. I would prevent them from doing that, Sir, therefore I would encourage the small man. I would not give him a lease of less duration than that of the old squatter, who gets a twenty-one years' indefeasible lease. Why should the squatter who has to lay out so much money, and who has to pay four times as much rent get a lease for a less period than the old squatter? I say we should give every encouragement to those men. Now, as to the rents of the pastoral lessees. They are fixed by the Act, and I think that is very wise. Thus far the minimum in the outside districts is 10s. per square mile, just three-quarters of a farthing an acre; in the settled districts it is 40s., or about ¾d. per acre; in grazing farms ¾d. per acre, and in agricultural farms 3d. per acre. I think there is very much advantage in fixing the minimum price. The board, then, taking all circumstances into consideration, which they are obliged to do, have to deal with it, and from the experience we have had of the board, I do not think anyone will say that they have not brought great intelligence and ability to work in the administration of the Act. I have never heard a breath of objection against the board and their administration. I think it a very great advantage that there should be a minimum fixed for their guidance, and for the guidance of the people we wish to see occupying the land in various ways. But, now it is proposed that instead of having a minimum to guide the board, and fixing the price at that contained in the proclamation issued by the board for any land thrown open as a grazing farm, there shall be a system of auction substituted, and a system of a most objectionable kind—people bidding against each other in the dark, not open, above-board auction at all. People are told, in fact, that although the rent is fixed at 3d. or ¾d. per acre, if they wish to have any hope of getting it they must pay a little more; and a poor man, very anxious to secure the land, will pay a premium, and then if anyone else offers a larger premium and the first man withdraws his application he loses his premium under this Bill.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No; he loses nothing.

Mr. JORDAN: I think that is very unjust and very undesirable. The Minister for Lands now wishes to make an alteration as to the conditions under which a lessee holds his land before he gets his lease. He said there is great danger in allowing a person to take up land on a grazing farm unless he is immediately compelled to reside upon it either personally or by bailiff. As the matter stands now under the Act, I think it is perfectly safe. A person makes application for the land; he pays the first year's rent and survey fees. He must do so, and as soon as his application is accepted he gets notice of the condition of occupation which constitutes him the nominal tenant Within seven days of that time he must pay for any existing improvements, and then, and not till then, he gets his license. Then he must, if he wishes to secure the land, complete his fencing within three years. Although he does not reside on the land with his wife and family, he has to send men to put up the fencing and other improvements, and that is occupation. Then what can he do during these three years? He cannot impound cattle until his fence is complete. He cannot deal with the land in any way. He cannot mortgage it; he cannot sublet it; he cannot do anything with it except put up his improvements, and within three years he must get a certificate, otherwise he will lose the land, except that the board have the power, under special circumstances, to extend the period twelve months. Otherwise I say he must complete those improvements within the three years. That, I contend, is sufficiently safe. So that this is in reality "much ado about nothing." It is sounding an alarm where no danger exists. I know that the Act of 1876 was vexatiously administered sometimes—by the commissioners; I am not saying by the Minister. I know cases in which the letter of the Act was exacted in a way never intended—where most unreasonable and unnecessary requirements were insisted upon. I do not wish to see any obstacles placed in the way of settlement. I do not wish to see the period of the lease decreased. I believe it would stop settlement to a large extent. I believe that when this premium system comes into operation it will deter persons from taking up land. For these reasons I object very much to these provisions so far. Now I come to something else. The selectors of agricultural or grazing farms are to be subjected to the same provision; they are to live personally or by bailiff on the land from the commencement. As far as agricultural farms are concerned, I believe every farmer availing himself of the privilege of ten years' credit will secure the freehold of his land at the end of the period, and to do that he must reside personally, continuously, and *bonâ fide* on it during the ten years. Where is the danger in that? There is no danger, whatever the Minister for Lands supposes he has discovered in that way. Now, I come to something else in the Bill, to which I think there is very grave objection. "Agricultural farms—acquisition of freehold." The clause reads:—

> "So much of section seventy-three as is contained in the words 'or of each of two or more successive lessees' is hereby repealed, and the period of five years is substituted in lieu of the period of ten years therein mentioned."

Under the Act we know that persons can mortgage their leases, they can sublet them, or they can transfer the subleases, and that is an immense and incalculable benefit, in my idea; but by omitting the words "or of each of two or more successive lessees" we shall do away with that, because if a person wishes to

get a freehold he cannot sublet it. He must personally reside upon the land. Residence by the other lessees to whom he sublets will not do—they have nothing to do with the matter. If he wishes to get a freehold he must reside upon it himself from the first, and that will do away with one of the greatest advantages of the Act of 1884, and will be in my opinion a great mistake. Then there is to be an alteration in the period from ten to five years, which will be most objectionable. I do not think that there is any part of the Act of 1884 which commends itself so much to the class of men who cannot do all their own labour, but who want some assistance and intend to employ labour on their farms, as this, which gives them credit for ten years; but now we are going to do away with that in this amending Bill—they are only to have credit for five years for their land. I think that is a most objectionable provision, and I believe there is a greater objection to it even than that. At present it is a fact that persons cannot get very large areas of land by any system of dummying, as the present Act prevents the aggregation of large estates. We know that large areas of land suitable for farming occupation—the best lands in the colony, and in the most suitable localities—are put up in blocks of not more than 1,280 acres and not less than 160 acres, and if persons could dummy that land—that is if they could get their friends to take up adjoining blocks for them—such a system could be very well carried on within a period of five years' residence, but it cannot well be carried on with ten years' residence. We know that dummying was done extensively under the Act of 1868, by which the pastoral tenants of the Crown could purchase as much as 10,000 acres on their runs, and they could get it at 5s. an acre. Under that Act 2,666,000 acres were taken up at 5s. an acre, and although they were nominally limited to 10,000 acres, they got hundreds of thousands of acres on their runs because they dummied the land. In the same way farm lands have been dummied. I could refer to one of the reports of the Under Secretary not long ago in which he points out that farming land has been extensively dummied. The provision in the Act of 1884 was a preventive of dummying, and if there was anything in that Act which commended itself more than any other part to the general public it was this, which was calculated to put a stop to the aggregation of large estates—that old leprosy from which this colony is suffering now. Nine millions of acres of land have been alienated, including some of the finest agricultural lands in the colony, which, if it had not been for that dummying, would have settled thousands of families, and instead of spending one and a quarter millions of money, as we are now doing, in importing farm produce which we cannot grow, we should be growing it ourselves. Settlement was kept out, and facilities were given for getting hold of large blocks of land, and this much-abused Act of 1884 has been the means of putting a stop to that aggregation of large estates. What did we read the other day in the concluding portion of the admirable report drawn up by one of the commissioners sitting on the Sugar Commission? He pointed to the fact that vast areas of splendid land in the North have been bought up and are now lying unused. One reason why certain politicians in this colony, and certain gentlemen for whom we have great respect otherwise, dislike the Act of 1884, is because it has put a stop to dummying, and to the aggregation of large estates; and we do not want to see that system brought in again. Now, as to the occupation licenses, the same system is to obtain in this as with grazing farms—that is, there is to be a system of premiums. A person who wants an occupation license, instead of offering the amount fixed by the Land Board, which may be a fair rent, has to offer a premium under this Bill. The present system works very well, although I dare say there may be curious instances, such as that very funny one with which we were entertained by the Minister for Lands, where 400 people wanted the same land, and where there was a rush for a piece of land; but they are of rare occurrence. One of the land commissioners says of occupation licenses, that the application for country under Part V. of the Act is still very great. The easy rental and small areas offer considerable facilities for the small stock-owner to acquire country, so as to get away from the heavy fees he may have to pay to the squatter for the run of a comparatively small herd. It is of great advantage that there should be facilities for the small stock-owner, without his being compelled to pay an exorbitant price to the runholder. The runholder has fixity of tenure and compensation for improvements, and he should be content to carry on his operations on the leased portion of his run. I do not think it is desirable to oblige a person who wants to take up land under an occupation license to have to offer this premium as proposed. I believe it is undesirable, and on that account I shall oppose it. Now, another part of the Bill seems to be equally objectionable—that part which deals with sales by auction. I do not think that it is very safe, as large blocks may be bought by speculators. I think it is limited very wisely under the Act, by which the farmer can get a freehold, the homesteader can get a freehold, and persons in towns and suburbs can buy land, but it would not be desirable to institute sales by auction on large scales. We should not wish to depart from the principle of leasehold, from which we should get regularly increasing rents. Now it is proposed to create great facilities for the acquisition of large pieces of country land. At present the upset price is £1 per acre; now it is proposed that there shall be no minimum upset price, but that the upset price shall be fixed by the board. The gentlemen who at present compose the Land Board—long may they live!—will not live forever; and other gentlemen may take a different view of matters, and give facilities for the purchase of large blocks of land, especially as three years are to be allowed for payment. I think the present arrangement is a very good one, and I do not wish to see facilities afforded for the acquisition of large estates. Then there is the proposal with regard to artesian water, and that is entirely in the interests of the big man. He is invited to go away from his leasehold and fossick for water on the resumed portion of his own run which he has given up for certain advantages which he had in exchange. Why not encourage him to find water on his own leasehold of which he has a twenty-one years' lease with compensation for improvements? The Minister for Lands tells us that the lessee would be bothered by small men coming in and taking up the resumed portion close to his leasehold. That is just the very thing we want; we do not want to give him power to keep out those men. It is proposed that he shall be allowed to get 20,000 acres on the resumed portion—no doubt he will select the best part—for twenty years, and no minimum rent is fixed. I say that is in the interests of the big men altogether, and opposed to the interests of men who carry on pastoral pursuits on improved principles, on smaller areas at much greater expense to themselves in the way of outlay for labour; and, therefore, I do not believe in the artesian part of this amending Bill. In fact, I think the whole of the Bill is unnecessary. I think it will lead to the aggregation of large estates, facilitate

speculation, and do away with many of the great advantages provided in the Acts of 1884, 1885, and 1886. I am not afraid about the land revenue. We have been told till recently that there was no settlement under the Land Act of 1884, and never could be any worth speaking of; but in the last report of the Lands Department we find that the territorial revenue last year was £61,884 7s. 9d. more than in 1887. That is so far satisfactory. We also find that *bonâ fide* settlement has vastly increased during the last twelve months, no less than 1,683,207 acres having been taken up as grazing farms or agricultural farms under the Act during the past year. And in the last part of his report one commissioner speaks of the growing confidence felt in the Act of 1884, now that its liberal provisions are being generally known. Hon. members on the other side may laugh. It is no doubt very entertaining to gentlemen who have all along ridiculed the Act. The Act has not only been ridiculed by them, but has also been deliberately and persistently misrepresented for years by that section of the Press which supports them.

The PREMIER: Properly represented.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: Condemned by it.

Mr. JORDAN: I say deliberately and persistently misrepresented. When I was Minister for Lands I published the conditions upon which persons could take up land as grazing farmers, as agricultural farmers, and as homesteaders; and they actually said I had invented those things.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: No, no!

Mr. JORDAN: I say they did, and the reason is not far to seek. One commissioner tells us of the growing confidence in the Act, now that its liberal provisions are becoming generally known. When I was Minister for Lands, I endeavoured in my own simple, straightforward, English sort of way to make its provisions known. I put the Act into plain English. I am nothing of a lawyer, but I can understand the Land Act. Though hon. gentlemen on the other side never could understand our Land Act, I never found any difficulty in understanding every part of it, and I put it into plain English and put it on the walls, so that every one who ran might read.

The PREMIER: We have heard of handwriting on the wall before now, but an interpreter was necessary.

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS: Do you understand section 8 of the Act?

Mr. JORDAN: Where are they to be seen on the wall now? I had them printed in red ink, and was very much annoyed to find the red ink faded away. Then I had them printed in black ink and sent to all the railway stations in the colony, and to most of the offices of the land agents in the various districts. But where are they now? I see the red ink copies, which are faded away, still hanging on the walls. We want the land settled; but we cannot expect the land to be settled unless we make the provisions of the Act generally known, not only here, but also on the opposite side of the globe. Now, about the revenue. We are told in the reports that the time is fast approaching when we shall find ourselves landed in a terrible hole. The revenue under the Act of 1876 ceases in two years' time; but there is yet £277,713 due under that Act. In this report I read:—

"The two items under the Crown Lands Act of 1884 which should produce what, for example, I will call its main revenue, consist of rents of selections and increases of rents of runs in the 1st schedule, the first amounting to £19,250 1s. 4d., the second to £36,765; total, £56,015 1s. 4d. Now, bearing in mind that the former have only increased from seven to nineteen thousand in 1888, the latter from £29,927 18s. 6d. to £36,765, I think I am perfectly justified in doubting whether the increase in the next two years will make up for the gradual cessation of payments under the Act of 1876. There now remains under this head to be paid £277,713, which is being received at the Treasury at the rate of about £146,000 a year, and hence it follows that after the end of 1890 a very sudden decrease of revenue will occur."

Up to 1890 we shall be receiving £146,000 a year under the 1876 Act. That will be at the end of three years, not two years as is here stated. We are invited to consider, as the increase of rents has only been £12,000 on £7,000, what it will be next year on £19,000, and so on for three years. I make out a very different result from that stated in the report. Instead of it being an increase of £12,000 on £7,000, making £19,000 from rents on selections, the increase at the end of 1889 will be £32,000, making altogether £51,000. Then what will the increase be in the following year on £51,000? I am invited in the report to say what will the increase be in three years on the basis of the increase last year of £12,000 on £7,000. On that basis the increase on £51,000 in 1890 will be £87,000, making £138,000; and on the same principle the increase in 1891 on £138,000 will be £236,000, making the total at the end of 1891 £374,000. That is the direction in which I am invited to calculate. I am invited in the report to make a calculation, and I have done so; and that is what the increase will come to on the basis in the report. That can be shown by a rule of three sum, and neither the hon. member for Barcoo nor anybody else can disprove it. In the same way if the increase of rents from the pastoral tenants is taken into consideration, we shall find that the increase from them in the three years on the same basis will be £68,000, and if we add that to the £374,000 we shall get £442,000. That is the result of the calculation I have been invited to make upon the basis of the increase of last year. It will amount to £442,000. I do not say, and I do not think, the increase will really be anything like that, but I do say that, taking into account that the territorial revenue has increased in the face of the severe drought and bad seasons we have had since the 1884 Act was passed, and taking into consideration the settlement which has occurred in agricultural and grazing farms, and taking into account the infinitesimal rent paid, 3d. an acre, and that the selector pays half-a-crown an acre for the land in ten years, and that if the price is fixed at £1 an acre he has to pay 17s. 6d. an acre more at the end of that time to make it his own—I say, taking all this into account, we may look to having an abundant and overflowing revenue from the operations of the Land Act of 1884. Therefore I say there is no necessity whatever for this Bill in that respect. In paragraph 5 of the same page of the report, it is stated:—

"Reviewing the present financial aspect of the land question, I beg to submit the expediency of taking such measures as will provide for maintaining the revenue."

I consider a full answer to that is given in the next paragraph, which states that—

"The total area selected under the Act since it came into operation amounts to 2,991,895 acres, and there are at present 9,500,000 acres open to selection."

If there was any fear for the revenue, and I hold there is none, the true remedy would be to take proper and sensible steps for the occupation of those 9,500,000 acres remaining open for selection. That is the remedy I should take. I believe, from what has already taken place, in spite of the terrible drought of the last few years, we could soon get these grazing and agricultural farms settled upon to a vast extent. I wish now to say a word about the question of land orders, to which the Minister

for Lands referred. The Under Secretary for Lands, in this report, seems to be under the impression that the land orders have not been availed of by the immigrants to any considerable extent. Six hundred were issued to the end of the year 1888, and only thirty-three were taken up. Then he goes on to say that the total yearly rental from lands taken up under land orders is £149 6s. 11d. That is a bald way of putting it, and it must be remembered that these land orders are available in payment of rent for ten years, and this £149 is only for the first year, and that will have expanded to £1,490 at the end of ten years. He goes on to say :—

"The points I desire to draw attention to are, that though the land order system has been in force for over two years, and the colony stands committed to part with lands to the value of £16,850 for the express purpose of assisting newly-arrived selectors, they have only taken advantage of it to the extent of £149. Had this sum been, say, about £2,000, then it would have indicated that the majority of holders of orders had paid first year's rents under section 74 of the principal Act, and would expend the balance when due. But under present circumstances no such assumption is possible."

I say that is not a fair way of putting it. I do not say there has been any intention to state it unfairly, but that statement of it does not convey a correct impression, because the colony does not stand committed to part with lands to the value of £16,850. These land orders must be claimed within six months of the time the person arrives in the colony. Out of 600 issued only thirty-three have been claimed. What becomes of the rest? They are waste paper. The land orders are only available in payment of rent, and cannot be used in any other way. It is, therefore, a mistake to say that the colony stands committed to part with land to the value of £16,850. The 29th section of the Act of 1886, which provides for land orders to be issued, states that—

"Every such warrant shall entitle the person named therein as the person to whom it is issued to receive, at any time within six months after his arrival in the Australasian colonies, a land order, in the form of the 3rd schedule of this Act."

The Under Secretary for Lands states in his report that 600 land orders have been issued, and that of these only thirty-three have been made use of. If no more land orders have been made use of than the number mentioned, the colony is under no obligation in reference to the other land orders issued ; they become waste paper, as I understand the Act. It is therefore not strictly correct to say that "the colony stands committed to part with lands to the value of £16,850," the full amount of the 600 land orders that have been issued ; that is a misapprehension entirely. I know the Minister for Lands is not very strict in exacting compliance with the provision of the Act which states that the land order shall be presented within six months, for the reason that many persons when they come here are not made acquainted with the land order system. The hon. gentleman satisfies himself on evidence that they have paid their passages in full to the colony, and if he issues a land order it is a matter of grace ; an immigrant has no legal claim for a land order unless the warrant is presented within six months after his arrival in the colony.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS : These 600 land orders have been issued.

Mr. JORDAN : We are liable for these land orders to the extent to which they have been made use of, and not one farthing more. I regret that out of the 600 land orders issued only thirty-three have been made use of to the extent of £149. But what does that prove? It proves that the people are ignorant of the land order system ; they have not been properly informed in England, on the opposite side of the globe, or on their arrival in the colony. I shall take this opportunity of saying that, when I was speaking on this subject the other day, I mentioned that proper means had not been taken to make our land order system known in England, and I gave some facts in proof of that. I carefully stated then that I was not reflecting on the present Government, but I knew that this had taken place while the Liberal party were in power, but I think my hon. friend, if he will allow me to call him so, the Minister for Lands, did not catch that ; he thought I was reflecting on the present Government and felt somewhat aggrieved that I should have made such a statement. I thought at that time that the edition of the "Colonial Office List" for 1888 was the latest edition, but I have since been informed that there is a later edition, for 1889. But on looking into it, I find the very same words. It is distinctly stated that—

"The land order system of immigration has been discontinued, the present liberal system of disposing of the public lands of the colony being considered by the legislature a sufficient attraction to the better class of immigrants."

I complained of that the other day, and I think with good reason. That has been intentionally done by someone. The "Colonial Office List" is published from information collected from the various colonies every year ; and after we have re-established the land order system on a much better basis than before, somebody has taken the trouble to publish in the "Colonial Office List" that the system has been discontinued. I accuse someone of doing that intentionally, not the Minister for Lands, of course, nor any of his subordinates ; but I say that somebody has sent that false information to England purposely. I guarded myself the other day so as not to reflect on the present Minister in that matter. My words were these :—

"When I went into the Lands Office I found that there had been scarcely any immigration under that Act, although it had then been in existence eighteen months. I found persons trying continually to get land orders, but they had no land order warrants. I heard of one case a few days ago in which a respectable family stated they were told in England that the land orders were no use. How is it that when that system has become the law of the land these misrepresentations are sent home by Government officials, and that people who come out from England through the agency of the Agent-General of the colony are uninformed? How is it? It could not happen when I was in England, because, of course, I made it my business to see that every person who paid his own full passage to the colony got his land order warrant before he sailed. I know very well that at this took place while the late Government were in power, and I say it is obvious to my mind that proper means were not taken after the passing of that Act to make it known in Great Britain."

I did not accuse the Government. In saying what we had not done, I asked them what they were doing. I hope the Minister for Lands will be satisfied with that explanation, for I believe the present Government are anxious to have the land order system thoroughly known in England. They know very well what the first result of it was. Twenty years ago, during the first year the system was in operation, and entirely in consequence of it, between 5,000 and 6,000 persons came out, paying their own passages, and bringing nearly £30,000 in each ship. We have even a better system now, and the result of it, if put into full operation, will be still more beneficial to the colony. I may say a word also in the way of criticism on what is stated in the report about village settlement, because I think that what is there stated is intended to bring that system into contempt. The reason given here, I think, is not sound. A bald statement is

made which is calculated to give a wrong impression—I do not say intentionally, of course. It is stated—

"The provisions of the Act of 1886 with regard to village settlement have been actively carried out, all village sites proposed by the late Minister, Mr. Jordan, being dealt with as intended."

I am very glad to see that, because we know, some of us, that during the late elections it was stated at public meetings again and again that in reference to this village settlement I had either blundered or intentionally selected land utterly unsuited for the purpose. I am very glad the present Minister has approved of all the sites I had selected. That entirely disproves the statement made and circulated to the effect that I had set aside lands for village settlement that were utterly unsuited for the purpose. Then the report goes on to say :—

"Up to date the total cost of surveys of land thrown open in connection with village settlement amounts to £3,866 13s. 11d., and the total area selected out of the total areas opened to 7,912 acres 18 perches, while the total sum received in return is £418 2s. 8d., of which £196 3s. 7d. only is rent.

But, Sir, that is only rent for one year, and that should have been stated. The impression conveyed is, that although £3,866 has been spent in surveys, the return has been only £418, of which only £196 is for rent. But, as I have said, that is only the first year's rent, because those lands, like homesteads, are taken up at 6d. per acre, so that you must multiply the £196 3s. 7d. by five to get the full result. That will give a total of £980. Then out of the £418 2s. 8d., £196 3s. 7d. having been for rent, leaves £221 19s. paid for surveys. That will cover half the survey fees on the 7,912 acres taken up, leaving the other half to be paid. Multiplying the first year's rent by five, gives us £980; add to that the £220 balance yet to be received, it gives us £1,200. We are told that 7,912 acres have been taken up, but what proportion does that bear to the total area of the seventeen village settlements? I have got that information from the Land Office since. The total area is 29,128 acres, and the cost of surveying that is stated to have been £3,886 13s. 11d. We know that the cost of surveying 160 acres is £7 7s. 6d. That is the rate fixed and published to be charged to homesteaders, and at that charge the cost of survey would amount to £1,335 15s. 10d. But I find from the report of the Surveyor-General that the cost of survey of agricultural farms had been 1s. 1½d. per acre. At that rate, the cost of the survey of these seventeen village settlements, 29,128 acres, would amount to £1,638 9s. Then how is the cost put down at £3,886?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: What about the village surveys?

Mr. JORDAN: I am speaking about the village surveys. According to the rate mentioned by the Surveyor-General, the cost of those surveys should amount to £1,638, whereas £3,886 is put down in the report of the Under Secretary for Lands. There must therefore be some mistake. Besides that, the bald statement that the return of rent from these seventeen village settlements has amounted to only £196 is misleading. It conveys a wrong impression—I do not say intentionally—and is calculated to bring the system into contempt. In addition to that, I find figures something like these were quoted by hon. gentlemen on the Treasury benches, forgetting that, as I have stated, they are only one year's rent. Again, the area selected is only about one-fourth of the whole area in these settlements, so that we must multiply the total return so far by four to arrive at what the actual results will be; and I believe that if proper steps are taken to make the system known it will yet prove a great success. One part of the Surveyor-General's report I am very glad to see, and I shall quote it. It will be remembered that I once stated here that when I went into office I was anxious to ascertain what the result of the operations of the Land Act of 1884 had been up to that time, and that I had, therefore, inquiries made from all the land agents and surveyors throughout the colony. I had maps made, on a scale of two miles to an inch, showing all the land that had been brought under the operation of the Act by the pastoral lessees; then all the land that had been resumed from the pastoral lessees; then all the land in the resumed portions that had been dealt with by the dividing commissioners and the board; then all the land within the resumed portions that had been thrown open to selection, dividing that into the portions that would be used for grazing and agricultural farms. The land agents of the colony were supplied with maps showing all this, and they were instructed to keep the head office in Brisbane posted up day by day by wire, showing all the land that had been selected or applied for in their districts, in order that the maps at the head office might be charted up every day, so that any poor man coming from Ireland, or Scotland, or England, and wanting a farm, on walking into the office might find every information he required. I may say that the Surveyor-General, falling in with my views, gave me most efficient and zealous assistance in the matter of preparing and exhibiting these maps, and there they are now. That gentleman speaks of the success of the scheme in this way, because, Mr. Speaker, I hold that we make a great mistake if we do not make these things thoroughly known. We may have the best Land Act, as I believe we have, in any British colony, and yet it is of no use whatever unless people know of it and of its provisions, and unless all facilities are created to give persons who want to settle on the land every help we have it in our power to give. This is the way in which the Surveyor-General speaks of the matter :—

"The map room has been enlarged and arrangements made for supplying reliable information on all subjects connected with the selection and sale of land. It is largely availed of by persons who are desirous of acquiring land, many of whom are ignorant of the provisions of the Crown Lands Act. In a few minutes the whole procedure is explained to them by the officer in charge. Information conveyed verbally in this way is better understood by a large class of inquirers than by reading printed directions, which, though admirably drawn up, do not always succeed in supplying the particulars required. In this room maps of every district in the colony can be inspected, and tracings can be made by the public if they desire it. Particulars of all the lands open to selection and to be offered at auction can be obtained on application, and every assistance given to show their position on the map. This map room is a sort of bureau where inquiries can be made. It is only in its infancy, and its usefulness is beginning to be appreciated. In former years it was very difficult for a stranger to find out, amidst the ramifications of the Lands Department, the precise office where he could obtain information."

Now, is that not an admission that it was very difficult for persons wanting land to find out in the Lands Office itself where they could get the information?

Mr. ARCHER: Whose fault was that?

Mr. JORDAN: The hon. member can investigate that for himself. I am not saying whose fault it was, but I am commending the system now in operation. The report goes on to state :—

"These inquiries also took up the time of superior officers who had often more important business to attend to. The present system works well, and, what is better, gives satisfaction. I have been especially pleased with the manner in which visitors have

expressed their thanks for the attention they have received, and also their approval of the whole arrangements. There is nothing like it in the other colonies."

What a shame that is to the other colonies!—

"By direction of the Minister for Lands maps have been prepared for exhibition in the map room, showing the lands open to selection in every district in the colony. These maps show the land selected from day to day—so that they truly represent what they profess to do. These maps are a great boon to those desirous of selecting land, as they are able to ascertain at Brisbane the lands that are open to date before they decide to visit the locality where they are situated, and so avoid the disappointment attendant on their finding the land they desire to select already applied for when they attend at the local land office. As there are thirty-seven land agents' districts, the maintenance of these maps involves a large amount of work. In addition to these, similar maps in duplicate are in course of preparation for each of the land offices.

"Some of the offices are already supplied, and I hope soon to see the whole series completed. Each map is allowed to remain in the local office for three months, when another map, charted to date, is forwarded to take its place. The old one is then returned to this office for the purpose of having the necessary additions made, so as to be ready to replace the previous one at another interval of three months. By this arrangement there will be a reliable map in each land office, which was not always the case before this system was introduced."

I am very glad to see the system that I introduced, and which had commenced operations before I left office, has been fully approved of by the present Minister for Lands, and is being carried out in all its details. I am sorry that I have detained the House so long, and I am sure hon. members must have listened to me with some pain from the difficulty I have laboured under in speaking to-night; but I could not allow this Bill to pass without giving my views on the subject, because I believe our present Land Act is a grand reform in land legislation, and surpasses anything existing in any of the Australian colonies. I am satisfied from our experience, in spite of the long-continued droughts we have had, that it is going to prove a glorious success, and I regret that this amending Bill should be brought in, as, in my opinion, a very great injury will be done by it to the Act now in existence.

The HON. P. PERKINS said: Mr. Speaker,—I am sure it must have been an intellectual treat to hon. members to hear the story that the hon. member for South Brisbane has just told us about the land, and settling people in the colony. We have heard that story a great many times, and I regret that age has not brought wisdom to the hon. member, and that in the autumn of his life he sings the same old song—that the same old barrel-organ is grinding away still. In saying so I am not going to compliment the Minister for Lands upon the Bill that he has placed before us this evening. I am not going to treat you to a very long speech. It may be expected that I am going to travel over the ground that the hon. member for South Brisbane has ploughed. I am not going to harrow after him; but unfortunately it happens that in the colonies the land question has been made the bogus question of every politician who wanted to get popularity cheaply. Now, the present Minister for Lands should be in a better position to know the wants of the people possibly than any other member of this House. I recollect the time when it was the popular cry, "Why don't you settle the people on the land?" Who was raising that cry at the time? It was an individual who happened to have the good fortune to be rejected by a constituency since, and, as the Minister for Mines and Works called our attention the other evening, because he was rejected he got a very important appointment, and he has been learning his business since. I regret to say the leader of the Opposition, when his attention was directed to the matter the other day, tried to escape out of responsibility for that appointment by saying, "I was not in the colony at the time." If the hon. gentleman was not in the colony at the time, he must have left instructions, as he was the Ministry. There is no doubt about it that he was the cause of the appointment, and I think it was one of the scandals of the colony that a carpenter should be appointed to go and study settling the people upon the land. He himself selected 320 acres down at Beenleigh, but he never did anything with it. He left his family there, while he went about the country preaching water principles. We are invited to believe that he has become a splendid man since, but if he has it is at the expense of the country; and it must be admitted that a better appointment could have been made at the time. It was not creditable to the leader of the Opposition to try to get out of it by saying that he was not in the country at the time; and I think he will admit on reflection the responsibility of the appointment. This land business seems to be the question of all politicians who possibly have no opinions of their own. We know that in the earlier days the so-called squatters on the Darling Downs got hold of the land there in their own way, and afterwards got the railway to pass by their doors. All the good land on the Darling Downs seems to have been parted with; and we are now talking about land that, to all intents and purposes, is of very trifling value. If people were allowed to get it for half-a-crown an acre, provided they settled on it, the State would not lose much. I have seen leaders in the newspapers about the frauds committed on the State by selling land at Cullin-la-ringo and in other parts of the colony; but now people have had time to reflect, those who have a local knowledge of those transactions have no difficulty in coming to the conclusion that the persons who bought land at Cullin-la-ringo, and in other parts of the colony at that time, would be very glad to get their money back. I do not think it was a bad bargain for the State, and I do not think it did the purchasers much good. I have had a little experience in buying land, and I would be glad to part with the land I purchased for the price I paid, minus the interest. But what I complain of is, that after the four or five years' experience we have had, and the leading article which appeared the other day in a newspaper, showing what the result to the country has been, the Minister for Lands has not brought in a Bill to wipe the Land Act of 1884 out altogether, and go in for a comprehensive measure. We all know the ability of the hon. gentleman, and what a complexion he can put on a case. I did expect more from him. Instead of that, I am informed by the hon. member for Kennedy, Mr. Lissner, that the Minister for Lands made an apology for bringing in the Bill. He began with an apology, and he attempted to make an apology as he wound up. I did not hear the first apology, but I heard the second. Seeing how ruinous the present Act has been to the country, and how the intentions of its introducers have failed in every direction, and looking at it from a revenue point of view, I think the hon. gentleman should have introduced a measure to repeal that Act; but instead of that he allows the Act to remain, and goes tinkering with it by bringing in a few clauses. What has been the curse of this country for some time?

Mr. MACFARLANE: Drink!

The HON. P. PERKINS: Tinkering with the land laws. Take the transactions in sugar lands here, for instance. Those with experience in other places, who invested their capital in sugar plantations—what will they say? The great danger to the place is that, if it is suspected that we are doing well, there will be some alteration in the land laws. There is no greater

misfortune than that people elsewhere should be from day to day thinking that investors are never safe, and that during any session of Parliament there may be an alteration in the land laws. The Chief Secretary himself must know that the distrust felt by people elsewhere is so great that they will not buy a station here; they will not even entertain the offer. Why? Because they think that if they buy at a price which appears fair at the time, some man may come into office, and if he thinks they are doing well he will alter the land laws. Those are the statements made down below; and I am giving them for what they are worth. Hon. members all know, if they have anything to sell here, how difficult it is to find a purchaser. People are alarmed and warned down below that we have a lot of treacherous legislators to deal with here; and if they have any money they will keep it in the country where they made it. The squatter's position at the present time is a most unfortunate one. He has had the elements to contend with, in addition to many other misfortunes that combined against him. When it rains, too much of it comes, sometimes to his discomfort. And we are not doing anything to invite settlement here. I will give a squatter's statement made the other morning. He said: "I have 160,000 acres of land. I have ringbarked the timber. I purchased 60,000 acres contiguous to that, which was a great inconvenience. It encumbered us, and we had to go to the bank or some financial institution. But under the present Act we managed to get 160,000 acres. We discovered that the land was much better after the ringbarking than the plains we set a very high value on." He says, "This land should belong to the people." He was perfectly fair and candid over the matter. "This land should go to the people; and the people want it. There are any amount of them looking for it, but if you were in my place you would do the same as I have done." I could not dispute the honesty of his statements. There it is; the Act we have in force at the present time, and which the present Minister for Lands permits to continue in operation, is about the best Act to enable squatters to take away the lands of the country from the people that is in force in any part of Australia. That is admitted, and I hold that any alteration in the land law at the present time should take the shape of a repeal of the Act of 1884, and the introduction of a comprehensive measure dealing with the subject. I have had some troubles upon me lately, and disabilities which rendered me unable to give the attention to this matter that I perhaps should have given. However, I need not go behind any man to say that when in office I made every endeavour to settle people upon the land. I give the hon. gentleman who last spoke every credit for his good intentions. I have no doubt he meant well. I have never had any other opinion about him since I have been in this House, but that he was an honest man. However, he has made a mistake, and, though he is now in the autumn of his life, years or time have not brought him wisdom. He has asked us to believe that he has invited people to come out here and settle upon the land, but I think it is unfortunate that some of them came here. I invite the House to delay the passing of this Bill and decide upon a comprehensive amendment of the land law to be fixed for, say, ten years, so that the people at home, and especially in the other colonies, may find that we do not intend to tinker with our land laws every year. Let there be some finality about it. I may say that most of the land in Victoria is now disposed of, and it is the bogus of every politician to be talking about framing a liberal land law. There are any number of people there who would come here if they only knew they would have some fixity of tenure, and that our land laws would not be tinkered with every two or three years. While that is the case they will take their capital and wisdom elsewhere. I do not know how the House may be inclined to look at this Bill, but I confess my own disappointment with it, and I trust the Minister for Lands will give time for reflection upon it, and will not try to force it through this evening. I think he said he was willing to accept suggestions from the leader of the Opposition. The Government had better take the leader of the Opposition on to the Treasury bench. If the leader of the Opposition is to be asked to square every matter, we have no business here at all, and had better shift to some other place. I admit the ability of the leader of the Opposition, and I know what good he has done the House and the country by his criticisms of Bills, but it is a very unfortunate position for the Minister for Lands to be in to say that if the leader of the Opposition has any amendments to suggest upon his Bill they will be taken. What are hon. members on this side doing? Are there too many here? I think it looks very much like it. I trust the Minister for Lands will himself pause and see the necessity for introducing a more comprehensive measure.

Mr. HODGKINSON said: Mr. Speaker,—The hon. member who last spoke read the party he supports a very useful homily, and has obviated the necessity of hon. members on this side following in the same strain. I only propose to deal with that part of this measure which sets at rest, or is calculated to set at rest, a painful uncertainty as to the position of gold miners. No doubt, through an oversight, the Act of 1884 has led to a difficulty upon which professional gentlemen of equal ability have expressed different opinions, and the clauses in this Bill restore the status of the gold miner to that he occupied under the Gold Fields Act of 1874. I was not in the House at the time, but I understand from the debates that the Act of 1884 was in some sense a compromise—a compact—between two parties, between that very important party who hold the pastoral leases of the Crown, and what may be termed the rest of the population. It has always been the argument, and so far as I am capable of passing an opinion upon it, it has always seemed a just argument, that the squatter was not fairly treated in this respect—that he got no security of tenure. Personally I have always advocated dealing with that great interest in a most liberal manner, recognising that the squatter is a primary agent in the cause of civilisation, but letting him clearly understand that he is but a primary agent, and that when the land is required to be satisfactorily put to a higher purpose he must move on. I believe the real squatter has always been of the same opinion, and that he is averse to acquiring the fee-simple of land; but in many cases—especially in the case of squatting in the vicinity of Brisbane—the rich squatter has been tempted by hopes of great profit to acquire the fee-simple of land, and has found himself ultimately nothing more or less than the mouthpiece of certain financial associations, and he is himself perhaps not in as good a position now as he was in as a squatter without the fee-simple of these lands. But there is one thing which, if the squatters will forgive me for mentioning in their own interest, I will refer to, and that is this: Let them by no means attempt to violate in any way the compact that was come to between the pastoral interest and the other interests of the colony. If they once show the least desire to obtain in any way whatever possession of that portion of these lands which has been resumed for general purposes for the benefit of the

country, they will excite suspicion and distrust, and they must, as they have always done, go to the wall, as indeed must happen in every such case in a country where democratic government is the form of government adopted. There is no man worthy of the name of liberal, or radical if you choose so to call him, who does not recognise that squatters as the pioneers of civilisation in this country merit treatment of great liberality, and who would not measure out to them more than they might be entitled to in equity and justice. But if, after having succeeded in obtaining an Act which is without exception the most advantageous Act the squatting interest has ever obtained in any colony in the Australasian group, they begin to complain of their position—that by reason of droughts, floods, rabbits, iniquitous taxation, want of communication, and a thousand other evils, the squatter's life is a burden, and rather to be regarded as a penal than a voluntary occupation—if they attempt to violate that Act, which was a compact, in order to secure a part of that land vested in the public in the interest of the general public, they will excite distrust. If this clause in the Bill, under the insidious guise of furthering improvements in the shape of artesian wells, is acted on in the manner laid down by the Minister for Lands it will re-excite the suspicions which some of us had hoped were laid to rest by the cheerful acceptance by the squatting interest of the Act under notice. If their troubles are so great, why should they seek to increase them? But we know it is all nonsense talking in that way; we know that as long as a squattage can pay one penny in excess of rental and the charges to be paid to the Crown that is an asset; and we know perfectly well that all the seasons during the last four or five years have been unfavourable to the pastoral interest, but in that respect they have been no greater sufferers than the rest of the community. We know that like every other industry in the colony it is subject to those changes which make it at one time a desirable, and at another time an undesirable pursuit. There is no doubt of one thing, that they have a desire for self-aggrandisement, that they desire to occupy more country than they can successfully work, even under the loose style of working in which squatting is carried on here.

Mr. MURPHY: What do you know about it?

Mr. HODGKINSON: The hon. member for Barcoo asks, what do I know about it? Well, I know a great deal about it; I know perfectly well that it is an occupation which enables a great many men to obtain wealth and position with the smallest stock of brains possible. There is one point that the Minister for Lands did not clearly explain, and that is the question of compensation. That section of the community which I represent more than any other—the mining section—does not object for one moment to pay the pastoral tenant or the holder of an agricultural or grazing farm full compensation for any disturbance of his recognised title; he is legally entitled to compensation, and the miners do not want to infringe on his rights. But I do not see any provision in this Bill as to who is to pay the compensation. Of course it is impossible for individual miners to pay it, and it is only fair and just that some machinery should be provided for fixing the amount of the compensation and the quarter from whence it is to be derived. No doubt it is the intention of the Government to supply such machinery, but no explanation on that point was given by the Minister for Lands. At any rate, the Government, however they may reimburse the squatter, will not suffer. The squatter now pays an excess of rental over what he paid originally, and for the resumed portion of his run taken up by agricultural tenants and grazing farmers an increased rent over what the present squatter pays is received, and the miner again will pay to the Government a much larger revenue for whatever land it is necessary to resume under this section.

Mr. NORTH: No

Mr. HODGKINSON: The hon. member says "No." He really looks a youthful gentleman, but I ask him does he for one moment contend that a strip of country which only supports sheep and a few boundary riders and the men requisite to keep in order a rabbit fence, and pay interest to the mortgagee, returns as much revenue to the Government, as, say, 640 acres in which Gympie is situated? I suppose the revenue from Gympie amounts to more money than the revenue from any squatting district in the colony. I am perfectly certain that no member in this House believes for one moment that the mining community does not pay more to the revenue than the squatting community. I may also say, whatever interjections that hon. member may make, none would be more loth to see the mining community driven out of the colony than the hon. member himself, because miners give a cash market to the squatter. I do not say if I were a squatter that I should like to see a diggings break out on my run, but I should like to see it on my neighbour's run, as near my boundary as possible. No doubt in the early days a jealousy existed between the pastoral tenant and the miner, but that jealousy has altogether died away now, and there is nothing the squatter likes better to see than the breaking out of a diggings in the broken country where a few blacks are permitted to exist and harass his stock, and which is utterly profitless and expensive to him. With regard to the legal aspect of the amendments dealing with mining I will not attempt to speak. They will, I am sure, be received with great satisfaction by the mining community as setting beyond doubt the position of the miner. I am confident that no member in this Chamber wishes for one moment to cripple such an industry as the mining industry. For that reason I am sure both sides of the House will do their best to pass the measure into law. The details of the Bill are so very small that they are hardly worth talking about. With the exception of the recognition of the rights of the miner, and a little alteration in the terms of tenure, this amendment is about as complimentary to the much-abused Act of 1884 as has ever been made in this House. The neglected infant has become such a beautiful child that she has actually been dressed up in new frippery by the very gentlemen who ignored her paternity six months ago.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL (Hon. J. Donaldson) said: Mr. Speaker,—It is very well known here that I am looked upon as a squatting member, inasmuch as I represent a squatting district; therefore I take the earliest opportunity of replying to what I may almost call the threats of the hon. member for Burke, who just now made reference to the squatters with regard to their trying to prevent the miners from getting on to their runs. This Bill in itself is a slight proof that I, at all events, am not opposed to that, nor have I met a squatter who is; and I am sure everyone will be glad to see this amendment in the law, which is necessitated through an oversight in the original Act. There was no intention, when that Act was passed, that there should be any such restriction on miners; it was even contended at the time very strongly that they should not be restricted in the slightest degree of their rights. That was the opinion of most hon. members who were in the House at the

time. Experience has since shown the necessity of defining clearly the privileges it was intended to give them when that measure was passed. I am certain that every member of the House, whether a squatter or interested in squatting, will give his most hearty support to the passing of this clause in such a manner as will give complete assurance that they, at all events, are not adverse to the mining interests of the colony. It is not necessary for me to say more on that subject. Still, speaking for myself personally, it is very well known in this chamber, and to many people outside it, that I have always held most liberal views with regard to the Land Act. As far as settlement is concerned, I do not yield to any member of the House in my desire to see the country properly settled by a farming population. It has already been stated by my hon. friend the Minister for Lands that this is not a radical alteration in the existing land laws, but that the experience of the last few years has shown the necessity for introducing a measure of this kind for various purposes. I have already referred to mining, but it is necessary that some amendment should be made in the direction of offering greater facilities to persons who desire to settle on the land as farmers. Through existing restrictions, I believe, it takes a residence of ten or twelve years before a selector can get his title deeds, and this, it will be admitted, is detrimental to one of the best interests of the colony. I have held that opinion for some time, because it is a very large portion of a lifetime, and people do not care about going on land when they have to reside on it so long before being able to acquire the freehold of it. That this is detrimental is proved by the figures placed before us, showing the large amount of land taken up under occupation licenses, where the period is only five years. We may call them homestead selectors, although there is no provision in the Act to provide for homestead selection. The homestead selectors have been amongst the most successful settlers in various parts of the colony, and have given a greater impetus to the agricultural industry than all the selectors under the previous Acts put together. To show how successful the system has been we need only look at the large amount of land taken up by them since the passing of the Act of 1884. The area is larger under that clause of the Act than under the other, which allows up to 1,280 acres; and that makes it evident that something should be done to decrease the restrictions with regard to the latter class of selectors having to reside ten or twelve years on their land before being entitled to the freehold. I followed, or rather attempted to follow, the very long speech of the hon. member for South Brisbane, the late Minister for Lands. There is no doubt this is a subject in which he takes a deep interest. It is one which he has read a great deal about, but I fear it is one which he does not thoroughly understand. I do not say this by way of any disparagement of the hon. gentleman, for no member of the House has a higher opinion of him than I have myself; but as far as land laws are concerned, and the settlement of people on the land, or experience in settlement, I think he knows very little; and whenever he touches on the squatting question, he knows a great deal less. One of the first statements he made to-night was that all the squatters in the colony voluntarily came under the Act.

Mr. JORDAN: No; I said a large proportion, at least 75 per cent.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: That at least 75 per cent. of them came under the Act, and had given up something like 47,000,000 acres of their land for settlement. We know they did not do so voluntarily, but because a threat was held over them by the hon. gentleman who was Minister for Lands at the time, that if they did not wish to come under the Act he would exercise the right to resume the whole of their runs under the Act of 1869. By that Act, after giving six months' notice, the Government could resume the land and throw it open for selection. The squatters were placed in this position: They had either to come under the Act, and get what I have always looked upon as a very good tenure, or remain outside it with the chance of having the whole of their land taken from them. In spite of the proportion provided by the Act of 1884, which might be one-fourth, one-third, or one-half, as the case might be, I do not think there was much of a voluntary nature about that action of the squatters, because it was a chance of losing the whole of their land or retaining a portion of it by coming under an Act, the operations of which they were very doubtful about. I do not wish to speak too strongly on this point; but even within the last few days some squatters have informed me that if they had only known the position they were going to get into, they would have remained as they were. Having taken that step, they will, of course, have to make the best of it now. The next objection taken by the hon. gentleman was with regard to the tenure of grazing farms; he said he thought they should at least be of the same length as the squatting leases. Well, personally I have no objection to that, Mr. Speaker, but there is only a year's difference after all. The tenure under the Bill is twenty years, and under the squatting leases twenty-one. Of course in the case of those who have come under the Act a considerable portion of their leases have expired; they will yearly be getting less, and in the course of nineteen or twenty years hence the whole of those lands will have fallen into the State to be again dealt with. But it will be very different in the case of these selections. It is not long since the first selections took place, and if the Act remains in force exactly as it is now, thirty years hence there will not be a large quantity of land falling in to the State to be dealt with by the legislature in a manner applicable to the requirements of the colony at that time. The great advance we are making in the way of irrigation is opening up a new era, and from my experience of the lands of this colony I am perfectly confident that if we only get a sufficient supply of water by boring—and we do not know what the discoveries in the way of artesian wells may be—or by conservation, the interior of Queensland may yet be turned into a vast wheat field. That is quite possible. Supposing, for the sake of argument, that a scheme of irrigation may be able to do a great deal in this direction, I think that the present generation of legislators ought, at all events, to be careful when dealing with the public lands, to do so in such a way as not to bind future generations from being able to turn them to the best advantage. Another danger is that those selectors of 20,000 acres may become so strong a body in the colony and will exercise such a power that they will agitate for the purchase of these lands. In Victoria I remember some years ago, under the occupation licenses there, where the selector had not the right to purchase, within a few years the holders became so strong as to demand from the legislature the right of purchase. I say that when that happened in a colony like Victoria, a more radical colony than this is likely to become, how do we know what powers the selectors of these grazing farms may exercise here in the future to the detriment of the colony—admitting of course that large areas of freehold would be detrimental. I know that a large number of people hold that opinion now. I do myself; I believe that the aggregation of large estates so as to prevent close settlement is not a desirable thing in any colony. I

have no objection to seeing moderate-sized estates, because we know that they will be turned to better use, and be made more valuable by being freehold than being under leasehold. Of that I am confident. At the same time we must be very chary of legislating in such a way as to tie up future generations from dealing with the public lands. Thirty years is a generation; and thirty or forty years hence we can hardly form any idea of what the condition of the colony may be. If one carries his mind back thirty years, would he expect to see Queensland as it is to-day; would he expect to see the large amount of settlement that has taken place up to the present time? I am sure that very few, if any of us, ever dreamt then of the discoveries we are now making in the way of artesian water boring. And this discovery is only in its infancy. I hope to see very large results from it, and if we are only able to do as much in that direction as I hope to see done, I am confident that the lands of this colony will be developed to an enormous extent. A great deal of our land is rich enough for agricultural purposes, and I am certain that it will be turned to good account. Only a few months ago, in company with the Minister for Lands, I paid a visit to Mildura, which is nearly as poor land as ever I saw. I am sure that if it had been offered to me a few years ago at 6d. an acre I would not have cared about purchasing it. But the Chaffey Brothers have clearly demonstrated that they will make their scheme there a great success, and actually add another important province to Victoria. I am very sorry that they did not come here first and form a settlement of the same kind. I am sure it would have added greatly to the progress of the colony. Another matter in which the late Minister for Lands criticised this Bill was in connection with the Land Board fixing the rents. But there is no attempt made to do what he stated. It is only in regard to applications for farms, in the first instance, that a premium can be offered. If two or more persons apply for the same land, they can state, in a sealed envelope, the amount of premium they are willing to pay. The board previously fixes the rental to be paid, and if the selector is willing to pay more than the price stated, he will have an opportunity of being able to do so. I think that will prove a considerable check on dummying, because at present, supposing a selector—I am speaking now of a *bonâ fide* selector—wants to take up a piece of land, there may be some person who is interested in keeping him out of that land, and he will put in a large number of what they called in Riverina some time ago "clashers," and the chances will be ten to one against the *bonâ fide* applicant getting the land. I think the provision in the Bill will tend to prevent that. It will enable any selector who is prepared to pay a higher rental than the price fixed for the land to do so. I know this matter is open to argument. I see the hon. member for Toowoomba looking at me, and I know this is a clause he will take exception to. I have heard his argument against it before, and to a certain extent it is a sound one, because he pointed out that under the 1876 Act some of the selectors had to pay more than they intended to pay. However, I think the system a good one. The hon. member for South Brisbane, Mr. Jordan, also fell into an error with regard to the conditions of selection. The conditions in this Bill are exactly the same as in the present Act, with the exception that the selector will within three months have to enter into possession of the land. Previously he had three years, and that was the biggest opening to dummying under the Act. If I were a squatter desirous of being able to evade the law I should say instead of three years make it five or seven years, because until the lease is issued there is no control whatever over the land except the payment of the rent. There is no liability whatever on the selection until the expiration of three years.

Mr. JORDAN: If he does not make his improvements in three years he loses the land.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: There is no necessity for a selector to do anything whatever until the expiration of three years, then, if he has not fulfilled the conditions, forfeiture follows, and even then he may apply to the Land Board to extend the term another year, making it four years. Of course I assume that such an extension would not be granted without very good reasons being shown. The Government have every desire to prevent anything like dummying being carried on in any shape or form. I might as well inform the House that during the bad times there was a class of selectors going about the country for speculative purposes, taking up the most valuable waterholes on stations, which they rented to others with travelling stock, and by that means, after getting a great deal more than they paid for the land, they gave it up. We do not want selectors of that kind. We want people who will settle upon the land, and make their homes upon it. That is the position we desire to attain by this amending Bill.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: Of course you remember where the agitation came from to extend the time.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: Yes, it came from the Ministerial corner. Of course I was then sitting on the other side of the House. I am breaking no confidence, so I will make a clean breast of the whole affair. I came into the House and wrote on a piece of paper, which I handed to the leader of the Government at that time, "If you extend the time to five years you will open the door to wholesale dummying." He immediately saw the effect that it would have, and he got up in his place and condemned the extension at once. There was silence from his supporters after that. All the agitation came from the hon. gentleman's own side of the House.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: The Government proposal was two years all round.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: I make this explanation to show that my desire was not to open the door to wholesale frauds, and I think the leader of the Opposition will remember the fact. I do not remember the date, but refer the hon. gentleman to the report of the proceedings. The proposal, Mr. Speaker, to allow a squatter to select a farm upon his own run, provided that he bores for and obtains water, is one that I am sure the squatters themselves will not be very thankful to the Government for. I approve of the clause myself, because I never could see the object of preventing a squatter from selecting upon a portion of his own run, inasmuch as he is not debarred from selecting on another man's run, or acting as his neighbour's dummy, or taking up a piece of land outside his own district, and twenty-five miles from his own run. I think that is likely to have a demoralising effect. I would not suspect any squatter who goes outside his own district to take up a selection; but I think it is better that he should take it up on his own run. My reason for thinking the present proposal will not be very successful is that bores cost from £2,000 to £5,000, and there is no guarantee that water will be obtained then. The squatters run a very great risk, in the first place, in expending such a very large amount of money, and they receive very

small consideration for it. They have to comply with all the conditions of the law the same as an ordinary selector, and have to pay rent just the same. They receive no reduction in the rent they are paying at present for the land, and I certainly have never thought it was fair to prevent squatters from taking up selections in their own districts; but that it would be preferable to allow them to select upon their own runs. That is a step in the right direction; but I do not think it is one the squatters will feel very thankful to the Government for. I do not think it will pay; and I make this explanation to show that this is not a sop for the squatters, because there are squatters on this side of the House. I do not look upon it as any sop, but it is just giving them a certain amount of justice, and I would like to see them receive that justice. No doubt hon. members will have an opportunity of hearing some squatters speak upon this particular clause, and if they do so, I am sure that if they are under the impression that the squatters are pleased to have such a clause in the Bill, they will be undeceived in that matter. I do not wish to conclude without making some reference to the long speech of the hon. member for South Brisbane in regard to village settlement. I hold in my hand a return brought down to the latest date in regard to village settlement, and I think that hon. gentleman will find that the country is not to be congratulated upon the success of that scheme. I find that at the present time there are twenty-one villages in twelve districts, and 748 farms have been surveyed. Of these—mark the figures!—158 have been taken up. The total area surveyed is 36,429 acres, and the total area selected 8,818 acres. The total cost of surveys has been £4,970 8s. 5d., while the total amount of rents has been £457 12s. I do not think the country is to be congratulated upon the success of village settlement.

Mr. JORDAN: One year's rent.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: It is two years' rent. If it were not for Ravensbourne, near Toowoomba, where there are eighty farms thrown open and sixty-eight taken up, and actually £178 2s. 3d. out of the £457 received for rents, the result would look still worse. There are some districts where not one farm has been taken up.

Mr. GROOM: Where the land is no use.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: That is just the very thing; I did not like to say it; but that is not the fault of the present Government. I am sure no Minister for Lands has tried harder to do his duty than my hon. friend, the present Minister for Lands, has since he has been in that department. He has earnestly tried to work the Act of 1884 as intended by its framers, and has tried to carry out the ideas of his predecessor. Yet I have heard the statement made that he has not tried to give publicity to it; I can contradict that statement.

Mr. JORDAN: I did not say so.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: You said that some of the notices issued by you had been in red ink, which had faded out, and they had not been renewed, while in others, the black ink had been washed out, and they had never been renewed. I know that notices have been issued in London, as well as in the colonies, in regard to land orders. Every publicity is given, and the hon. gentleman has never shrunk from his duty, and sometimes those duties cannot be very pleasant. He has done his level best to try and promote settlement in this colony, and while he is in office I know he will continue the same course. I have an official document regarding village settlement, and some of the remarks made are very interesting:—

"Village settlement will not be a success until some irrigation scheme has been started."

And the next remark is "Ditto, ditto."

Mr. HODGKINSON: That is a new fad.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: It cannot be. In the place the first remark applied to there are fifty-nine farms surveyed, containing 3,782 acres, at a cost of £339 14s. 7d. There has not been one single acre selected. Where is the fad in that?

Mr. HODGKINSON: The fad is irrigation.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: Yes; people are too sensible to take up land at present without any water upon it, or any prospect of obtaining water to enable them to cultivate it. That is at Bimbah, in the Aramac district, a very suitable place for a village that must be. Then there are Foxhall, in the Blackall district, and Conway, near Bowen; the same remarks apply in regard to these. Then in the next one there are seventeen farms occupied, three selectors living on three allotments. The residence sites are considered a failure. Improvements to the value of £271 were effected. That refers to Ninderry, near Brisbane, Connondale, near Brisbane, and Gneering, also near Brisbane. I presume that there was one of those three selectors settled upon each. The next place is Cordalba, near Bundaberg. There are fifteen farms all occupied, and selectors living upon them; the improvements made are valued at about £1,230. Then there are twenty-eight farms containing 1,281 acres, of which area 953 acres have been selected, and the rental amounts to £29 19s. 10d. At Tuchekoi and Brooyar, near Gympie, it is stated that there is "no progress, farms only recently confirmed; maximum area allowed is considered too small." Of the next place it is stated "village settlement will not be a success until the maximum is increased." The next place is Dullawunna, near Mount Britton—that is unoccupied. At Taabinga, near Nanango, it is stated that "the selectors were making very satisfactory progress. All live on their allotments." There are at that place 1,600 acres surveyed, 480 acres being selected, the rent and survey fees paid amounting to £19 13s. 4d. as against £140 19s. 11d.—cost of survey. At Euluma and Murrin Murrin, near Port Douglas, "the village settlement is viewed with disfavour." At Coogurra, near Roma, two farms are occupied. Farms would be more sought after if the maximum area were increased. In North Hodgson, also near Roma, twelve farms only are occupied, owing to farms having been very recently confirmed. Then we come to Ravensbourne, near Toowoomba, and out of 158 farms taken up in the colony, sixty-eight have been selected at Ravensbourne. It is stated of that village settlement, "In a few months a very satisfactory report may be looked for. Two allotments occupied." It is an unfortunate thing for the colony that there is not some more good land like this at Toowoomba to be occupied for the same purpose; but I know that the hon. member for South Brisbane, Mr. Jordan, while he had every desire to settle people under this scheme, proposed to do it in some parts of the colony where it could not be successful, and at the same time ran the colony into a very large amount of expenditure for survey fees that will not be refunded, as the land will not be taken up for the purpose for which it was intended. I doubt whether the village settlement is going to be a success, unless, as is stated in some parts of this report, an irrigation scheme is started. That, of course,

will be of great assistance. Now, with regard to homesteads, where they get 160 acres instead of 80 acres, there is a very successful settlement, and one that has never ceased. It has gone along finely all through since the Act of 1884 came into operation, as it was doing previous to that Act coming into operation. The hon. member for South Brisbane said to-night that he had not the slightest anxiety so far as the revenue scheme of the Act of 1884 was concerned. Well, I feel rather sorry for the hon. gentleman. I think that is one great reason for bringing in this measure, which will to a limited extent—and I think only to a limited extent—restore the balance that we have lost by passing the Act of 1884. At the time of passing that Act there was a large revenue coming in under the Act of 1876. Now, as the hon. gentleman admits, in about two years the whole of that revenue will be lost, as the progress payments will cease. About £277,000 will be lost in two years, and if we cannot improve on that what will be the result? The hon. gentleman adduced a few figures to show the progress that we are likely to make; but it reminded me of paying so much for the first nail put into the horse's shoe, doubling it each time, and then finding what the result would come to at the thirty-second.

Mr. JORDAN said: Mr. Speaker,—I rise to a point of order. The hon. gentleman has misrepresented what I said. What I said was that I worked out a sum that was given in the report. If the increase in rent from selections in one year was from £7,000 to £19,000 we were entitled to calculate what it would be in three years. I simply gave the working out of that sum, and I said carefully I did not believe it would come to anything like that amount. I simply gave the working out of the figures propounded in the report.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member has not stated his point of order. He has corrected the statement made by the Postmaster-General, but that is not a point of order.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: I dare say I misunderstood the hon. gentleman. He was dealing only with probabilities, but he pointed out that if certain increases took place we would have a certain revenue in a certain time.

Mr. JORDAN: No; I beg the hon. gentleman's pardon, I did not. I pointed out if there were an increase of £12,000 on £7,000, if that rate of increase were to go on in future years what the sum would be. I was invited to consider what the amount would be.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: I think if the hon. gentleman had been careful in his calculations he would have found that all the land in the colony would be soon taken up. It is quite true that the total rental received from grazing farms from the 1st March, 1885, to 31st December, 1888, was £25,657—£13,747 from agricultural farms and £11,910 from grazing farms—and, of course, it has shown a certain amount of progress. But you can quote figures in such a way as to be very deceiving, and I am sure the hon. gentleman quoted figures to-night that if they were believed in by this House would be very misleading, because the results cannot become anything like what he anticipates. What is the use of quoting figures if they cannot be realised?

Mr. JORDAN: I was invited to calculate that, and I did so.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: I am glad to hear the hon. gentleman say that, as I misunderstood him. I might say that we have 427,000,000 acres of land in the colony, and at a rental of a 1d. an acre it would bring in so much ten years hence; but that is not possible we know, and it is not probable. The hon. gentleman certainly did not speak so that hon. members could follow him; and I understood that he was quoting certain figures to show what results would follow in two years hence to cover up this deficit of £270,000 that will have to be provided for. That is the way I followed and understood the hon. gentleman, and that is the force of the argument he was using at the time. That is the reason why I have replied in the manner I have done. If we only received £25,000 from the 1st March, 1885, to 31st December, 1888, and in eighteen months hence lose £140,000, is it at all probable that we are going to get a revenue of £140,000 per annum to make up the deficit? I do not think so, and that was the force of the hon. gentleman's remarks—to try and lead the House to believe that there is not the slightest necessity at the present time for bringing in a Bill of this kind. For that reason he took exception to several clauses providing for additional revenue, one of them relating to sales by auction. He made a strong point of that, saying that there is no necessity for bringing in a Bill for that purpose; but I contend that we shall have to get a larger revenue in future than we have received during the last three or four years from the land. The whole of the lands within the schedule have been dealt with, and while there has been an increased rental of £36,765 from pastoral occupation, that amount has gone, and there will be no further increase for several years—until the expiration of the first seven years after the runs were dealt with; and, for all we know, it is quite possible that the amounts may be reduced at the end of seven years. Therefore, we have to make up the deficiency in the Lands Department, which has not shown any progress for the last few years. Though the Government have the power to alienate lands, no doubt the check which this House has upon them will be sufficient to prevent them from abusing the privilege; but the Government are not going to abuse the privilege. They have the power already to sell as many 40-acre blocks as they like, if they choose to exercise that privilege; but they do not wish to create large freeholds or allow the squatters to mop up the country. No Government would dare to do that, even if they desired to do so, neither do the squatters desire to buy large areas of land. Those who have bought large freeholds are in the worst position to-day, and most of them wish they had not indulged so freely in the privilege they possessed of buying up large areas of land.

Mr. HODGKINSON: What about the Wimmera district in Victoria?

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: Many large estates in New South Wales—some of them containing more than 200,000 acres—were bought, not from the desire of the squatters to purchase, but because they had to protect themselves. They were forced by their creditors to secure the land or they would have been foreclosed upon. It was because speculative selectors were going about the country, which was not fit for settlement at that time. In that way large estates accumulated and the result was that very few remained in the hands of the people who put them together, but went into the hands of other capitalists who had no hand in building them up. Nearly all the people who built them up, I am sorry to say, failed, that is they went out with small means; and we must try to avoid that sort of thing in this colony. I think our land legislation, as we are trying to guide it, will prevent anything of that kind here, because the laws of the country are not of such a nature as to compel the

squatters to purchase large areas to protect themselves. It is quite right that the Government should have the power to sell a considerable quantity of land for the purpose of making up any deficiency in revenue—and for no other purpose do they desire the power—and I am sure that if hon. gentlemen will only reflect, they will not see the slightest objection to a moderate amount of land being sold by auction in this colony. Under the terms proposed it will be possible for a person with a limited amount of capital to purchase 320 acres, or 640 acres, and have three years in which to pay the money. I fail to see that it is only the squatter or large capitalist who desires to buy 320 acres or 640 acres because terms are given; and I consider this amendment a step in the right direction. So far as I am concerned, I would be glad to make the term five years, because many people with moderate capital who desire to buy land would be glad to be relieved of the obligations connected with residence and improvements. I think the hon. member for Toowoomba will, to a considerable extent, bear me out in that argument. I do not think he fears the danger now which used to exist in regard to capitalists trying to grab up the land. There is a great deal of land which men of moderate means would like to buy if they were not forced to expend a large amount of money on improvements at once; and if they have the right to acquire it on time payment, as we propose, it will be taken up by a class of people who will make full use of the land in the future. I do not think I have anything else to say. I have not gone as fully into the question as I might have done, because the Bill has not been severely enough criticised. If there had been severe criticism, I would have been glad to have met the arguments used. A great deal of what was said by the hon. member for South Brisbane, Mr. Jordan, was not argument. He made a lot of statements that bore reference to his own administration of the Act of 1884; and though he took up nearly an hour he made very few objections to the Bill. I looked upon his speech more as an explanation of his own administration of the Act than as a criticism of the Bill; and I am sure that if hon. members look carefully into the Bill they will see that there is a great deal of good in it. I know what the leader of the Opposition will say. He will criticise us because we have not gone in for something more severe, because the Land Acts, 1884 to 1886, have been freely condemned by the party now sitting on this side. I know the ground he will take up; but the Government can reply that they are making the measure more perfect than it is at present, and the country will have an opportunity of judging whether the criticisms we have passed on the Land Act in the past are true or not. Time will tell whether we are right or not in our criticism.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: That is your motive I suppose in trying to make it worse.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: Our motive is to make it better; and I am sorry that the hon. gentleman should make such a statement.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: Your main object is to show how bad it is; and the amendments tend in that direction.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: The Land Act of 1884 was found to be defective; and in 1885 it was amended by the Government who brought it in. In 1886 they brought forward a further amendment, which showed that they saw the necessity for amending the Act. And now we see that there is a further necessity for amendment, and we have brought in the Amending Bill of 1889. We have given good reasons for doing so; and I challenge the hon. gentleman to disprove any of them, or to prove that there is no necessity for any one of the amendments now proposed. I am quite ready to be converted if I hear any good arguments to the contrary. As far as mining is concerned, everyone must admit that the amendment is necessary.

Mr. HODGKINSON: Not only necessary, but advisable.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: And the amendment with regard to preventing an evasion of the law—that is also necessary. And those are the two main objects we have in bringing forward the present Bill. There is no force whatever in the argument that we are trying to make the Act worse. I was sorry to hear the charge made just now.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: I only took you up on your own words.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: I say we are trying to amend the Act and make it better. We are putting hoops on a leaky cask. The cask is loose and leaky.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: You put bad hoops on.

The PREMIER: It was a bad cask.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: It was pointed out frequently by members of the Opposition when the late Government were in power that the Act would fail from a revenue point of view, and good arguments were brought forward on that point by the present Minister for Mines and Works. He raised the question with regard to revenue, and his speech was answered by the then Treasurer, who quoted figures to the same extent as my hon. friend, the member for South Brisbane. He quoted figures by the yard, but what has been the result? Have those figures been realised? Let anyone look at *Hansard* of that time and the actual figures of to-day. Will they not admit at once that the arguments raised by the Minister for Mines and Works were correct, and the answer given was wrong? The House was deceived. It was in the grasp of an octopus Railway Bill, and that was why the Land Act of 1884 became law, because it was stated by the then Minister for Railways that the Land Act would provide sufficient revenue to pay interest on the whole of the £10,000,000 loan. Well, I think experience has shown us that that is not the case, and that the Act of 1884 is a lamentable failure as a revenue measure. That it has succeeded to a certain extent I am very glad to see. I am glad to see that it has succeeded so well in the direction of settlement, and I hope that with amendments it will succeed still further. I hope that it will be amended so as to prevent any evasion of the law, and that we shall settle a proper class of people on the land; and that the colony will make that progress under good land legislation which the present Government are only too anxious to see.

Mr. GROOM said: Mr. Speaker,—I do not think there is any member on this side of the House who will not give the Minister for Lands credit for an honourable and conscientious endeavour to administer the Land Act fairly since he has been in office. I have had opportunities of noticing the hon. gentleman's conduct in relation to it, and I must bear my testimony to that fact, and should be failing in my duty if I did not express my belief to that effect. With regard to the village settlements, to which the Postmaster-General has made allusion, I may say that I am not at all surprised at their failure. Whether it is that those who had to select the village settlements were determined to make the system a failure, I do not know, but I have seen some of the places selected

for village settlements, and they are such that I am sure you, Sir, would not turn a flock of hungry goats on to. How it was possible to suppose that any human being would settle on such places with a half-acre allotment to live on and 80 acres of this rocky, waterless country to cultivate, I do not know.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: Who selected the sites?

Mr. GROOM: I do not know.

The HON. P. PERKINS: Irrigate.

Mr. GROOM: Irrigation would be entirely out of the question in such places. No irrigation except nature's irrigation, and that of the most frequent and copious character, would give any value to the land I refer to. And my remarks apply not only to the South but to the North. My hon. friend, the member for Herbert, had an opportunity of seeing the character of one of the settlements at Port Douglas at an out-of-the-way place on the top of mountains where the land, according to the land commissioner, was perfectly inaccessible, and yet it was marked off into eighty-acre farms. In fact, it was perfectly absurd to suppose that any settlement could take place there. The only place that has been a success has been Ravensbourne, the locality known as the Cedar Scrub, joining part of the old Crow's Nest run, and where, I see, according to Mr. Warner's report, there are eighty farms, ranging from twenty to eighty acres, which were allotted to sixty-six selectors. A number of them were Lincolnshire farmers sent out by Mr. Randall, and they went in a body to this particular place and assisted no doubt to make their village settlement a great success. Those men are there now. They are thoroughly satisfied with their land, and I have no doubt it will be turned to a useful purpose. But so far as the other places are concerned it is not probable that village settlement, as at present conducted, will prove a success. I do not think it could be, and certainly the nature of the land will not tend to make it a success. Now, so far as this Bill is concerned, of course it is very harmless in some respects. I take it that it is intended to improve the Land Act, but whether it is going to produce the amount of revenue which the hon. Minister for Lands anticipates is another question. I am not inclined to think that it is. With regard to the grazing farms the only thing I have any objection to is that two applicants for the one selection are to decide the matter at auction, and are to bid against one another. I have seen the evil of that system. I, on one occasion, went into an auction room to see the system carried out, and saw three or four men ranged before the commissioner, each bidding one against the other. Well, it is perfectly monstrous to see three or four men bidding against one another, and the man who has the longest purse getting the land. So it will be again, I am quite sure, if the provision to that effect is carried. And with regard to offering a premium on the annual rent, I am sure that that will lead to the man who has the largest amount of money getting the land. With regard to the case referred to by the Postmaster-General, I know it was a case of great hardship, and I do not think the matter has been settled to this day. The unfortunate selector is still on his selection, but that land was offered by the Crown at 6d. an acre per annum; and, in consequence of the auction system, he paid 9s. per acre per annum. Of course that is more than the land is worth, and he has to pay £80 or £90 a year as rent for ten years. That is an instance of the objection to the auction system. I am perfectly sure that under the proposed clause if you bring two applicants together—the owner of a run on one side and a selector on the other—the man who has the most money—the owner of the run—is bound to get the land. I think the system of balloting is far the most equitable, and far more just to all concerned, and certainly it has worked the most satisfactorily. I may say, with regard to the reduction of the terms of leases from thirty to twenty years, that it is pretty well known that when the Act of 1884 was going through Parliament, I opposed the thirty years leases. I believed it was too long a time for any man to be allowed to keep land from the public. I do not think we ought to give any lease for a longer period than fifteen years, and I am sure that no one who has had any experience of the progress of these colonies would come to any other conclusion than that almost every ten years a different set of circumstances arises which necessitate new legislation. Entirely new circumstances may arise, such as the discovery of goldfields, which might be sufficient in their effects to justify an amendment of the land laws. I think, therefore, as I did when the Act of 1884 was being passed, that it is wrong to lock up the land for thirty years. As I must act in conformity with the opinions I expressed then, I am in accord with the Minister for Lands in the reduction of the term he now proposes, and I am prepared to support the hon. gentleman so far as that clause is concerned. With regard to the reduction of the period for the acquisition of the freehold of agricultural farms, I cannot agree with the hon. gentleman. I do not know whether he has had any intimation that the term of ten years is too long, but from inquiries I have made since this Bill was introduced, I am led to the conclusion that all the selectors regard this as the best portion of the Land Act, and do not wish it to be interfered with in any way. I will show what this proposal will practically amount to, and I have had some experience in this matter. I have no doubt the hon. member for Stanley, Mr. O'Sullivan, will recall similar instances when I mention facts of this kind. The Minister for Lands proposes in subsection 6 of clause 3, that the period of five years should be substituted in lieu of the period of ten years mentioned in this connection in clause 73 of the Act of 1884. It might be possible for selectors under present circumstances and with conditions as they are now, where the seasons have undergone a complete change, where we have a year of fine seasons like the present one, which set in in March and is likely to continue for the present year, to take advantage of this clause; but with the predictions of those who have devoted a lifetime to the study of meteorology that we are going to have another drought in 1890, which will probably extend to 1891, it is more than possible that the farmers will not be in a position at the end of five years to make their selections freeholds, and the result will be that they will go, as many of them go now, unfortunately, and have done for many years past, I am sorry to say, to the money-lender. They will borrow from him sufficient money to make their lands freehold, and they will then be in the hands of the mortgagee, and instead of paying 3d. per acre per annum to the Crown, in part payment be it remembered of the principal, they may have to pay, as I have known some have to pay, 40 per cent. interest upon the money they borrowed. I have known selectors go on the 1st March to these money grubbers—usurers in the worst sense of the term—and they have exacted 40 per cent. for the money lent to pay their rents. I have known that to be done, and any system which may tend to encourage that sort of thing, as I fear this proposal will, is one I should deprecate in the strongest possible terms. Therefore, I ask the hon. gentleman whether, after all, this proposal

is not unwise? This is not a revenue part of the Bill, as it is simply giving means for the acquisition of a freehold. I believe by giving the selector ten years, and allowing him to pay this small modicum of rent, we encourage him to make a permanent home for himself and his family—induce him to fence in his land, and permanently settle upon it; and we offer no facilities whatever for gambling in land. We shall not do wisely to alter the Act of 1884 in this respect. Experience goes to show that ten years is the best term to provide, and I know that Sir Graham Berry, in pointing out a defect in Sir Gavan Duffy's Act, said it would be materially improved if they refused to issue a title to selectors for ten years, because a shorter period offered inducement to gambling in land and the surrendering of the land to money-lenders. I have seen the evil effects of a too easy acquisition of a title where selectors have had to pay exorbitant interest for borrowed money. It is much better, I think, to leave the term as it is now, and at the end of ten years the selector may be in a position to obtain his freehold by the profits from his farm without having recourse to the money-lender. There is another matter referred to in the Bill, and that is the question of sales by auction. As hon. members know, I have always been opposed to sales of land by auction, that is in large areas. I am not opposed to reasonable sales of land, because there must always be a certain amount of land disposed of in the ordinary course. I quite see that if there are to be sales by auction up to 320 acres, it may lead to the eyes of the country being picked out as they were in years past, although I believe there is not at the present time that strong desire to acquire large areas of land that was noticeable some years ago. What has been stated by some hon. members opposite I can confirm, as to some persons having secured large areas which they would now gladly dispose of. I know that the Westbrook Run, in the neighbourhood of Toowoomba, could be purchased for a very small price indeed, much less than it cost the present proprietors. I think there might be some provision inserted in the Bill such as there is in the New South Wales Act. I do not know whether the Government would have any objection to that. I take it that the principle of the Land Act of 1884 was leasing as against alienation by auction, and that is the principle of the Land Act of New South Wales, and in the Land Act introduced by Mr. Brunker it is not proposed to disturb that principle. In the Act in New South Wales power is given to the Government there to sell land up to £200,000 per annum, and there is no intention on the part of Mr. Brunker, in the Bill which he has introduced, to repeal that portion of the principal Act in that colony. That is of course to prevent the aggregation of large estates, and why could not the Government insert a clause in this Bill limiting them to sale of land up to £100,000 per annum, and not have wholesale sales of land by auction as in the past? I do not see why a man who chooses to purchase 320 acres of land should not do so; that is, I think, a fair concession, but I think that the Government should limit themselves to the sale of land to the value of £100,000 per annum. That would be a guarantee to the people that there was no disposition to unnecessarily sell the public estate. As to the provisions respecting the artesian wells, I accept the explanation of those provisions given by the Postmaster-General. With regard to the provisions with respect to mining, I believe they are absolutely necessary to satisfy the mining community. I have nothing further to add to these observations. The Bill is a simple one in itself, and is, I believe, the outcome of an honest attempt to administer the Land Act of 1884. I think it must be admitted by every disinterested person, at any rate as a revenue Bill, it certainly has not had the effect which was predicted for it, and it must also be admitted that the contention of the Minister for Mines and Works, when addressing the House in 1884, and endeavouring to show that some of the figures then quoted were fallacious and would never be realised, has come to pass. I am one of those who have taken this view of the Act of 1884, that it was valuable not so much for bringing in a revenue as for settling people on the land. If you settle people on the land in large numbers you obtain a revenue in an indirect way—through the Custom-house. The question arises then, has settlement been greater under this Act than under the Act of 1876? If we really accomplish the object we wished to attain—namely, to promote settlement, the revenue is a secondary consideration, and it is satisfactory in this respect to notice from Mr. Hume's report, that notwithstanding the adverse seasons which farmers have laboured under, the land selected in 1888, was greatly in excess of the selections for 1887. I think the more the Land Act of 1884 is understood by the public outside, the better it is liked, and I believe that the gentleman at present in charge of the Lands Department has an honest desire to effect the settlement of people on the land, so far as the Land Act enables him to do so. I believe this Bill is introduced with that object, and I hope the hon. gentleman will succeed. I shall give him what assistance I can in passing this Bill, but at the same time I would ask him to consider what I have pointed out, as I think it would be an unwise step to reduce the term within which the holder of an agricultural farm may acquire the freehold of his land from ten years to five. It will be a step in the wrong direction, will really obstruct the progress of settlement, and will open the door to unnecessary gambling in land.

Mr. PLUNKETT said: Mr. Speaker,—I wish to say a few words in reference to this Bill. I am somewhat disappointed with it, as I certainly expected a more comprehensive measure; but as the Minister for Lands has invited amendments, I shall feel called upon to propose some amendments in committee. These amendments will not be brought forward in a spirit of factious opposition, but with the sole desire to effect the settlement of people on the lands, and I believe that can be done better than it has been done under the Act of 1884. I consider that the Land Act of 1876 is the best Land Act that has been passed in this colony since separation. I propose in the amendments I intend to submit to limit the maximum area to be selected under this Bill to 1,280 acres, in place of 5,120 acres as allowed by the Act of 1876, the term of payment to extend over five years, and no certificate to be granted sooner. My reasons for this amendment are not financial ones; my sole desire is to settle the people on the lands of the colony. My experience, extending over a period of twenty-five years, is that there has been more *bonâ fide* settlement under the Act of 1876 than under any other Act passed since separation. The Land Act of 1868 was, in my opinion, too liberal, as it allowed one man to select land up to 10,000 acres in the settled districts of the colony. That has been taken advantage of, and the result has been very detrimental to the colony in general. The hon. member for Toowoomba has said that the provision requiring a man who takes up an agricultural farm to reside on it for ten years is one of the best features of the present Land Act. I certainly cannot bear out this at all. I have had a very wide experience among farmers, and I find that that provision has been a greater

bar to settlement than any other clause in the Act of 1884. I will, in support of this view, just point out the difference between selection of homesteads and of agricultural farms under the existing Act. For this purpose I will refer to three or four land agents' districts. In the Beenleigh land agent's district during the year 1888 there were 25 homesteads taken up, representing 3,442 acres, and only 5 agricultural farms — that is, farms not exceeding 160 acres. In the Brisbane land agent's district for the same year there were 356 homesteads, representing 49,270 acres, and only 39 agricultural farms, or 16,141 acres. In the Ipswich district there were 183 homesteads, representing 21,991 acres, and only 38 agricultural farms. In the districts of Toowoomba, Warwick, and Dalby there were 303 selections, and of these only 71 were agricultural farms. Where, then, I would ask, is the proof of the statement made by the hon. member for Toowoomba? I think it is quite the other way. A great many of the small selections taken up as agricultural farms in my own district have, I know, been taken up in the belief that the Land Act of 1884 would be repealed, and that the selectors would be allowed the same privilege as those who have taken up land under the Act of 1876. There is one part of the principal Act of 1884 dealing with agricultural farms which I should like to see amended, and intend to move that the words "160 acres" be omitted, with the view of inserting "320 acres." I can assure hon. members that 320 acres of land now available in some districts is not equal to 160 acres which were taken up previously under the Act of 1876. Under that Act men could take up 160 acres near navigable waters, but even then they could only manage to eke out a sorry existence on that area. Now, however, a great deal of the land available is scrub land far away from railways and navigable waters, and it is as much as a man can do to make a living on 320 acres. I do not therefore think it is too much to ask that the maximum area of agricultural farms should be increased from 160 acres to 320 acres. Then with reference to grazing farms, I think the present conditions with regard to fencing are too severe and prevent small selectors taking up grazing farms. I will give an instance of what I mean. Here are two men, for instance, say, conterminous graziers under the present Act. If they are unneighbourly, are not the present Fencing and Impounding Acts sufficient to make them divide their grazing selections? But if, on the contrary, they are friendly and neighbourly, and can work their business as graziers until such time as it may suit them both to divide their holdings, why should the Government step in and make it imperative? The squatter, on an average, pays about one-half the rent, and he is trammelled with no conditions other than working his stock in an amicable manner with his neighbour. If he does not conduct his business in an amicable manner, his neighbour can coerce him into dividing his cattle, but it is purely a business matter between themselves of which the Government take no part, leaving them solely to the conditions of the existing Fencing and Impounding Acts. Now, what equity is there in allowing the grazing selector less freedom than the squatter? They are both Crown tenants; the Crown reaps the advantage of about double the rent from the selector, and should in all common fairness put him in a position at least equal to the squatter. I intend to take the sense of the House on that clause in committee. Neither in the Act of 1884 nor in the amending Act of 1886 is there any such thing as liberality. Why, I ask, should a man whose daily avocations prevent him from residing on the land be debarred from obtaining a freehold? Such a thing is impossible under the present Act, and I think that in the case of farmers, miners, artisans, and labourers, and that class of men, they ought to be allowed to select land by means of resident bailiffs in place of living on it themselves, which it is impossible to do, situated as they are. Hon. members will, I think, agree with me that any amendment intended to give people an opportunity to make a country home for themselves should be given with a free hand. I will ask hon. members in committee to give me as much help as they can in the matter, for I think it is a very necessary thing, although I hope the Minister for Lands will take it into consideration and himself propose the insertion of an amendment to that effect.

Mr. CAMPBELL said: Mr. Speaker,—Although there are some clauses in the Bill to which I shall give my heartiest support, there are others that I shall deem it my duty to vote against. Unless I become more enlightened in committee than I am at present I shall certainly vote against the clause referring to artesian water. I think—and I assisted to do it—the squatters of the colony were very fairly treated under the amending Act of 1886; and if this clause pass, enabling squatters to go out of their leased holdings and enter upon the resumed part for this purpose, taking off, perhaps, 1,000 acres of it, it will be a gross injustice to other members of the community. It will give them a decided advantage over other men, because they can outbid them. They can pay a higher premium than the majority of ordinary men, and consequently it will be a very dangerous thing to allow the clause to pass. At any rate, until I have more information on the subject than I have at present, I shall oppose it in committee. From his speech this evening the Minister for Lands does not seem to have a very great amount of sympathy with the homestead selector. I see that since the Act came into operation something like 427,000 acres have been taken up by homestead selectors; and it will be admitted by all who know anything of the country, that they have been taken up on the very worst, or the most indifferent land in the colony -stony, heavily timbered, or scrub land, where a considerable outlay will be required to bring them under cultivation. Those men should have every consideration, and it will be impossible for those lands to be utilised by anyone else. Their hardship—I am referring principally to village settlement—is mainly with regard to survey. I know of persons who took up land in the village settlement of Ravensbourne who had to pay as much as 6s. an acre for survey fees. That seems to me to be a gross injustice. I represented the case to the Under Secretary for Lands some time ago, and he showed me clearly that that amount was paid to the surveyor. The total amount paid was £12 12s., and if surveyors are allowed to charge such a sum as that for surveying a paltry forty acres of land, it is a great hardship, and it will deter people from taking up land, particularly under the village settlement clauses. With reference to the desire to reduce the term for agricultural farms from ten to five years, that will have my hearty support. I firmly believe that every man has a right to his freehold within a reasonable time, and I consider five years ample, particularly as the Act at present is not bringing in a very large amount of revenue. It will be a great relief to those men if they can get their deeds at the end of five years. With regard to sales by auction, it may be remembered that when the amending Bill was before the House, I advocated that blocks of land up to 640 acres should be sold. I am still of that opinion. I shall support the 320 acres, and if

the Minister for Lands makes it 640 acres I shall be still more inclined to support it. It is only fair that persons engaged in trade who choose to purchase a piece of country land should not be compelled to reside on it. They can now purchase 40 acres, but that is not sufficient. If their means enable them to buy 640 acres to form a stud farm, or a model farm, or to make a home, they have a right to do so, and I shall certainly support anything in that direction. With reference to the clause relating to miners, I do not pretend to any special knowledge. Miners are a very influential and worthy body of men, and I think it is only right that they should have the right to seek for gold or other minerals upon the lands of the colony. But the rights of the pastoral lessees, who hold leases for twenty-one years, must be protected. It is not the miners who injure the pastoral lessees, but those whom I may term their camp followers. Wherever there is a new rush, a number of people follow in the wake of the real miners, take up all sorts of lands, form paddocks and depasture a large number of cows upon them. Well, if that is done it will be necessary for this House to protect the pastoral tenants. If you don't the results will be very serious. If a pastoral tenant is compelled to go to the Land Board for compensation, I do not think he will get any great satisfaction, because they will look at the matter through the spectacles of the office, and therefore the pastoral tenant will be at a great disadvantage. I do not think I can say anything more on the Bill, Mr. Speaker. I shall support the second reading, but I do hope that there will be some amendments made in committee. I do not know whether it would not be better for the hon. member for Albert to bring in a new Bill, because I do not think it possible to include all his amendments in this Bill.

Mr. HUNTER said: Mr. Speaker,—In the concluding remarks of the hon. member for Albert he referred to the desire of miners to take up allotments as freehold. Now, Sir, I can assure that hon. member and this House that there is no desire whatever on the part of miners to acquire freeholds from the Crown. On the other hand, they are very much against it. It is not very long ago that the Government advertised certain lands held under lease on Charters Towers for sale, and the miners petitioned so strongly against it that the sale was withdrawn. Therefore I should not like the House to be led astray with the idea that the miners are asking the Government for power to purchase land from the Crown. I am very pleased indeed, Sir, to see the clauses in this Bill which relate to mining—clauses 14 to 17. They are very valuable provisions that have been much sought after, and I do not believe there is a member in the House who will not support them very strongly. In fact, I believe the House will pass the second reading of the Bill unanimously, simply on account of those clauses. But I am very sorry to see that the Government have tacked on to those clauses, the other provisions with regard to the sale of land by public auction, and Part IV., providing for artesian wells. It is well known that the selector is a very obnoxious man to the squatter. A squatter, part of whose run has been resumed, would be willing to put down two or three bores in search of water on the resumed portion if by that means he could keep selectors away. If a squatter, by putting down a bore just outside the boundary of his run on the resumed portion, can secure a large portion of it and keep selectors off, there is not the slightest doubt that he will do it. This is a very bad provision. It does away with the whole beauty of being able to resume portion of the runs. In fact they might as well be allowed to remain as they were before, because if the land is at all good and likely to be selected the squatter will put down a bore and secure the whole of it. That is a power which ought never to be placed in their hands. I am bound to support the second reading of the Bill, because it contains the provisions with regard to mining to which I have referred, and I can only again express my regret that the other clauses I have mentioned are tacked on. I shall not detain the House longer, because, as I have said, I am compelled to support the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. PAUL said: Mr. Speaker,—The hon. member for South Brisbane stated that the Act of 1884 was an Act which was to do away with all the distrust and confusion which existed under previous Acts in this colony, but I think if ever there was an Act that created distrust and confusion it is that very Act. I speak from personal experience of the effect of one of the principal clauses of that Act—that is, the clause relating to compensation for improvements erected on the resumed areas. The consequence of that provision was that before the runs were divided the lessees suspended all work, being ignorant as to what division would be made until their runs were divided; therefore thousands of men were thrown out of employment, and were "humping their drum" up and down the main roads of the western portion of the colony. Another statement the hon. member made was—I believe it was the object of the framers of the Act—that it would be the means of increasing the revenue of the country. I cannot speak from personal knowledge with regard to selections, but I can speak from personal knowledge of the pastoral areas, and I can say that so far from increasing the revenue it has had the contrary effect. I am sure that I speak for the majority of squatters when I say that they knew they held simply the grazing right—that is the use of the grass. They never claimed that they rented the land itself; and whenever the land was required for closer settlement they were quite prepared to surrender their rights. That I believe was the feeling of most of the squatters of the country, and they were perfectly willing to accept an amendment of the previous Acts—more especially the Act of 1869—which placed the administration of the law in the hands of a Land Board free from political influence, with power to increase the rents of squattages within reach of railway communication, and also to give compensation for improvements in lieu of pre-emptive right. Now, what has been the result of the operations of this Act, which was supposed to create settlement? I am speaking now of the grazing areas out West. The majority of those areas have been taken up by squatters and are held simply as depôts to fatten their stock. I think some provision should be made to define how these selections should be taken up. On Saltern Creek about 10,000 acres have been taken up in the names of two Victorian squatters and their children, consequently a large and valuable portion of the run has simply been transferred from one squatter to another. Settlement has not been increased in any way thereby, because the bailiffs who are there are simply in lieu of the boundary riders who were previously in the employment of the lessees, and the holders of the property are still living in Melbourne. I do not know how the Land Board made the decision they did, which was supported by the Minister, with regard to the selection taken up on Victoria Downs. Mr. Hunter's son applied for 20,000 acres, which application was refused by the Land Board, and a re-hearing was refused by the Minister. Yet, while that was refused to a native-born Queens-

lander, a Victorian firm was allowed to obtain nearly 120,000 acres in one block. Who are the proper selectors but the native-born Queenslanders? Because a father leases a run, that is no reason why his son should not be allowed to select. I think it is monstrous that that should be the case while other people are allowed to select wholesale; and when the Bill is in committee I think there should be some provision made by which the sons of lessees, or native-born persons should be able to select. The next point I wish to refer to is in regard to paragraph 3 of subsection 2. That is a most wise provision, I think, because I know of cases where six grazing farms were offered at the low rental of ¾d. per acre, and of the six only one was a good selection. The consequence was there were about thirty applicants for that selection, and one was known to have put in fifteen applications and two more four each, while the *bonâ fide* applicant, who would not stoop to such dishonourable work, had twenty-nine chances to one against him. So that, I think, this is a wise clause, and it has my warm sympathy. I should have spoken at much greater length had I not been anticipated by my hon. friend the Postmaster-General; but he forestalled me in many lines of argument I was going to take up, and I have no desire to repeat what has been already said. In regard to the clauses dealing with mining matters, I think the provisions are good. In places such as Thane's Creek and Eidsvold, the runs have been inundated with prospectors and miners, and I think some provision should be made by which it should be optional with the Land Board to compensate the licensee for the portion of his run which is taken away. A provision might be made by which an equal area of the resumed half could be exchanged for the part which is taken from him, if available.

Mr. E. J. STEVENS said: Mr. Speaker,—I think the Government are to be complimented upon bringing in this amending Bill to the present Land Act. Although there is a great deal in the Land Act of 1884 which I approve of, there are other parts of which I entirely disapprove, more especially that part which deals with the non-alienation of land. Clause 6 of this Bill which deals with the question of freeholds is decidedly a step in the right direction. As I have stated before, I think ten years is too long a period to wait before a man can obtain the freehold of his land, and I am confident that there would be very much more land selected, if men had the power of acquiring the freehold in a much shorter time. I know of selectors who took up land under the Act of 1884, with the expectation that the time would soon arrive when that portion of the Act would be altered, and they would be able to obtain the freeholds sooner. In regard to clause 3 of Part II., the arguments raised seek to prove that three years is very much too long a time for a licensee to be allowed to improve his land. At present he can take up land—a grazing area—for three years, simply for the purpose of debarring settlement; but I think that the time of three months, proposed by this Bill is too short, for the simple reason that it is impossible for a man to put in any great improvements in that time. In a great many cases a man would be unable to take possession of the land in that time. There are large areas of land in this colony which would serve admirably for those grazing farms; but they are more or less unwatered, some totally so. Although in many cases, as I say, it would be impossible for men to take possession in three months, three years is too long, and I hope a happy medium will be discovered. In regard to survey before selection, I think there is a great deal to be said in favour of it, one thing being that a man will know exactly when he applies for his farm what he will have to pay in the way of survey fees. At the present time no selector can have an idea of what the fees will be, and in many cases there are additional fees of from £5 to £10 to be paid, which is a very considerable sum for a small selector to pay even in instalments. It is a very material thing for him, and it would be a very great advantage if he knew what the fees would be. While I am on the subject I would like to draw attention to the slovenly way in which some surveyors perform their work. Some two years ago I brought before the Minister of the day the wretched way in which one surveyor had done his work in a portion of the Logan district. The pegs were put in badly, and the lines were not properly cleared. The selector in that instance had to pay very much higher fees than he anticipated, and the survey of a good portion of the selection was of little or no use to him. In that case, I am happy to state that the head of the department instructed the surveyor to do the work over again; but there were many farms in the same district in exactly the same position; but because these men did not make an outcry in the matter, they have been more or less troubled about the boundaries ever since. I think a very severe penalty should be inflicted upon those surveyors who perform their work so badly. I think clause 8 is a very good one indeed—that which extends the time in which a man may make his payments. The present term is one year, and that is too little. Extending the time gives investors a greater opportunity of competing with capitalists in purchasing land. It is argued by some that extending the area gives the capitalists a great advantage. That might be so, or it might not. Giving an extension of time for the payment of the purchase-money gives the small man a very good opportunity indeed of competing with wealthier men; and I am quite in favour of extending the area. I have always been opposed to the non-alienation of land, and I see no reason to alter my opinion. I think people ought to be enabled to buy larger areas than forty acres, and this part of the Bill will have my most cordial support. I also think it will be a good thing to do away with the difficulties which have arisen between miners and owners of grazing areas. If the Crown has to pay compensation, I do not think it will be any very great loss to the country; in fact, it is a considerable gain to the colony that mining areas should be opened up. There is no doubt that, although it may be a source of annoyance to the man upon whose land the gold is discovered in one way, it is a great advantage in another, as he has a close and immediate market, which in all probability more than compensates him for the annoyance caused by the disturbance. I can easily imagine that in the case of a man who has selected a grazing area and has only one waterhole to depend upon, miners entering thereon would be a source of very great annoyance to him. In fact, it might destroy the whole of his holding, as it is well known by those who have had anything to do with stock that if a mining camp is established on a waterhole the miners with their dogs and tents will prevent stock from going to the water, and stock have been known to perish from thirst sooner than go to a camp, more especially if there are dogs about it. That point I hope will be cleared up before the Bill becomes law. There are some points which I cannot approve of so heartily as those to which I have referred, and upon which I shall have more to say when the Bill gets into committee. The general tenor of the Bill is, I think, very good. Although I do not think that it has been indicated that there

will be a division upon the second reading, if there should be, I certainly shall vote for the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. MORGAN said: Mr. Speaker,—I beg to move that the debate be now adjourned.

Question put and passed.

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

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I beg to move that this House do now adjourn. The first business to-morrow will be the consideration of the Payment of Members Bill in committee, and then the resumption of the debate on the Land Acts Amendment Bill.

Question put and passed.

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