Queensland

Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 28 AUGUST 1889

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Wednesday, 28 *August*, 1889.

Question Without Notice—machinery landed at Townsville.—Formal Motions.—Warwick Gas Company Bill.—Church of England (Diocese of Brisbane) Property Bill.—Crown Lands Acts of 1884 to 1886 Amendment Bill—committee.—Adjournment.

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

QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE.

MACHINERY LANDED AT TOWNSVILLE.

Mr. SAYERS said: Mr. Speaker,—I wish to ask the Colonial Treasurer when the paper I asked for the other day will be laid on the table of the House—namely, a return relating to the machinery landed at the port of Townsville.

The COLONIAL TREASURER (Hon. W. Pattison) said: Mr. Speaker,—I have no recollection of the return being asked for by the hon. member. I will make inquiries and inform the hon. member.

FORMAL MOTIONS.

The following formal motions were agreed to:—

By Mr. BARLOW—

That the powers of the select committee, appointed on Thursday, 8th instant, to "inquire into any sanitary contracts that have been made with the municipal authorities of North and South Brisbane during the last five years" be extended to include all contracts entered into since, as well as prior to, the appointment of such select committee.

By Mr. HODGKINSON (for Sir S. W. Griffith)—

That there be laid on the table of the House a return showing the revenue and expenditure for the year 1888-9 apportioned in accordance with the Financial Districts Bill of 1888.

WARWICK GAS COMPANY BILL.

Mr. MORGAN brought up the report of the select committee on the Warwick Gas, Light, Power, and Coal Company, Limited, Bill; and moved that the paper be printed.

Question put and passed.

On the motion of Mr. MORGAN, the second reading of the Bill was made an Order of the Day for Thursday next.

CHURCH OF ENGLAND (DIOCESE OF BRISBANE) PROPERTY BILL.

Mr. GROOM presented the report, together with the minutes of evidence taken by the committee appointed to inquire into this Bill; and moved that it be printed.

Question put and passed.

On the motion of Mr. GROOM, the second reading of the Bill was made an Order of the Day for Thursday, 19th September.

CROWN LANDS ACTS OF 1884 TO 1886 AMENDMENT BILL.

COMMITTEE.

On the Order of the Day being read, the Speaker left the chair and the House went into committee to further consider this Bill.

Mr. BARLOW said that before subsection 5 of clause 3 was moved he desired to submit a section in substitution of subsection 4. The amendment, which had been handed round to hon. members in print, sought to enable the public to exercise some influence upon the character of the land thrown open to selection. In accordance with what fell from the Minister for Mines and Works last night, he would endeavour, as far as he could, to shorten his remarks; but he thought when a very important measure like the Land Bill, which had to last for a long time and involved large interests, was under consideration, they might be excused if they gave the measure a certain amount of discussion, and endeavoured, as far as possible, to pass a good measure. Therefore, brevity or undue haste on such an occasion would possibly be time thrown away, and would not be in the interests of the colony. That must be his apology for speaking somewhat at length on the clause he had to submit. It would be admitted that the questions of tenure and rent were of very minor importance compared with the matter of classification. There were many classes of land in the colony which might be very advantageously locked up, perhaps for much longer periods than was now the law. There were other classes of land which he believed should not be locked up for so long as the period mentioned in the principal Act; but in voting as he did the other night, he endeavoured, as far as possible, to take the least of two evils, and therefore he supported the longer tenure. In the clause he now submitted he endeavoured, to some extent, to guard against the possibility of valuable agricultural land being locked up under the longer tenure, as pastoral or agricultural farms, and to guard against it in such a way that if any Ministry were to do such a thing they would not be able to say that they did not know it, but would give the public the fullest opportunity of protesting against it before it was done. In moving the amendment he was by no means wedded to the terms of it, in so far as the three months' notice and the three times of publication were concerned. He was quite willing that they should be curtailed, so long as the principle of the amendment remained the same. One of the great outcries against the Act of 1884 had been

that valuable land had been locked up under it as grazing farms, which was eminently adapted for agricultural purposes, and which should have been reserved for agricultural areas. So far as his understanding of the Act went there did not appear to be any check laid upon the Minister in respect of grazing farms. According to Part IV. of the Act, dealing with agricultural areas, in the 41st section it was stated that—

"The Governor in Council, on the recommendation of the board, may by proclamation define and set apart any country lands as agricultural areas."

That was, he took it, that when the Governor in Council was so advised by the board, certain lands would be set apart as agricultural areas; and the Minister must follow the advice of the board. Then in the 2nd subsection of the 45th clause of the principal Act, it was provided that the proclamation declaring land open for selection should also specify whether the land was in an agricultural area or not. But there did not appear to be any means or any machinery provided by the Act by which the Minister was to be guided or advised as to the land he set apart as grazing areas for grazing farms. Complaints had been made, and notably in the Moreton and Burnett districts, that valuable agricultural land had been set aside and, in many instances, taken up as grazing farms. His amendment, if it met with the approval of the Committee, would not in any way tie the hands of the Minister or of the board. They would be at liberty to go on and do as they were doing now, only if they did so they would have to do so in the face of a protest and the utmost publicity that could be given to that protest. He thought it was only fair that the people of the colony generally should have some voice in the question of land administration, and when they saw before their eyes that valuable land was going to be locked up as grazing areas they should have some forcible means of bringing that fact not only under the notice of the Government, but of the public. If that was provided for, things could not be done which might now be done in error by the Government from want of information. He would ask, who was as likely to be able to give that information as the parties who were on the lookout for agricultural land? He thought the amendment would meet the case. They had been told that they had some 400,000,000 acres of available land in the colony, and the Hon. Vice-President of the Executive Council—who, he regretted to hear, was prevented by indisposition from being in his place—had shown them a diagram showing the enormous area of land in the colony. It was said they had very nearly 400,000,000 acres of land, but he would like to ask how many of those acres were available? He did not think one-tenth of the whole acreage of the colony was available for close settlement—certainly not for agricultural purposes, and it was questionable whether that extent was available for close settlement. Therefore the argument so frequently used that they had 400,000,000 acres of land to fall back upon was to a great extent a fallacious one, and it behoved them to be very careful about what they did in reference to the amending land legislation they were engaged in. He had been struck yesterday, on looking over a return of reserves handed round to members, with the fact that the total acreage of reserves amounted to 2,000,000 acres, and that was a large proportion out of the probable 40,000,000 acres that were available. Their railways, it should also be remembered, had to bear the burden of the good and bad land. They did not fly over the bad land free of expense on their railways. They had to be carried through those territories, and the cost of maintenance and wear and tear had to be provided over the bad land as well as over the good, and it was really the small proportion of good land in the colony that had to bear all the expense. For his part, he believed it would be better to leave the first-class land under occupation license than to let it as grazing farms. That, to his mind, was a self-evident proposition, and holding that belief, he was induced to propose his amendment, and say that:—

"Before any land shall be proclaimed to be open for selection as a grazing farm, notice of the intention of the Governor in Council to proclaim such land as so open shall be published at least three times in the *Government Gazette*, in some newspaper published in Brisbane, and in the newspaper published nearest to the said land."

If it should be the opinion of the Committee that the notice should only be published once, that would be sufficient for him, so long as public attention was directed to the intention of the Government to throw open the land for selection. In the next paragraph of the amendment there was a question of time within which a "protest" was to be entered, and he had stated it at three months, though if members thought fit they might reduce that time to one month. He said in the amendment—

"If within three months from the last of such publications the Minister shall receive from any person a communication in writing (hereinafter called a 'protest') protesting against or objecting to the opening or keeping open of such land for selection as a grazing farm, and setting forth any reason for such protest, the Minister shall require the commissioner to make a special report."

He should be told, no doubt, that those reports had been made before, and that they were all published and to be found in the office; but he wished to accentuate the matter, and to provide that when such a protest as was provided for was served upon the Minister the commissioner should be required to report again upon the land, and give his reasons for the report he made. The amendment then went on to provide that the report should be—

"As to the suitability of such land for agricultural purposes or otherwise, and in such report he shall set forth among all other necessary particulars the distance of such land from the coast, from any railway made, surveyed, or projected, and from any permanently running stream, together with any possible natural facilities for artificial irrigation; the average rainfall so far as can be ascertained, and the nature of the soil and of the natural timber or vegetation thereon. The report of the commissioner, and the protest received by the Minister, shall be referred by him to the board, and he shall require the board to make a special report and decision thereon, which decision shall be absolute and final as to the opening of such land as a grazing farm or otherwise."

He did not consider that that would in any way tie the hands of the Minister, as, so far as he could see, the Minister had no power to override the board now; and in connection with grazing farms, it did not appear to him that the board had any say in the matter, and had only the right of saying what land should be classed as agricultural areas and what should not. He proposed also in the amendment that—

"The same course shall be followed in regard to all lands open for selection as grazing farms and not actually so selected on the twenty-seventh day of August, one thousand eight hundred and eighty-nine, and no application to select the same or any part thereof shall be accepted until such advertisements, reports, and decisions have been duly made as to the keeping open or withdrawal from selection of such lands."

That was to say, that the question should be held over until the persons on the spot, or interested especially in the land, had an opportunity to approach the Minister and inform him from their personal knowledge as to the nature of the land. The amendment then went on to provide that copies of the protests, advertisements, and so on should be published in the *Government Gazette*. By that means, he submitted, the matter would obtain the utmost publicity, and no Land

Minister, present or future, would be able to act in defiance of clearly expressed public opinion, and if he or the Land Board did act in such a way they must publish an account of their proceedings in the *Government Gazette* for public information. For his own part, he gave the Minister for Lands the utmost credit for an earnest desire to administer the Act of 1884, and he had no desire in the amendment to make the slightest reflection upon the administration of the Act by that hon. gentleman. He believed that if the Committee took the trouble to discuss the provision, they would find that it would be useful to the Minister, as he would then get the very best information. He would get the information from the people directly concerned, and from people who had the best means of knowing what the character of the land was. It was not possible that the argument could be brought against the clause, that it would have the effect of blocking settlement. It was not as if a person desirous of monopolising the land would be able to put in a caveat against its being occupied, because it would only have the effect of delaying the matter a very short time. Supposing a malicious representation was made to the Minister for Lands on the subject with the view of monopolising the land and keeping it in the hands of the present holder, the result would be that the report of the commissioner would soon blow it to pieces. It would only require a short time to advertise and to carry out the other details. The clause would give the people confidence, as they would say that if the Minister had decided that he would take a certain course after he had received those protests, he was willing to accept the responsibility of his actions, and must be right. With those remarks, he begged to move the following new subsection to follow subsection 3 of clause 3 :—

Before any land shall be proclaimed to be open for selection as a grazing farm, notice of the intention of the Governor in Council to proclaim such land as so open shall be published at least three times in the *Government Gazette*, in some newspaper published in Brisbane, and in the newspaper published nearest to the said land.

If within three months from the last of such publications the Minister shall receive from any person a communication in writing (hereinafter called a "protest") protesting against or objecting to the opening or keeping open of such land for selection as a grazing farm, and setting forth any reason for such protest, the Minister shall require the commissioner to make a special report to him as to the suitability of such land for agricultural purposes or otherwise, and in such report he shall set forth among all other necessary particulars the distance of such land from the coast, from any railway made, surveyed, or projected, and from any permanently running stream, together with any possible natural facilities for artificial irrigation; the average rainfall so far as can be ascertained, and the nature of the soil and of the natural timber or vegetation thereon. The report of the commissioner, and the protest received by the Minister, shall be referred by him to the board, and he shall require the board to make a special report and decision thereon, which decision shall be absolute and final as to the opening of such land as a grazing farm or otherwise.

The same course shall be followed in regard to all lands open for selection as grazing farms and not actually so selected on the twenty-seventh day of August, one thousand eight hundred and eighty-nine, and no application to select the same or any part thereof shall be accepted until such advertisements, reports, and decisions have been duly made as to the keeping open or withdrawal from selection of such lands.

From time to time copies of all such protests, advertisements, reports, and decisions shall be laid before Parliament within seven days after the commencement of each session thereof, and a schedule of particulars thereof shall be published in the *Government Gazette* in the form of First Schedule of this Act, within fourteen days after the making of any decision by the Land Board.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. M. H. Black) said that when the Bill had been before the Committee on the previous Thursday they had discussed the principle of grazing farms and selections at very considerable length, and the Committee, by a large majority, had affirmed that the principle of grazing farms, as laid down the Act of 1884, was to remain intact. The by Government had accepted that decision, both as regarded the length of tenure, and as regarded the general principle of the advisability of offering every facility for having the resumed portions of runs throughout the colony occupied as grazing farms. As he had then stated, he accepted the decision of the Committee on that point, and he most certainly was not prepared to accept an amendment such as that now proposed, which he considered would destroy one of the chief features of grazing farm selection. He did not think the hon. member had really considered what the effect of his amendment would be. First of all, grazing farms were to be advertised in the *Government Gazette*, or in some paper published in Brisbane, three times at the very least, and that would take three weeks. Then, the grazing farms having been so advertised, they were to remain for three months open to protest by any person. The phraseology of the amendment stated, "If within three months from the last of such publications the Minister shall receive from any person a communication in writing;" so that it would be in the power of any person to delay settlement on those grazing farms. He could protest for any cause whatever, and what was the result of that protest to be? The clause stated, "The Minister shall require the commissioner to make a special report to him." The hon. member, perhaps, did not know that the Land Board, to whom was entrusted the duty of deciding what lands of the colony should be thrown open as grazing farms, had already obtained all that information from the commissioners. He was proud to think that not one single murmur of disapprobation at any of their acts had ever been brought against the Land Board. They had done their work in a thoroughly honest and conscientious manner, and he had every belief in their integrity, and was satisfied, from his own knowledge of their work, that they took every opportunity of ascertaining what lands of the colony were suitable for grazing farms, and what land of the colony should be thrown open for grazing farms. Hon. members would see that the amendment would really throw a block in the way of grazing farm selection, which he was sure the Committee had not anticipated on last Thursday night, when they had negatived the clause he had proposed reducing the length of tenure from thirty to twenty years. The hon. member had referred to the fact that valuable agricultural lands were likely to be locked up for too long a period. He (the Minister for Lands) had referred to that on Thursday last, when he stated that those lands, though not valuable agricultural lands at present, would become so under the altered conditions of the colony in the next ten or twenty years, owing to water conservation, and to their knowledge of irrigation having advanced so as to enable them to utilise lands as agricultural which were now only valuable for grazing. On those grounds he had thought the longer tenure was inadvisable. At present the richest lands of the West, admirably adapted as they were for grazing farm selection, were not of any value for agricultural settlement. Another point which would be affected by the hon. member in his amendment would be that the grazing farms surveyed, amounting in the aggregate to 5,000,000 acres, would be absolutely withdrawn. There would be no grazing farm selection, at all events, for another three or four months. He thought the

hon. gentleman must himself see that the object he sought to attain would not be attained by his proposed subsection, and, on behalf of the Government, he (the Minister for Lands) could not accept it. After the expression of opinion they had had as to the value of grazing farm settlement, he did not think it would be advisable for the Committee to assent to the amendment. He also desired to say that if any hon. member desired to bring forward any amendment on such an important question as land legislation, it should not be sprung on the Committee in the shape of a surprise, as that now under discussion had been. It should be circulated, so as to give hon. members an opportunity of studying what the effect of such an amendment would be. He could not accept the amendment.

Mr. JORDAN said he felt sure the hon. member for Ipswich was desirous that that part of the Act which provided for grazing farms should be successful, and should be worked in such a way as not to injure the agricultural interests of the colony—that land should not be taken up as grazing farms for thirty years, if it was specially adapted for agricultural purposes. So far he went with the hon. member, but he quite agreed with the Minister for Lands that the effect of the proposed amendment would not only be to stop the selection of grazing farms for three or four months, but would create confusion in the minds of people who were thinking of taking up grazing farms. Unless any special reason could be shown for so materially altering the Act, it was exceedingly undesirable to make changes in it. It was some years before the public generally understood what would be the effect of the Acts of 1884, 1885, and 1886. At engtli, shortly before he left office, special means were taken to make the principles of their land legislation popularly known, both in the colony and elsewhere, with the result that last year 1,390,000 acres of land were taken up as grazing farms. Any attempt to alter it now would only create distrust in the mind of the public generally. With regard to the Land Board, he was sure the colony had every reason to be satisfied with them, and he was pleased to hear the Minister for Lands say that not a murmur of complaint had been raised against their administration of the Act. The board had to consider the report of the dividing commissioners, and the Minister for Lands could veto the decision of the board. He should like to see the responsibility of the Minister maintained, so that the Minister should be responsible to the House and to the country to see that land specially suitable for agricultural purposes was not thrown open for grazing farms. He pointed out the other night the special means he himself took with that object in view, and he was perfectly satisfied to leave the responsibility with the Minister who, he was certain, would take good care that land specially suitable for agricultural purposes should not be locked up, as it was termed, for thirty years. The question was, whether it would be better to sell the land at 6d. an acre, or to lease it for thirty years at five and a-half farthings an acre subject to four increases, which would bring it up to 9d. an acre before the end of the lease. He deprecated any such change as the amendment would introduce into the Act; it was certain to have an injurious effect, and he should be obliged to vote against it.

Mr. MELLOR said he should like to see some amendment in the direction he indicated the other night, so as to prevent agricultural land being taken up as grazing farms. All the agricultural land in the coast districts would be wanted long before the expiration of thirty years. It was different in the West, where thirty years would not be too long a time. The amendment of the hon. member for Ipswich would to some degree meet his objection. It would, at all events, give the people a chance of objecting to agricultural land being thrown open for grazing farms, and by that means the attention of the Minister or the board would be directed to the fact that such land should not be thrown open for grazing farms. Many grazing farms had already been taken up in the coast districts, which were really good agricultural land, and which ought never to have been allowed to be taken up as grazing farms; and as the colony advanced, and systems of irrigation were introduced, the want of the land so locked up would be felt long before the end of thirty years. If the amendment could be made to apply to all land within 100 miles of the coast, it would do a very great service. The Minister for Lands said he was quite willing to accept the decision arrived at the other night, but on that occasion the leader of the Opposition said it was not desirable that agricultural land in some parts of the colony should be locked up for thirty years.

Mr. JORDAN: It is in the discretion of the Minister.

Mr. MELLOR said it seemed to him that up to the present time the policy had been to do anything whatever that would make the Land Act a success. No matter what happened, the Land Act must be made a success. He felt that that idea had been taken a little too much into consideration, and that land in some parts of the colony had been sacrificed for that reason. He was altogether in favour of leasing, and did not wish to see that system altered, but he thought that something should be done to prevent good lands in the settled districts or within 100 miles of the coast being locked up for thirty years as grazing farms. He knew from experience that a great deal of land had been taken up as grazing farms that would be required for agriculture before the thirty years expired. He was sure the hon. member for Port Curtis knew of cases of that kind in his district where land had been locked up from that close settlement which they all desired to see. He certainly hoped something would be done in the way he had indicated.

Mr. DRAKE said he hoped the Minister for Lands would consider whether he could not accept some proposition of the kind proposed by the hon. member for Ipswich in a modified form. He (Mr. Drake) was one of those who voted last Thursday against subsection 4, and he did so with a considerable amount of hesitation, because he must admit that during the debate very strong arguments were used in favour of reducing the tenure from thirty to twenty years, and those arguments tended most strongly in favour of some such proposition as that now made by the hon. member for Ipswich.

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS (Hon. J. M. Macrossan): Your conscience pricks you now.

Mr. DRAKE said his conscience did not prick him. As he had stated, he had voted against the subsection with considerable hesitation. He had listened with great attention to everything that had been said, and came to the conclusion that it would be better to let the Act in that respect remain untouched. One reason which actuated him in that way was, as had been pointed out by the hon. member for South Brisbane that evening, the undesirability of continually altering their land laws. But still there was great force in

the argument that there was danger of land that would be required for agricultural purposes being locked up for thirty years, and the object of the amendment was to provide some machinery which would prevent that as far as possible. He fully recognised the objections to the clause that had been pointed out by the Hon. the Minister for Lands, but thought that some of them might be overcome. For instance, the hon. gentleman objected to it on the ground of time—that at least three weeks would be occupied in advertising, and another three months in waiting for protests.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Then there must be an inquiry.

Mr. DRAKE said that supposing it took six months, what was that in comparison with thirty years? The strongest argument used by the hon. gentleman was that it was the duty of the Land Board to make those reports; but the board were only human, and the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Ipswich would give the public an opportunity, in fact invite them, to make suggestions to the board if they saw that land suitable for agriculture was likely to be locked up as grazing farms. As had been pointed out, land which might not be fit for agriculture now might become so during the thirty years, and he presumed the Land Board looked to the future in that respect—as well as they were able; but private individuals should also have an opportunity of pointing out to the Minister any circumstances which came under their notice, which might lead them to suppose that any particular land would become useful for agricultural purposes before the expiration of the thirty years. The hon. member for Gympie, Mr. Mellor, had pointed out that land actually suitable for agriculture, or that would soon be suitable for that purpose, had already been let as grazing farms, which showed that the Land Board, in exercising their discretion in that matter, had exhibited a considerable amount of liberality in parcelling out land as grazing farms. There was, therefore, great danger that land suitable for agriculture, or that would become suitable for agriculture within a comparatively short period, would be locked up as grazing farms for thirty years. He would, therefore, ask the Minister for Lands whether he could not accept some modification of the proposed amendment, which would have the effect of giving the Government greater security that land which would be suitable for agriculture would not be locked up for thirty years.

Mr. HODGKINSON said the adult male population of the colony was about 117,000; those people represented 200,000 acres of cultivated land, about half of which, he presumed, was under tropical and semi-tropical cultivation in the North; and he thought any fears that were entertained as to there not being sufficient land open to receive that development of agriculture which they could reasonably expect, were premature. He had not the exact figures before him, but no doubt the Hon. the Minister for Lands would correct him if he made any serious error. He believed there were 9,000,000 acres of land alienated in the colony; that something like 12,000,000 acres had been declared open for settlement, of which 5,000,000 were open as grazing farms. Now, if they compared the progress of agriculture in New South Wales, where there was a population of little over 1,000,000, or in Victoria with a like population—with that of Queensland, he would ask was there any possibility of there being such an increased demand for land as some hon. members seemed to anticipate; and was it worth while, for the sake of what he held to be a purely imaginary danger, to attempt to destroy the working of one of the most valuable clauses in the Act of 1884? Any attempt to tinker with the Act in its present accepted form would only make the people they wished to lure from the other colonies in order to take advantage of the grazing farm portion of the Act, ignore all the representations that were made. Those people would say they could place no dependence on the legislature of Queensland, because restrictions were always being put on the administration of the Act. Even admitting all the arguments of the hon. member for Ipswich, what did they amount to? It was simply an appeal from Philip to Philip. They were told distinctly by the Minister for Lands that before the land was thrown open it was fully reported on by the commissioner of the district, and that his report underwent the criticism of the Land Board. He presumed that it then received the endorsement of the Minister for Lands, whose responsibility should be preserved by the Committee, because he was the only person they could make responsible for any mal-administration of the Act. It seemed the height of absurdity to allow anyone to make a protest, and then send that protest to be considered by the people who had already decided on the matter. The hon. gentleman stated that it would be about four months before the protest could be decided. On what practical computation did he base his calculation? In the first place, three months would be allowed after the last advertisement for a protest to be made by anybody; and a protest might be made by anyone who had an animus against a would-be selector. If he could be sufficiently malicious to credit the pastoral tenants, after their patriotic conduct the other night, with such an insinuation, he might say that they could then, without any trouble except a little writing, invalidate the whole of the clause. The first step was to advertise, and that would take three weeks. Then during the following three months the board would be open to receive protests; after that the commissioner would have to go to the special section of country protested against and make his examination and report.

Mr. BARLOW: No. To confirm his previous report, or otherwise.

Mr. HODGKINSON said he did not see the use of another report.

Mr. BARLOW: To fix the responsibility.

Mr. HODGKINSON said he preferred to let the responsibility remain on the Minister in charge of the department. He thought that last remark of the hon. member, which must have been involuntarily made, was sufficient to condemn the amendment. The responsibility was fixed already. The commissioner could be removed at the instance of the Minister who was responsible. The members of the board were not removable except under the conditions on which they held their position; but the Minister was responsible for the whole sequence of action; and he (Mr. Hodgkinson) preferred to continue that responsibility. He should vote against the amendment.

Mr. BARLOW said he was singularly unfortunate in having two Land Ministers, one on each side, against him, but that did not shake his faith in the usefulness of the clause. With regard to the amendment not being in the hands of hon. members, he was under the impression that as soon as an amendment was printed, a copy was sent to the Minister of the Crown in charge of the department concerned. There was no intention on his part to spring the amendment on the Minister for Lands; and he was sorry the hon. member had not received a copy, as it was printed three days ago. That hon. gentleman said that there were now 5,000,000 acres open to grazing selection; but

that was all the more reason why it should be looked into a second time, because that was a very large portion of the lands of the colony. The amendment would not alter the Act in any way; it would simply enable the people of the colony, who were the parties interested in seeing the lands properly classified, to have an opportunity of representing their wishes to the Government. What was done by the opponents of the Act of 1884 before and during the last general election? Did they not go up and down the country expressing their abhorrence of the Act, saying it had swallowed up in grazing selections land wanted for agricultural purposes? They abused the Act, its author, and its administrator, the hon. member for South Brisbane; but if those persons had had an opportunity of protesting against the throwing open of those areas for grazing selection their mouths would have been shut for ever. He saw no chance of carrying the amendment, and would not press it to a division; but he would ask what hurry there was, that a delay of two or three months might not take place? If the amendment were accepted, the reports of the officials concerned would be accentuated. They would be compelled to stick to their statements, to nail their colours to the mast, because the Minister would ask them whether they adhered to what they had said in the face of any protest that might have been made. And if, in the face of protests, they did adhere to what they had previously said, and the Minister adhered to his decision, and any trouble afterwards arose, the fault would be on him and not on the people whose land was sought to be taken from them. He was not acquainted with departmental routine, but in the ordinary way of doing business a telegram would be sent to the commissioner who had made his report, asking him if he still adhered to that report, and the commissioner would wire back to say that he still adhered to it.

The PREMIER: Of course he would. But what would be the good of that?

Mr. BARLOW said the commissioner would then be held responsible by the Minister. But if the Minister found that the report was still adhered to in the face of important and circumstantial statements on the part of the person who entered the protest, it would be his duty to make further inquiries; and if he declared the land open as grazing farms without those inquiries, the responsibility would be on him and on the Government he represented. The land all over the country was watched as a cat watched a mouse. In every district except the metropolitan districts, where the land was all alienated, the people kept their eyes on every bit of land that might be thrown open to selection, and from them the Minister would be able to get valuable information. It would be impossible to have different tenures in different parts of the colony, and he had submitted the amendment now before the Committee believing that it would carry out the object intended. It might be modified so as to make it apply only to the lands at a certain distance from the coast. A valuable suggestion had been made by the hon. member for Gympie, but as he (Mr. Barlow) had the opposition of two Ministers for Lands, he saw there was no possibility of carrying his clause.

Mr. DALRYMPLE said he agreed entirely with the first portion of the amendment. He agreed with it so far as it laid down that land should be proclaimed open for grazing farms before being open to selection, but as he believed that that course had always been pursued, and there was nothing else of value in the amendment, he was not disposed to vote for it. The main object of the amendment was that any person might have an opportunity of informing the Minister that certain land, when thrown open for grazing purposes, was suitable for agricultural purposes, but surely the value of the Act depended upon whether persons resident in the colony advised the Minister or not. If they did not gratuitously give the information there was no value whatever in the clause, and if they were willing to do that at the present moment there was no Minister for Lands who would not take due notice of such a communication. That was the only good purpose the amendment could serve, and as against that they had to place the fact that there would be great delay—it was impossible to say what delay—and that would prevent a large number of persons coming here to take up land. Another objection was that a great addition would be made to the expense of administering the Act, and further, the clause might be worked with the express purpose of keeping land out of the market. One observation the hon. member made surprised him. He said that even although two Ministers for Lands expressed their disapproval of the clause, yet he still retained his entire confidence in it.

Mr. BARLOW: Hear, hear!

Mr. DALRYMPLE said then he could only say he did not believe an earthquake would suffice to shake the hon. member's confidence in any amendment he brought forward. The hon. member further said that under certain circumstances a telegram could be sent to the commissioner to ask him whether he adhered to his report. Nothing could be plainer than that if an official was asked if he had told the truth or not, he would treat the inquiry as an insult. It was simply asking him whether he was trifling with the colony or not; whether he was a perjurer or not.

Mr. BARLOW said: Did the hon. member think that because he was opposed he necessarily must give way? He had taken the trouble to think the matter out, and he had just as much confidence in his amendment as he ever had.

Mr. DRAKE said he was glad to learn on the authority of the Minister for Lands and the hon. members for South Brisbane (Mr. Jordan) and Burke that there was no danger under their present system of agricultural land being locked up as grazing farms. If they accepted that assurance there was no need for the amendment, but at the same time some hon. members who spoke last Thursday must have been very strangely misinformed on that subject. He would read what the Minister for Mines and Works said on the subject:—

"The present law allowed those lands to be locked up for thirty years, and let them see what sort of lands they were. Were they lands that could not be devoted to anything else but grazing? Would the hon. gentleman or would any hon. member of the Committee tell him that agricultural lands and good agricultural lands were not being locked up?

"The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: They ought not to be.

"THE MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS said it could not be helped. He said that if that land which was being locked up under the thirty years' tenure was fit for nothing else but grazing, he would not be as strongly opposed to it as he was; but knowing as he did that good agricultural land, and some of the best land, had, owing to the Act, been locked up by both Governments, the present and the last Government, he was opposed to the thirty years' tenure, and would reduce it still more than to twenty years if possible."

That was the argument used last Thursday to induce the Committee to consent to subsection 4, and now when an amendment was brought forward with a view of putting some check upon

the locking up of agricultural land as grazing farms, they were solemnly told by two Ministers for Lands, and the hon. member for Burke, that there was no danger whatever.

Mr. HODGKINSON said he rose to contradict the hon. member in one statement he made. He did not say there was no danger of locking up agricultural land. He said there was no danger of locking up agricultural land that was likely to be wanted during the term of the leases, and he still adhered to that opinion. But there was another danger, and that was that if the amendment was carried it would give unscrupulous people a great opportunity of levying blackmail. It would also involve within the colony agitations for greater railway expenditure, because they found that as soon as there was an isolated settlement of so-called farmers in any portion of the colony, the first thing was an agitation for a railway, and, as was shown by the debate on the previous night, the funds at the disposal of the colony would be frittered away in making petty railway lines for the carriage of an amount of agricultural produce that would not pay for the grease on the wheels. If the farming community would only energetically cultivate the area of land now in their hands, they would show their claim to greater consideration than was demanded for them by their advocates in the House. There was a disposition in the House to sacrifice the whole colony for an interest that by no means was entitled to the position arrogated to it, and if the amendment was carried, it would be a very fruitful source of extending that evil.

Mr. MELLOR said he was sorry that the hon. member for Burke could see no further than the present time. He said the agriculturists should do a certain thing at the present time, but he (Mr. Mellor) thought the future should be looked to, and if they would take the trouble to look back twenty-five years ago to the Land Act in force at that time, and at the land that had been alienated—good agricultural land at 5s. an acre; if they only took that into consideration, and looked at the lands that at the present time were being thrown open to selection as grazing farms, they might ask themselves what the people would say twenty-five years hence. The very same cry would be raised against the present system as had been raised against the Land Act of 1868. Under that Act lands had been selected as second-class pastoral that were most magnificent agricultural lands, and in the same way he knew of lands being surveyed as grazing farms now that would in the near future be required as agricultural lands. No one had attempted to deny that already a lot of land had been thrown open as grazing farms that should have been reserved for agricultural purposes. He was much afraid that when there was a cry for land to be thrown open for grazing farms, including agricultural land, it would be in the power of the Minister to permit it to be done. He might refer to a district not far from Brisbane—the valley of the Mary. There was as good land in that valley as in the whole of the colony for agricultural purposes, but it was isolated, and it was impossible to get to it unless they had railway communication and good roads provided to it, and if that land was leased for thirty years as grazing farms he was certain that long before the leases expired, a demand would be made for its resumption by the Crown, in order that it might be devoted to agricultural purposes. It was at no great distance from the metropolis, and was, besides, in the centre of a district where gold was known to exist largely, and it would be required for settlement before many years were over.

Mr. COWLEY said that if the hon. member for Ipswich had intended to strike a blow at the system of grazing farms, he could not have taken a better course to carry out his intention than by moving the amendment he had proposed. The bulk of the land of the colony was agricultural land. The bulk of the blacksoil land on the tablelands was first-class agricultural land, and if they debarred all agricultural land, as was proposed in the amendment, they would have no grazing farms at all. The bulk of the land on the tablelands was agricultural land, but there was no one to cultivate it, and there was little or no water. Let the hon. member put himself in the position of a grazing farm selector. He went to choose a piece of land, and saw a piece he would very much like to get. Then he applied to the Minister for Lands to have it thrown open for selection, and what would he find? The neighbouring squatter might say, "Hang it, I will not have this man coming in on my run. I will protest." And he would protest, and the commissioner, if he knew anything at all about his business, must report that there was good agricultural land on the selection. Why, the swamp lands of the colony, if drained, were the best of agricultural land, and on the blacksoil plains, if they could only get water, they could grow anything they liked. The bulk of the land, as he had said, was agricultural land, and the effect of the hon. member's amendment would be to debar all grazing farm settlement. He was himself opposed to grazing farms, and on that ground would be willing to support the amendment moved by the hon. member, if the question was one as to whether they should have grazing farms or not. It had, however, been settled that they were to have grazing farms, and the effect of the hon. member's amendment would undoubtedly be to stop them. It was all very well to say delay would not stop a thing, but delays were very vexatious; and when a man applied for a farm and the nearest squatter or someone else "protested," it might be six or twelve months before the selector would be able to go upon the land, if at all. If the selector had to wait during the whole of that time he would be so disgusted that he would clear out, or else try for land in another part of the colony; in any case he would be worried and driven to desperation, and that would be the only effect of the amendment, if carried.

Mr. MACFARLANE said he was glad his colleague had had the courage of his convictions, and was still of the same opinion, notwithstanding the opposition to the amendment. They must give the hon. member credit for a desire to secure good agricultural land for agricultural purposes, and if the suggestion of the hon. member for Gympie, to apply the amendment only to the coast or settled districts had been adopted, it would have had a better chance of support. When the main Act was going through he had himself suggested that the Act should be applied only to the settled districts, and that they should resume the half of any run outside those districts. That suggestion had not been taken up, and if it had been, it would have saved a good deal of the discussion that had taken place that day. He thought the discussion that had taken place upon the amendment would not be lost sight of, and in view of it, he did not think the Minister for Lands or the members of the Land Board would offer any objection to reserving superior land in the settled districts, if a strong protest was entered against its being thrown open for selection as a grazing area. The discussion was then likely to do good, and his hon. colleague had been actuated by the best intentions in moving the amendment.

Mr. STEVENS said he did not think any good would be gained by adding the amendment to the Bill, as it simply provided for referring a report upon the land to a man who had already reported upon it. It would be something like the system obtaining under the Commissioners for Crown Lands a few years ago, when a man made his report upon land as a surveyor, and if the Crown lessee made any objection to the report, it was sent back to the man who made it to report again. If the man making the report in the first instance did his work well, there was no need to have him make a second report. In any case, they could have no confidence in such men. If their work had been properly done in the first instance, they could only bring in the same reports again.

Mr. MELLOR said that if the suggestion he had made with reference to the distance from the coast would be accepted, he would move as an amendment that after the word "land," in the 1st line of the subsection, the words "within one hundred miles of the coast" be inserted.

Mr. GRIMES said he would like to know from the Minister for Lands whether the commissioners at the present time sent in such reports as were set forth in that amendment—as to the distance from a railway line, the distance from the coast, its suitability for agricultural purposes, its suitability for artificial irrigation, and so on. It would be very useful if such reports were sent in.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said that the different commissioners sent in such reports. In order to satisfy hon. gentlemen that all precautions were taken, he might state that no less than 1,154,000 acres of land, which it had been intended to throw open for grazing farm selections, had been withdrawn, in consequence of the land being adapted for agricultural settlement.

Mr. DRAKE said he would like to know how so much agricultural land had been locked up in grazing farms.

Mr. COWLEY: It is all agricultural land.

Mr. DRAKE said they were disputing about terms, as far as he could see. They were told one day that agricultural land was being locked up in grazing farms, in a few days afterwards they were told that it was not being locked up, and now the explanation was that the land was all agricultural land. Surely they ought to have some common understanding as to what was meant by agricultural lands.

Mr. GLASSEY said the information which the Minister for Lands had just given the Committee was extremely valuable. It seemed to him that one fatal objection to the amendment of the hon. member for Ipswich came from the statement of the Minister for Lands, to the effect that 5,000,000 acres had already been surveyed for settlement as grazing farms, and that in the event of the lodging of protests under that subsection settlement would be delayed. Taking into consideration that statement of the Minister for Lands, and his statement that every precaution was being taken to prevent agricultural lands being acquired for grazing purposes, and taking into account that, owing to the present favourable seasons, a large number of grazing areas would be taken up, it would be unwise of the hon. member for Ipswich to press his amendment. He did not agree with some hon. members in thinking that, because certain prominent persons on either side of the Committee raised objections to amendments proposed by other hon. members, those amendments should be at once withdrawn. He did not think that they should bow to the criticisms of leading members on either side, as he considered any hon. member who did that, after proposing an amendment in which he sincerely believed, would not be worth his salt if he acted in that way; he should press his amendment, and if necessary get a vote of the Committee upon it. So far as he (Mr. Glassey) was personally concerned, he would not let the opinion of a Minister of the Crown, or of an ex-Minister of the Crown, weigh with him in the slightest. Hon. members were returned to represent their constituents on the faith that they were the most competent persons to represent them, and if they were to bow to a little criticism they would not be deserving of their seats. He believed that the Minister for Lands was actuated by a sincere desire to see the lands of the colony settled by *bonâ fide* agricultural and grazing classes, with the view of developing the resources of the colony to the utmost; and in the face of the statements made by the Minister for Lands, it would not be wise for the hon. member for Ipswich to press his amendment. There were some capital points in that amendment, but it would not be wise to press it.

Amendment—That after the word "land," in the first line of the new subsection, the words "within one hundred miles of the coast" be inserted—put and negatived. New subsection put and negatived.

Mr. COWLEY said that, in the absence of the hon. member for Burrum, he wished to propose an amendment, standing in the name of that hon. member, to follow subsection 3 of clause 3. He thought the subsection would commend itself to every hon. member. It was simply to allow the holder of an agricultural farm of 170 acres or under, the privilege of selecting a grazing farm not to exceed 640 acres, and to hold it without actually residing upon it, so long as he should continuously and *bonâ fide* reside upon his agricultural farm. The effect of the amendment would not be to lock up the land; it would be simply to give the small holder the chance to take up a little land to graze his stock upon. The amendment was as follows:—

> Any holder of an agricultural farm containing less than one hundred and seventy acres, who resides personally and *bonâ fide* thereon, may select in any area opened for selection as grazing farms within a distance of fifteen miles from his said residence a grazing farm containing not more than six hundred and forty acres, and he shall in such case, but for so long only as he shall continuously and *bonâ fide* reside on the agricultural farm, be exempt from the condition of occupation in respect of the grazing farm.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said that as the Bill was arranged in the same order as the principal Act it would be better to dispose of the clause relating to grazing farms before dealing with the amendment just proposed.

Mr. COWLEY said he understood that that was the proper place to introduce it. The Committee were now dealing with grazing farms, and the amendment certainly dealt with grazing farms.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said he took it that the "170 acres" in the 2nd line of the amendment should be 160 acres, as it was intended to give the so-called homestead selector a grazing right, without occupation, which he did not possess at the present time. Many complaints had been made by persons who had taken up even smaller areas than 160 acres, especially by village settlement selectors, who were restricted to 80 acres, that the limited area of their selections did not enable them to combine grazing with agriculture as they desired. It was a concession to be given to the small selector which he thought the Committee might readily grant. Hon. members would see that, although exempt from the occupation condition

of a grazing farm, the improvement condition had still to be complied with; that was, that within three years of the grazing farm being selected by the small selector, he had to fence it in. The subsection was introduced by the hon. member for Burrum, and he had told that hon. member that on considering the matter he thought it would be a reasonable clause to add to the amending Land Bill, and that he should support it. He believed the Committee, which had always wished to do what it could to benefit the smaller selectors, would consent to the subsection becoming law.

Mr. PALMER said he quite agreed with the object of the proposed amendment, but he thought it could be improved upon by greatly extending, or even omitting altogether the radius of fifteen miles. There might not be a grazing farm within fifteen miles of a man's selection, and surely in a case of that kind he ought to be allowed to go beyond it.

Mr. PHILP said he thought the distance ought to be extended. He knew of places in the North, and on the Johnstone River especially, where a settler would have to go sixty miles before he could get a grazing farm.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said that before going further it would be advisable to amend the area. He presumed it was the homestead selector whom the subsection was intended to benefit. He moved as an amendment that the words "less than 170" be omitted, with the view of inserting the words "not more than 160." That was the expression already used in the Act.

Mr. COWLEY said he accepted the amendment. That was the intention of the framer of the subsection.

Amendment put and agreed to.

Mr. MURPHY said he quite agreed with the hon. member for Carpentaria, that there should be no restriction as to the distance within which a man should select a grazing farm. Why should they put a man who happened to hold a farm on the outside fringe of an agricultural district in a better position to select a grazing farm than a man who happened to be in the interior of the district. A man whose holding was twenty miles away from the border of the agricultural area would not be able to select in the adjacent grazing farm area, while his neighbour who happened to live five miles nearer would be able to do so. He thought the words, "within a distance of fifteen miles from the said residence," should be struck out.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: That would make it apply all over the colony.

Mr. MURPHY said that would make it rather absurd. He would like to make the clause as liberal as possible, but he could not see how to get over the difficulty pointed out by the hon. the leader of the Opposition.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said many similar provisions to that proposed had been introduced into Land Acts within his recollection. The idea was, and always had been, that a man with a small holding, not large enough to combine grazing with agriculture, might take up another small holding sufficiently near his residence to be able to be worked together with the land on which he was residing. That, of course, did not apply to everybody in the colony. People in towns, a large portion of the community, could not take advantage of it; and the principle being of limited application, it should be restricted so as to give effect to the idea underlying it. He thought the idea a very good one. But it would be of no advantage to the colony to allow a man who had a homestead selection in the Logan district to take up a grazing farm in the Wide Bay district without residence. That would not tend to settle the lands in the Wide Bay district. The limit proposed was the one usually proposed under similar circumstances; it was an arbitrary one, but he believed it was as good as any they could get.

Mr. GRIMES said he did not see any harm in allowing the fifteen miles limit to remain. Very few agricultural areas would be set apart that would be more than ten miles across, so that a person ten miles from an agricultural reserve might still be within the fifteen-mile limit. It would be of very little use for a selector to have a paddock more than fifteen miles away from his homestead.

Mr. MELLOR said he would like to know whether the clause would include persons who had taken up land a long time back? He saw no reason why it should not.

Mr. COWLEY said the intention of the clause was, as explained by the leader of the Opposition, to enable a small agriculturist to take up another farm sufficiently near his homestead to be able to work it himself without employing men especially to do so — as a paddock for his stock. With all due deference to the hon. member for Oxley, he could say that there were agricultural areas considerably over ten miles across, and in some places people had to go ten and twenty miles to get grazing land. He could not accept the amendment suggested by the hon. member for Barcoo, because he could see that it would be fraught with very great evils all over the colony. The result would be that people would take up no end of grazing farms and sell their rights to the squatter. No residence would be required, and the squatter would simply run a ring fence round the outside boundary. Therefore he could not accept the amendment, but if the Committee thought it necessary, he would have no objection to make the distance twenty-one miles.

Mr. MURPHY said before the hon. member took charge of an amendment in the Land Act, and criticised the actions of squatters and other people, he should study the Act he was discussing. If he did so he would find that a squatter was prohibited from holding a grazing farm. It was contrary to the Act. How, then, could he hold a grazing farm and run a ring fence round it? If he held it at all it must be in a dummy's name; and when he could take up a 20,000-acre area it was scarcely likely that he would go in for dummying 640 acres.

Mr. COWLEY said the hon. gentleman did not understand him. Of course, the squatter would not appear in the transaction. The grazing farm selectors would hold the land, but the squatter's cattle would run on it, and virtually it would be held by him. He did not suppose for a moment that the squatter would come forward and say, "This is my land," but at the same time he would get twenty or thirty men to take up so much, and thus defeat the very object the Committee had in view.

Mr. GLASSEY said there was a class of persons who, in consequence of their daily occupation, were prevented from taking advantage of the liberal provisions of the Land Act of 1884. He referred to the men employed on the railways in the interior. Many of those men had large families; they were located in isolated parts of the colony, and they had no means of finding ready or suitable employment for their children in the localities where they resided. He had a large family of his own, and if he were located in the interior like those men he would feel heavily handicapped with his sons in consequence of having a very limited

outlet for their labour as they were growing up. He therefore hoped that, in the immediate future, some attempt would be made to give those persons the opportunity of taking up agricultural and grazing farms—particularly grazing farms—for the benefit of their families. He had frequently received communications on the matter, which was one of growing importance, and he trusted that either the leader of the Opposition or the Minister for Lands would frame a clause which would enable those persons to whom he had referred to take advantage of the very liberal provisions of the Act of 1884.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said it must be borne in mind that this part of the Bill did not apply to all parts of the colony—it did not apply to the Gulf country, for instance—and in considering the different parts of the measure, they ought to bear in mind the parts of the colony to which they applied.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said he thought the clause as proposed by the hon. member for Burrum, which the Government were prepared to accept, was sufficiently liberal. Its intention was to allow agricultural farmers to take up grazing farms within a reasonable distance of their agricultural farms so as to combine agriculture with grazing. If the limit were extended to twenty-five miles the grazing farm would be beyond the daily reach of the agricultural selector; and he thought the distance of fifteen miles ought not to be exceeded. He could not support any extension of the distance.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said that the limit of fifteen miles had no meaning whatever at the present time in East or West Moreton, because the land was all taken up there. The distance ought to be fifty miles in those districts. The Minister for Lands said there could not be daily attendance at a selection twenty-five miles away; but there was no necessity for that. If a farmer with a family had 80 acres or 160 acres, there was no room for the children when they were grown up; and what the farmer did was to send them out to another selection, where they stayed a week at a time, and went home on Saturday night. That had been the practice among selectors to his knowledge for nearly thirty years. He agreed with the suggestion of the hon. member for Bundanba, and he would be glad if the leader of the Opposition would frame a clause for the benefit of the children of those people working along the railway lines. Another point he wished to bring under the notice of the Committee was the fact that one portion of the Act was a sort of inducement to perjury. In the old Land Act it was always stipulated that the single girls who took up selections should reside on those selections. A single girl took up a selection of 80 or 100 acres. Was it supposed that she lived on her selection? No single girl ever did so, yet a great many of them had got their deeds. How did they get them? Simply by making false declarations. Parliament never intended that a single woman should live out in the bush by herself; but at the same time these women had saved their money, instead of buying fol-de-rols and fashionable bonnets, and they eventually got married. He had a servant of his own whose wages were something like £20 a-year. She divided them into three parts. One-third was sent home to her mother, one-third was spent in clothing, and the other third paid for a selection. She never lived on it for one day, but she managed to bring a husband and two cows on to it. Why should they encourage young women to make false declarations. Rather let them have the land and say, "Live on it when you can, and get a husband when you can." Was there any gentleman in the Committee who had a sister, or wife, or daughter, and who would allow her to go away and live alone in the bush? The thing was absurd. He would be glad if the leader of the Opposition would take the suggestion of that practical member, Mr. Glassey, and introduce such a clause as had been spoken of, in which should be inserted a provision that no single women should be required to live on their selections.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL (Hon. J. Donaldson) said the object of the clause was that if a person had a selection within a certain distance, he would be entitled to take up another without complying with the conditions of residence, provided he lived on the first. The matter to decide was whether fifteen miles was a reasonable distance or not. A selector was not prohibited from taking up a grazing farm 500 miles away, but he must comply with the residence conditions laid down by the law. He would have to employ a bailiff; or if he had a family growing up who could work the land, they could bailiff it.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: They have no land within fifteen miles of them.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said they could go away 500 miles if they chose. Clause 19 of the Amending Act of 1886 provided that a person could have two agricultural farms within ten miles of each other, and comply with the residence conditions on one. Now the Committee wished to go further and allow a man to take up a grazing or agricultural farm within fifteen miles. There was nothing to prevent that man going away 100 or 500 miles, provided he complied with the residence conditions.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: I have known people refused because the place was a mile further.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said the hon. gentleman did not understand the law.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: Yes; and I know others that do not.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said if the hon. gentleman understood the law he would not raise his present objection. A man could send his family out and let them comply with the conditions of residence. The object of the clause was to enable a person to take up a grazing farm within fifteen miles of his agricultural farm and not comply with the condition of residence on the former, but there was nothing to prevent a selector taking up a grazing farm at a greater distance, so long as he complied with the residence conditions. The hon. gentleman said he wanted to extend the fifteen-mile limit. He could point out loopholes that would be left if persons could take up land all over the colony, because the selector who occupied land at the present time would be a very useful person to use as a dummy; so that there was great danger in extending the distance too far. He thought fifteen miles was a very reasonable distance indeed. He was sure the hon. member for Stanley spoke quite honestly without understanding the law as it was at the present time, and he (the Postmaster-General) had tried to explain that there was no prohibition against a selector taking up a grazing farm at a greater distance away, but he must comply with the law as to residence.

Mr. ISAMBERT said the practical remarks of the Postmaster-General deserved every consideration. The residence clauses had been inserted in various Land Acts in order to prevent land-grabbing, and by allowing any agricultural farmer to select a grazing farm within fifteen miles of his selection, would open the door very wide to a system of land-grabbing on an unprecedented scale. Limiting it to

within fifteen miles was no safeguard. There was relief required for small holders, by allowing them to work a grazing farm in connection with their small holdings, and the object would be attained if residence was dispensed with at the discretion of the Land Board or Minister. As the Postmaster-General truly said, there was no hindrance to selecting grazing farms 100 or 500 miles away. He believed that allowing a grazing farm to be taken up within fifteen miles of a selection would tend to prevent actual settlement. He could not agree altogether with the hon. member for Stanley that they should allow anyone to acquire land without residence. They knew what difficulties there were in the way of selectors getting good agricultural farms; the Minister for Lands knew them well, and to allow land to be selected without residence would make actual settlement very difficult. It would prevent actual settlement rather than promote it. They ought to be very jealous not to allow the selection of any grazing farms without the residence conditions. He held that opinion, though there were many selectors in his district who might be anxious to extend their holdings if they could get a grazing farm under those conditions within fifteen miles of them.

Mr. SMITH said he thought the distance within which the selection should be made might be extended to twenty-five miles, as it was not at all likely that any grazing farms would be found within the limit of fifteen miles of an agricultural area. If the limit was not extended, he feared there would be no such thing as a homestead selector obtaining a grazing farm at all.

Mr. STEVENS said he thought the proposed amendment was a very good one indeed, and he was certain it would be largely availed of in the district south of Brisbane and the country lying towards the Tweed River. There were many farmers there who would be glad to take up a few hundred acres on terms such as those proposed in the clause. He had been under the impression that there was a provision in the present Act similar to the amendment, and he thought an amendment on the subject had been moved by the late member for Stanley, Mr. White, to give the selector of agricultural land the right to take up a certain amount of grazing land. With regard to the proposal to increase the distance to twenty-five miles, he thought that for *bonâ fide* selectors that would be too far altogether. The greater the distance the paddock would be from the farmer's holding—for that was what it would be—the greater would be the risk of his losing his cattle. Fifteen miles, he fancied, was as far as a man would care to trust young stock, unless they had been branded, away from his supervision and control. If they made the distance greater than fifteen miles, there would be less chance of the clause being worked in a *bonâ fide* manner.

Mr. JORDAN said there was a great deal of force in the remarks of the hon. member for Rosewood. There was a great deal of danger in allowing persons to take up country in that way, which would otherwise be taken up by persons who would occupy it in a *bonâ fide* way, without any such conditions as were proposed. Under the clause so long as a selector taking up 160 acres resided upon his farm personally, he need not fulfil any conditions of occupation on the square mile of land to be given him as a grazing farm. The difficulty might be met by a slight alteration in the clause, by inserting the word "residence" instead of the word "occupation" in the 2nd last line; so that it would read—

"But for so long only as he shall continuously and *bonâ fide* reside on the agricultural farm be exempt from the condition of residence in respect of the grazing farm."

That would make the clause very much safer, and he hoped the hon. member in charge of the clause would accept that suggestion. If not, he was prepared to move that as an amendment to it.

Mr. MURRAY said it appeared the clause only extended to the holder of an agricultural farm, and he thought it ought to be extended to the holder of freehold agricultural land of the same extent. There were very few agricultural farmers who would be able to take advantage of the provision, and it would be a great advantage if it was applied to all farmers holding freeholds of the same area as stated in the clause. Another matter was the extent of the grazing area allowed, and he thought 640 acres was too small if it was to be of any use as a grazing area at all. He would like to see the provision extended to holders of freehold land of the same extent, and the area of the grazing farm allowed increased to 2,000 acres, or even more.

Mr. TOZER said it was important for the member in charge of the clause to define what an agricultural farm was. The question arose as to whether the holder of any farm was to have the privilege of selecting a grazing farm under the clause. It might be wise to extend the provision to the holder of an agricultural farm under the Act of 1886, or under the principal Act, and it might not be considered wise to give the same privilege to a person holding a freehold farm, or to a person holding an agricultural farm under the Act after he had converted it into a freehold. The definition of an agricultural farm should be clearly understood, because, as the clause stood, no one would know whether it included the holder of any piece of agricultural land or not.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: It is defined in the Act.

Mr. TOZER said that then it would mean the holder of an agricultural farm under the last Act.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: Yes.

Mr. TOZER said he thought some hon. members were under the impression that under the clause the holder of any freehold less than 160 acres would be entitled to select a grazing area under the clause.

The PREMIER: He can if he likes; but he is outside the Act.

Mr. TOZER: Why should he be? Why should such a person be obliged to reside on the holding when the holder of an agricultural farm under the Act, before he got his freehold, was to be allowed to select 640 acres of grazing land and utilise it without any conditions of residence? Why should not that principle, if it was to be applied to the holder of a grazing farm under the Act, be applied to the holder of a freehold of agricultural land of the same size alongside of him? If it was the intention that the clause should only apply to the former, the best plan would be to say in the clause, "the holder of an agricultural farm under the Act of 1886."

Amendment agreed to; and subsection, as amended, put and passed.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said that was a convenient time for him to submit to the Committee an amendment of which he had given notice. In the 2nd subsection of that clause the Minister for Lands had proposed that in the event of there being competition for a grazing farm the question should be settled by tender. It had been pointed out that the difficulty under which the first applicant was placed was that he was subject to competition, and the Minister for Lands had stated that it often happened that people took the trouble to find land suitable

for grazing farms, but when the land was thrown open, and they came to apply for the grazing farms, they were met by a number of other applicants, whose attention had been directed to the land—which they would not otherwise have known about—by the applications of the first lot of men. The proposal of the Minister for Lands to settle the question by tender had not commended itself to a majority of that Committee, and he (Sir S. W. Griffith) was one of those who had thought the remedy worse than the evil complained of. A few days ago he had received a letter from a gentleman living in the Northern part of the colony, whom he did not know personally, calling his attention to the evil, which he said had affected him personally; and he suggested that the person who first called attention to the suitableness of the piece of land for a grazing farm, the suitability of which had not occurred to the Land Board, was entitled to a sort of priority in the competition for the land. The idea had commended itself to him as reasonable, and he had accordingly formulated it in a clause which had been circulated, and which he would now read to the Committee. It read as follows :—

> When any person makes a request to the Minister that any specified area of land may be proclaimed open for selection as grazing farms, and it results from the request that the land is so proclaimed, the Minister shall notify to the commissioner that it was proclaimed at the request of such person, and if, on the day appointed by the proclamation as that on which the land will be open for selection, an application or applications by such person to select any of such grazing farms is or are lodged at the same time as applications by other persons to select the same farm or farms, the application or applications of the person by whom the request was made shall nevertheless be deemed to have been first lodged and shall be entitled to priority accordingly.

Since the clause had been circulated he had been told that such a provision might afford undue facilities to the neighbouring pastoral tenants to get the best land. It was possibly open to that objection to some extent; but, on the other hand, the principle proposed by the clause was very much like that of selection before survey, without the evil of allowing the person making the selection to pick out the eyes of the country, because the scheme of the clause would be that not so much a particular area of land as a particular locality would be brought under the notice of the Government as suitable for grazing farms. It would then have to be surveyed under the direction of the Government, the areas and the prices would have to be fixed by the Government and the board, and no one person would get a monopoly of the land. The first applicant would have to a certain extent the advantage of selection before survey, or rather, the prospector, using the word in a wide sense, would have the first claim. That principle had been adopted in many of their laws, and it was always followed in mining. It was a question, of course, whether the possibly undue advantages which might be given to persons specially interested in the land—the neighbouring pastoral tenant, or the pastoral tenant from whose run the land had been resumed—would more than counterbalance the advantage given to the persons to whose industry and enterprise the throwing open of the land was due. He himself did not attach nearly so much weight to the suggestion that the subsection would be to the advantage chiefly of the neighbouring pastoral tenant as some persons seemed to do. He maintained, and he thought with reason, that dummying was practically not possible under the grazing farms clauses. He admitted that a squatter might get his friends to select grazing farms in his neighbourhood. That would always be so under any system that could be devised, and the amendment would not give them any greater facilities in that respect than they had now. He believed that competition for grazing farms did not often occur, but it did occur in rare cases. The mode proposed by the Government was not a satisfactory one, and the question was whether the one now proposed would be better. There was a good deal to be said in its favour, and he had kept his promise to the gentleman who suggested it to him to bring it before the Committee. His own opinion was that it might be accepted without any danger at all. He did not think the danger of the pastoral tenant being the first to make the application would counterbalance the advantage which was fairly due to the man who was what he might call—using the word in a somewhat extended sense—the prospector, of allowing him to take up the land as a grazing area. The amendment was worthy of very serious consideration, and he, therefore, now proposed it as a new subsection in the clause.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said he had no doubt the hon. the leader of the Opposition proposed that clause in all sincerity and full faith in the integrity of everybody; but, couched as it was in apparently very innocent phraseology, there was still a most dangerous element hidden within it. To put it plainly, it meant practically free selection before survey of grazing farms throughout the colony, and he did not think that at the present time it would be at all a judicious thing to introduce that novel element into their land law.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: I quite agree with that.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said he was very glad to hear the hon. gentleman say so. He did not think the hon. gentleman had studied what the effect of the proposed amendment would be. It amounted to this: That anyone might go on to the resumed portion of any run; he had then to apply to the Minister that any specified area of land he liked—he defined his own boundaries, selected his own waterholes, and might so arrange his boundaries as to include or exclude possibly valuable improvements—should be thrown open to selection as a grazing farm.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: Grazing farms.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said it was immaterial to him whether it was "farm" or "farms." If it was to be read in the plural, it only made the danger greater than in isolated cases. The Minister must then act upon that request, cause that grazing farm or farms to be surveyed, and unless he could show very good cause to the contrary, which a Minister was not always able to do, he must allow that exploiter to obtain possession of that particular area of land, which might be the means of excluding a large number of similar grazing farms from useful occupation. It would enable the first man, or if it was to be farms and men, then the first syndicate, who went on the resumed portion of a run to pick the eyes out of the country, to secure the most valuable waterholes, without which grazing farms were of no great value, and virtually to get occupation of the surrounding country rent free. Another very dangerous element in the clause was this: The moment the resumed portion of a run was gazetted open as a grazing farm, that very moment, even though not a single farm was selected, the pastoral lessee's rent was reduced one-third. Hon. members would therefore see how, by means of that clause, the rents of the resumed portions of runs throughout the colony could be at once reduced by one-third. There was no necessity to select the land. It only required anyone interested—a squatter, a storekeeper, or anybody else—to put in an application for a grazing farm of any area, and as soon as the land was surveyed

as such, the pastoral tenant could at once demand a reduction of the rent; and, that being done, there was no power to raise the rent afterwards. The thing was absurd. He gave the pastoral tenants of the colony credit for sufficient ingenuity to know that if that clause became law, in a very few months there would be grazing farms selected all over the resumed portions of the runs, and that, as a consequence, the rents would be reduced by one-third. He did not think the hon. gentleman really saw what the effect of the clause would be.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: I have made no such proposition.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said he would appeal to the hon. gentleman, and also to the hon. member for South Brisbane, Mr. Jordan, whether his statement of the effect of the clause was not correct. In the interest of the colony he did not think it would be at all a judicious step to allow such a clause to become law.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said he thought the proposition should be discussed on its merits. It might have merits or not, but he thought the least the hon. gentleman could do was to deal with the proposition he had made, and not with an entirely different proposition. Any person was now at liberty to ask the Minister to throw land open to selection as a grazing farm or farms. That was the right of everybody in the community; the clause did not confer any right in that respect that did not exist at the present moment. The land office was open to receive applications for land to be thrown open, and how did the Government know where to proclaim land open unless they were told. They might have an instinctive knowledge to a certain extent, but they must get information on those matters from the public, and he had taken existing facts as the basis of his proposition. Anybody might apply for land to be thrown open as grazing farms, and the Government might or might not accede to the application. If it appeared to the Government that the application was made merely in the interests of the person who held the grazing right over the resumed half of the run, he presumed that they would refuse the application—that if they believed there was no real *bonâ fide* demand for settlement, they would not proclaim the land open for selection, and consequently the rent would not be reduced. If, on the other hand, they believed there was a *bonâ fide* demand for settlement, he presumed they would grant the application. Those were existing facts, and on them he had based his proposal. The clause made no difference in that respect. If the Government chose to neglect their duty, and yielded to every idle application, they could do so now, and reduce the rents accordingly; but he assumed that they would continue to do their duty as they were doing it at the present time. His clause proposed something that would start after that. All he proposed was that after the Government had satisfied themselves that there was a *bonâ fide* demand, and acceded to the request, then the person who had been the means of creating that settlement should have the prior right. That disposed of one of the hon. gentleman's objections. The other objection he had made was that the clause meant selection before survey. He (Sir S. W. Griffith) strongly objected to the selection of grazing farms before survey. He had always done so, because on grazing farms facilities for storing water were essential, and if anyone was allowed to go on land and select the best places for storing water, or the best natural supplies, the value of the surrounding country would be made useless. Before the land was selected it must be surveyed. The clause did not propose to alter the law in that respect; there was no proposal to interfere with survey before selection, except that the man who first gave notice of the *bonâ fide* demand for settlement should have a prior claim for consideration. That was all he asked. If the hon. gentleman thought the words "specified area" objectionable, some other expression might be substituted. The intention of the clause was to provide that the man who called attention to land in any particular locality afford ing a field for *bonâ fide* settlement should have a prior right to consideration. He (Sir S. W. Griffith) had introduced it in accordance with a promise he made to a gentleman smarting under what he considered a grievance, and because he thought that the matter was worthy of consideration. The Government also thought it worthy of consideration, because they had brought forward a provision specially dealing with the difficulty. If there were other objections to the proposition, and sound ones, he would yield to them; but the arguments used by the Minister for Lands up to the present time did not meet the proposal at all.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said he could not agree that his arguments did not meet the clause. They were specially directed to the amendment as printed; but if the hon. gentleman wished to amend that amendment let him say so. The clause distinctly stated, "any specified area of land." If that was not an invitation to persons to select a specified area, to define that specified area, and go to the Minister or the board and ask that that specified area should be granted to him and no other, he did not know what it meant. The clause as printed was an invitation to persons who were not satisfied with the present localities of grazing farms to pick out lands that would suit them and indicate the specified area they desired to settle upon. Then the Minister would be bound, unless he could show good cause to the contrary, to act upon that invitation; and if the clause were passed as printed, it would simply mean free selection of grazing farms before survey. The specified area was to be defined by the selector; it was then to be surveyed; and the man who went to the trouble of pointing out that the land was suitable for selection was to have a pre-emptive right without competition—a principle to which the hon. gentleman opposite had strongly objected.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: And still objects most strongly. I want the proposal discussed on its merits.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said that he also wanted it discussed on its merits; and he contended that he was discussing the amendment as printed on its merits. If the hon. gentleman liked to introduce the amendment in another form he would deal with that, too, on its merits. He thought the proposal contained a most dangerous principle to introduce in connection with grazing farms—namely, selection before survey—which would practically allow a selector to pick the eyes out of a piece of country, and block up large areas against possibly more profitable settlement afterwards.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said the arguments of the hon. member were directed principally against the term "any specified area of land," and he admitted the force of what the hon. member said with respect to that. In order to overcome that difficulty, he would move that the words "any specified area of" be omitted, with the view of inserting the words "in a specified locality" after the word "land."

Question—That the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the amendment—put and negatived.

The PREMIER (Hon. B. D. Morehead) said he did not know whether the leader of the Opposition had studied what had happened in New South Wales when what were called special surveys were made. That was in the old days when Victoria formed part of New South Wales; and the whole of the best lands in the colony were then taken up in the way the hon. gentleman now proposed that they should be allowed to be taken up in Queensland. The only difference was that, in New South Wales, they went as freeholds, and the hon. gentleman proposed that here they should go as thirty years' leases. Surely the hon. gentleman had not contemplated the effect of that?

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: I am not familiar with the details of what took place in New South Wales at the time to which the hon. member refers.

The PREMIER said that if the hon. gentleman would look at the old maps of New South Wales and Victoria he would find that the best of the lands were taken up under what were called special surveys; and if the clause now before the Committee were passed that would be the effect so far as Queensland was concerned. He trusted that such a clause would not be passed, because, no matter how it might be amended, it would give a preferential claim which ought not to be given by any Parliament.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said that the proposal of the leader of the Opposition to use the term "specified locality" instead of "specified area" did not get over the difficulty in regard to selection before survey. A person might desire to select the only portion of good land on a run. If he desired to select 5,000 acres the Land Board might decide that the size of the farms should be 20,000 acres. In that case were they going to survey them in 20,000-acre blocks, and debar the man from getting the selection he wanted, notwithstanding the fact that he made the first application?

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: If they think they ought.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said that as the Minister for Lands had pointed out, it might happen that there was only one waterhole on the land thrown open for selection. The man who applied to have the land thrown open would desire to have that waterhole in the middle of his 5,000-acre selection, and the whole of the rest of the country would be excluded.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: It would be the fault of the Land Board if that happened.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said the Land Board would have no control over the matter if the clause was to have any force at all. Unless preference was given to the person who asked that the land might be thrown open—unless he was entitled to certain consideration—the clause would be of no value whatever. It was probable that a particular portion of land would be asked for, not by a *bonâ fide* selector, but by a person working in the interests of the pastoral lessee. He had heard the hon. gentleman speak of pre-emptive rights, which he looked upon as so many forts by which the pastoral tenant kept his hold upon the land; but the proposal of the hon. member would be bringing the same system into play in the very worst shape.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: How could it be?

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he could very easily show the hon. gentleman.

The PREMIER: Don't show him. He might do it.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he did not think he would. If the clause had any force whatever, the person who made application in a particular locality should have the right to take up a selection where he indicated his wish to have it. The land would have to be surveyed in blocks of certain sizes; a man might only desire to select 5,000 acres. If it was only going to be taken up for the purpose of securing the water the smaller the area the better it would be, because if the pastoral lessee wished to evade the law he would take a small area instead of the maximum fixed by the Land Board. The principle as at present was a very good one indeed, because in the report of the commissioner who divided the run the Land Board came to the conclusion whether the farms should be in large or small areas, according to the quality of the soil. If the clause was to be of any use whatever, they must protect the man who sought for the smaller area, because he would be the *bonâ fide* selector. If the board thought the land good and decided to cut it up in 20,000-acre blocks, the person who wanted 20,000 acres had a prior right over the person who wanted 5,000 acres. But if there were two 10,000-acre blocks, and no competition, the man who applied for 15,000 acres could take up 5,000 acres in another block. That was a very good practice. If the clause was passed they must give some weight to it. If the applicant made application for a small area of 2,000 acres, he would be able to hold the whole of the country if the application was made in the interests of the pastoral lessee. Or it might be taken up for other purposes, so as to render the rest of the country valueless, and thus a man might compel the pastoral lessee to make terms for the use of the water.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: Reserve all the water.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said if they did that they would stop all selection. Anyone who had any practical experience in the interior would know exactly the effect of the clause, and how dangerous it would be. He had every sympathy with the man who made the first application, who resided in the district, and desired to get the land; but he was sure the clause would open the door very wide to evasion of the law. The hon. gentleman, the other night, spoke of the desirableness of inducing young men to come here from the other colonies and settle down, but the clause proposed would have the opposite effect of inducing such men to come here. All the people residing in their own particular districts would pick the eyes out of the country before anyone outside could get a chance at the land.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: Why don't they do it now?

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said there was no temptation to do it now. The object of the clause was to give priority to some person, and he ventured to say that within one week of the division of every run in the colony there would be applications made for particular spots. That would be the effect. He knew the hon. gentleman brought forward the clause with the best intention, but he only looked at one side, and his want of practical knowledge prevented him from seeing the great danger there would be in adopting such a provision. If he had seen that danger he would never have brought forward the clause.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said the hon. gentleman argued as though the board would abrogate their functions, but the clause was based on the assumption that the board would continue to perform their present functions

It imposed no obligation whatever on the board, and did not tie their hands in any way whatever.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: Then it is a farce.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said it was not a farce. The case was put to him by a gentleman in connection with the Cardwell district. There was a lot of land there not under pastoral lease. If a man found out country not under pastoral lease, he might desire to have that put up as grazing farms; he took the trouble to find it out, and he would do as he did now. He would write to the Minister and say, "I know of some land in a certain district suitable for grazing farms. I am prepared to pay a fair rent for it; will you proclaim it open for selection?" What injury was done? The board would consider if it was desirable to do so. If they thought it was not fit for grazing farms they would not proclaim it; but if they thought it suitable for that purpose, they would send a surveyor to examine it; and they would see that the water was not all in one block. He assumed that the commissioners and the board would continue to do their duty; he argued on the basis that they would do their duty, as they did at present. He would suppose that that was done. The man had been at some trouble in finding the land, and it was put up. Other people put in applications; a ballot was taken, and under the present system the original applicant might lose the land, and he was thoroughly disheartened. Those were the arguments that had been addressed to him. He had pointed that out previously when the Government proposed to meet the same difficulty by the tender system. He thought it was only fair to remind the Committee and the Government that the arguments he had used as to those hardships frequently existing were the same arguments used in favour of subsection 2 of the clause. The difficulty did exist in some parts of the colony, and it was one which the Government thought sufficiently serious to be worthy of presenting a mode of meeting it, but their mode did not commend itself to the Committee. If the board continued to do their duty as at present, the dangers pointed out by the Postmaster-General were entirely imaginary. The proposal was not that a man should mark out a piece of land of so many acres with certain boundaries and get that put up. It was no such proposal; but he submitted to the Committee that if a man called attention to a new piece of country where there were no grazing farms open, he had done the country a benefit. If the Government thought so, and the board thought, after investigation, that the man had been the means of directing public attention to a new field for grazing settlement, then he was a public benefactor. If the Government did not think so, and thought it was simply a "try on," they would refuse to proclaim the land open to selection. To make the clause bad, first of all the Government would have to violate their duty in throwing open land that was not required; and, secondly, the board would have to fail in their duty in having the land subdivided. All the officers appointed by law to properly administer affairs connected with the land must entirely abrogate their functions before any mischief could happen. Supposing the Government did their duty, as he supposed they would: if the board did the same, and saw that the land was properly surveyed, and that there was no monopoly of water, then what possible harm could there be in saying which of the various applicants had the first right to the land? What difficulty could there be? The main point was that in the event of the Government concluding that the land ought to be thrown open, and the board having seen that it was properly surveyed, in the event of there being competition, the man who was the means of bringing the land under notice should have the first chance. That was the whole effect of the clause. It gave no monopoly. It gave the prospector, or the man who directed attention to the land, a prior right for the trouble he had taken. That was what the clause said. He admitted that the words "specified area" were misleading. He quite admitted that; but calling attention to a particular locality was very different, and that was the position he spoke of when he asked to be allowed to amend the clause.

The PREMIER said he believed that the cassowary was found in the Cardwell district. He was a very rare bird, and rarer now than when the Cardwell district was discovered.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: I have heard of him on the plains of Timbuctoo.

The PREMIER said he had also heard of him in that connection in a little rhyme in which he was said to have eaten not only a missionary but a hymn-book too, and the hon. gentleman would find him better there than in a Land Bill. It appeared the clause originated with a gentleman in the Cardwell district who did not know how to get certain unoccupied land. It was easy to get land in that district of that description, or in any of the unsettled districts on the western slopes of the colony, by taking it up as unoccupied country. The hon. gentleman had told them that his friend did not know how to get a certain portion of unoccupied country in the Cardwell district when he could easily get it under an occupation license.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: Yes; but he would not get priority.

The PREMIER said that was really too absurd. Was that clause to be introduced because a friend of the leader of the Opposition could not get a certain piece of land under an occupation license without competition. If the hon. gentleman had pointed out that a serious injustice would arise to a large number of individuals in the colony, or to a large section of the community, under the existing law or the proposed amending Bill, if such a clause was not included, he could understand him, but when the hon. gentleman narrowed it down to the case of one person in the Cardwell district, who could not get hold of a particular portion of land without competition, it reached a perfect absurdity. He thought the hon. member must see, under the circumstances, it was best to withdraw the clause, and not press it any further. The Committee would agree that the weight of the argument was against the hon. gentleman, and he did not think that on that occasion the hon. gentleman had acted with his usual astuteness.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said he did not want to talk any more about it, but he wished to correct an error the hon. gentleman had fallen into, and which he had corrected before. He had said that a gentleman in the Cardwell district had called his attention to that mode of remedying an evil which the Government had themselves stated the Bill before them was introduced to remedy. It was not because an individual in the Cardwell district had suffered that the proposal was made. The Government and the Minister for Lands had pointed out the evil, and the Government had proposed a remedy for it. They had stated that it was a serious evil requiring the attention of Parliament. The remedy proposed by the Government was not a satisfactory one, and a gentleman in the Cardwell district, whom he did

not know personally, and whom he had never heard of before, pointed out to him a mode of remedying the evil which he took it for granted, on the assertion of the Minister for Lands, existed. The Government might now say the evil did not exist—and of that they knew more than he did—but he had taken for granted the statement of the Minister for Lands that it did exist, and that it was so serious that they dealt with it in the Bill before them. He took it for granted that it was a subject requiring serious consideration, and the remedy proposed by the Government being unsatisfactory in the opinion of the Committee, he had thought that what appeared to him to be a reasonable proposal for remedying the evil should be submitted to Parliament. He had no wish to discuss it any further.

Mr. STEVENS said that if the amendment was agreed to it would without doubt amount to a positive instruction to the board to throw rtain portions of land open for selection.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: I would not have introduced it if I thought so.

Mr. STEVENS said that was what it would amount to, and if it was passed, and a man asked that certain land should be thrown open to selection, and the request was not granted, he would consider he had a grievance at once. Another point to consider was that it would, if carried, be a very fruitful source of blackmailing, as men would call upon pastoral lessees and threaten to apply that certain portions of their runs should be thrown open to selection. As to the amendment substituting a "specified locality" for a "specified area," that would have the effect of defeating the proposed amendment itself, because the applicant would simply want a certain area, and not any block in a certain locality. If he did not get the block he had set his heart on he would not have one at all.

Mr. COWLEY said he would like to ask the leader of the Opposition whether he was sure his correspondent wished the provision applied to grazing farms, or only to occupation licenses?

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: I cannot say that. I have not got the letter with me.

Mr. COWLEY said he asked the question, as several gentlemen in the Cardwell district had asked him to have that principle applied to occupation licenses, and not to grazing farms, as there were no grazing farms in that district at all. The difficulty was that when a man discovered land which he would like to get under an occupation license, and induced the Minister to throw it open for selection, there were forty or fifty applications put in for it immediately. He knew of cases of that kind which had occurred in that district; and when men discovered land they would like to take up in that way they were afraid to make it known, or ask that it should be proclaimed open for selection, as so many applicants would at once put in for it. He thought the leader of the Opposition must be confusing the two things. He felt sure the hon. gentleman's correspondent only intended the provision to apply to occupation licenses, and he was confirmed in that belief by the knowledge of the fact that there were no grazing farms in that district.

Mr. PAUL said the amendment, if passed, would only intensify the evil done in New South Wales under Sir John Robertson's Act providing for free selection before survey. He could speak with some knowledge of the working of that Act, because eight or nine years ago he had been appraising runs in New South Wales and then saw the evil effects of the system. Not only large but small squatters had been blackmailed, and he recollected one run which he was appraising near Coonamble. It belonged to a widow, and was only about thirty square miles in extent, and at one end of it there was a dam and at the other end a permanent waterhole. A selector came in and took up 640 acres, and secured the whole of the natural water. The clause before them was simply one by which the evil effects of Sir John Robertson's Act in New South Wales would be brought into play here, and he for one would strongly oppose it.

Mr. PALMER said he could endorse the remarks that had fallen from the hon. member for Herbert with reference to occupation licenses, and when he first read the clause under discussion he thought that was what the leader of the Opposition must have had in his mind in drafting it. He had received a number of complaints in connection with the way in which applications were put in for occupation licenses, and the amendment would exactly meet those cases. There were plenty of selectors who would go in for occupation licenses for land they discovered, but they knew that once it was proclaimed open for selection they would have to compete with a great many applicants for it, and they, therefore, kept dark about it altogether. If the principle of the amendment could be applied to occupation licenses it would be a very useful one, as he had heard many complaints on that head. As soon as any land like that was discovered along the coast districts, and it was made known, the discoverer had to compete with a great many others.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said he thought it probable the gentleman who wrote to the leader of the Opposition intended the principle to be applied to occupation licenses. He knew there had been a demand for the right of acquiring occupation licenses in the more northern parts of the colony, for large areas of land which were not included in pastoral leases and which had been held for many years without the Government receiving any rent. They were of such an isolated character that it would be almost impracticable to send surveyors to locate them. In the *Government Gazette* of November 12 last, the matter having been brought before the notice of the Government, they issued a proclamation allowing people to describe the areas that they were desirous of holding under occupation licenses in the Cooktown, Normanton, and Burketown districts. They had to specify under certain conditions the land they desired to hold under occupation license, and they received a priority of application.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: How?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said, under Part V. of the Land Act, clause 77, it was provided that—

"The Minister may grant licenses to occupy from year to year, any Crown lands not subject to a right of depasturing under Part III. of this Act. Such licenses shall be granted under and subject to the following provisions and conditions, that is to say—

"1. The land shall be declared open to such occupation by notice in the *Gazette*."

That was what the Government had done, and the same clause said the first applicant should be entitled to the license.

Mr. DRAKE: Before it is gazetted?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said the *Gazette* notice was to appear one month before the land was open for selection under occupation license. There were large areas of the land he had described which up to the present time had been practically useless to the colony, and a great number of people residing in those localities knew of the existence of those areas of land, but

the Government were not in a position to define them. So that proclamation was issued in accordance with the power given under Part V. of the Act to make the land available, and have it occupied in a way that it had not been before. In order to meet the demand that existed for land in the Cardwell district, the Government proposed to extend the proclamation to that district. Those licenses would be issued from year to year until the land was required for other purposes. On the eastern seaboard, where there was no doubt a great deal of valuable agricultural land that was not required for settlement, it would be far preferable to allow that land to be held under occupation licenses, renewable from year to year, than to have it locked up for thirty years as grazing farms.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said he did not wish to take up too much of the time of the Committee. Hon. members seemed to be under the impression that grazing farms could only be taken up on the resumed parts of runs; but they could be taken up anywhere in the lands described in the schedule of the Act. Any of the land open to selection by occupation licenses might also be thrown open as grazing farms. The hon. gentleman had given effect to the very principle of the amendment in respect of occupation licenses, but he had not done it according to law. It might be worthy of consideration whether an amendment should not be inserted to give effect to what the hon. gentleman said he had already done, and a few verbal amendments in the clause he had proposed would be sufficient. An hon. member had asked him whether his correspondent referred to grazing farms or to occupation licenses. He was sorry he had not the letter with him; but his impression was that the letter referred to both. He had been extremely busy lately, as hon. members knew; and he had shown the draft to the Minister for Lands as soon as he had written it. He could not withdraw the clause because it had been amended; but the opinion of the Committee was evidently against it, and he was quite satisfied with the discussion that had taken place.

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

New clause, as amended, put and negatived.

On subsection 5, clause 3:—

"The following provision shall be added to subsection five of the last mentioned section:—

"Provided that notwithstanding such forfeiture the Governor in Council may waive the forfeiture and reinstate the selector upon payment of the arrears of rent due at the date of such forfeiture and the accrued penalty."

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said that in consequence of subsection 4 having been negatived it was necessary that the subsection now proposed should be amended. He moved that the words "the last-mentioned section" be omitted, with a view of inserting the words "section fifty-eight."

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. TOZER said he would like to add a score of words to the end of that clause to remedy a hardship which existed in his own electorate. The subsection as it stood, provided that, notwithstanding the forfeiture, the Governor in Council might waive the forfeiture, and reinstate the selector upon payment of the arrears of rent due at the date of such forfeiture and the accrued penalty. Now the accrued penalty amounted to 60 per cent. per annum. He wished to give the Governor in Council further power to waive the payment of the penalty in exceptional circumstances. What he proposed to insert was:—

And in case sufficient grounds for exceptional consideration be proved to his satisfaction, the Governor in Council may remit all or any part of such accrued penalty.

He would give cogent reasons in support of his amendment. In his district last year, owing to the heavy floods and two successive seasons of drought, many of the selectors became unable to pay their rent, and a petition was sent down to the Minister for Lands. That hon. gentleman was satisfied with the justice of the petition, and he caused a letter to be written to the following effect:—

"With reference to the petition addressed to you from certain selectors in the Wide Bay district"—

And he might say that they represented nearly all the selectors on the Mary River—

"praying that the time for the payment of rent may be extended to the 30th September next, I have the honour to inform you that the Secretary for Public Lands will grant any reasonable concession in the way of time as an act of grace owing to the present bad seasons, but the penalties imposed by the Act will have to be paid."

Now, what was the use of saying to those persons that the penalties imposed by the Act must be paid? Did hon. members think that there was a man in the district who would not practically have starved himself out rather than pay those excessive penalties? In the case he referred to it was the whole district which was suffering, not one person. The amendment was not an innovation, but was a part of the old land laws of the colony. The principle was good, and why should not the Government in administering the land laws of the colony be merciful where mercy was necessary? Why should they exact from selectors and others, under exceptional circumstances of great hardship, as in the case he had referred to, the penalty imposed by the Act? He was now pleading in the interests of a large section of people who took up land for *bonâ fide* settlement. Those men were not going to ask the Government for charity; they were simply asking the Committee to affirm the principle that the Government should have power to remit those heavy penalties, which had been imposed as a warning, and as a punishment to those who, having the money to pay, would not pay. They should not visit with equal penalties the man who wilfully neglected to pay his rent and the man who, from exceptional circumstances, had not the money to do so. With regard to the answer of the Minister for Lands to the Wide Bay selectors, he (Mr. Tozer) had informed the selectors that the Government could not break through an Act of Parliament in the interests of any section of the community, and what he had proposed would give the Government power to remedy that. Supposing a dam were to break, as had been the case recently in America, and ruined a large district, and the people in that district were unable to pay their dues to the State, the Government should have power in such a case to remit those dues. That was the effect of his amendment. He begged to move the amendment he had read, to follow at the end of the 5th subsection.

The PREMIER said he supposed the hon. member for Wide Bay, in moving his amendment, was prepared to go further, and mete out equal justice all round. He supposed the hon. member would deal in the same way with the pastoral tenants. Did the hon. member propose to do that?

Mr. TOZER: If the pastoral tenants require it.

The PREMIER said that he would ask the hon. gentleman and the Committee what class had suffered within the last seven years as much as the pastoral tenants had? They had received no consideration at the hands of Parliament, and why should they not receive the same consideration as those who were dealt with in the clause under discussion? Under the Act of 1884 a penalty was imposed of 5 per cent. for the first thirty days, 10 per cent. for the next thirty days, and 15 per cent. to the end of ninety days, for default in paying rent. After that the penalty was absolute forfeiture without power of reinstatement. Why should the pastoral tenant be placed in a different position from any other holder of land in this colony?

Mr. TOZER: Would you place him in the same category as the homestead selector?

The PREMIER said he would place him in the same category as any other person paying rent to the Crown for the land he occupied. He would treat the pastoral tenant exactly on the same platform as all others. If the hon. gentleman proposed a differential way of treating the different holders of land from the Crown, he decidedly objected to it. If, on the other hand, he was prepared to put them on the same platform it was a matter for argument. He did not agree with it, but he thought that the pastoral tenant had a perfect right to ask to have his claims considered when a matter of that kind was brought before the Committee for discussion. With regard to conditional purchasers, homestead selectors, and so forth, it was well known that in the past they had been treated with the utmost leniency by every Government wherever a good case for leniency had been made out, without anything being put on the statute book. He certainly objected to any such clause being placed on the statute book without the same concession being given to the pastoral leaseholder.

Mr. TOZER: The grazing farmer would get it under this.

The PREMIER said that was all the more reason why the twenty-one years' tenant should not be excluded. There had been no fewer than three cycles of depression during the last fifteen years, when the pastoral tenant was as thoroughly crushed as any selector had ever been, but he had received no concession at the hands of the State. If his rent was not paid up to the day, he had to pay his fine. He recollected a case some years ago, when there was a fine of something like £1,500 depending on an answer to a telegram coming from Melbourne with regard to some runs held just within the boundary of the colony. He (the Premier) was acting for the lessee of the runs, and he went to Mr. Hemmant, who was then Premier and Treasurer, and asked him whether he would allow the matter to wait until that telegraphic reply was received, and he was told that unless the rent was paid on the 30th September the fine would be exacted. Mr. Hemmant did his duty; he had a clear line before him, and he did what the law said he should do. It would be manifestly unjust if an amendment of that sort were passed, which did not include the pastoral tenant. In any case, it was a very dangerous thing to put on the statute book. Hitherto the selectors had been treated by every Government in a manner fair, liberal, and generous; in fact, they had been exceptionally well treated, and he objected most distinctly to their being treated in a differential way from any others who held lands from the Crown.

Mr. SALKELD said that, although it might not be wise to go as far as the hon. member for Wide Bay proposed, he did not see why the State should exact 60 per cent. interest on arrears of rent, when it could borrow money at 4 per cent. The amount might be reduced to 10 per cent., and he saw no objection to pastoral tenants paying 10 per cent. on their arrears of rent, and the time might be fixed at twelve months. That would meet the bulk of the cases, and would be received with satisfaction by the settlers in the country.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said he believed that previous Governments had acted in the same way as the present Government were doing with regard to those unfortunate cases which occurred occasionally where the tenants of the Crown, through bad seasons or other causes, were unable to meet their annual payment of rent. Although the law was to a certain extent as stated by the hon. member for Wide Bay, the hon. member had quite overstated the case when he accused the Government of exacting 60 per cent. interest for non-payment of rent. The actual amount was 15 per cent.

Mr. SALKELD: It is at the rate of 60 per cent. per annum.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said the hon. member might just as well say that it was at the rate of 120 per cent. for two years, or 180 per cent. for three years, and so on indefinitely. The tenant was allowed three months extension of time on payment of 15 per cent., and if at the end of ninety days he was still unable to pay his rent, and unable to give a satisfactory reason why he had not done so, there was no doubt, according to the strict letter of the law, that his selection was forfeited. The Act gave the Minister the right of reinstating and waiving the forfeiture. Ministers for Lands, although they were supposed to be very hard-hearted as a rule, had bowels of compassion the same as other people, and he defied the hon. member to bring forward a single case of exceptional hardship where a struggling selector had been asked to pay 15 per cent. It would be a dangerous thing to put such a clause as the hon. member suggested on the statute book. There must be some finality; the Government must know what their annual revenue from the land was likely to be, and if once a clause was introduced informing the selector that if he did not pay his rent it would be all right, that he had only to put a pitiable case before the Minister and he would not be compelled to pay the fine, the rents instead of coming in on the 31st March, would not come in until the 30th June, and then not till the 30th September. No doubt the penalty under the Act of 1876 was only 10 per cent., but it must be borne in mind that under that Act the annual payment was very much larger. Under the present Act the tenure was totally different. It was a fifty years' tenure, and the majority of the tenants were homestead selectors, whose annual payment was a mere bagatelle.

Mr. TOZER: But their payments will increase.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said that when the time came that their rents were increased to such an extent as to press hardly upon them, that would be the time to further amend the Land Act, and give them relief in the way either of reducing the rents or reducing the penalty in the event of the non-payment of rent. As the Premier had stated, if they introduced a clause of that kind applying to merely one class of the population, it would be very unjust indeed. Whatever was done let it be made of general application. If it was to apply to the selector, whose payments were very small indeed, let it also apply to the pastoral tenants whose payments were very large. The Committee would do very well to let the law stand as it was at present, when every case would be dealt with on its merits by the Minister for the

time being, and he did not think that any case of exceptional hardship would ever be brought before the House.

Amendment put and negatived; and subsection, as amended, put and passed.

On subsection 6, 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."

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said the form of the clause was objectionable, but he thought unintentionally so; and he would suggest an amendment. The existing law provided that when the condition of occupation on an agricultural farm had been performed by the continuous and *bonâ fide* residence on the holding of the lessee himself, or of each of two or more successive lessees, for the period of ten years, then the grant might be issued. It was now proposed to reduce the ten years to five; but he must confess that he could see no reason for allowing the contribution towards the prescribed period of residence made by one lessee, to be taken away from him if he sold his selection. He would, therefore, suggest that the subsection should read so that the period of five years should apply to the first lessee only, leaving the law as at present with respect to successive lessees. That would enable the whole matter to be fairly discussed, as there was a great difference of opinion respecting it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said he was going to propose that himself.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said he begged the hon. gentleman's pardon. He had not seen the amendment.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said the amendment had been printed, and read as follows :—

Section seventy-three shall be read and construed as if, instead of the term "ten years" inserted therein, the term "five years" had been therein inserted.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said that was very different from what he proposed, which was that the five years should apply to the first lessee, but not to two or more successive lessees as to whom the residence should extend over ten years.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS : We want it five years.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said he could see no reason for taking away from the first lessee whatever rights he had acquired by the residence he had given on the land, as an element in the selling value of it. If one man had lived three years on the land he could sell to another, who might sell to another, and so on until the condition of residence was completed, and the man who completed it should be entitled to the freehold. Surely the hon. gentleman did not mean that if two or more successive lessees resided on the land for five years the freehold should be granted.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS : I do.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said that was dummying made easy. A lessee had a certain time to make his improvements, so that he could keep one dummy for, say, six months, dismiss him, get another, and so on, and at the end of five years he could fence in the selection and get the freehold. There would be no *bonâ fide* settlement at all in that. He did not believe in reducing the term of residence at all, but he certainly thought that each lessee should get the benefit of his residence on the selection. He would suggest that the clause should read so as to apply to one man for five years, or to two or more men for a period of ten years in all.

Mr. JORDAN said the 69th section of the principal Act gave power to the lessee to sub-let the whole or any portion of his holding upon the following conditions :—That the sub-lessee was not disqualified to become the lessee; that the approval of the board was obtained; that special grounds were shown for such approval; and that the underlease must be in writing and in duplicate, and one original was registered in the Lands Department. Those were very careful safeguards, and he thought it would be a great pity if that part of the Act was altered. It was a matter of great importance to persons who had taken up farms, and who, in consequence of a succession of bad seasons or other unfortunate circumstances, were unable to meet their expenses, that they should have power to sub-let a portion or the whole of their selections, subject to those safeguards. If the words "or of each of two or more successive lessees" were omitted, as proposed, it would prevent successive lessees from getting the freehold, and that he considered very objectionable indeed. The words "two or more successive lessees" appeared not only in clause 73 of the principal Act, but also in clause 17 of the Amending Act of 1886, so that if they were left out of the principal Act they should be also omitted from the Act of 1886. The latter part of the clause was to his mind most objectionable. He was not quite sure whether the hon. the Minister for Lands intended it to be permissive or compulsory—whether persons who had taken up agricultural farms should be compelled to complete the transaction in five years, or whether it would be optional for them to do so. He should like the hon. gentleman to tell the Committee what his intention was. If it was compulsory, then it would destroy a valuable part of the Act, which gave farmers the privilege of getting their land at a low rent on long credit. That provision as it at present existed was largely appreciated; and since the liberal provisions with regard to taking up lands at low rents had become generally known, a very great number of farms had been taken up. He had obtained some figures from the Lands Office with respect to the quantity of land taken up in the year 1888, under the Act of 1884. The number of farms taken up in that year, exceeding 160 acres in area, was 266, and the area was 134,147 acres. The number of farms of 160 acres and under, taken up as homesteads, that was, in which the selectors had claimed or been allowed to pay the survey fees in five annual instalments, was 955, and the area was 125,852 acres. The number of farms of 160 acres or under, of which the survey fees had been paid in full, was 291, and the area was 33,170 acres. The summary of that was as follows :—Homesteads 955, area 125,852 acres; the total number of farms, other than homesteads, large and small, 557, area 167,317 acres. Persons who desired to select land were becoming aware of the liberal provisions of the Act of 1884, and it was very important to encourage the occupation of land, not only as homesteads, but also as farms of a larger area. The good land specially suitable for tillage was in small patches, and if all that were occupied all the poor land would be left; and it was therefore desirable that persons should take up a sufficient area, so that they could carry on agriculture combined with grazing. From a revenue point of view it was not desirable that all the alluvial and scrub lands should be occupied by farmers, if that were possible, and all the poor land left unoccupied; and it was undesirable to disturb the operation of that portion of the Act relating to the long-credit system. The settlement that had taken place under the Act of 1884 was more successful last year than in any previous year, the whole of the land taken up in

the year 1888, including grazing farms, homesteads, and the larger farms, being 1,683,207 acres. That was double the area taken up in any previous year. It was double the area taken up in 1882 under the Act of 1876, when 845,018 acres were occupied, including a large quantity of sugar land in the North—some of which was sold at very low prices. Under the Act of 1876 the rents for the first year amounted to one-tenth of the purchase money, and when those farms were realised upon at the end of the ten years, or previously, the whole amount received would be £470,230. It had been repeatedly said, especially by Ministers, that the Act of 1884 was a failure from a revenue point of view; and he would now compare the results of the operation of that Act during the past year with the results arising from the occupation of farms in the year 1882 under the Act of 1876. In making a comparison it must be borne in mind that when the rent was paid in full at the end of ten years, or previously, under the Act of 1876, the State had realised all that could be realised, unless a land tax was imposed; whereas under the Act of 1884 the land was bringing in a continuous and increasing revenue. They must, therefore, calculate what the land would realise when it was paid for under the Act of 1876, and what the land leased under the Act of 1884 would realise at the end of ten years, and what would be realised by the increased rents of runs at the end of ten years. He had already stated that the maximum result of the transactions of the year 1882 under the Act of 1876 would be £470,000, and now he would show what would be the financial result in ten years from the operation of the Act of 1884. In the first place, those long credit farms, when they were paid for—and he maintained most of them would be made freehold—they knew what a disposition there was among *bonâ fide* farmers to obtain freeholds—those long credit farms were being highly appreciated; and last year the quantity taken up was 167,317 acres, at an average of 22s. 6d., and that would amount to £188,231. The homesteads taken up last year comprised an area of 125,852 acres, at 2s. 6d. When they were paid for in five years the amount would be £15,731, and in another five years it was fair to assume that an equal quantity would be taken up. The rents for grazing farms last year amounted to £7,859, and for the ten years the payments would amount to £78,590. Now there was this element to be taken into account, which was always ignored by hon. gentlemen on the opposite side. The operations of the Act of 1884, from a financial point of view, could not be properly considered without taking into account the fact—that from its operations, and the division of the runs into leased and resumed portions, it had brought in already an increased revenue of £38,000, and the increase last year alone from the increased rents of runs amounted to £15,351. That was a remarkable fact. Taking ten years' payments, that would amount to £153,510. It was a fair thing to look at the whole question, and consider the operation of the Act and its effect from a financial point of view, and not confine their attention to the infinitesimal rents of 1¼ per cent. Farmers were highly appreciating the long credit system, as was proved by the large areas taken up last year, and one of the great objects was to keep the farmers—who were a somewhat impecunious class, although deserving of every consideration at the hands of the House, and a class who would constitute the wealth of the colony—to keep them out of the hands of the money-lenders. That was one of the great principles of the Act of 1884. Those men, if they had to pay for one-tenth of their land in the first year, would be very soon in the hands of the money-lenders, and paying, perhaps, as much as 25 per cent. for their money. He thought they should preserve that part of the Act intact and guard it with zealous care. He had said again and again when the 1884 Act was before the House that that was the most liberal arrangement for supplying the colony with an agricultural class that had ever been conceived. If he understood the clause before them, it was to make the farmers pay up in five years, and that would be a fatal blow to the Act. The fact that so large an area was taken up last year, was attributable to the very fact that it was not until that year that the farmers had any conception that they could get such long credit. They were told again and again, that they could not get their freehold, and they believed it; but the fact was they could get their freehold by paying the infinitesimal amount of 1¼ to 1⅜ per cent., and get it at the end of ten years. He thought he had disproved the assertion that the Act was a failure as to settlement and a failure as to revenue. He had something more to say about revenue, but he would confine his attention to the proposal to compel the farmers to pay for their farms in five years. It was asked, "Why should not the selector have the same privilege as a homesteader?" Well, the homesteader paid a great deal more than the selector. He paid 6d. an acre for his land, and was only allowed to take up a small quantity, and if he liked he could obtain the freehold in five years. The farmers understood the long credit system now, as was proved by the fact that last year they took up 167,317 acres, and the payments on the whole, including grazing farms and increased rents of runs, would amount in ten years to £453,863, as against £470,000 that would be realised by the sale of selections that took place in the year 1882, when such vast quantities of land were sold up North at such a low price. So that really they did not suffer in comparison by taking the best year under the Act of 1876 and the best year under the Act of 1884. Moreover, this had to be taken into account. That 800,000 acres of land taken up in 1882 were alienated and gone for ever. They would never be of any use to the State unless a land tax was instituted; but under the operation of the Act of 1884 last year, 1,390,038 acres were leased at eight times the rents previously paid by the old squatters, with four increases during the period, and the land would, at the end of the time, be paying, some of it 9d. an acre for the last five years of the thirty years' lease, and would not be lost at the end of that time. He deprecated any tampering with that part of the Act. He could point with confidence to the operation of the Act of 1884 since it had become known, in support of his statement, that it was a success as far as settlement was concerned, and that as far as revenue was concerned it would be a success. Five years out of the ten had already expired, and at the end of the ten years, if settlement went on in the same proportion as last year, they would have a revenue very nearly equal to the revenue transactions of the year 1882, to which he had referred. If it were to be compulsory, then some further alteration would be necessary in section 73 of the principal Act, which provided that, if a farmer chose to make his holding a freehold within twelve years, he could have the land at the rate originally fixed in the proclamation. He thought it was to be compulsory, but if it was intended to be optional, he still saw the greatest objection to the latter portion of the clause. He had already explained as well as he could what the value of the ten-years' credit system was to the farmers; but there was another principle in the clause, and that was that every possible impediment should be put in the way of dummying the land. They knew very well that if land could be made a

freehold in five years, arrangements for dummying could easily be entered into, and if a man made arrangements to secure his freehold in ten or twelve years, arrangements for dummying that land would be knocked on the head for ever.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said he would like to ask the hon. member whether he thought land was more easily dummied when it cost £1 an acre than when it cost only 2s. 6d. an acre? The hon. gentleman had given them a long dissertation upon the virtues of the Act of 1884, and he was prepared at present to admit that it was everything the hon. gentleman desired it to be—he was not criticising it now; but what was the reason so much land had been selected within the last two years to which the hon. gentleman referred, and in the direction the hon. gentleman pointed out? It was because the majority of the selectors were able to get their freeholds in five years.

Mr. JORDAN: A much larger proportion selected where they could only get it in ten years.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said the arguments the hon. gentleman had used were actually in favour of the clause as proposed. What did they find? Last year there were 1,246 homestead selectors at 2s. 6d. an acre who would get their freehold in five years, as against only 266 who had to pay £1 an acre for the land, and would get the freehold in ten years.

Mr. JORDAN: I have the figures from the Lands Office, and there were 955 homesteads.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said that in 1887 there were 984 homesteads at 2s. 6d. an acre taken up, and 249 agricultural farms at £1 an acre; and in 1888, as he had said, 1,246 homesteads at 2s. 6d. an acre were taken up, and only 266 agricultural farms at £1 an acre. What was the inference? Why, that it showed the reason for the desire for settlement on small areas was because they could get the deeds in five years. Could any hon. member explain to him why a person who was prepared to pay £1 an acre for his land should not have the same facilities for acquiring his freehold as a man who paid only half-a-crown an acre for it?

Mr. JORDAN: He wants long credit.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said he knew they got credit, and everyone desired to see the homestead selector get his freehold. He said by all means give those who were satisfied with 160 acres the best land they could provide for them; let them reside upon the land and have it at 2s. 6d. an acre, and allow them to get their deeds in five years. But then in the case of those who required a larger area than 160 acres, surely it was enough to penalise them by saying that the minimum price they should pay should be eight times as much as the others! Why penalise them still further, and say that in addition to that very severe penal condition, they should wait for ten years before they could get their freeholds. The ex-Minister for Lands had admitted the anxiety people showed to get a freehold, and he was glad to hear the hon. gentleman admit that. The hon. gentleman must admit that that was entirely opposed to the principle of the Act of 1884, which was to make it as difficult as possible to get a freehold.

Mr. JORDAN: No.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said that Mr. Dutton had been infatuated about leaseholds, and he had actually told them that before long even their town lands would be let upon lease, and the revenue they would draw from them would be so enormous that they would be able to do away with the Customs.

Mr. JORDAN: He did not put that in the Act.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said he had tried to, and the hon. gentleman would admit that leasing as opposed to freehold was the great feature of the Act. The hon. gentleman had gone into a mass of figures to prove what the revenue from the Land Act would probably be in ten or twenty years.

Mr. JORDAN: In ten years.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said the hon. gentleman might just as well have worked out his calculations for the next twenty or thirty years. All those calculations were problematical, and quite beside the question. They knew, for a fact, that all the financial anticipations of the Land Act of 1884 had, up to the present time, failed. He hoped that the sanguine anticipations of the hon. gentleman himself would be realised in the future. But let them, by all means, give reasonable facilities to those who required a larger area than 160 acres. He was not asking by that amendment to reduce the price, though it might be argued, Why should not everyone be allowed to take up land at 2s. 6d. an acre? He admitted the principle that those who were satisfied with small areas of land should be allowed to get them at 2s. 6d. an acre, but he contended that they could not show any just reason why those who required more than 160 acres were not sufficiently penalised by having to pay eight times the price for it, without the additional penalty of having to wait ten years before they could get their freehold.

Mr. JORDAN: They have long credit at $1\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. interest.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said he could not follow the hon. gentleman in his financial calculations. What he knew was that one man got his land for 2s. 6d. an acre, and the other man had to pay £1 an acre for it. The clause was not compulsory, and his contention was, that if any man desired to get his freehold in five years he should be allowed to do it, and if he desired to wait for ten years, or the whole fifty years, he had no objection to his doing so. If a man was anxious to acquire his freehold, he wished to enable him to do so, and he contended that a large number of settlers in the colony really did want to get their title deeds. They would feel more secure if they had them, and would no longer be afraid of the Government assessors coming round to raise the rents upon them. They could carry out their various occupations better if they had their deeds. It was all very well to say that the Committee did not want the selectors to get into the hands of the money-lenders. That was quite true, and if they could possibly keep them out of the hands of financial institutions so much the better. But they all knew that in the ordinary occupations of life it was absolutely necessary, at some time or other, that the selectors should be able to offer some security in the event of their requiring financial assistance to enable them to carry on. He commended the amendments to the notice of the Committee. He believed the leader of the Opposition was right in the amendment he had suggested, as he had no desire that the clause should be compulsory. He might also state that the clause should read that personal residence for five years should entitle the occupant to a freehold, and residence, by two or more consecutive lessees for ten years.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: That is what I said.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said he was obliged to the hon. gentleman for the suggestion.

Mr. PALMER said he had listened attentively to the arguments of the ex-Minister for Lands; but he hoped the amendment would be adhered to. The ex-Minister for Lands had shown them that the easier they made it to acquire freeholds, the greater would be the amount of settlement. Whether the term was five years or ten years, if the farmers wanted the freehold they must have it; and they should do all they could to prevent the farmers falling into the hands of money-lenders. The whole of the hon. member's argument was to show that he preferred the 17th clause of the Act of 1886, which made the terms easier for those who wanted to take up land. It was hard enough for the settler to live five years on the land and fulfil the conditions, but they would be penalising him, as it were, if they compelled him to live another five years upon the land. He hoped the Minister for Lands would adhere to his amendment.

Mr. GROOM said he could not accept the amendment. He had endeavoured to ascertain what the opinions of the selectors were, and he had not found that they were at all dissatisfied with the present arrangement. Quite the contrary. The Minister for Lands said that those who were paying £1 per acre were desirous of obtaining their deeds in five years; but they had had no evidence of it. He had heard no complaints, and no petitions had been presented to Parliament. He had specially made inquiries, and had written letters to other persons asking for information, and there seemed to be perfect unanimity of opinion amongst the selectors, that the present arrangements for selecting land were satisfactory. The Minister for Lands laid great stress upon the fact that there were a number of homestead selectors, and he argued from that, that there was a disposition on the part of selectors to obtain the freehold in five years. But he did not think that was the reason why there were so many homestead selectors. He thought the reason was that the terms upon which land could be taken up were more liberal, and, no doubt, the low price had something to do with it. If they looked at the operation of the Land Act of 1876, they would find that a great increase had taken place in the number of homestead selections taken up, as compared with the conditional purchase selections, and in the case of the Land Act of 1868 they would also find that selectors had preferred the homestead method of selecting land to any other, and, without doubt, that feeling prevailed now. He was very glad to see it, and hoped that homestead selections would continue to work as satisfactorily in the future as in the past. Where agricultural farms of 1,280 acres were taken up, he thought that ten years' terms would be a great advantage. One of the arguments advanced for continuing the present term of thirty years for grazing farms was, that owing to bad seasons it might be impossible for them to make any money unless the tenure was a long one; but did not the same argument apply with the same force to the owner of an agricultural farm? What was the argument of the hon. member for Wide Bay in regard to the petition of the selectors in his district? What was the opinion of the selectors last year? It was that the longer the term of payment for agricultural selectors, whereby the payments would extend over a number of years, the easier would it be for them to obtain their freeholds. If the selectors were compelled to acquire their freeholds in five years, as the Bill would virtually compel them, they would be driven into the hands of money-lenders, and it was no use hon. members saying that would not be the case. He knew the class of people they had to deal with. He had been in communication with them, and knew something about them. They would all read the Bill as they found it, and in order to obtain their freeholds they would put themselves to any amount of inconvenience, and go to the money-lenders to obtain the requisite amount of money. Immediately a selector did that he placed himself in the hands of a mortgagee; he assigned his title deeds at once to the person who advanced him the money, and the chances were 100 to 1 that he would not get out of his hands for some time. That was the position of a great many selectors at present. One gentleman boasted to him that he had his iron safe full of the deeds of those unfortunate selectors to whom he had advanced money, and they were not able to redeem them.

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS: That is the case all over the world.

Mr. GROOM said he hoped it was not. Did the hon. gentleman mean to say that that condition prevailed among the peasant proprietary of France and Germany? Certainly recent inquiries into the condition of those countries did not say so. The peasant proprietary of France and Germany were most prosperous.

The PREMIER: No; not in Germany.

Mr. GROOM said all he could say was that if the Premier was right, all their reading was wrong. It would be a very sorry condition of affairs indeed if those selectors were in such a position that their deeds must all be in the hands of the money-lender. In a great many cases those unfortunate men, in order to complete their payments and secure their titles, had paid as much as 40 and 50 per cent. interest to those usurers, and he had always had great sympathy with the selectors, and would even advocate the establishment of State banks in order to get them out of the hands of the money-lenders. In fact, the selectors were not working for themselves, but simply to pay the interest upon the mortgages. If the term were allowed to remain at ten years the selector would have time to make his payments, and although the bad seasons might affect him as much as they did the grazing farmer with his thirty years, at all events he would have a fair opportunity of realising enough out of his farm to pay the amount necessary to make it a freehold. The ten years' tenure was one of the best provisions in the Act, and he had always maintained that the longer time was afforded selectors in which to obtain their titles, the less facilities were offered for gambling in land. If the term were reduced as was proposed, they would certainly be offering facilities for gambling in land. There was not the slightest doubt about that, and he very much questioned whether *bonâ fide* selectors would have those areas at all. He very much questioned whether it would not tend to lead persons to take up land for their own personal ends, and not for *bonâ fide* settlement. If persons were to be able to acquire freeholds at the end of five years a man might put up a hut on one corner of his land, as they used to do in old times, and sleep in it once a week or once a month, and call it occupation. The Committee had decided a few nights ago that the lease should remain at thirty years, and he hoped a majority of the Committee would decide to allow the term for acquiring the freehold of an agricultural farm to remain as it was at present. At all evnts, he could say from inquiries he had made that there was not the slightest demand for any alteration in that clause, but, on the contrary, the public regarded it as one of the very best provisions in the Act. He was sorry he could not support the Minister for Lands, and he would therefore oppose the proposal most strongly.

Mr. STEVENS said that so far from its being an injury to the farmers it would be of great advantage to them. The clause only made it

optional, and said that the land might be purchased at the end of five years, but a man would still have the right of purchasing at the end of ten years.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said he was glad to hear the Minister for Lands say that he was willing to accept the amendment he had suggested, so that in the case of successive lessees it would require ten years' occupation, otherwise dummying might be the result. He did not like the reduction of the term of occupation at all. He had had a long experience of dummying in the colony, probably as large an experience of attempts to put it down in courts of justice and in the legislature as anyone in the colony; and he affirmed that the Act of 1884 made dummying impracticable, because it made it unprofitable. The only way to put down dummying was to make it unprofitable, and under the Act of 1884 it was not profitable. It was not profitable for a man to put a dummy on land when he had to live there for ten years before the employer could get it. It might be profitable for him to do it for five years, but ten years was too long a time to trust to a man's false sense of honour to break the law. It was a long time to trust a man for five years, but he knew that that had been done in the colony. Some homestead selectors under the old system had acted as dummies for five years, however they had not thought it worth while to abolish the system on account of them; but it had been done. The small homestead selections were not the field for dummying —they were too small. The dummying was done on the big selections. Any hon. member who had taken any part in previous legislation would know how it had been done. He had known of a case where three selections joined together, and one man occupied them all by putting up a building where the three joined, and residing there.

The PREMIER: It was done in New South Wales, where four joined.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said, in the case he had mentioned, the commissioner had given certificates stating that the conditions of residence had been fulfilled on each of the selections. There was no doubt that the Acts passed in 1868 and 1876 required declarations to be made as to residence, but many people regarded those declarations not as oaths, but as statements in which they might violate the truth as long as they were not found out. And this had led to a low moral sense on the subject. That most objectionable feature was done away with by the Act of 1884, and under that Act there had practically been no dummying; but if the term were reduced to five years, it would be much more than twice as easy to dummy than if the period of residence were left at ten years. He did not think that any mathematical calculation would express the ratio, but he thought the chances of dummying with five years' residence were at least fifty times greater than with ten years.

The PREMIER: Try a logarithm.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said the matter was not capable of being calculated mathematically, though he supposed it might come under the heading of probabilities. That was the principal reason he had for objecting to the proposal of the Minister for Lands—in fact, it was his only reason. He believed that it would seriously imperil the usefulness of the Act of 1884. He did not suppose the hon. gentleman wished the five years to count from the date of the approval of the application—that he did not want the five years' residence to be concurrent with the five years in which improvements were to be made?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said that in that case a man could make all his improvements in the last three months, and he would get the land at once. In fact, he could make his grant take the place of his certificate. A man might live for four years and a-half without putting a stick of improvements upon it, and then he could get his grant by making all his improvements in the next six months. The *bonâ fide* selector would make his improvements to suit himself, but if a man took up land for the purpose of selling it again he would not put improvements on it until near the end of the five years; but that surely would not be *bonâ fide* settlement. If the hon. gentleman would make it five years' residence subsequent to getting the certificate of improvements he would give the proposal his support, because then *bonâ fide* settlement would be secured. He regarded the question from the point of view that that part of the Act was intended to promote settlement. If the question was one of promoting the alienation of land, it would be different altogether. The proposal to allow a man to live on the land for five years, in order to get a title immediately, or within six months after the certificate for improvements was issued, simply knocked on the head the necessity for making improvements, and there might be no improvements. As the law previously stood, a man might take five years to make his improvements, but he had to live on the land for ten years before he could get his grant, so that if he did not utilise the land for five years, he had then to live on it for five years after that. He still had to live five years on the land after the improvements were made before he could get his title. The only thing that would have to be done under the clause proposed by the Minister for Lands would be to put a hut on one corner of the land, let the man live there, make no improvements at all until just before the expiration of the five years, and then make his improvements and get his deed at once. That would entirely withdraw from the Act of 1884 a provision which tended to secure *bonâ fide* settlement. It would not discourage settlement of course, but it would encourage people to take up land for other purposes than *bonâ fide* settlement. He did not think the Minister for Lands had considered the amendment from that point of view. If the object of the amendment was to encourage the alienation of land he could understand it; but the object of that part of the Bill was to encourage settlement, and that inducement was entirely withdrawn by the amendment if the five years' residence would count from the date of the approval of the application. If, however, the five years counted from the date of the certificate of improvements, he confessed that his objection would be to a great extent removed.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said that the hon. gentleman did not see that the very arguments he used might also be used against homestead selectors. Did the hon. gentleman think that persons took up land merely for the purpose of selling it again? How was it that the homestead selector did not put up a tent in the way the hon. gentleman had said, and within three months of the end of the five years put a fence round his selection and make his land a freehold in order that he might sell it? Experience had taught the people of the country that land was not so readily saleable. Hon. members must take into consideration the fact that more than half the land selected for many years past had been selected as homestead selections at 2s. 6d. an acre, and that lowered the value of the adjoining lands. If anyone was anxious to sell, it was the homestead selector, who got his land at 2s. 6d. an acre, because he

would get a handsome profit at 15s. an acre, whereas anyone who paid £1 an acre could not afford to sell at such a price. The hon. gentleman stated that his objection would not be so great if the permit to acquire the freehold within five years dated from the certificate of improvements. That would not be a fair condition unless it was made to apply to the homestead selector as well. Why should it apply to one and not to the other? He (the Minister, for Lands) did not think that those compulsory conditions which compelled people to spend money unnecessarily on improvements were at all advantageous to the country. He would much rather see the amount to be expended spread over the five years, or whatever the term might be, than see the selector rushed into unnecessary expenditure simply for the sake of getting his freehold a little earlier. Under the Act of 1876, 10s. an acre, with three years' residence personally or by bailiff, was considered sufficient to qualify anyone to acquire his freehold by paying up for the unexpired term of seven years. Those were easy terms, but he considered that that provision was really injurious to the country as it caused an immense amount of money to be unnecessarily expended on valueless improvements. That provision gave rise to what had been referred to so often as walking fences, and to houses being erected at the intersection of four selections and made to do service for all four. When they passed a clause like that they might expect it to be evaded. He considered that no one would fence his land and reside on it for five years merely for the purpose of selling it; and that any person who resided on his selection for five years and fenced it, or made improvements on it equal in value to the fence, and who was prepared to pay £1 an acre for it at the end of the five years, should be allowed to acquire the freehold if he wished. The clause did not make it compulsory that a man should acquire the freehold. If he was prepared to go on for ten years he could do so; the rent would then be reassessed by the board, and he could go on for another ten years if he chose; but they should give him the option to acquire the freehold when he liked. It was not compulsory, and he believed a provision of that kind would be a benefit to the country.

Mr. SALKELD said he confessed he did not like the amendment proposed in the Bill. If the arguments advanced in favour of giving a man the deeds of his selection at the end of five years were valid, why not give them at the end of one year? Reference had been made to the provision in the Act of 1876 whereby selectors could acquire the freehold of their land at the end of three years by making certain improvements on it and residing thereon personally or by bailiff. He believed that a great quantity of land selected under that Act was not taken up for *bonâ fide* occupation. In a great number of cases the land was dummied, and in many other cases it was taken up for speculative purposes, and much of it was lying idle at the present time. The report of the Sugar Commission showed that mile after mile of land in the Northern districts taken up at 5s. an acre was still unoccupied. What was that land taken up for? For nothing but speculative purposes. He believed the ten years' provision of the Act of 1884 was working well, and had heard no complaint against it from *bonâ fide* settlers. The only persons who objected to it were persons who lived in towns and desired to take up land in areas of 1,280 acres and acquire the freehold for purposes of speculation. The difference between a ten years' and a five years' period was something like the difference in a span of a bridge. With the materials at present available, and in the present state of science, it was impossible to make a span for a bridge beyond a certain distance, but if the span was reduced the bridge could be made quite easy. So in the case of land selection, men would not risk taking up land for ten years merely for speculative purposes; there was too great a risk, and that practically meant the prevention of dummying. The subsection under discussion went as near as possible to the principle of selling the land, and if they went on that principle they should get as much for the land as they could. The proposed amendment would destroy to a very great extent the safeguards against dummying. *Bonâ fide* occupiers did not find fault with the present law, because if they wished they could transfer their holdings to any other persons who were eligible to be selectors under the Act. That proviso would take away all the personal hardship that a selector might have. The Act of 1884 was becoming more popular every year. For the first year or two people did not understand it, but numbers of people who disapproved of it then were beginning to see that it was going to be the best thing for the country. It had caused some inconvenience, but it was laying the foundation for the proper land administration for the future. He hoped the Committee would reject the amending clause.

Mr. PLUNKETT said that his experience on the subject was different from that of the hon. member for Fassifern, and he considered that the amendment introduced by the Minister for Lands was a step in the right direction. On the second reading of the Bill he suggested an amendment for the purpose of giving persons whose avocations kept them in town a chance of obtaining a freehold without enforcing the condition of residence, but he fancied that the present feeling of the Committee was rather against a proposition of that kind. He had carefully watched the operation of all the Land Acts of the colony since 1863, and he was convinced that the Act of 1884, so far from being conducive to settlement, had been a comparative failure. The best Land Act for settling people on the land was that of 1876. The amendment which he had intended to move would be to give men who could not leave their places of business an opportunity to select land and fulfil the residence condition by bailiff for a period of five years. There were men all over the colony—mechanics, artisans, miners, and so on—who could not leave their private business, but who were anxious to obtain the freehold of a piece of land. Under the Act of 1876, persons were allowed to select up to 5,120 acres, and reside on it either personally or by bailiff for three years, but there was no possibility of any amendment to that effect being carried now. His suggestion would be that they should be allowed to select 1,280 acres and reside on it by bailiff for five years. Indeed, there were many men anxious to obtain a freehold who would be only too glad to be allowed to select land and hold it by bailiff for five years, even if they obtained only a maximum of 640 acres. The Act of 1884 had no doubt been a success as far as homesteads were concerned, but as to its liberality with regard to allowing men to select agricultural farms, he failed to see where it came in. No doubt a great deal of land had been taken up in farms of over 160 acres under the Act of 1884, but more *bonâ fide* settlement took place under the Acts of 1868 and 1876 than there would be for the next ten years under the Act of 1884. On the other hand, the Act of 1884 had given with both hands to men of large means. That was not a proper state of things. The restrictions on the obtaining of freeholds should be removed. He was as strongly opposed as anyone in the Committee or outside it, to the aggregation of large estates, but he was strongly of opinion that greater facilities

should be given to men to make a home on the land at the cheapest possible rate. At present the feeling of residents in the country was to leave it and go to Brisbane. That was a very unhappy state of things, and one which might in time become lamentable, but it might be remedied if some such suggestion as he had made, with regard to granting freeholds on five years' residence by bailiff, were introduced and accepted by the Committee.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said if the Minister for Lands was willing to amend the clause in the direction he (Sir S. W. Griffith) had indicated, it would read, "Section seventy-three shall be read and construed as if the words 'for a period of five years' had been inserted before the words 'or of two or more successive lessees.'"

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said the amendment he had prepared, and which he thought would meet the hon. gentleman's views, read "So much of section seventy-three as is contained in the words 'lessee himself or of each of two or more successive lessees for a period of ten years' is hereby repealed, with the view of substituting 'the lessee himself for a period of five years, or of each of two or more successive lessees for the period of ten years.'"

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said that amendment was a great deal longer than the one he had suggested. He moved that the words "so much of," at the beginning of the clause, be omitted.

Amendment agreed to.

On the motion of SIR S. W. GRIFFITH, the subsection was further amended so as to read :—

"Section seventy-three shall be read and construed as if the words 'for the period of five years' had been inserted before the words 'or of each of two or more successive lessees.'"

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said the effect of the subsection, as amended, would be to make the 73rd section of the principal Act read :—

"Whenever in the case of a holding in an agricultural area, the condition of occupation hereinbefore prescribed had been performed by the continuous and *bonâ fide* residence on the holding of the lessee himself for the period of five years, or of each of two or more successive lessees for the period of ten years, next preceding the application hereinbefore mentioned, the lessee may apply to the commissioner"—

and so on. He now proposed to raise the other question, whether the five years was to be subsequent to the date of the improvements. He had already given his reasons on that point. If the five years during which the right to get the freehold might be acquired was to be the same five years as the license to occupy, the condition of settlement would drop out altogether.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER : What about homesteads?

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said that homesteads were exceptional. They were not, except to a very limited extent, used as a means of speculation ; but they were used to a great extent for the purpose of settling the country. It was in connection with the larger areas that it was worth while to speculate ; and the inclination to dummy was not extinct, though the facilities for dummying which formerly existed had been removed. It was said on the other side that the danger of dummying was in connection with the grazing farms, and that there was no danger of dummying the large agricultural farms ; but he thought it was the other way about. He thought the danger of dummying was in connection with lands that could be made freehold. With the view of raising the question, he proposed to add the following words :—"And as if the words 'such period of five years being subsequent to the date of the certificate of fencing or improvement' had been inserted after the words 'hereinafter mentioned.'" Then if a man wanted to get his freehold quickly he must improve his land quickly, and so prove his *bona fides*. He recognised that there was a great deal of force in the arguments of the hon. member for Albert with regard to the *bonâ fide* selector ; but unfortunately they were also obliged to regard the matter from other points of view—they had to take into consideration the speculator and the dummier. He would give the *bonâ fide* selector every facility ; and he did not think that compelling a man to prove his *bonâ fides* by actual occupation five years after the land was in such a condition that it could be beneficially occupied would do him any harm. He need not spend any more in improvements than the cost of the fence, and then after five years he could make his land freehold. According to the proposal as it now stood, the selector need do nothing at all till within the last three months of the term. His land might remain in a state of nature till then, and all he had to do was to run a fence round it and get his deed.

Mr. PLUNKETT: It would not pay the selector to do that.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said the *bonâ fide* selector would not do it ; and the amendment he proposed would not touch him, because he would have brought himself within its provisions. It was the man who did not make the improvements that the amendment would exclude. The *bonâ fide* selector would only be affected to the extent of six months' occupation by the amendment, and the man who was not a *bonâ fide* selector would be excluded from the benefits of the clause ; and that was a fair discrimination to make between the *bonâ fide* and the dishonest selector.

Mr. PLUNKETT said the leader of the Opposition looked upon every man as a dummier who selected a piece of land with the object of making it freehold.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: No. I say that there are such persons as dummiers, and we cannot afford to disregard them.

Mr. PLUNKETT said that as far as East and West Moreton were concerned, he thought the price of selections was too high. He considered that the land available as agricultural farms there in its unimproved state was dear at 10s. per acre, and he thought it would be a wise thing for the Minister to instruct the board to have an inspection made with the view of reducing the price. He wished to know whether the clause would be retrospective if passed.

Mr. ADAMS said that the clause if carried would have the effect of driving selectors to the money market. The *bonâ fide* selector used his capital in improving his land ; and if the clause passed it would induce him to borrow money to carry out his improvements so as to get his title within a certain time. He knew that under the previous Act people were anxious to get their deeds, and borrowed money for the purpose ; and he had been asked to go to the Lands Office and push on the issuing of the deeds so that the selectors might get out of the money-lenders' hands and borrow money from financial institutions at a lower rate of interest. Every facility should be given to the selector to get his titles as early as possible, because many a man had lost his land through having to wait too long for his title.

Mr. STEVENS said the leader of the Opposition had stated that the effect of the further amendment he had proposed would be to cause the *bonâ fide* selector only six months' longer occupation ;

that was taking it for granted that the selector of 1,280 acres would fence his land in at once, but he did not think that was likely. The improvements were generally done gradually, and in all probability the fencing would not be complete until nearly the end of the five years. The amendment might improve the position of the selector by one year, but not more.

Mr. O'CONNELL said the amendment would help the dummy. A dummier was a man with capital at his back, and it would be no trouble for him to put on his improvements. The *bonâ fide* selector was a poor man, and could only put on his improvements when he had the means to do so. The amendment would really help the dummier to get his land.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said that that argument cut the other way. The man who paid £1 an acre in five years must have some one at his back. The poor man would not be able to do that. It was only the man with money who would be able to take advantage of the provisions of the amendment.

Mr. TOZER said he had consulted many agriculturists in his district as to the change from ten to five years, and he had not heard one express himself in favour of the shorter term. He had voted with the Government on the other clauses, but in that instance he could not do so. He had endeavoured to find out as far as he could whether the farmers had any objection to the period of ten years imposed upon them, and they had not; but what they did object to was that all the good land was culled, and the price put upon it was too high. There was no doubt it was absurd to class all land in the colony, such as the plains around Ipswich and the land on the fringe of the Mary River, at £1 an acre all round. There was some good land for a quarter of a mile back and that was all. The farmers in his district had no objection whatever to the ten years' term. It was only a sentimental objection. The hon. member for Bundaberg talked about getting a freehold and borrowing money, but why did he not sympathise with those living on the goldfields. He (Mr. Tozer) had had a tenure of his home where he was living for the last twenty-one years. He was not calling out for a freehold.

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS: Yes you are, and were.

Mr. TOZER said he begged to inform the Minister for Mines and Works that he was not.

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS: You worked as hard as you could to get a freehold.

Mr. TOZER said that about thirteen or fourteen years ago the public made a complaint that he had a large area of land, and he did not choose to surrender it unless he got some consideration for it. He then said that if the Government called upon him to give up his property, they must give him something in return. But since that time he and others had come to the conclusion that the title they had got was quite as good as a freehold. He would guarantee that the Minister had received no applications whatever for goldfield homesteads to be converted into freeholds.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Plenty!

Mr. TOZER said they had got an indefeasible lease, and had accepted it under certain conditions. They paid a considerable amount per year, and were able to get advances on their property sufficient to carry them on. The hon. member for Bundaberg said the amendment would enable persons to get out of the hands of one class of money-lenders and get into the hands of another, but he knew of no instance in which persons in his district complained that they had any difficulty in getting reasonable advances made upon the security of their property. It seemed to him that the Act was working extremely well. It was a dangerous innovation to go back to the old five years' system. They knew the effect of it under the 1876 Act. It could be seen by visiting some of the Northern rivers. They could go there and find nearly half that portion of the colony vacant, dummied up to the eyes, and anyone who went through the list of persons holding freeholds, could see at once that the lands were not being used for legitimate purposes; no one could say that they were being occupied according to the intentions of the framers of the Acts of 1868 and 1876. They had been taken up by dummies, and, in many instances, by travelling fencers. He knew of no portion of Queensland where the land had been more dummied and less utilised than on the Northern rivers.

Mr. COWLEY: What rivers?

Mr. TOZER said he spoke of the Johnstone River, for one. There was magnificent land there applied to no use, but it was taken up for purely speculative purposes. As little as possible had been spent upon it, and where were the improvements which it was supposed would be put upon those lands? It was known to every thinking man that those lands were not utilised for the proper purpose. The quantity of agricultural land in the colony was limited; the eyes of the country had been picked out, and the amendment now proposed would have the same effect as the Act of 1876. How many acres of land were there in the name of five persons in this colony? He had found 400,000 acres in the name of one firm, which had been taken up under the Acts of 1868 and 1876. The whole policy of land legislation throughout the world was, at present, to prevent the accumulation of large estates. It was so in Germany, in France, and it was coming to that in England and Ireland. The stand he took was that there was no need whatever to allow the present system, unless the Treasurer came forward and said that proposal was absolutely necessary in the interests of the country for revenue purposes. He had heard nothing of that, but what they did hear was that the proposal was in the interests of the poor selectors. As he had said, the selectors in his district were satisfied to wait for the ten years, and he trusted the Government would not press upon the Committee any alteration of the Act of 1876 in that respect.

Mr. ADAMS said he had listened attentively to the hon. member for Wide Bay, and had heard him tell them that he had a tenure which he considered equal to a freehold. The hon. member scouted the idea of people looking for a freehold. But he (Mr. Adams) considered that each and everyone would like to get a freehold, and they did not care about being tenants, even of the Crown. They knew that the tenants in Ireland at the present day had what was called "the plan of campaign," and they only paid half their rent. If they were tenants of the Crown here it would be no use bringing forward "the plan of campaign," as the Crown would exact the rent to the last penny. He could speak with as much confidence about selectors as the hon. member, as he had been a selector for many years. He said, as he had said many times before in that House and out of it, that the selector that went in for making his improvements at the outset always failed. The man who did not fail was the selector who expended his money in such a way as to get some immediate return from his land, and made his improvements gradually as he went on. If a man spent all his money in

improvements at first it would be impossible for him then to cultivate his land to advantage. He maintained there were many who, when the time came near when they would get their freehold, borrowed money at very heavy interest, so that when they got their deeds they could release themselves from the money-lenders by borrowing upon their deeds to much greater advantage, and they wished to get their deeds to be able to do that as soon as possible.

Mr. COWLEY said he had been very much amused with the remarks that fell from the hon. member for Wide Bay. In one breath the hon. member told them that there was no agricultural land in the Maryborough district, and in the next he said the agricultural selectors there were perfectly satisfied with the ten years' system. What did it matter to them whether it was ten years or thirty years when they were not intending selectors? What was the use of the hon. member telling the Committee that the people he represented were satisfied with the system, when at the same time he told them there was no agricultural land in the district? Then the hon. gentleman went on to tell them about dummying on the Johnstone River. He could tell the Committee, and he said it unhesitatingly, that he was prepared to take the land acre for acre, and pound for pound, and prove that far more money had been spent per acre on those Northern lands than on the agricultural lands of the South. He could say more, that if the labour had been supplied to the landowners of the North which they were led to expect they would get, the capital expended on those lands would at the present time be double or treble what it was. They took up the land believing that that labour would be obtainable, and as they had not been able to obtain it, they were unable to put their properties to the use they intended at first. He had been consulted professionally by several large landowners in the North, who asked him to go on to their lands and inspect them, and recommend to them the best means of utilising them, and his recommendation had been that it was impossible for them to do any good with their lands at the present time, simply because there was more land under cultivation than there was labour obtainable to work it thoroughly, and he recommended them to leave the land alone. Brisbane men who had taken up land there had asked his advice professionally as to what they should do, and he had conscientiously advised them that they would be only throwing money away to try to cultivate those lands with the labour available at the present time. That was the reason the land was idle, and not because the owners had dummied it in any way. They fully intended, when taking up the land, to work it to the best advantage, but it was utterly impossible for them to do that under existing conditions.

Mr. TOZER said he would answer the hon. member for Herbert by referring him to a statement of figures given in one of the Sugar Commissioners' reports as to the area of land in the North that was not utilised, and that statement would show that what he (Mr. Tozer) had said was true as to the enormous areas of land that was not utilised at the present time. He found according to that statement that—

"In the Port Douglas district there are 56,384 acres of land selected, but there are only 3,000 acres under cultivation. On the Daintree River, for twenty-three miles on either side, the land has all been selected, but it remains unoccupied, and there are only four resident homestead selectors in the whole of that distance. In the Cairns district there are 80,000 acres selected, and the total area of land under cultivation does not amount to more than 5,500 acres, and it is estimated that there are not more than 3,000 acres in the whole district outside of sugar under cultivation. In the Ingham district, which includes the Herbert River, there are 202,161 acres selected, of which area 5,933 acres are under cane, and only 400 acres under cultivation other than by cane. It is estimated that in this district there are at least 120,000 acres made freehold, and these freeholds are practically unoccupied. In the Townsville district, which includes the Burdekin Delta, there are 272,064 acres selected; the area of land under cultivation by sugar is 2,240 acres; under cultivation otherwise than by sugar, 450 acres. In the Mackay district there are 420,520 acres selected, of which 24,302 acres are under cultivation. 17,422 being under sugar-cane, and the balance under cultivation other than by cane. It is estimated that in the Mackay district there are 140,000 acres made freehold, and not now occupied. Most of these lands have been selected on the various streams of the Northern districts. On the Herbert River it is estimated that from Ingham to a distance of thirty miles west of the town, the whole of the land has been selected on either side of the river. On the Mossman, the Mowbray, the Russell, the Mulgrave, and the Tully, the same thing has occurred, and it was the opinion of witnesses that the taking up of these large areas with water frontages had rendered a large extent of back country comparatively useless, and retarded settlement in the North very materially."

Those facts had been brought under their notice by the chairman of the Commission. From those facts, and from the doomsday book, his statement as to the enormous area of land that at the present time was not used according to the intentions of the framers of the Acts of 1868 and 1876, under which it was taken up, was more than borne out. The hon. member said that acre for acre, more money had been spent in the North than in the South. But taking the district around West Moreton, could anyone say that land in West Moreton was not used in a better manner for the purposes of *bonâ fide* settlement than the lands on those rivers in the North? Was it not idle to make that remark, on the part of the hon. member. One square mile in the district he represented had had more money spent in improving it than the whole of the North. In the North an enormous amount of money had been spent upon some plantations, but that did not do away with the argument that for all those persons who had done honestly what the Act contemplated, how many were there who had not done so? And they were trying to legislate to prevent the continuance of the state of affairs that was shown in the report he had quoted. Not only was the land taken away from the purposes of *bonâ fide* settlement, but he most strongly objected to see land dummied, because that land contained minerals which were taken away from those engaged in mining. It was for that reason he rose to protest as strongly as he could against the alienation of land in that way.

Mr. PHILP said the hon. member for Wide Bay had spoken about land being locked up in the North, and not put to the use it was intended for. At present there were about 10,000,000 acres of land alienated, and out of that there was 200,000 under cultivation. The evidence of Mr. Knox, the manager of the Colonial Sugar Company's plantations, said that the whole of the land held by that company was 38,000 acres, and 6,800 acres, or more than 20 per cent., of that was under cultivation. The present was not the first time that it had been said such a quantity of land had been alienated on the Johnstone River. He could assure hon. members that the Northern people would be very glad if the whole of the lands on the Northern rivers were occupied as the Johnstone River was occupied. The hon. gentleman pointed to the Daintree and the Mossman Rivers; but the lands there were mostly taken up by poor people in small selections, and they had abandoned them because they could not not make them pay. On the Johnstone River a powerful and rich company had taken up the land, and were carrying the whole district with it, and crushing cane for other people. If the lands on the Daintree and Mossman Rivers had been selected by that

company they would have been prosperous instead of lying idle as they were at present. He knew another river in the colony where the land was taken up, the Ross River. That land was taken up under the coffee and sugar regulations at £5 per acre, and had been sold at £12 per acre, and since then some of it had realised £1,000 per acre, while the people who had made those large profits had not spent 1s. upon the land. The people on the Johnstone River knew they could not get as much by 50 per cent. as they gave for it, and they would give the land back for less than they paid to the Government for it. That was the case with nearly all the land on the Northern rivers. The selectors could not get labour to cultivate the land; but, nevertheless, far more land had been cultivated in the North than in the South. That same parrot-cry had been often repeated.

Mr. TOZER: How many white people are there on those lands?

Mr. PHILP said the Colonial Sugar Company employed 342 Europeans on their three plantations. He was in the North before an acre of that land on the Johnstone River had been taken up, and was at one time employed in getting cedar. When that company took up the land referred to, they not only spent 10s. per acre in improvements, but they spent £2 and £3 to fulfil the conditions. But there was some land which was selected by gentlemen living in Brisbane who had not spent 1s. upon it, and in some cases they had forfeited it. The former had given employment to large numbers of Europeans, not only upon the plantations, but up and down the coast, and it was not right for the hon. member for Wide Bay to say that that land was dummied.

Mr. JORDAN said he did not contend that the sinners in the South were greater than the sinners in the North. They knew that out of the 9,500,000 acres that had been alienated there were something like 8,000,000 acres that had been taken up by large capitalists and in point of fact locked up from settlement by a large population. They would see that under the Act of 1868 Crown lessees were permitted to buy 10,000 acres upon their own runs, and he was quite sure that 8,000,000 of acres were now in the hands of large capitalists, and were locked up. He could point to one piece of land between two towns on the Downs, where something like 500 square miles was in the possession of large capitalists, and simply fenced in. There were 320,000 acres of the richest land in the colony, nearly all of it suitable for agriculture, and that would cut up into 6,400 farms. That would mean 6,400 families, and taking the average of each family at five, it would mean a population of 30,000 people. Those people would contribute in Customs duties something like £100,000 a year, and that was an illustration of the way in which that miserable system of alienating land in the North and in the South had operated to the disadvantage of the colony. Grazing farms under the Act of 1884 paid eight times the rent, and were subject to four increases; but under the old Acts large areas were locked up waiting twenty years for an increase in the value of the land. That was the way in which land was locked up, and settlement kept out. If under the Act of 1876 a large quantity of land had been dummied, how much more was dummied under the Act of 1868? There was ten times as much. 2,666,000 acres had been alienated at 5s. per acre with ten years to pay it in. That was locking up land and preventing settlement, if anything was.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said that the only controversial clauses were that and another, and he thought they should now adjourn, as the discussion did not show any signs of being finished that night. He hoped they were not going to get into the fashion of sitting late every night, because they could not stand it.

The PREMIER said he quite agreed with what had fallen from the leader of the Opposition. He thought the question had been thoroughly discussed.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: I did not say that.

The PREMIER said that they might now come to a division. He was no more desirous of sitting late, as he had a great deal of work to do, than was the hon. gentleman. The question had been discussed over and over again.

Mr. SALKELD said that he wished to make a remark in reply to the hon. member for Townsville with regard to the quantity of land cultivated in the North as against the South. A large area of the land taken up in the South of the colony was not agricultural land at all, but was taken up for grazing, and was being used for that purpose. That was the great difference. Of the agricultural land taken up, a far larger proportion was being cultivated in the South than in the North.

Mr. PHILP: You are quite wrong.

Mr. SALKELD said if they took the scrub lands in West Moreton and in the Wide Bay districts, there was a far larger proportion under cultivation than in the scrub lands taken up in the North.

Mr. ISAMBERT said the question had not been fully discussed. There was something more behind it than the hon. members on the other side chose to disclose. As the hon. member for Bundaberg had said, they were anxious to let people acquire their freeholds. But if they got those freeholds they would have to borrow money, on which they would have to pay 10 per cent., and in many instances more than that. On the other hand, by paying their annual rent and at the same time the purchase money, they had only to pay 1¼ per cent. *Bonâ fide* settlers did not require a bit of parchment, as they thought it was far better to pay 1¼ per cent. to the Government than to pay 10 per cent to a money-lender. The clause was to benefit a few speculators, for whom the Land Act of 1884 was to be ruined in one of its finest features, and he objected to that. There was no force in the argument of the hon. member for Townsville, who had stated that there was more money spent in the North on their lands than in the South; and he had given as instances some of the sugar companies. Who had said anything about them? What they had complained of was of those who had done nothing with the land. Even the majority report of the Sugar Commission pointed out that in the North the land near the rivers, which was easy of approach, was all selected but not used, and the selectors who wanted land now had to go back into the mountains where there were no approaches. He thought the debate ought to be adjourned.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said that clause proposed to make a radical change in the Land Act of 1884, and, with the exception of the auction clause, it was the only clause about which there would be any controversy. It had only been discussed for two hours and a-half, and it was not unreasonable to ask that the Committee should adjourn. Of course Ministers could do as they pleased, but the request was a most reasonable one. He had been much surprised to find that hon. members were so silent on that subject, knowing, as they all did, its importance, but now Ministers said there should be no more discussion.

The PREMIER said that the hon. gentleman had forgotten that the Minister for Lands had accepted a material alteration at the suggestion of the leader of the Opposition, and most hon. members had thought that would settle the question; but what did the hon. gentleman then do?

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: I expressly stated that I opposed it altogether.

The PREMIER said that the hon. gentleman then tacked on an additional amendment of his own.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: I said I was going to do so, but I said at the first that I was opposed to the whole scheme.

The PREMIER said that almost every hon. member of the Committee had expressed his opinion with regard to the clause, and the question had been fully discussed. Would there be any alteration of opinion by waiting till to-morrow? Would any hon. member contend that any hon. member would change his opinions by waiting? The leader of the Opposition knew that what he was stating was a fact when he said that talking would not in any way alter a single vote that might be given.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: That means that the vote is to be a party one. The discussion will be perfectly useless if that is what your proposition means.

The PREMIER said that his proposition meant that no matter what might be said, there would be no alteration in the mind of any hon. member, as they had all quite made up their minds on both sides how they were going to vote. Except from what hon. members had said during the debate, he did not know how individual members would vote; but he knew how he and his colleagues were going to vote, and he could not see the use of postponing the discussion upon that question. They could just as well dispose of it that night as next day, and it must be borne in mind that the next afternoon was devoted to private business, which meant so much less time for the Government to do their business, and therefore they must, as far as they could, go on with the business in hand, even if they had to sit a little late at night.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: The same argument is used every night.

The PREMIER said they had sat for several days over that Bill, and they had only got through a portion of clause 3. It was now only ten minutes to 11 o'clock. They had sat later than that in former sessions, and as the present session could not last very many weeks longer, and the Government were very desirous to get on with that very important measure, they must proceed with the business. Surely the Committee could come to a decision on that question that evening; waiting till to-morrow would not make any difference in any individual vote. Let them divide now, or if hon. members wished to express their opinions, let them do so and get on with the business.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said the clause under discussion was the most important clause in the whole Bill except the auction clause. It proposed to introduce a radical change into their land system, and as it was very late it was not unreasonable to ask that its consideration should be postponed. If hon. members were to sit five nights a week they should come to some understanding as to how late they were to sit. Their physical endurance would not stand sitting late five nights a week. He could not do it, and if it had to be done they would have to take turns and come occasionally to see that matters were properly discussed, and that would not conduce to the progress of business.

Mr. TOZER said he was in a difficulty as to who were the political mentors of the Committee. He took up *Hansard* that morning and read very carefully a speech made by the Minister for Mines and Works on the previous evening, and the hon. gentleman set him an example as to the course which might be adopted by hon. members in committee. As a young member, he (Mr. Tozer) always liked to follow a good example. The hon. gentleman told the Committee what was the proper course for a member to pursue when he did not thoroughly approve of a measure, and desired to have his opinions ventilated; and in doing so he spoke of a matter which was of trifling importance compared with the one now before the Committee. The question the hon. gentleman then referred to was the Cairns railway, whereas the matter now to be decided would affect the future interests of the whole colony. The hon. gentleman said:—

> "There was no doubt that the members of the district had asked for the plans to be produced; but if the hon. gentleman would refer to *Hansard* he would find that the only thing which had prevented him (the Minister for Mines and Works) from stonewalling that line from Herberton to the coast was because he would have been misunderstood."

He (Mr. Tozer) did not come to the House for the purpose of stonewalling, but that was the example the Minister for Mines and Works set them. He thought the proper course for members of that Committee to pursue when a matter had been properly ventilated was to yield submissively to the decision of the majority, and that was the course he intended to adopt. There should be some discussion on so important a matter as the one under consideration, with the view of showing the country what the real merits of it were, and they should not let the majority prevent the members who were in a minority from discussing it by saying, in effect, "We are the majority; we won't discuss this matter, and you must not; you must sit down like dumb dogs." The proposal under discussion was the thin end of the wedge to repeal the whole substance of the Land Act of 1884. The question of reducing the term from ten years to five was only the beginning of what they knew was intended by hon. members on the Government side when the people would allow them. Hon. members on the other side might say, "We are in a majority;" but there was a power above them, the power which had sent them there; and there was no fear of the people of the country ever repealing land laws which they knew were in their favour. The people knew full well that that Chamber as at present constituted did not represent the views of the country on the land question; and though the Opposition were in a minority, they were justified to a limited extent in having their views placed plainly before the country; otherwise it would be said, on some future occasion, that they coincided with the proposals of the Government, or that they offered but a feeble show of resistance. During the last few months it had been said all over the colony that they were the happiest family in the land, and that the Opposition might as well not be there, because, instead of ventilating matters, they simply let the Government do as they pleased. He only rose to point out that the Minister for Mines and Works was educating the young members on that side in a system of which he (Mr. Tozer) did not approve. The hon. gentleman said that the only thing that prevented him from stonewalling the Cairns railway, was the fact that he would have been misunderstood. He (Mr. Tozer) did not wish to do anything that would partake of that character. So far as regarded the discussion on the Land Bill, there was no doubt that the Government could cast no

stone at anybody who had opposed it, because the matter was so controversial that the two previous subsections had been negatived by a majority of the Committee. The result, therefore, had shown that their discussion of the measure was justified. And as far as the clause now under consideration was concerned, he took it that it was the most vital clause in the Bill. They commenced the discussion on the principle of the clause two hours ago. So far as he was concerned, he had enunciated his views on the matter, which was the vital principle of the Bill. It was possible that hon. members on the Government side would not be allowed that discretion which they were allowed on the minor clauses, but that at the request of their leader they would respond to the party drum. Knowing that, were they to sit silently and submissively and say, "Gentlemen, do as you please?" The weight of numbers in the Committee was against them, but so far as numbers in the colony were concerned, the Opposition represented as many as the party sitting on the Treasury benches. Outside, they had a power at their back which demanded that they should, in respect of that particular matter, speak their views; and they were doing so, by deprecating any change in the Land Act which would do away with the ten years' system.

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS said the hon. member had read the Committee a lecture on stonewalling. Did he know what stonewalling was?

Mr. TOZER: I do not.

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS said the hon. member had been doing it. Stonewalling was taking advantage of the forms of the House to impede the business that was going on; and the hon. member had been doing that for a very long time that evening. As to the Cairns railway, it would have been a blessing to the country if he had stonewalled it, but he bowed to the will of the majority in a matter in which he did not believe. How did they stand now? He agreed with the leader of the Opposition, that that kind of thing could not go on. It was no use coming there merely to talk. Hon. members getting up and making three or four speeches on the same subject, repeating themselves, was not discussion. Had any hon. member, for the last hour and a-half, thrown any fresh light on the proposal of the leader of the Opposition? Not one. If they were to conduct the business of the House properly, some agreement must be come to. Let them look at what was on the paper now, and what was to come on yet. There were the Goldfields Act Amendment Bill to be considered in committee, the Lien Bill to be considered in committee, and two other Bills of more or less importance, the Prisons Bill, and the Married Women's Property Bill. There were two other Bills which he knew had yet to be brought on, one of which—the Decentralisation Bill—would take some discussion; and he had a Bill ready in reference to bridges over the Mary and the Burnett Rivers. There was also a Bill dealing with the Northern Supreme Court, and there were the Estimates, as yet untouched. If they were prepared to sit there during five days a week until Christmas, the present kind of thing might go on; but as they were not, it was time the leader of the Opposition came to some agreement with his party to do a certain amount of talking and no more, and then get on to business.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said he had always endeavoured to facilitate the business of the House, and it was with that view that he had asked the Government to consent to an adjournment half an hour ago. The members of the Government had been long enough in the House to know that even if they succeeded in forcing the question to a division that evening it would not aid the progress of the Bill. He had made what he considered a very fair proposal, not with the slightest desire to retard progress, but because he wanted the matter to be discussed and decided on its merits, and he was prepared to bow to the decision of the majority after fair discussion. He did not know what influence the discussion would have on hon. members opposite, but they were sent there to perform an important duty, and the Opposition considered it their duty to educate public opinion on the matter before the Committee. He was not prepared to take part in an all-night sitting, nor would he do it. He had made what he considered a fair proposal, that the Committee should adjourn so that the question might be thoroughly discussed. He did not know how much longer the discussion would take, but there would certainly be two divisions. He would say again that he desired to facilitate the progress of business, and he hoped the Government would accept that assurance.

The PREMIER said the hon. gentleman seemed to forget that the debate was brought about by an addition of surprise, moved by himself to an amendment moved by the Minister for Lands. The amendment of the Minister for Lands was accepted in principle by the hon. gentleman, who stated that the amendment he had to move was on the same lines, but was shorter and therefore better. The subject had been discussed for nearly three hours. To-morrow no Government business could be taken until after tea; Friday was private members' day; and on Monday, at the request of the leader of the Opposition, no contentious matter was to be taken. When was the Bill to come on again? It could not certainly come on again before Tuesday.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: We can certainly get through this clause to-morrow night.

The PREMIER: Why not get on with the discussion now? What pledge had they that the clause would be finished to-morrow night? What new light could be brought to bear upon it by hon. gentlemen opposite? If there was any fresh information to be given on the subject, those hon. members could give it that night as well as to-morrow night.

Mr. JORDAN: It's too late.

The PREMIER said the hon. gentleman who said it was too late had already spoken three times on the subject; he did not know whether he had got any fresh information in the meantime to give to the Committee. At any rate, they hoped the hon. gentleman had said all he had to say on the matter. Would the hon. the leader of the Opposition promise, on the part of his side of the Committee, that the whole clause—of course it might be altered—would be passed to-morrow night?

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said as far as the leader of a party was justified in making a pledge of that kind, he was prepared to do so. He would just like to say one word in explanation. The hon. gentleman had evidently misunderstood the amendment he had moved. When he first spoke on the clause he said there was an objection to it in the form in which it was presented, and which he thought was unintentional, and he suggested that it should be submitted for fair discussion in the form which it had now assumed. He also said that he objected to the clause altogether, but that his objection would be modified if

the amendment now under consideration was accepted. He had pointed out that it would be better to deal with the questions in that way, taking them one by one, and he had done so entirely for the purpose of facilitating business.

The PREMIER said he accepted the hon. gentleman's assurance without reserve, and he was perfectly certain that his followers would do what he had stated. If there was any obstruction on the Government side of the House, it would not be the fault of the Ministry.

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

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I move that this House do now adjourn. The first Government business to be taken to-morrow will be the further consideration of the Land Bill in committee.

Question put and passed.

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