

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 21 JULY 1891

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, 21 July, 1891.

Crown Lands Bill—second reading—Resumption of Debate.—Grammar Schools Act Amendment Bill—second reading.—Post and Telegraph Bill—second reading.—Adjournment.

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

CROWN LANDS BILL.

SECOND READING—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

On the Order of the Day being called for the resumption of the debate on the Secretary for Lands' motion, "That the Bill be now read a second time,"

Mr. PAUL said: Mr. Speaker,—

The SPEAKER said: The hon. member forfeited his right to speak on the occasion when he moved the adjournment of the debate, and can only speak now with the consent of the House.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. PAUL said: Mr. Speaker,—I shall not detain the House for long, as I intend that what practical knowledge I have on the subject shall be brought to bear when the Bill is in committee; therefore I shall simply speak generally on the matter. The 1st clause in the Bill meets with my entire approbation. It provides:—

"This Act may be cited as the Crown Lands Act of 1891, and shall be read and construed with and as an amendment of the Crown Lands Acts, 1884 to 1889, and those Acts and this Act may together be cited as the Crown Lands Acts, 1884 to 1891."

I have to congratulate the Ministry, and especially the Secretary for Lands, for having attempted simply to amend the Act. Unfortunately the Act of 1884 was an entirely new principle as compared with the previous Acts of 1869 and 1876. It was not, as it should have been, an amendment of those Land Acts which had preceded it; and I feel perfectly certain that everyone who has any practical knowledge of the Acts of 1869 and 1876 will admit that there were no two Acts in any of the colonies so good as those. That there were defects in them we know. If the Ministry at that time had simply amended the then existing Act by making provision for the appointment of a Land Board to administer the law, and giving the Board power to increase the rents of squattages within railway communication, so that the squatters should bear their fair share of the interest on the cost of constructing the railways by which they benefited, and by introducing a further provision allowing compensation for improvements in lieu of pre-emptive rights, they would have done sufficient. But unfortunately they had different ideas on the subject, and the effect of the Land Act of 1884 was to throw out of employment almost the greater part of the working men in the Western districts, because there was no provision whatever made for compensation for improvements, and the squatters did not know what portion of their runs would be resumed until the amending Act of 1886 gave them permission to erect improvements on the resumed areas, subject to the approval of the Land Board. But, as I have said, the Act of 1884 had the effect of throwing hundreds, and I may say thousands, of men out of employment, and that was the commencement of the trouble that the colony has since passed through. It created a great amount of dissatisfaction, and we all know that when men are idle they commit crime. Idleness is the parent of crime, and that is the reason there has been such an immense amount of crime in the Western districts. However, this Bill will, I believe, give a chance to men working as shearers, bushmen, fencers, carriers, or railway lengthsmen to secure land where their families can settle and make a home, and which will enable them to supplement their income by developing the resources of the soil. If there had been this chance before in the Western districts of men settling on the land we should not have had idle men who have no stake in the colony roving about and causing trouble. But when men have no employment they often resort to improper means for earning a living. I feel very pleased indeed that this amending Bill has been introduced, and I am perfectly certain it will have a beneficial effect. We know that on the Darling Downs and in New South Wales there are a number of selectors who with their families reside on the land which they have taken up, and at shearing time the men go out, not as rovers over the land, but simply to shear in the district in which they have settled, by which means they supplement their income and are enabled to improve their selections. I am convinced that directly we have such a class of men—I do not care whether they are what are called workers or small capitalists—settled on the land, we shall have a respectable community who have a personal stake in the welfare of the country, and who, in times of trouble, will stand by the Government and maintain at least the form of government. I believe that the reason Great Britain has been so free from insurrection and violence such as have been experienced by other nations of Europe is that everybody is interested in the great national debt of Great Britain. That is the reason that trebleous times did not come upon Great Britain as they did upon other nations on the continent of Europe. England
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went through the crisis of 1848, which I recollect, because the majority of the people had a personal interest in the welfare of the country. I have to congratulate the Secretary for Lands upon the practical way in which he has afforded assistance to intending selectors by publishing maps and descriptions of the country available for selection in the different districts of the colony, showing clearly where land can be taken up, and under what price and conditions. Such action reflects great credit on the hon. gentleman. When I travelled along the Gympie line on Saturday I saw at every railway station maps put up, giving the information I have mentioned. That is what has always been wanted; ever since I have been in the country, nobody knew where they could get land. I remember when I had to go out West in consequence of the marsupial plague in the Leichhardt district, which compelled me to abandon my run there, consisting of three or four blocks, and to travel two-thirds of the sheep out West for the purpose of taking up country, I could get no information as to where there was any country vacant. There I was with 12,000 sheep, and I was not a sufficiently good bushman at that time to know of my personal knowledge where I could get land. I applied to the land commissioner at Blackall and the land commissioner at Aramac, but they could give me no information whatever, though I afterwards learned that there were thousands of square miles that I could have selected in different districts. But there was no information obtainable from the officials in the district, and I could not at that time wire down to Brisbane. I think, therefore, that the action of the Secretary for Lands in this particular is practical, and will be productive of very great good. As I stated at the commencement of my remarks, I am not going to detain the House with a long speech. I simply wish to express my approval of the Bill. When it goes into committee I shall be glad to do what little I can, with my practical knowledge of bush life, to assist the Government to frame a good measure.

Mr. SMITH said: Mr. Speaker,—I shall not trespass long on the time of the House, but I desire to make a few remarks on the Bill before the debate closes. I have noticed that every amendment of the Land Act of 1884 that has been brought forward has been received with considerable satisfaction by members of the House. Some think that the Loan Act of 1884 and the Land Act of the same year have a great deal to do with the present depressed financial condition of the colony. There is no doubt the Land Act of 1884 was the complement of the Loan Act of that year, as it was said that unless it was passed, the Government would not go in for the £10,000,000 loan. There is, however, another reason why the colony is in straits at the present time. I attribute a great deal of the present distress to the non-success, or partial collapse, of the sugar industry. Some persons hold that the Land Act of 1884 was not such a bad Act.

Mr. GLASSEY: We have the land.

Mr. SMITH: The hon. gentleman says we still have the land, but I do not think that is the whole object of our land legislation. The object of our land legislation, I hold, should be to settle people upon our lands in order that they may be turned to profitable account. What is the use of the land to us if it is not settled upon and giving some return to the State? I think that if the Government cannot devise some further means for developing the land and making it profitable to the State, we should have a committee of inquiry appointed—another Royal Commission—to find out the best means of gaining that object. The Chief Secretary has said we cannot compel

people to remain upon the land, and there can be no doubt that our object should be not only to settle people upon the lands, but to get them to remain upon them, and develop them after they have once taken them up. Though you can take a horse to the water, it is impossible, as the hon. gentleman said, to make him drink; but we may often be able to induce people to settle upon the land, though we cannot compel them to do so; and I believe it is our duty to hold out such inducements as will settle a thrifty population upon the public estate. It has been remarked by the hon. member for Toowoomba, that in proportion to our population we have a very small area of land under cultivation in the colony as compared with the other colonies. If we deduct the area of land at present under cultivation in the sugar-growing districts from the total area under cultivation in the colony, it will be found that the area of land at present utilised in Queensland for purposes other than sugar culture is very small indeed. If the present Bill will induce people to take up land and put it to a profitable use it will be of very great benefit to the colony, and I may say I think the Bill tends in that direction. During the year 1890 there was paid the sum of £38,303 in duty alone upon articles of produce imported into this colony which could have been produced within the colony itself; and the amount we spent as a community in the purchase of produce imported into the colony, which we could have grown ourselves, was equal to half a million of money; and if we include flour as a product we can grow ourselves, the amount of money we actually sent out of the colony for the purchase of products we might have grown ourselves, was over a million of money. That is a very humiliating statement to have to make, inasmuch as it shows that our legislation hitherto, in so far as the settlement of people upon the land is concerned, has not been a success. It must be patent to all that the Agricultural Department is one of the most important and useful departments we have in the colony, and I think we must look to the future development of that department to find the means whereby we can turn the lands of the colony, and especially the agricultural lands, to profitable account. The late Secretary for Lands deserves every credit for the manner in which he endeavoured to educate the people by providing them with a professor of agriculture, with the travelling dairies, a specialist in tobacco manufacture, and in many other ways, as he has thus enabled the people to gain knowledge which will be useful and profitable to them in their operations for the development of the resources of the land. I think the present Secretary for Lands also deserves credit for having gone further in the footsteps of his predecessor in that direction; but if the Agricultural Department would devote its attention more particularly to the movement which seems to gain favour very much in the colony at the present time—that is, the establishment of village settlements in favourable localities—it would be of great advantage to the colony, and it would really place us in a better position for producing in the colony what we require than any other means we could adopt. People will not go out and settle in places isolated from other persons, as our means of communication are not sufficient; and the only profitable way in which we can settle our lands, under the present circumstances of the colony, is by endeavouring to settle people as proposed in these village settlement schemes. The reason the village settlement schemes have not been a success hitherto, arises from the fact that the lands devoted to the purpose were not at all suitable for agriculture. I have seen

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some of these lands myself in the Northern portion of the colony, and I think that if the surveyors had been instructed to find the most unsuitable spots for the purpose they could not have better carried out their instructions than they have done in surveying portions of the country they have already surveyed. There is no possibility of settling people upon some of the lands set apart for village settlement at the present time in some of the Northern parts of the colony. I am given to understand that the same thing can be said of parts of the Southern division of the colony. It may be justly said from one point of view that the State should not spend money in establishing village settlements, but I do not see myself that it would be anything but a good investment for the State. I know in New Zealand the Government lend money to those people who are anxious to settle in communities, and that it becomes a good investment for the colony. I will read a short extract from the *Mail*, which quotes from the *Canterbury Times* an account of one of the village settlements in New Zealand, which shows, at all events, that it has been successful there:—

“Recent reports which appear in the *Canterbury Times* enable us to supplement the information which appeared in the *Mail* of May last regarding village settlements in New Zealand. Mr. March, a gentleman of much experience with the labouring classes, has been appointed inspector of village settlements, and in the course of recent lectures he has given some pleasing details of his experiences among the settlers. Mr. March shows, from official documents, that in one part of the colony 166 sections have been taken up, comprising 5,217 acres. Of this area 3,613 acres have been cultivated, and there are 517 souls located on the land. The settlers own 255 horses, 473 head of cattle, 295 pigs, 2,228 head of poultry, and 80 sheep. The actual value of the permanent improvements effected by the settlers, deducting the sums advanced by the Government, is £8,405. The improvements do not include money spent in tilling the land, but merely the value of houses, fences, and outbuildings. The sum advanced by Government to the settlers for houses was only £2,260. This, with the cost of administration, represents the entire outlay of the State. This money is not sunk. It is invested at 5 per cent. interest. The settlers have improved the public estate to the amount of £8,405. That affords ample security for the £2,260 advanced to them. But they have also paid to the State for rent £1,853 15s. 9d., and for interest £295 10s., or a total of £2,149 5s. 9d. Thus already the Government has received back nearly the whole sum it advanced to the settlers. But the money still bears interest at 5 per cent., and the improvements effected represent security nearly four times greater than the money advanced; whilst the State still owns the land, and will derive from it a perpetual revenue. These results have been achieved by simply encouraging 166 persons, representing 517 souls, to settle upon and improve 5,217 acres of previously unoccupied and unproductive land of a second-class quality. The village settlement system is accepted by the present Government of New Zealand as the best means of coping with the unemployed difficulty.”

That is a very important matter, and one which we should take to heart—

“The principle is that of settling the industrious poor on the soil instead of leaving them to starve in cities. The land is leased on very favourable terms, and the money necessary to make homes advanced as a loan, for which the improvements placed on the land are taken as security.”

Now, Sir, I maintain that the money spent by the New Zealand Government has been a really good investment, because the value of the improvements made on the land is so much added to the value of the estate of the colony. Besides, the settlement of people who become producers is a great item in the welfare of any colony. Now, with regard to the administration of the Land Act in New Zealand, they seem to take the greatest possible trouble to give all necessary information to would-be settlers. They publish a pamphlet, which I have seen, containing particulars of every selection that is open to be taken up within the colony. It not only contains the position, but it gives the

area, the quality of the land, the price at which it can be purchased, or the price at which it can be leased. They have in New Zealand what is called the perpetual lease system. It also gives the distance from market, the means available for the settler to get his produce to market, and every particular which it is necessary for a settler to possess in order to place him in a position of knowing whether the land would suit him or not. Although that would be a troublesome matter, it would, I am sure, repay the Government to give people much information, which at present they have not got. It is impossible for a man to know, unless he actually examines the land, whether it is at all likely to suit him; but from the pamphlet which I speak of, he could give a very shrewd opinion as to whether the land would be a suitable place on which to make a home. I think, therefore, that it would be a very good thing if the Government gave such full information as is given in New Zealand. Now, with regard to the Bill itself, I think that the village settlement system, with assistance from the Government, would not at all interfere with the settlement of groups of people as is provided for in the Bill. I think the two could work side by side without one interfering in any degree with the other. I have no doubt that numerous amendments will be proposed in committee, but I would point particularly to the 14th clause. Under section 72 of the Act of 1876 a selector could surrender his lease and come under the Act of 1884. I think it would be only fair to the selector under the 1876 Act, who does not choose to come under the 1884 Act, that he should be given the privilege of coming under this Act.

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS (Hon. A. S. Cowley): I am afraid he would make a very bad bargain if he did.

Mr. SMITH: At any rate that is a subject which may well be considered in committee. I shall have much pleasure indeed in supporting the Bill, as I believe it is a step in the right direction.

Mr. CORFIELD said: Mr. Speaker,—I am very glad to see that it is again proposed to amend the Land Act of 1884, and I think in the right direction, too, although not as far as might be wished. It is well known that a large number of the 20,000-acre blocks are simply held by dummies for the stations, but as the conditions are all fulfilled, no action can be taken, although the 1884 Act was passed to prevent this kind of thing. Again, it is impossible that a man of small means—say with less than about £3,000—can take up blocks of sufficient area to be of use in the well-watered districts of the West, such as along the Warrego or other rivers. But I would speak of the district which I represent. There are many districts better watered, but in good seasons there is not a better pastoral district in Australia. Owing to the scarcity of water nothing less than 20,000 acres would be of the slightest use to any man who intended going in for sheep farming or raising cattle on a small scale. Well, in that 20,000 acres it is almost certain that he would have, at the most, but an imperceptible watercourse, dry excepting for a few days after heavy rains. During the great drought from 1883 to 1886, I think I can safely assert that a larger proportion of the losses in stock was more due to the distance from grass, or where feed was to the water than to any scarcity of feed. That is to say, that the stock could nearly always find sufficient to eat, but water was so scarce that they became weakened in travelling to and from it. They would remain on the grass for days until their thirst forced them to go to the water, with which they would gorge themselves, and, being weak, they became bogged. This goes

to prove that it is not the want of food for stock that prevents the development of Western country, but the scarcity of water, or rather the non-storage of the abundance of water that goes to waste. How can the man of small or moderate means spend the sums of money required to find water for the stock which 20,000 acres might carry? I would suggest, therefore, that the Secretary for Lands should consider a scheme of co-operative selection, something like what he proposes in the agricultural farms, in the way of assisting a certain number of selectors with the means to construct tanks, dams, or bores, which shall be common to those selections, and that the expenses incurred be charged upon them in the shape of increased rent. Unless something of the kind is done the lands will never be occupied in a comparatively close settlement. I say comparatively because I think that if we had one *bona fide* selector, with his family and employees, on every 20,000 acres in the Western country, the settlement would be sufficiently close for his interests and prosperity. I intend to support the second reading of the Bill, and I trust that when it goes into committee the hon. gentleman in charge of it will see his way to bring in an amendment on the lines I have indicated.

Mr. ALLAN said: Mr. Speaker,—I quite agree with what the Secretary for Lands said in introducing this Bill, that it is calculated to make a very radical change in our land laws. For that reason it requires extremely careful consideration. I do not propose for a moment to put anything in the shape of obstruction against the second reading of the Bill, but in committee it will want careful looking into in very many ways. I think myself it might have been made a little clearer to us. It seems to be almost more of a lawyers' Bill than ever I saw before. There are references in it to ever so many other Acts, and one has to go from one place to another so much that it is difficult to get a firm grip of the Bill at all. So far as I can see, I do not think that even the lawyers in the House have got a very good grip of it. Looking at the fact that we already have the Act of 1884, the amending Acts of 1885, 1886, and 1889, with this one to be added to them, it will be seen that, with the regulations—the timber regulations and others—that our Land Act consists of some 500 clauses now of one kind or another. That alone is a tremendous piece of work for a layman to go through and try to understand. I do wish, Sir, there was some Act consolidating the whole of our land laws which we and the people who want to settle on the land could understand. There is such a want of finality in our land legislation that one never knows what will be done next. Rents and conditions are altered and re-altered year after year until there is quite an uneasy feeling amongst people who have anything to do with land. There is no doubt we want to give the people a little more idea of really what they have to do when they take up land, and what they have to pay for it when they get it. I do not know whether this will be a good Bill for revenue purposes; that will have to be proved. No doubt the unconditional selections will bring some little money into the Treasury, but whether they will be good for the country I very much doubt. No doubt people in the far West will take up picked places here and there in the middle of their runs, or near a waterhole, pay for them, and then let the land lie idle until other people want it, when they will make a very good bargain in the increased value of that particular block which they have not had to put anything upon. No doubt if they get the first pick in that way it may be a very good thing for them, but it will be a very bad thing for the country. Before this Bill is passed I should like to have some idea of the other land legislation which is

contemplated this session. There has already been foreshadowed a Bill, I presume, for the sale of land by auction for the purpose of bringing in revenue. It would be as well that we should know something about that measure before this Bill is passed, because a good deal in it touches on that question, and will have some influence upon it, more or less. Although I do not believe in selling the lands when we can keep them, preferring that they should remain the property of the State, still I believe that if we have an asset of that kind it is better to sacrifice a portion of it rather than cast additional taxation upon people who are already too heavily burdened. I should like to know a little more about that. Another measure proposed to be introduced is, I understand, for the resumption of certain lands on the Darling Downs. I know nothing about that; I have not been consulted on the subject, although I am one of the members for that part of the country; but we have heard it said that there is to be some Bill brought in for repurchasing land on the Darling Downs. I do not mean to say that I am at all against that; far from it. I am very sorry that ever that land was disposed of in the way it was. I think it is a pitiable thing to see those fine lands occupied as they are instead of being under the plough; and I should be very glad to see them back again in the hands of the Government, so that they might be placed in the hands of the people and brought under cultivation. If that is to be done I should like to know a great deal more about it. I really do not know how far it is going to encourage settlement in that part of the country that is over 100 miles from here, for this reason: Only two years ago we passed a protective tariff, which I supported very strongly, one of its chief objects being to assist the farmers. It was received by the people in my part of the country with great gladness, as it foreshadowed that the Government were desirous of assisting the agriculturists, and by assisting them doing good to the colony generally. This tariff gave protection on their produce to the extent of something like 50 per cent., and the result was to give great impetus to the industry. But, Sir, without consulting Parliament at all, the Railway Commissioners and the Secretary for Railways put 50 per cent. on to the carriage of that very produce, thereby undoing in one act the whole of the good the protective tariff did to farmers residing over 100 miles from here. There is no doubt whatever about that, and I am sure it was not a wise thing to do. I do not blame the Commissioners. They were brought here as experts in their business—as men who knew how to make private railway companies pay, with the object, I suppose, of making our railways pay, and they are doing the best they can with the knowledge they have of the country to attain that end. Therefore I do not blame them, but I do think that the Secretary for Railways and Ministers generally should have stepped in and prevented the Commissioners from going as far as they have done in this direction. I do not blame the Secretary for Railways altogether, nor do I say that the rates should not be raised; but I do say that, previous to raising the rates, the Customs tariff should have been increased quite as much, if not more, than the amount the farmers had to pay for increased railway rates, because it is not a fair thing to handicap people who have settled upon the land to the extent they are now. Therefore, if the Government do repurchase the Darling Downs lands, I fear that the present railway tariff will tend very much to retard settlement on those lands; but I trust that the Treasurer will see his way to bring forward something in the way of further protection in the opposite direction,

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which will prove of benefit to those whose success we have so much at heart—that is, those who are settling on the land and producing many of the articles we require; so that instead of sending about £1,000,000 out of the colony every year for those things, we may be able not only to supply our own requirements, but become exporters. In dealing with this Bill, I shall confine my remarks to one particular part of it, which, I think, is of the most consequence—that is, the portion touched upon by the 21st, the 29th, and 30th clauses. Clause 21 repeals the words “on the recommendation of the Board,” and “on the like recommendation wherever they occur in clauses 24, 41, and 42 of the principal Act.” That clause is a very important one, and ought to be very carefully considered before it is passed. I trust that in committee hon. members will read up the portions of the existing Acts affected by it, and I am sure that the Secretary for Lands will be only too glad to get any well-thought-out advice on the matter. I hope he will also see that the proposition here made is going too far altogether. The effect of these clauses together is to absolutely bring into operation in this colony provisions similar to those passed in New South Wales in 1861, in Sir John Robertson’s Act—that is, that we shall have, at the will of the Minister, free selection before survey all over the colony.

The CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. Sir S. W. Griffith): No.

Mr. ALLAN: I notice that the Chief Secretary says “No;” but I have read the sections most carefully, and that is the only conclusion I can come to. I read the hon. gentleman’s speech and that of the Secretary for Lands very carefully, where they said that was not the intention; but, nevertheless, I can put no other construction on those sections but that they mean that the Minister, or the Government, shall have power to proclaim free selection before survey all over the colony, except in the case of urban and suburban lands. If the 21st clause be passed, the 24th clause of the principal Act will read—

“The Governor in Council may by proclamation declare any portion or portions of the colony to be a district or districts for the purposes of this Act.”

Now, “district” in the interpretation clause is defined to mean “a district proclaimed under the provisions of this Act,” and “country lands” are defined “all Crown lands which are not town lands or suburban lands.” That is a very wide signification; it takes in absolutely everything in the colony that is not town or suburban land. Then the 41st section of the principal Act, if amended as proposed by this Bill, will read:—

“The Governor in Council may by proclamation define and set apart any country lands as agricultural areas.”

And the 42nd section will read:—

“The Governor in Council may by proclamation declare any country lands to be open for selection under the provisions of this part of this Act, and may, by like proclamation, withdraw any such lands from being so open.”

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS: That has nothing to do with survey.

Mr. ALLAN: I will come to the question of survey immediately. Now, as far as I can understand, that clause, if amended as proposed, will give the Secretary for Lands, or the Governor in Council, power to throw land open for selection in agricultural areas, not only, as I said before, under similar provisions to those in Sir John Robertson’s Act of 1861, which imposed strong conditions, but actually unconditionally and in areas four times as large all over the colony.

The Secretary for Lands has interjected that that clause has nothing to do with survey, but the 43rd section of the principal Act says:—

“Before any land is so proclaimed open for selection, it shall be surveyed under the direction of the Surveyor-General and divided into lots of convenient area for selection, with proper roads and reserves for public purposes, and such lots shall be marked on the ground by posts not less than three feet high at the corners of the lots.”

That will be done away with altogether.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: No; that section is not touched at all.

Mr. ALLAN: In the 30th section of the Bill it states:—

“All the words in the 7th section of the Crown Lands Acts 1884 to 1886 Amendment Act of 1889 after the words ‘country lands’ are repealed.”

This is a real lawyer’s Bill. Just now the Secretary for Lands said it had nothing to do with survey, or with the 43rd section of the principal Act. Now, I turn up the 7th section of the Crown Lands Acts 1884 to 1886 Amendment Act of 1889, and leave out what follows the words “country lands.” It reads as follows:—

“The Governor in Council may, on the recommendation of the Land Board, suspend the operation of the 43rd section of the principal Act with respect to any ‘country lands.’”

That is how it will read if this Bill is passed.

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS: That is on the recommendation of the Land Board.

Mr. ALLAN: I beg the hon. gentleman’s pardon; he proposes to strike that out.

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS: Not out of that clause. The hon. member makes a mistake. We do not strike those words out there.

Mr. ALLAN: Well, as I said before, this is such a lawyer’s Bill that no one can understand it. One has to wander all round to find out anything. Now, if hon. members will follow me I shall read the 30th section again:—

“All the words in the 7th section of the Crown Lands Acts 1884 to 1886 Amendment Act of 1889 after the words ‘country lands’ are repealed.”

Now I have struck out everything after the words “country lands,” and the words “on the recommendation of the Board” are struck out.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Read what is left in.

Mr. ALLAN: It stands now:—

“The Governor in Council may, on the recommendation of the Land Board.”

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS: Hear, hear!

Mr. ALLAN: But in the 21st section it provides that the words “on the recommendation of the Board” shall be struck out.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That only proposes that the Governor in Council can, without the recommendation of the Land Board, make a proclamation, but does not deal with selection before survey at all.

Mr. ALLAN: This means selection before survey, if I understand anything. I hope it does not. I was very particular in following the Secretary for Lands in his speech, and I read it again to find out what explanation he gave in connection with these most important clauses 29 and 30. All he said was this:—

“The 29th section provides for the repeal of the schedule under the Act which deals with survey before selection. The repeal of this schedule was omitted in the Act of 1886. The 30th section makes provision for the repeal of all the words after ‘country lands,’ in the 7th section of the Act of 1889.”

Now, those two clauses are, I take it, the most important that have ever come before the House. Yet that is all the Secretary for Lands said regarding them.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: There is nothing in them at all.

Mr. ALLAN: Well, I shall be only too glad if I find that I am wrong, but I have, at all events, the satisfaction of knowing that with me are the late Secretary for Lands—who, this House will admit, is a man of intelligence and ability, who ought to understand something of the Land Acts, and, I believe, does—and the leader of the Opposition, and others here who thoroughly comprehend the working of the Act, not in an academical manner, as some very able men on the other side do, but practically, because they have to live by it, and they know what it means. They agree with me that the 21st, 29th, and 30th sections will want extremely careful consideration. I do not wish to take up the time of the House—it is not my habit to do so; but believing as I do that it certainly must be made much clearer than it is now, if it is not to be construed as meaning selection before survey, I would ask hon. members to carefully examine, before we go into committee on the Bill, a most able report which was made by Messrs. George Ranking and Augustus Morris, two of the ablest men in New South Wales, who were appointed in 1883 by the Government in which Mr. Farnell was Minister for Lands, to inquire into the working of the Land Act of 1861, which had been in operation for over twenty years. Their report was a complete condemnation of that Act, which was not nearly so drastic as I believe this Bill to be. If hon. members will read that report it will not be time wasted.

Mr. MACFARLANE said: Mr. Speaker,—I approve of some parts of the Bill, but I do not approve of other parts. To the Act of 1884 I gave my very hearty support; and I do not think it has been such a great failure as some of our legislators think it has been. No doubt we have all been disappointed with it as a revenue measure, and it has not come up to our anticipations; but still it has had the effect of settling a great number of people on the land. I have always looked upon it as a just Act, and one that did justice to all classes of society, from the humble homesteader to the large squatter; but this Bill professes more to be a revenue Bill. Of course it also professes to settle people on the lands. Most of our Land Acts, when we look back upon them, have been pronounced failures after a few years’ experience. I hope that, so far as revenue is concerned, this Bill will answer the purposes its framers have in view. It is a good thing in taxation to tax some commodity which has a very large consumption. Well, we have a very great quantity of land, and on the same principle we propose to deal with our land as something of which we have a very large consumption. The clauses dealing with unconditional selection, which will enable anyone to take up land, will no doubt have the effect of causing a great deal of land to be taken up. I know that ten years ago when I was before my constituents in Ipswich, this same idea was mooted—that unconditional selection should be allowed so as to enable young men in situations to take up land unconditionally; and by the time they got up in years they could then settle on the land. Now, the very same feeling exists at the present time. There are very many young men in my constituency who are thanking the Government for bringing in this system in the Bill. Some of them, however, are alarmed that the best land, as soon as the Bill becomes law, will be taken up by the squatters. I have not the same fear. There is no doubt the

squatters will take up the very best parts—the well-watered parts—they will pick out the eyes of their stations to a certain extent; but I do not think that they will take up any great quantity. Some people are under the impression that the Bill will have the effect of causing a great deal of the land to be dummed. So far as the squatters are concerned, I really do not think much will be dummed, because, as was remarked by an hon. member on the other side of the House, it would not pay the squatters to pay 1s. an acre per annum for land when they can get it for from 3d. down to 1d. per acre. That being so, a considerable quantity of land will be open to the general public. There is no doubt that a considerable quantity of land will be taken up in this way by young people. A good deal of money is spent foolishly by young men, and if they invest their money in land under these provisions, it will become like a savings bank to them, as they will be compelled to pay up or lose their land. This will be the means of making them thrifty and careful. They will probably allow the land to lie idle for some time until they are in a position to stock it and work it profitably. I think, however, there should be another condition besides that of paying rent. If there were no rent to pay at all that would be thoroughly unconditional, but there is rent to pay, and in my opinion it would prevent dummying if instead of allowing the selector to pay the whole price of the land in two or three years, it were provided that the payments should extend over the whole term of twenty years. It would also be far better for the Government to have the money coming in regularly every year than to have a great rush of payments one year and receive very little subsequently. As to the provisions for associations of co-operative selections, I am rather afraid they will not work. As human nature is at the present time, I believe it will be found that this part of the measure is unworkable. There is so much human nature in every man and in every woman that it will be impossible for twenty or thirty persons to work together in the way proposed. When you try to form a society for any purpose it is impossible to get men to see eye to eye, and as some men are lazy, and some avaricious, it seems to me that these provisions for co-operative selection are not likely to realise the anticipations of the Secretary for Lands. I should be only too glad to find that I am mistaken in my judgment, because if the scheme can be worked it will certainly do a great deal of good. I am afraid that if I were one of forty selectors I should not always be able to agree with my colleagues; and it is very hard to get twenty men to do what is just and right to each other. Therefore, while expressing my approval of the Bill generally, I hope it will be amended in committee in some points, so that it may answer the purpose the framers have in view. I have nothing further to say on the present occasion.

Mr. LUYA said: Mr. Speaker,—I must say that the impression made upon my mind by this discussion is very similar to that conveyed to the hon. member for Cunningham, Mr. Allan—namely, that we are about to inflict upon the colony free selection before survey. It has been said that the measure will not have that effect, but it will have to be shown much more clearly than it has been hitherto, that such is not the case before I can accept that view. I have had an opportunity of seeing the result of free selection before survey in New South Wales, under Sir John Robertson's Act, and there can be no question, I think, that that Act would have been a very good one if its operation had been confined to certain localities. The great evil was in allowing free selection before survey from one end of the colony to

the other. Even at the present time in Queensland, I have not the slightest doubt, there are certain localities where free selection before survey would be very advantageous—that is to say, it would lead to lands being settled which would otherwise remain a wild and a desert, and would bring money into the Treasury. I shall be very pleased if in committee the Secretary for Lands is able to disabuse our minds upon this matter. I wish now to say a few words on the provisions for co-operative selection. I do not like them altogether. There is something uncanny in the proposal. I think it must have been made in order to see what hon. members would make of it, and whether they would worry it into proper shape. It is opposed to human nature to think that forty men would so far forget the old Adam that is in us, as to agree under the terms proposed in this Bill. It would be far better to have a scheme of village settlement, in which each man should have his own lot, and work out his own salvation on his own lot. If they can agree to assist one another, very good; but to work the whole settlement as one section, in the way suggested in this scheme, would lead in the end to the aggrandisement of one party—the one who has the strongest mind. I have always been an advocate of village settlement, but my idea of village settlement is rather different from this scheme. My idea is that everybody should have his own lot, and I would go a great deal further than the Bill goes and have State-aided village settlement; let it take any form that might be decided upon. I am not wedded to any particular scheme. But we have an immense number of men in this colony, and the great problem we have to solve is what we are going to do with them. I mean the men who form the floating population of the colony. I know as well as any person can know that a great number of people are desirous to go on the land. This has been largely our own fault, because we have had people employed upon our public works; now we are knocking off public works, and we are only thereby adding to the number of unemployed, while we hold out no hope for them in the future. It is useless to say a man can go upon a piece of land and make his living on it right off. Is there any member of this House who will say a man can go upon a piece of land without capital and sit there until his crops grow? He must live in the meantime; and I hold that it is during the interval between his selection of the land and the harvesting of his first crops that something should be done to assist him. I have always entertained this idea, and I have tried to put it into a practical and definite form. The matter got mooted in the papers, though I never put an advertisement in and never made my intentions public in any way. The result, however, was a number of applications that astounded me. The applications were so many that I had to tell off a clerk to receive the men making application for land, and answer letters on the subject. I have received a vast number of letters all breathing the same spirit, and expressing the same anxiety on the part of the writers to get upon the land. Some of the applicants actually craved to be allowed to go upon the land, though they knew the conditions of my scheme. Many have asked as a favour to be allowed to go upon the land, and I have received letters of applications from as far north as Mount Morgan, and one from New South Wales. I have received letters from all parts of Queensland from farmers—men working on leaseholds who wish to get a freehold for themselves, and knowing my conditions, they express themselves as only too glad to get land on those terms. I am not going to read the bundle of letters I

have here, but I may make a few quotations from them. Before doing that I should, perhaps, explain the conditions on which I am offering the land. I may state at once I have never been an advocate for giving our lands away. I think the country should receive a fair value for its land, and you cannot always get a fair value for land put up at auction. If you give assistance to a man to go upon land, you may reasonably ask him to pay a fair price for it, and a fair sum to cover your risk. The conditions on which I put men on the land are merely residence and cultivation. Those are the main conditions.

Mr. GLASSEY: What area do you give?

Mr. LUYA: Forty acres, but it is all scrub land. If it was open forest country a larger area would be required; and, by the way, I may say I do not believe there has yet been introduced in this colony any Land Bill the clauses and conditions of which can be fairly applied all over the colony. Our colony is too large for that, and it should be divided into sections, and the Land Act should be administered with a due regard to the capabilities of different parts of the colony. My scheme is that the men shall take up a forty-acre farm, reside upon it, clear it and cultivate it. They must do that to my satisfaction, or to the satisfaction of any person I put in my place to look after the working of the scheme, and while they are doing that, I allow them the ordinary rations allowed in the colony, with the further conditions that I give them the use of a few milch cows at first, and afterwards they can break in as many as they like. I also engage to bring their produce down to Brisbane at the rate of 10s. per ton and sell it for them, and out of their first crop or second crop, as the case may be, they must pay for their rations and all tools that may have been advanced to them. If they do that these men will not be paupers, and it is not inducing them to become paupers to offer such terms, for they will be merely selling the produce of their labour. I have the security of their labour for everything I advance, and I run no risk. As to the price of the land, I may tell hon. members that there has been none sold yet at a less price than £5 an acre. In every instance the settlers have insisted upon first inspecting the land, and they have been glad to go back to it after satisfying themselves that the bargain was a fair one. Up to the present time they have been doing remarkably well. They are felling away the scrub and cutting it down, and I am sure that so far they have earned far more than I have expended upon them. I made the bargain strictly as a commercial one. I knew what was likely to come forward in the way of land legislation before long, and I thought if I could show that the settlement of land could be attained on some such principle as that, it would be an inducement to the Government to adopt some such scheme. I do not say the Government should adopt a scheme exactly like that, but some such scheme as that, and the more so as we have at present to solve the problem of finding employment for a continually increasing floating population. We have got the land, and we should make use of it, and it will only cost a few thousand pounds to try this experiment. The present Bill, we are told, is only an experiment, and I say why not extend the experiment and see if something cannot be done for these men who are really so anxious to get upon the land? I do not say that everyone who applies for land under such a scheme will make a success of it, but even supposing we get a large measure of success, or 50 per cent. of success, it will repay us over and over again for the little we put into it. Even if some men go on to the land and do not stop upon it, the Government cannot possibly

lose, because the work of those men will be put into it and increase its value to the next comer. Some of the letters I have received are really pitiable. It jars upon one's nature to find men in a country like this asking as a favour to be allowed to go on a piece of land. Some of the applicants were men working on leaseholds, and others were working on sugar plantations. I received a large number of applications from Maryborough, and several of the applicants from that district are known to the hon. member for Maryborough, Mr. Annear. Many of the applicants have been men working as fencers, and such work; they have been some time in the colony, and have had some colonial experience. You could not get better men as settlers, and how many new chums could do the work a settler requires to do? Why the thing seems to me so clear that I wonder the Government have not adopted some such system before. I really wish they would adopt some scheme, and try to work it out. I will now read a few extracts from letters I have received, making application to settle upon the lands I have been speaking of. John Caldwell, of Bundaberg, writes:—

"I hereby apply for a farm. Knowing the locality well, and having experience in cane-growing, and sons to assist me, I have no doubt of success on the conditions stated."

Joseph Cully, of Bundaberg, writes:—

"Is there any land left? I should like to get a farm for self, and one for my brother. I am married, with six children. Please write if we can come up, and if we can bring our tools, which we have for scrub felling."

A. F. Simpson, of Forest Hill, Barolin, writes:—

"Will you kindly inform me if there is any chance of my getting one of your farms on conditions I saw in the *Week*? I and a mate of mine want to know if there is any truth in it. We have had experience in bush work. Please let me know by return."

F. Younger, of Maryborough, says:—

"I wish you would forward all particulars. There are dozens of families willing to go on conditions printed. I am requested to write to you on their account, as well as on my own."

Soren Holst, of Adelaide lane, Maryborough, says:—

"I saw a description of your village settlement. It at once took my liking. I ask if you will let me have a forty-acre block. I am a Dane; carpenter by trade, but have been farming. Am married, with one son nineteen years of age. I refer you to Mr. John Annear."

Fred. Hannant, of Gatton, says:—

"Would you be so kind as to inform me when I can go and see your land. There will be three of us, all married. We all have a knowledge of scrub farming. Please write without delay."

John Adderton, of Maryborough, writes:—

"I am at present, and am often out of work, much against my wish. Will you allow me to settle on the land. I apply because I get so little to do. I think by the help of God, and the assistance you give, I could pull through. I would be rejoiced to take one of your farms."

They all run pretty much in the same groove. I have received applications from Eidsvold, Nerang Creek, Milton Plains, Emu Vale, South Kolan, Mount Morgan, Albionville, Ipswich, Mount Crosby, Chinchilla, Laidley, Laidley South, Southport, Boondoon, and from many other places, but I have read enough to show that these men mean what they say. Besides the letters, of course I have received hundreds of applicants from Brisbane, and had I not personally seen the applicants I could not have believed that there were so many men really anxious to go upon the land, and who were prevented from doing so because they were absolutely without means. If private people start a scheme of this kind with such a large margin of profit, I do not see why the Government should not take it up. We do not, of

course, expect the Government to do as well as private persons, but where there is such a large margin of profit, I really think it is the duty of the Government to take up some such scheme as a means of facing the social problem which is troubling us at the present time, of how to settle people on the lands of the colony.

Mr. BUCKLAND said: Mr. Speaker,—Like many hon. gentlemen who have preceded me, I am disappointed with the working of the Land Act of 1884, more especially from a financial point of view. We were led to believe when that Act was going through the House, that not only would it give an impetus to the settlement of agricultural farms, but also that the rents of the pastoral occupants would be very greatly increased. I believe that the Land Board has to some extent increased the rents of the pastoral tenants, but not by any means to the extent we were led to believe. I am informed that under the new Land Act of New South Wales, land which adjoins the borders of this colony, and is no better than some of the land in the Warrego district, pays at least double the rent per acre that our land pays. I have not taken the trouble to look through the returns, but I believe that such is the case to a very large extent—that the pastoral lands are not valued by the Land Board as high as they should be. I must say that I am very much disappointed with the financial results of the Land Act of 1884. We have made several amendments in that Act, and one of the important amendments which was made by the late Mr. Jordan, when he was Secretary for Lands, was the introduction of a system of land orders. People in Great Britain and Ireland who paid their passage to Queensland were allowed a non-transferable land order of £30 for each adult, and half that amount for each member of his family under the age of twelve years. I think, but am not quite certain, that I am correct as to the age. There ought to be some provision inserted in this Bill with regard to these land orders, of which a very large number have been issued, for which no return has yet been made. On page 5 of the last annual report of the Department of Public Lands it is stated:—

“There had been issued under Part V. of Amendment Act of 1886, to 31st December, 1890, 1,458 land orders of a total nominal value of £43,720, the total number of selections made by holders of such orders to same date being 101, with a gross area of 30,140 acres 2 roods 23 perches, and an annual rental of only £572 19s. 11d. There lapsed, on account of death of the holders, £20 worth of land orders, and there remained at the end of the year land orders outstanding and available to the extent of £43,127 0s. 1d.”

Such being the case, I think the hon. gentleman should in some way introduce a clause by which they could be made available under the unconditional clauses of this Bill. I know it was believed by many hon. members who were present during the session of 1886, when the land-order clause was passed, that it would be the means of introducing a large number of the right sort of people from Great Britain and Ireland. They have not come so quickly or so numerously as was expected. I, myself, have sent a great number of copies of the Land Act to the old country, but in no case, so far as I know at present, has it induced a single individual to come to Queensland. The late Mr. Jordan was an enthusiast as regards the good which the land-order system would do. That it had introduced a first-class section of people into the colony no one can deny. A few years ago, under the transferable orders—which I admit were to some extent a great evil—there was a very large number of useful farmers and their families introduced, as well as a considerable amount of capital. I do not think such has been the case under the non-transferable

orders; and I think the time has arrived when we should do as was done with the land-order system of 1868, when the orders then issued were reduced by 50 per cent., and made available for the taking up of selections. If the Secretary for Lands were to make a reduction in the value of the orders, so long as they were made available for the purpose, I see no reason why those who hold them should not be entitled to go all over the lands of the colony open to unconditional selection and make use of their orders in paying the rent on those unconditional selections. We have been trying for many years in this colony to get people to settle on the lands, and up to the present, as far at least as agricultural settlement is concerned, it has been a comparative failure. And yet we hear from the hon. member for South Brisbane, Mr. Luya, that he has been offering areas for homestead selection and village settlement, and that he has received applications from all parts of the colony, as well as from New South Wales, from people anxious to settle on the land. It is evident to me that we cannot be too liberal with our public lands. If we are to have people to settle upon them and to live by farming, we must give them an easy method of obtaining the lands. In the colony of Victoria we have seen the public lands brought under the hammer and sold to the highest bidder. The evils of that system were many. Only the man who had plenty of money in his pocket was able to get the best of the lands when they were brought under the hammer.

Mr. GLASSEY: It will be the same under this Bill.

Mr. BUCKLAND: I do not think so. The unconditional clauses of the Bill will, I believe, be the means of settling a very large number of people on the land. While they may be possibly open to the objection, as was stated by the hon. member for Ipswich, Mr. Macfarlane, of the eyes and the waterholes being picked out on some of the runs by the squatters, I think they will be the means of settling people on the land. There are lots of people in business in Brisbane and the other towns of the colony who would be only too glad to have a selection of country land if they were not surrounded with conditions. Under these clauses of the Bill it will be possible for them to get a piece of land without being compelled to reside upon it. I think that with a few amendments in committee this will be a very good Bill, and it will have my support.

Mr. MURRAY said: Mr. Speaker,—It appears to me that the most important feature in this amending Bill is the clause relating to unconditional selection of land. I think in some respects it will be attended with considerable danger. I am of opinion that it would be well to provide that this system shall apply only to the agricultural districts of the colony. A capital provision was inserted in the Act of 1868, whereby no lessee could have the power to select land on the resumed portion of his own run. The lease was considered ample remuneration for the loss he had sustained. Under this Bill the terms of the lease are liberal in the extreme, and I am afraid that in the Western districts, if this provision is carried out, it may probably have the effect of inducing the lessees to go over the resumed portions of their runs and picking out only favourite parts of them, which would ultimately preclude *bond fide* settlement. Water is very scarce in those districts, and by selecting the little water frontages the lands away from them would remain in the hands of the Government for many years to come.

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS: It only applies to agricultural areas.

Mr. MURRAY: I understand that by this Bill the Governor in Council can proclaim any district an agricultural area. Under this Bill that is all that is required to be done, and an agricultural area can be proclaimed anywhere and everywhere. The conditions are certainly liberal, although £1 an acre seems a high price, as no doubt it would be if payment were made in cash. But, as the terms of payment are only 5 per cent. on the value of the farm for twenty years, they are exceedingly liberal. They are certainly sufficiently liberal to induce many people to take up this land. There is no doubt that under the Bill anyone who wishes to acquire an extensive area of land in the colony can appoint as many agents, or bring forward as many acquaintances, as he chooses to take up land for him; and if he chooses, he can pay off any balance on the land the following day; and I presume he can convert it into a fee-simple at once. Therefore I think in the interest of the colony it would be well to confine these clauses to the agricultural districts of the colony, because I know that if these water frontages are selected in the Western districts the balance of the country will not be settled upon at all. I think it must be admitted that if there is one evil more than another in those districts it is the huge possessions that prevail out there. They are undoubtedly too large, necessitating very sparse population; and there is nothing, in my opinion, that would induce settlement so much as the Government resuming the halves of those runs, and throwing the lands open to selection. There is not the slightest doubt that there would then be such a rush for land out there for settlement that the greater part of that country would be taken up, and by that means the evil at present existing there—want of settlement—would be overcome. If those lands had been taken up for *bonâ fide* settlement under the Act of 1884 as grazing farms of 20,000 acres, it would have prevented in a great measure the strike disturbances we have seen in those districts. There is one feature I should like to have seen introduced in the amendments proposed. This Bill provides for a uniform price of land all over the colony.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: No, no!

Mr. DONALDSON: Not less than £1.

Mr. MURRAY: That is the minimum; I do not see any provision for it being more. However, it must be admitted that with the variety of soil and climate we have in this colony it is not practicable to have anything like a uniform price or uniform laws or regulations for our lands. The session before last, when the Land Bill was going through, I brought forward a provision for dealing with the waste lands of the colony, and tried to get it inserted, but did not succeed. As is well known, there are considerable tracts of country in every district that have been open for selection for the last twenty years. There are several areas in the neighbourhood of Rockhampton which were open for selection under the Act of 1888, and remain so still; and I think it would be wise to pass some provision by which those lands could be settled upon and utilised. They are waste lands, and I would suggest that the owners of the properties alongside them should be allowed to take them up at one-half the price proposed in this Bill—that is, at 6d. per acre for twenty years. I know numbers of small selectors who have inferior land of that description at the back of their selections, and who would be very glad to annex it to their holdings at a reasonable price. These lands are simply a nuisance as they are, and it would be a very good thing to get them taken up and utilised. I do hope that it is not the intention of the Govern-

ment to interfere in any way with the present system of selecting grazing farms in the Western districts. I think it would be a very great mistake to interfere in any way with the provisions of the Act relating to grazing farms in those districts, because, although I do not like to say they are not agricultural lands—that remains to be proved—I believe they are purely grazing lands. When I was out in those districts I found great complaints made by grazing farmers that they are obliged to fence both sides of the road separating their selections. Between each selection there is a road from two to five chains wide, and the Land Board insist that before a certificate is granted the selector shall have fenced all round the selection, whereas one fence with gates at one end is all that is required, and if in course of years it should be found necessary to erect the other fence, the local authority of the district could enforce it being done. In the meantime these lanes are fenced, there is no stock or traffic upon them, a great crop of grass grows which sometimes takes fire and burns down the fencing erected. I therefore think the Land Board should have power to grant certificates where one fence has been erected between such selections, leaving it to the local authority to compel the other fence to be erected when necessary. With regard to the village settlement clauses of the Bill, I have just received a letter from the Central Queensland Pioneer Co-operative Society, dated Barcardine, 17th July, 1891, which says:—

“Having received communication from the Minister for Lands, Brisbane, enclosing copy of amendment of Crown Lands Acts, 1884 to 1889, after perusal of clause 16, it seems to us, as a community, that subsection 8 of clause 16, when taken in conjunction with subsection 4, places a certain amount of temptation before any individual member of our community to withdraw from it at the expense of others. Suppose farm No. 20 had improvements exceeding the sum of 10s., and, as in our case, those improvements had been erected by the joint labour of the whole, while farm No. 21 had less improvements, it is in the power of the selector of No. 20 to withdraw, leaving the community to carry on the other improvements without his labour.

“The object we wish to gain is for no member to have an individual right to any particular piece of land, but for the whole community to have a common share in the portion leased.”

I have no doubt that great success will attend these village settlements if care is taken in the choice of proper sites, and in the selection of proper men to go upon them. They must be men of industrious and sober habits to make the settlements successful. In connection with this matter, I notice a letter in the *Observer* of the 13th June, addressed to Mr. John Annear, M.L.A., which shows that there are plenty of men of the right stamp in the colony who are prepared to go upon the land even without Government aid. The writer says:—

“Wallumbilla, 9th June, 1891.

“DEAR SIR,

“I consider it my duty to inform you of the great success that has attended my visit to Wallumbilla. If you remember, last December I, with two other seekers for land, called upon you and requested your sympathy and assistance in obtaining free passes to inspect the village settlements open for selection in the Western district. These passes the Minister for Lands kindly granted. Wallumbilla and Hodgson were comparatively unknown at that time, but my report upon those two village settlements has induced scores of people to visit those places. Now, at this present time there have been taken up sixty-eight farms out of seventy-seven in the Wallumbilla village settlement, and most of the selectors are on the ground engaged in fencing, clearing, and building. It is quite a busy place, and will soon become a very important one. Last December there were only three selectors on the ground. The land is very good and well watered, the soil being especially suitable for potatoes and wheat. Some very good samples have been grown here by the three selectors that were here last year. A good many selections have been taken up at Hodgson, but it

is not the favourite place. I am now settled at Wallumbilla with my family, and we are very pleased with our selections. We are making arrangements for a State school and church. I may state there is quite a rush here for land, and there are only about nine blocks left. There are at present five men up here looking for land. The great complaint is that the blocks are too small. The village settlement system would be a great success if the area of land was increased to 160 acres, and good land was available. The surveyors are here cutting up more land for selection. This, I believe, will soon be gazetted. If the Government make any amendments to the Land Act this session, I would suggest that the area in village settlements be increased to 160 acres."

This proves that we have some men amongst us who are willing to go upon the land and cultivate it. I am prepared to support the second reading of the Bill, in the hope that many amendments will be made in it; I think it will require very careful consideration at the hands of hon. members.

Mr. NELSON said: Mr. Speaker,—I do not intend to offer any opposition to the second reading of the Bill. On the contrary, I am rather pleased to see it brought in, for one reason—that it is an instalment of a system by which the system of land alienation which was so much condemned in 1884 will be carried out. I have always declared my opinion to be in favour of the alienation of land. I consider that when you take lands out of the hands of the Crown, and put them into the hands of private individuals, you immediately increase the value of those lands. I mean so far as the general wealth of the country is concerned. I am also pleased with the speech of the Chief Secretary, to which I listened with great attention. One cannot help admiring a man who, having made a mistake, has the courage to come forward and admit that he has done so. I wish we had a little more of that. And now that it is acknowledged that the strictures which were passed by the Opposition to the Act of 1884 were only too true, and that the great expectations which were then formed of the operation of the Act—particularly from the financial point of view—have proved an utter failure; that being now acknowledged, I take it as an earnest of better things to come. I hope that the days of land theories and fads may now be said to be over, and that we shall deal with our lands in a practical way. I see some indications of that in this Bill, and for that reason I am prepared to support it, agreeing, as a good many hon. members have said, that there are some alterations which it will be very desirable to make when we get the Bill before us in committee. The main feature of the Bill, as has been repeatedly pointed out, is the introduction of a system of selling lands by selection without any conditions whatever. Whether that will turn out a complete measure of success or not is very doubtful. It appears also that there is a good deal of uncertainty as to how far and to what extent this kind of alienation of land is to operate. To say the very least, there is a good deal of ambiguity as to how far this system is to operate. A good many hon. members seem to think it will give the Government of the day the power to throw open any lands throughout the whole of the colony, and bring them under the operation of these clauses. That, I must admit, appeared to me to be the interpretation of it when I read the Bill through first, and that is one point that will have to be made clearer when we get into committee. The only point I wish to bring prominently forward is to refer to the circumstance that this Bill is only a part, as I understand it, of a scheme which the Government are going to submit to the House. It is intended to bring other legislation before us dealing with the lands of the colony, and considering the importance of the subject, and the novelty of some of the

proposals that we are led to believe are going to be made, and taking the general view of the thing altogether, I think it is absolutely necessary that, before we go further with this Bill than the second reading, we should have the whole scheme of the Government placed before us, so that we can deal with it as a whole. This proposition with regard to unconditional selection is, we believe, to be made the means whereby certain lands which the Government propose to reacquire are to be redispensed of. Well, before we can pass a Bill of this sort, we must know by what means any such land is going to be reacquired, and then decide whether this Bill is a suitable way of redispensing of such lands. We have no information on the subject before us, and it seems to be absolutely necessary, just as we insist with regard to taxation, that the whole scheme of the Government shall be laid before us at one time, to be dealt with as a whole before we pass any one part of it. We must know how it will operate when the scheme is complete. I therefore hope that the House will insist upon some delay after the second reading of this Bill, and that before we go into committee we shall have the other Bills that are to follow upon this introduced, and, if possible, also read a second time. I think that is only a natural and reasonable request on the part of the House, and sincerely hope that it is one which the Government will acquiesce in.

Mr. GLASSEY said: Mr. Speaker,—The hon. gentleman who has just sat down approves of the Bill because it gives greater facilities to alienate the public estate than the Act of 1884. Now, Sir, I oppose the Bill because those facilities are proposed to be given in it. I have never believed in the right of any Government to dispose in fee-simple of the property that belongs to the whole people. I admit that it is the duty of the Government to see that the public lands are used in such a way as will be most beneficial to the whole people; but I do not agree that any Government is entitled to dispose absolutely of our lands to a few persons as is done by this Bill; and undoubtedly this Bill will give greater facilities to a few persons who have means at their disposal to buy the land. I say I do not agree that any Government have that right, except, of course, when they have a free and untrammelled mandate from the people to do so. During the time the late Government were in office, when they brought in their Bill to amend the land laws, as they said, the strongest possible opposition was offered by almost the whole of the then Opposition to their proposals. Their proposals were to give greater facilities to persons to acquire land in fee-simple; and when the senior member for Toowoomba submitted his amendment limiting the area of 150,000 acres of country lands to be sold in any one year, which amendment was ultimately carried, I think I am right in saying it received almost the united support of the then Opposition.

Mr. DONALDSON: They have changed their opinions since then.

Mr. GLASSEY: Singular to say two years have not quite elapsed since then, and we have now an entire reversal of that opinion.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: No, you have not; not by any means.

Mr. GLASSEY: Time brings about wonderful changes, and I think this is the most marvellous change we have seen take place in connection with what was at one time the Liberal party, whose battle cry was, "The land for the people." Those who looked forward to a good measure of land reform, particularly from the party now in office, who have always been considered the great land reformers, will be woefully and wonderfully disappointed when they see this

Bill. It has been contended by some hon. members that power is not given by this measure to people to acquire considerable areas of land by the easiest means by auction. I do not agree with that statement, and I interjected at the time that it was not correct. Under the 10th clause, which I shall refer to presently, the person with the largest means, or, as is sometimes said, with the longest purse, will ultimately acquire the largest blocks of land as against the poorer man with less means.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. Tozer): Then we'll tax him.

Mr. GLASSEY: The Colonial Secretary says we will then tax him, but that is not an easy matter to do. But, in addition to the person with the most means being able to acquire the most property, I think there is the widest possible field offered in this Bill for dummying land by those persons who are so inclined. There are no restrictions whatever imposed; every possible facility is given to those who so desire, to bring their friends and relations, and any other persons whom they may employ, to settle on the land and hold them for a time, and then rush them into the market, sell them at an enhanced price, and make a considerable profit on the transaction. If the late Government, when in office, had made such a proposal as that which is here submitted, we would have had such a howl all over the country, from the so-called Liberal party, as would have almost hurled them from power. When I was in opposition I held the views which I have now expressed and still hold, and I shall therefore oppose the second reading of the Bill. I shall record my vote against it on principle, even if there are few members who will support me. With regard to the provisions respecting conditional and unconditional selection, it is provided that the unconditional selector shall pay one-third more for his land than the conditional selector. And well he may. I consider that the person who is bound down by the conditions which are now the law of the country, has not by any means the same opportunity for trafficking or trading in land as the persons who take advantage of the facilities offered for acquiring land under the unconditional clauses of the Bill. Therefore, the difference in price—one-third—is not by any means sufficient to recoup the State for the loss which it will undoubtedly sustain by this arrangement. Then the provision which was very wisely inserted in the Act of 1884, to prevent lands being dummyed or gambled in, is to be set aside, and, as I have already stated, the utmost possible facilities are to be given for dummying land by persons who are so inclined. We are told as a set-off against this that there are not so many persons anxious to dummy land. But we have before us the stubborn fact that up to the present time nearly 16,000,000 acres of land have been alienated, or is in process of being alienated, in the colony, and, as has been pointed out by some hon. members, there is only the paltry area of 247,000 acres under cultivation—50,000 acres of which are under sugar-cane, and a little more than 240,000 acres growing the different products that the people really want. Now, Sir, the hon. member for South Brisbane, Mr. Luya, this afternoon gave the House and the Government some very useful information, which it would be very wise for the Government to act upon. The hon. member showed conclusively that there are a great number of people in the colony who are extremely anxious to settle on the land, provided reasonable assistance is given to them. He stated that he had received numerous applications from every part of the colony, because he, as a

private individual, was able to offer such inducements to people to settle on the land that they would have some means of living until such time as they would get a return from the soil. If the hon. member as a private individual can do that, why cannot the Government offer the same or greater facilities, and enable people to settle on the lands and use them for the benefit of the country? We are told that this is a new departure, and that it is not right to expend money subscribed by the people of the colony generally to enable a number of individuals to settle on the soil; and it is also said, with very little force, that it would be an injustice to those persons who have already settled on the land in different parts of the country without any such assistance. But we must be guided by circumstances, and where it is demonstrated conclusively, as it has been, that notwithstanding all the attempts that have been made by Parliament from time to time to settle people on the lands of the colony, up to the present those attempts have been, comparatively speaking, an absolute failure, that is an argument in favour of the necessity for taking a step still further in advance, and in the way suggested by the hon. member for South Brisbane. It has been tried with considerable success in America and in Canada; and as the hon. member for Bowen told us this afternoon, a similar experiment has also been tried in New Zealand, and has been attended with considerable success. I believe that not long since the South Australian Government despatched a special commissioner to New Zealand to inquire how far State-aided village settlement had been a success in that colony. I have met a large number of persons in different parts of the colony who are anxious and willing to settle upon the land, provided they have some assistance in the first instance, until they get some return from their farms. I care not how anxious a man may be to go upon the land, or how competent he may be for farm work, it is impossible for him to take up land if he has nothing in his pocket to enable him to hold out until he gets some return from it.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The storekeepers generally help them.

Mr. GLASSEY: No doubt they do in many instances, and in a very creditable way; but it will be admitted that where the storekeeper helps them, he will look for a considerable return for himself, and will charge the person he has helped a higher price for his goods than that person would have to pay elsewhere.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: No, no!

Mr. GLASSEY: That seems to me to be a reasonable thing, and so far as my observations have gone I think my statement can be amply borne out.

Mr. GOLDRING: The settlers forget to pay sometimes.

Mr. GLASSEY: It is a well-known fact that in the West Moreton district a good deal of settlement has taken place through the assistance of storekeepers in that district. That I admit at once, but I repeat the statement that persons so assisted by storekeepers have to pay more for the goods supplied than they would have to pay to other persons. As I have already said, this Bill proposes the repeal of the 48th section of the Act of 1884, which I say was a very wise and judicious provision, and which there can be no doubt had the effect of stopping dummying to a great extent. If the Bill now before the House pass into law in the form in which it has been presented, it will give rise to very much dummying, and I have no doubt we shall hear those who may be in this Chamber some few years hence advocating a change in the law—and perhaps at an earlier

date than is now anticipated—and regretting exceedingly that such facilities should have been given to acquire land in such a way. Clause 48 of the 1884 Act says:—

“No person who is under the age of eighteen years, or who is a married woman not having obtained an order for judicial separation for protecting her separate property, or who is in respect of the land applied for or held, or any part thereof, or interest therein, an agent, trustee, or servant of or for any other person, shall be competent to apply for or hold any land under the provisions of this part of the Act.”

In this Bill that clause is repealed, and any person whosoever, whether young or old or a relative of the intending selector or not, may have land taken up for them and held in the way I have mentioned until such time as a favourable opportunity offers to put it in the market and sell it, and there can be no question that there will be a great deal of trafficking and profit-seeking in land if this Bill becomes law.

Mr. FOXTON: That only applies to unconditional selection.

Mr. GLASSEY: Then, as I have already stated, in clause 10 it is provided that where two or more persons put in applications for the same block of land it is immediately put under the hammer, and the person with the longest purse, of whom we have heard so much in the House, will secure the land. I wonder how that tallies with the statements we heard from members of the present Government when they were in opposition. I say this totally reverses their policy, and such a change of mind in so short a time does not add to their political reputation as the true land reformers of the colony which the people generally thought and admitted they were. In addition to that, as has been pointed out this afternoon during the debate, this Bill will give persons who have means at their disposal, and leisure to travel over the colony, wherever land may be proclaimed open to selection, an opportunity to pick out the best spots, not only with respect to the soil, but with respect to the supply of water, where water may be very much needed in the interests of the settlers generally of any particular district. There is no provision in this Bill at all to stipulate that the natural water in the various districts where lands may be thrown open to selection shall be the property of the State, and held and used by the whole of the settlers in a district where land is taken up. I think that is a grave omission from this Bill. The hon. gentleman at the head of the Government some years ago introduced a Bill dealing with the right to natural water, and a clause might well have been taken from that Bill and inserted in this Land Bill, holding all natural water for the use of intending selectors, in order that no priority should be given to any individual in the use of that water. I think it is most unfair that any person should have the right to acquire the natural waters in any district, and practically levy toll upon his neighbours for the test of the water, or deter people from taking up land and using it from the fact that they cannot depend upon getting water if they take it up. In addition to the very wide door which is left open for dummied land in large areas and the various abuses that will undoubtedly arise if the land is dummied, this omission in the Bill, neglecting to make provision to secure the natural water for intending settlers, is a very important one. That, of course, is a matter that can be remedied in committee, but it is a question of vital importance to those persons who are desirous of settling on the land. I say it is a shame and a wrong, which I have seen in some parts of this colony, that considerable sized lagoons and some of the natural water-courses are monopolised by a few individuals,

and practically those individuals can levy blackmail on their neighbours who want to use them. But, in addition to that, I contend that permitting persons to take up large areas of land, which they can do under this Bill, debars settlement, because it is well known that these lands will be taken up in the most favoured localities. The best land will be acquired, and the inferior land will lie idle, and undoubtedly, wherever the land is near a railway line or a good road, it will be gobbled up by persons who have means at their disposal to acquire it, and the real *bonâ fide* settlers will be driven to the ridges and gullies and poor land, where there is no water. We have heard again and again in this House that the ambition of persons taking up land is to acquire their title-deeds at an early date. I see in the report of the South Australian Special Commissioner, who was sent to New Zealand to inquire into the working of the village settlement scheme in that colony, that he approves of the perpetual leasing system—a system which I have always approved of, and which, in my judgment, is the best system that any country can adopt.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Theoretically.

Mr. GLASSEY: Theoretically and practically. This person gives it as the result of his investigation that the perpetual leasehold system in New Zealand is the most popular system, and this is what he says on page 12, paragraph 11, of his report:—

“To prevent misapprehension which may be caused by the statement in reference to the general land system that the ‘perpetual lease tenure is by far the most popular in New Zealand’—a statement which has relevancy in connection with the assertion made above that many of the holders of these special settlement blocks wish to acquire the freehold—it may be well to explain that, under ‘the perpetual lease’ regulations in New Zealand, the lessee may, pursuant to certain conditions set out in the Land Acts, obtain the fee-simple at any time after the first twelve months, subject to his having put upon the land improvements equal to those stipulated for in the conditions for six years’ occupancy. This, of course, does not apply to the special settlement system, but I have thought it well to refer to it.”

Thus he states that in spite of the facilities for acquiring freehold within twelve months, on fulfilling certain conditions, the perpetual system is more popular in New Zealand than the freehold system. It is admitted on both sides of the House that the great aim and object of all land legislation is to get settlement. But can it be expected that settlement will follow in the way it ought, if persons who have means at their disposal are able, as they will be under this Bill, to acquire large tracts of country in the most favoured places, which they may hold for years if they think proper; while the very parties who ought to occupy them, and who are really desirous of occupying them, and of turning them to the best possible use for themselves and their families, and for the good of the colony generally, will be debarred if the Bill pass in its present form? There can be no doubt at all about that, and it is borne out by another thing which the Government are proposing to do. And to some extent I agree with them, that they find great difficulty in securing good lands anywhere near the centres of population for purposes of settlement. They are now devising some means for the repurchase of certain estates, which are now held not for the best possible purpose for the colony, and to turn those estates to account by settling people upon them. That shows how cautious this House ought to be in allowing any legislation to pass which will have a similar effect in the future. It is not a very wise provision to leave the door open so wide as to enable persons to acquire land in the easy way they will be able to do under the provisions of this Bill. I have already mentioned

that by the repeal of clause 48 of the original Act persons who have means at their disposal can take up tracts of country for every member of their families. Supposing I had means at my disposal, and desired to acquire a large tract of country, with the number of children I have we could get together quite a large estate. We might hold it for a certain time, and ultimately, when a favourable opportunity offered, we might put it on the market and turn it to the best possible account for ourselves. But is that a desirable state of things when, as shown by the hon. member for South Brisbane, Mr. Luya, there are so many applicants to take up the land which he offers at a much higher price than the Government ask? Owing to the easy terms that hon. member offers he has numerous applications from persons willing to settle on his land. This report from which I have quoted also states—and I think it is a matter which the House might well keep in view—that the lands ought to be classified—that is to say, with regard to village settlement, for which some provision is made in this Bill. The writer says, on the same page of his report:—

“A classification of all the evidence gives the following as chief essentials to the success of the system:—(1) Suitable land of good quality (because poor land would be useless for working in small areas). (2) Localities where other industries would give sufficient employment to the blockholder to enable him to partly occupy his time whilst improving his own block. (3) Where a reasonably ready market for the sale of his produce will be provided. (4) Access to the land by means of roads seems an obvious condition, but is overlooked in some of the New Zealand settlements. (5) Selection of the right class of settlers, and care not to put too many people upon any one settlement.”

These are some of the matters to which I have already referred. We say, in order to obtain close settlement, the land must be good, water should be easily procurable, and there should be good roads, and the utmost facilities for persons to bring their produce to market. The hon. member for Fassifern a few evenings ago referred to the great difficulties some of his constituents experienced in bringing their produce to market for want of good roads, and if persons are permitted to acquire lands in large areas in favourite localities, then these difficulties will be greatly increased and settlement will practically be blocked. An additional argument in favour of the Government aiding settlers in the way mentioned is shown by the figures on page 13 of the same report. The number of selectors who have gone on to settlements in the Canterbury district in New Zealand is 173, taking up a total area of 5,170 acres. Amount advanced by the Government, £2,260; rent paid to date, £1,795 8s. 4d.; interest paid to date, £279 10s., making a total of capital and interest paid, £2,074 18s. 4d., and leaving a small balance of only £102 12s. 8d. That, I think, is conclusive testimony, if any more were wanted, to induce the Government to go a step further than they propose in this Bill, and grant monetary aid to persons who are prepared to go to work on this co-operative principle. I am sure that instead of there being great loss, as some people seem to fear, the country will gain very considerably indeed. One matter in connection with clause 16, which has been touched upon by some hon. members who have preceded me, is that, to make the co-operative system a success, the persons in it should not only work the land in common but they should hold it in common—there should be one separate deed granted to the trustees who may be appointed by these companies. Now I contend that no person should have any opportunity, if he desired to do so, of having most of the improvements made upon any distinct block, and then obtaining the title deeds of that block to the disadvantage of the others who had made the farm valuable, as it undoubtedly would be. The

strongest inducements should be held out to make the co-operative scheme a success on the lines I have indicated. When the country makes up its mind to give monetary assistance to persons who are wishful to settle upon the land, then unquestionably settlement will take place to a large extent. But in addition to other difficulties, I have already pointed out what may arise if persons are allowed to acquire large areas of land and hold it for years, perhaps. One great objection to land settlement at the present time is the undoubtedly high rates charged on our lines of railway to persons who have produce to bring to market. There is no blinking that fact, and until such times as the Government make up their minds to reduce those rates and give the greatest possible facilities for farmers to get their produce to market, settlement will undoubtedly be retarded for a considerable time. Then we are told if that were done the railways will not pay; that the present rates are necessary to bring in a reasonable return from our railways; but I would ask whether it is better for the colony for the railways to carry 100 tons of produce at a low rate, or thirty tons at a high rate? The trains are now running frequently, but are they running with the same loads as they would if the rates were lower? Not by any means, and no matter where you go in the country—to the Darling Downs, or the Central or the Northern districts, the cry is the high rates charged on the railways. I do not care what areas of land may be thrown open, so long as these high rates remain in existence, so long will settlement be retarded to a great extent. We should so encourage settlement that we should be able to grow all the produce we require without having to fall back upon foreign markets as we have to do at present. What do we find? That even for those articles that we can produce in abundance and superabundance we are obliged to send considerable sums of money to the other colonies to procure them. If there is one article Queensland can grow in abundance it is maize, and yet in 1889 we imported no less than 216,252 bushels, at a cost of £35,414. We imported 181,829 bushels of oats, at a cost of £26,419; 17,371 tons of potatoes, at a cost of £94,117; 6,329 tons of hay, valued at £36,189; and 109,588 bushels of wheat, at a cost of £22,263. With regard to flour, we imported 41,371 tons at a cost of £482,687, whilst we are told by the experts who have recently visited the Roma district that there is no place in Australasia where wheat can be grown in such abundance as there; but, Sir, as long as the rates to which I have referred remain as they are, I say there will not be much wheat grown or flour ground to take to different centres of population.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. T. O. Unmack): Since those rates have been in force thousands of acres have been taken up solely by reason of those rates.

Mr. GLASSEY: Because the rates are so low?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Solely on account of the rates.

Mr. GLASSEY: We shall have the Secretary for Railways to tell us all about these matters by-and-by. Then we have chaff, 6,329 tons, valued at £36,189; and bacon, which can be produced in abundance in the colony, 309,717 lb., valued at £10,409; hams, 579,108 lb., valued at £13,511; cheese—I wish hon. members to mark the enormous quantity of this article imported—1,274,310 lb., valued at £31,853. Butter, 781,442 lb., valued at £35,041. Now, these are merely a few articles which can be produced in great abundance in the colony. They can all be produced here. In addition to these there are many others which the people in the different centres of population require and cannot procure, except from abroad, in consequence of the high railway rates. We

have heard the hon. members for Toowoomba, Warwick, Cunningham, and other hon. members distinctly state that in consequence of the high rates tens of thousands of tons of produce are lying on the ground where it was grown, simply because the farmers are unable to send it to market on account of those high rates. And yet we were actually importing the things we required from the Southern colonies. The total value of the articles I mentioned came in that one year to nearly £1,000,000—no less than £834,226. That, too, is an argument to convince the House of the necessity of enforcing some provision for the cultivation of the lands that may be taken up. There is no provision made in this Bill to do that. The Chief Secretary the other day said it would be almost impossible to make such a provision. If that be the case, the people of the colony will not derive much benefit from the sale of land. Look at the enormous areas under cultivation in some of the other colonies. Queensland, with a population of 400,000, has only 247,000 acres under cultivation, 50,000 acres of which is under sugar-cane. And if we deduct the sugar lands, that gives us about half an acre per head of the population under cultivation. New South Wales has about one acre per head under cultivation; Victoria has nearly two and a-half acres per head; New Zealand has two acres per head; South Australia has nearly eight acres; and Tasmania about three acres; whilst in Queensland, as I have already said, we have only about half an acre per head. At the same time, as has been repeatedly said, we are obliged to spend almost £1,000,000 per annum in purchasing produce which can and ought to be grown in this colony. It is admitted by all hon. members who represent country districts that this is, to some extent, in consequence of the high railway rates.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You only tell one side of the story.

Mr. GLASSEY: It is an unwise policy to pursue, and there is not the slightest doubt that before very long a move will be made in this House to induce the Government to see that the policy which is now being pursued in raising the rates, presumably with the view of recouping the Treasury, or, at least, in order to get a fair return on the money invested in the railways, is not a wise thing, inasmuch as if the rates are lowered a larger amount of produce will be carried, and ultimately larger returns will be made to the Treasury in consequence. So far as the tone of the debate shows, most hon. members are going to support the Bill. I have already mentioned that a considerable change has overtaken the minds of certain hon. members who now occupy this side of the House. No doubt they will be convinced that it is necessary to take the step they are taking. Money, they say, is required, and doubtless that is a very tangible reason; but I again repeat that if the present Opposition were occupying the Treasury benches and brought in such a measure as this, which is a measure that goes back on their land policy, we would have some stubborn opposition, not only in the House, but on the part of supporters of those on this side in different parts of the country. I do not like the Bill. I oppose it on principle, as I consider that no Government has any right to part with the public estate in the way proposed in the Bill. It is the duty of the Government to see that the public estate is used in the best possible way for the benefit of the whole community; and to give such facilities as they now offer to persons who have the means at their disposal for acquiring large blocks of country—an action which will undoubtedly retard settlement, and will not be an ultimate gain to the colony—will unquestionably be a considerable disadvantage, and an ultimate loss. I shall oppose the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. ARCHER said: Mr. Speaker,—So much has been already said about this Bill that I have not many words to add to the debate. But the occasion of this discussion has been taken advantage of to introduce questions which are as far away from this Land Bill as it is possible for any questions to be. The speech last delivered was not one on this Bill, but one on communism—that is to say, we are now to be prepared to put our hands into our pockets and settle idlers, who will not find the money for themselves, on the lands of the colony. My experience of the successful selectors in Queensland—and it is as large, I think, as that of any man sitting in the House—my experience is that the successful selectors in this country are those who have for eight or nine years saved their money, and have not indulged in drunkenness—if they have gone on the spree it has only been a small one—and when they had the chance to get land they have had the money to buy the land with, and something to live on until they could produce something for sale. Loafers are probably the only really poor men in Queensland. Except, perhaps, at the present moment, when there is a great depression, I do not think there has been any time when a man who was willing to work could not find employment in the colony. The selectors who have earned money and then settled on the land are, as I have said, the persons who are most successful as selectors, and even if we were prepared to give land to anyone who likes to go on the land, I am doubtful whether they would be a benefit to the country. I am not going now to enter into a discussion of this subject; it is a separate question; it is a question whether we should revolutionise the Government of the country and adopt a policy which has not hitherto been adopted. Before I would agree to do so I should like to have pointed out to me any country which has established itself in the manner suggested and been successful. I have no doubt that many people are willing to settle on the land if you give them money for that purpose, but I have great doubts whether they would become good settlers. The hon. member for Bundamba has said that we have no right to do what is proposed in this Bill, and that we ought to make such land laws as will be beneficial to the whole community. Does he suppose that the hon. gentleman who introduced this measure, and the whole Ministry in fact, have brought it forward for any other purpose than that of benefiting the country in the best way they know? Of course we are to benefit the country by our land laws, and we are now again trying to find out which is the best way of doing that. We have made previous efforts in that direction, and I believe that this Bill, even as it is, will be the means of benefiting the country, and with some amendments it will be better than it is now. But to get up and say that the lands are to be administered for the benefit of the public is a thing we all agree with. We are trying to find out the best way, and some have one opinion and some another. I look upon this Bill as partly a money Bill—a measure for raising greater funds from the land. This is thought by some members who have spoken as not exactly the right thing to do. But, as the Chief Secretary said the other day, it is just doing what any honest business man would do in the same circumstances. He has got to sacrifice a part of his estate to pay his creditors, and that is the first thing we have to do if we are going to be honest people. We must raise money to pay our debts, and not talk about doing this or that for our future benefit. It will be all very well to do that when we have proved ourselves honest people and paid our debts. I must congratulate the Chief Secretary on having returned in some respects to financial sanity, and seen

that the land must contribute its fair share to the revenue of the country. He has now had experience, or has at all events seen, that the theoretical land legislation which was introduced by the Secretary for Lands in the Administration of which he was the head in 1884, has not answered so fully as the theorist supposed it would. It is so with nearly all theories, and I think it is better, instead of adopting a completely new system, to try again a system which has been already proved to some extent. There is no doubt that the land laws of 1868 and 1876 settled a great many people on the land, and if the Government can succeed by this Bill in settling people on the land in the same way as was done under those Acts, they will not only add very much to the revenue of the country, but will do an immense amount of good to the State. It is a strange thing that people should think that they have exhausted the whole matter when they have stated one side of it. The talk about railway freights being so excessively high that farmers cannot possibly compete against imported flour, is only one side of that question. If farmers on the Darling Downs can more than supply all the flour required at their own doors, they ought to be able to supply the whole of Charleville and the Western districts, where they would have an enormous market, seeing that the wheat is grown closer to Warwick and Toowoomba than to Brisbane. Instead of the high railway freight being a disadvantage to them, it would be an enormous advantage. The freight from Brisbane is a kind of protection in the case of wheat, instead of a disadvantage, and it has surprised me that people do not open their eyes to the fact that farmers have found it more to their advantage to cultivate other crops. If farmers found wheat the most profitable crop they would certainly supply their own districts with that commodity. As far as this Bill is concerned, I am not very much afraid that there will be any great dummieing done. Dummieing was once very fashionable; a great many people dummied land, and a great many ruined themselves by it. People who talk about dummieing land when it takes twenty years to pay for land taken up for purely pastoral purposes, forget that for the whole of that period of twenty years the holders could not possibly make it pay; so that I do not think people will dummy—especially as they can hold the land under lease at a lower rent—except, perhaps, a few wealthy men, one or two in the country, who would like to have a place they could call their own. Further than that it would not go. Therefore, although this seems an exceedingly liberal measure, in that so many people in one family can take up land under its provisions, I am very far from believing that it will lead to the monopoly of any great part of the public estate. Of course the Government will not throw open for selection in this way land so situated that it may acquire a fictitious value, and they will have further the power of putting a higher price on such land than that mentioned in the Bill. The price mentioned here, as I understand it, is the minimum price to be paid for unconditional selections. Therefore I am not afraid that the choice sites to which the hon. member for Bundamba referred will be to any great extent selected, except by persons who intend to make their home on the land. Certainly I do not think the measure will ever lead to dummieing. The clauses which are intended to assist associations of settlers are likely, I think, for one reason to prove an utter failure. My opinions upon land laws are very well known, and I have continually spoken in this House of the absolute necessity of giving a farmer not only a piece of land to cultivate, but also a considerable grazing area to keep his stock on. I am

speaking of Queensland, and hon. gentlemen must understand that I do not refer to the Darling Downs and Killarney only, but to the colony as a whole, when I say I have not seen any really successful selector who has not, in the poorer parts of the country, combined grazing with agriculture. The most successful selectors I have known have not cultivated more than fifteen or twenty acres, and they have had, perhaps, 1,500 acres for grazing. Those areas for grazing are, in my opinion, really required, and it is surprising, too, how very few head of cattle can be kept on the average class of country; and as to fattening cattle for the butcher, that is very seldom done by selectors. The selectors are, I am glad to say, now getting instruction in these matters, and that instruction will, I hope and believe, induce them to produce a very great deal of the cheese and butter, for instance, that we now import. I have seen the travelling dairy at work myself, and I have not the slightest doubt it will do an immense deal of good in teaching the selectors the work that can be done. In the winter time they will be able to supply the towns with butter; and in the summer time, when what we get is oil and not butter, though there is then the greatest abundance of milk, the settlers will be able to turn it to account by converting it into cheese and prevent loss in that way. I hold that these co-operative clauses will certainly fail, because of the limited area of land allowed to be taken up under them. I think that will be admitted, unless hon. members are of the same opinion as the late Mr. Jordan—of whom I desire to speak with the greatest respect—and think that 120 acres, taking Queensland as a whole, are sufficient for families settled side by side. I certainly do not think so, and, under present circumstances, I hold such people would be the most miserable persons on the face of the earth. A single spell of drought would ruin them, and they would lose all their cattle. It must be remembered that in this colony there is plenty of room to let families have a large area to enable them to combine grazing with their agricultural operations; and if at any time it can be found that they could work satisfactorily on a smaller area, the land will, no doubt, be divided amongst the children. Some hon. members speak of Queensland as if it was about as large as this room, and we were all scrambling for a bit of it; but that is not so. There is plenty of room to give the grazing areas I speak of, and we need have no fear of large estates being the consequence. If in the future, by new cultivation, irrigation, or any other means that may be devised, it is proved that the land will carry a larger population, undoubtedly the parental estate will be divided, and the children will settle upon the farms. For the reason I have given, that the area is much too small—eighty acres each—I think the co-operative scheme is likely to be a failure.

THE SECRETARY FOR LANDS: A homestead selector can have a grazing farm of 640 acres now.

MR. ARCHER: I am speaking of the co-operative clauses, and I see nothing of that kind in them. As I understand the Bill, these settlers will be limited to eighty acres each, and this part of the Bill is especially for the purpose of allowing some of the members of the association to go away and work and earn money while the others reside upon the land and continue its improvement. Under these clauses a man can only get eighty acres.

THE SECRETARY FOR LANDS: He can take up a 640-acre grazing farm as well.

Mr. ARCHER: That could not be attached to the different farms of the co-operative society. If the members of the association could get eighty acres each, and they had the surrounding country to that extent as grazing farms, they might then be able to do something. It is useless to get people on to the land without giving them the means of making a comfortable living. I have heard some hon. members say with respect to this Bill that it would be better for the rich than for the poor man. But that is absurd. In any case the rich man will have an advantage so far as I can see. If you are going to propose a law that will put the poor man on an equality with the rich man, all I can say is that you will have to show how it is to be done. I have never heard of any way of doing it. We are all striving to become rich, and a few of us succeed. Ninety-nine out of every hundred fail. The rich man of course has the advantage. He can buy more land, better houses, and better carriages than the poor man can buy, and unless you introduce a clause stating that no man who has more than £100 shall settle on the land, I do not know how you are going to meet that difficulty. If such a clause was adopted, there would certainly be only poor men to settle upon the land, and many of them would be very sorry they did so, as they would find it would take their income to keep them, and they could not improve their land very much. I cannot see that that argument is any objection to this Bill. My objection to it is that I do not think it will have the result the framers of it anticipate. I fear that even after the Bill is in operation for some time it will not return the revenue at present anticipated from it. I do not think we shall have a sufficient number of selections made for some time to give us any perceptible income. I know that persons paying £1 an acre for land, speaking of Queensland generally and not of the Darling Downs, pay very well indeed for it. I think that those who have paid 10s. an acre for the land under the old Acts, if they have sold, and wish to settle again, will think twice before they pay more for the land. That is my real opinion, and therefore I very much regret to say that I do not agree that this Bill will have the effect anticipated. That it is a step in the right direction, and returning again to practice instead of theory, is undoubtedly an advantage; and I for one shall be most happy to see the measure improved, and will do my best in that direction.

Mr. DALRYMPLE said: Mr. Speaker,—On the whole I think the Bill is one which I approve of, and which I trust will pass the House, perhaps with such modifications as may be desirable. But I would not have got up to speak at all on this subject had it not been for some remarks made by the hon. member for Bundamba. I do not entertain such a bad opinion of co-operation in this colony as to believe that before we can have co-operative settlements we have to give away our land; then we have to pay people for going on the land, and then, according to the hon. member, we have to carry the produce of the people for nothing. Now, as we owe £30,000,000, and the security which we hold out to our creditors is in the main the land of the colony, if we adopt the hon. member's principles, then I think it will be advisable in the future not to speak of the lands of the colony as an asset. The hon. member has spoken of the year 1889, when we imported £1,000,000 worth of produce, and he suggests that in consequence the railway rates ought to be reduced until we can afford to do without imported produce, and supply our own wants in the colony. Now, it is a melancholy fact that the year 1889 was the very year when, if I am rightly informed, the railway rates

were particularly low; and yet that fact did not seem to stimulate the production of agricultural produce to the extent of £1,000,000 additional. I do not think arguments of that sort are at all likely to induce the Secretary for Railways to forego the revenue which we get from the railways, and which we cannot at present do without. The hon. member for Bundamba says the lands of the colony belong to the people; but the railways also belong to the people, and when we propose to give to the people living near our railways the benefit of rates which do not pay the people who own the railways, it is an endeavour to benefit one class at the expense of all other people in the colony. Now, the hon. member for Bundamba appears on this occasion, as he always does, to object to any facilities being given to what he calls the alienation of land—that is to say, that under no circumstances must the Government give facilities for acquiring the right to hold land, because that is all that alienating land really means. Hon. members talk of a long tenure; holding the land on lease from the Crown perpetually, but they do not seem to see that that is really what freehold land is. What is freehold land? The State does not absolutely part with any land; it always keeps to itself the right to take it back at any time, and in old times all land grants were made on the condition that when Her Gracious Majesty required a peppercorn, the holder of the land was to give it to her. Now, when you hold land on freehold on those conditions, and when you do have it as freehold, it is liable to be taxed. I should like to know in what respect it is an improvement to give land on very long terms for a small lease. Now, I believe myself that it is advisable, for the well-being of the community, that land should be alienated, and should be given to private individuals in fee-simple, or something equivalent to it, for this reason: that there is nothing in the world that we know of which will stimulate industry more than the knowledge of the men who are on the land that it will be their own. I defy the hon. member for Bundamba by any contrivance which he knows of to prove that you can, by giving a lease of land, provide the same stimulus to exertion, or produce in men the same amount of self-denial, as they will go through in order to acquire a freehold. When the hon. member says he objects to alienated land, I really believe he does so simply because he has never thought over the subject, and he has never thought what a great disadvantage it would be to people who were disposed to be industrious to be deprived of the right to acquire a freehold. Now, in all parts of the world that I know of—certainly in all civilised countries—the land is alienated. In Ireland the cry of the people is that it shall be alienated, and that the people shall get it. That is a country that has gone through very serious land troubles, but for all that the people do not want to have the land on lease from the Crown. That is precisely what they object to. In France, which is one of the best cultivated countries in Europe, all the land is held under fee-simple, and so it is in all other European countries, and in the United States of America. What the hon. gentleman calls progression I call retrogression, because it is well-known that where land is not alienated the people are not in such a high state of civilisation as where it is alienated. The non-alienation of land is an admirable principle in a black's camp, but nothing can be worse in a civilised community. Again, the hon. member says the Government is not entitled to dispose of land, because it belongs to the people. Now, if the land belongs to the people, and the people have called the Government into existence, why the people through their agents—the Government—cannot

dispose of the land I am entirely at a loss to know. If the Government represent the people, and the land belongs to the people, who is most fitted for doing what is necessary, so far as the land is concerned? Why, the Government, of course, because they act for the people. Now, in the present instance, apparently the Government are of opinion that a certain change would be advisable with regard to our land laws, and I say that the question of their having the right to do what they choose cannot possibly arise if they represent the people. You might just as well argue that the Government stores in Brisbane belong to the people, and that the Government have not the right to interfere with the peoples' property in those stores. Really I cannot follow such extraordinary apologies for arguments as the hon. gentleman has put forward. There is another matter I should also like to refer to. The hon. gentleman, we know, has occupied a very distinguished position in labour circles. He is a leader. In olden times a leader was called a duke. Whether it is on account of that fact or not I cannot say, but the hon. gentlemen has adopted a method of addressing you, Mr. Speaker, which, so far as I am aware, has never been previously adopted in this House. He always uses the royal "we"; and why he should speak in the plural I really do not know. Possibly he may give us that information at some future time. I should like to know the meaning of another remarkable phrase the hon. member used. It is a remarkable phrase as a phrase, but words are but symbols, and we want something besides words, and that is ideas. The hon. member said the Government could not do certain things unless they got a "pure and untrammelled mandate" from the people. What on earth is a "pure and untrammelled mandate?" An untrammelled mandate probably one may understand, but why must it necessarily be pure? Then, again, the hon. member tells us that it will not add to the reputation of the Government as reformers. It is not given to everybody to be a reformer. There are people who seem to believe that this world has suffered an eclipse for some 6,000 years, and that it has been waiting until they arose in order that the sun might shine upon it once more. There are some people who remind me of a saying of Mrs. Poyser's. They resemble Mrs. Poyser's cock, which believed every morning when it got up, that the sun rose in order to hear it crow. That the longest purse will ultimately be able to acquire most property, or that the people with the longest purse will have an advantage, has been already referred to by the hon. member for Rockhampton. He has said that it is perfectly absurd to suppose that anything could do away with the advantages a man derives from his savings. Why does a man work and save but to acquire property? It is precisely because a man does get an advantage by saving that he is industrious and thrifty, and exercises self-denial. We, as a community, are absolutely dependent upon the existence of thrift and self-denial. You, Sir, would not be sitting in that chair if thrift and self-denial in the past had not been exercised. The present position of many of us is entirely dependent upon people having been thrifty in the past, and having thereby won property which we use and enjoy. To say that a man shall not gain an advantage by thrift, or by having property, is practically to say that civilised communities shall come to an end. Then the Government are charged with having altered their policy because they intend to partly repeal the old Act. I do not know that that is anything to their disadvantage, but I know this: that if the hon. member were to change his policy we should call it progress. The hon. member for Bundamba has told us that out of the 16,000,000

acres or so that have been alienated, not more than 250,000 acres are under the plough. Probably it would be better if a larger amount were under the plough, so as to obtain more produce from the land. But if we have got 250,000 acres under the plough out of the portion of land which is alienated, how much have we got under the plough on land which is not alienated? We have made a distinct gain of 250,000 acres by alienating that land; and it seems to me that the best way to get land under the plough, on the whole, is to alienate it, so that the people who go to work on it may get the advantage of it for themselves and their families. That is the best of all ways to bring land into a state of cultivation, although I do not know that it is a particular advantage to get land under cultivation, if people can do better by devoting the land to some other use. People, as a rule, are the best judges of what it is wisest to do, and it is better certainly for a man to be running sheep on land, and making a living for himself out of the profits of the transaction, than to endeavour to grow produce which does not pay him to grow, which requires the State to pay him to grow, and to carry to the market for him for nothing. The hon. member has spoken a good deal with regard, not to the advantage of the plan which the Government have put before us in this Bill, but of another scheme of village settlement, which should be subsidised in some way by the State. That question is not properly before the House at present, but as it has been brought forward I should like to say a few words upon it. We are told that men will go on the land, but that they want to be paid to go on it. I dare say there are a great many people who would go on the land if they were paid for it; and there are a great many people who would keep off the land if they were paid to do so. There are a great many people who, I regret to say, are not well off—who, in fact, are very poorly off; and the people who are worst off are by no means the people we see in the streets. I know cases of great poverty, which are known but to few, and which are not complained of. It is only natural to suppose that most people would be exceedingly glad if they were placed in a position where they might probably win, and where they could not possibly lose. Several things have been at the bottom of the difficulties which have occurred in settling people on the land. One is that other occupations are, on the whole, more payable than farming. If a man out West is offered £1 a day to shear sheep, and declines to take it, you can quite understand that that man does not care to occupy himself in much more laborious and much less profitable employment. The profits in the farming industry, unfortunately, are not very great. The men who have gone on the land are the men who have saved money, and the fact of their having saved money is a guarantee that they possess some very valuable qualifications. Their industry and thrift have given them a chance of success which you cannot expect on the part of people who are not saving. If the working classes—the wage-earners—I have been a wage-earner a good part of my life—are unable to save money, it certainly is not because in this colony they are not very favourably placed. I was just looking at the excise duties and the Customs duties for the year 1890, and I find that in the June quarter the sum of about £100,000 was paid as duties upon intoxicating liquors generally—wine, beer, and spirits. In a year that would amount to £400,000. Now, I have not been in the public-house line of business myself, but I believe it is a fairly profitable business, and I should say that this £400,000, when retailed out in nobblers and so on, would not yield less than £800,000. I assume that the labouring classes, the

wage-earners, spend about one-half that amount in drink; that is £400,000 spent in an indulgence which they might, if they choose, do without; I am sure the hon. member for Ipswich, Mr. Macfarlane, will agree with me that that is a fair estimate. Now, taking the average cost of the keep of a man at 10s. a week—I mention that sum, because the strike leaders out West said the men could live very well on 8s. a week, but I take 10s.—and assuming that to be a fair rate, that sum would keep 3,000 men for six months, or, if only 1,000 men chose to work, they could do so for six months on that sum, which is wasted in drink to a very great extent, and have £32,000 capital to start with. I think these figures are sufficient to show that if men exercise those qualities which they must exercise if they are ever going to be successful, that the future of the working men of this colony is to a great extent in their own hands; and that, if they are only industrious and frugal, they can easily attain to a better position. I am only sorry that the men who have evidently great influence over the workers in this colony do not use that influence to show the men the true way to success. They are able, apparently, to exercise great dominion over them, and if they only exercised it wisely and well in the real interests of the working men, instead of against their interests and against the interests of the community at large, then I believe it is quite possible for them to establish co-operative enterprises in the West, in which they would have to depend on their own strong right hands, and which were started by the capital they themselves supplied. Nothing would give me more delight than to see co-operative enterprises begun in that way being successful, because not only would their success be encouraging, but it would be the grandest guarantee of future success. The hon. member for Bundamba objected to the Bill, because if two men applied for the same piece of land under exactly the same conditions the land is to be put up to auction as the fairest way of settling the difficulty. But not only must we consider the men who desire to obtain the land; we must consider also the interests of the people of the country, who, the hon. member says, are the owners of the land. The hon. member forgets the interest of the owner of the land whenever it suits him, because where two men apply for the same piece of land, and neither has any right to be favoured at the expense of the other, what fairer way can there possibly be than to make one of them pay the landlord—that is, the people—a small sum of money for the right to get the land? It is an eminently reasonable way, and is one of those things which no one could object to if he considered that the owner of the land was the people, and their interests had a right to be studied by the Government of the country. The hon. member for South Brisbane, Mr. Luya, has given us a very encouraging account of some attempt he has made to settle people on the land, and told us the number of persons who were willing to settle upon it; and before I sit down I should like to say a few words in respect to the place I represent—namely, the district of Mackay. In consequence of certain conditions with regard to labour, which the planters have to expect in the future, a number of them are willing to settle people on their lands, even as the hon. member for South Brisbane has done; and I hope that people who are desirous of settling on the land, and are not able to do so by their own means, will remember that there are persons in the Mackay district who are anxious that they should settle there; so that the wants of both may possibly be met. The land there is already cleared or them, and there is no difficulty about railway

[Mr. DALRYMPLE.

communication, because the moment their crop is ready for the mill they can draw for the full value of it. One of the greatest difficulties selectors in this colony experience is that when they grow a crop they are by no means certain that they will be able to dispose of it; but in this case that difficulty will not exist. I should not have spoken this evening had it not been that the hon. member for Bundamba made so many statements that I thought it necessary to correct. That is why I have ventured to take up your time, Sir, and the time of the House.

Mr. MELLOR said: Mr. Speaker,—I think the question before the House has been pretty well thrashed out, but I wish to say that I am in accord with the proposition with regard to the Land Board. I myself think the Board should be done away with. I believe we could do very well without them, and as they are able men they could get something else to do. A good deal has been said during the debate with regard to railway rates, but there are two sides to every question, and if the land is only to be cultivated where our railways go, I think we cannot expect any very extensive agricultural settlement in the colony. We know that there is farming going on in other places besides along our railway lines; and I have in my mind at the present moment one of the most successful farmers in the valley of the Mary River, who brings his produce to Gympie, and it is more expensive to bring it that eighteen miles than to bring it from Bundaberg. In fact, I believe it could be landed in Gympie from the Darling Downs cheaper under the old rates than it can be done over that eighteen miles; and I know a great many people in the colony who have not the advantages of railways complain of the competition they have to contend with because they have not got that means of communication. There is a good deal in that, and I believe the only chance we have to induce settlement on the land is to give a little more protection. The produce brought into this colony from the other colonies is delivered here so much cheaper than it can be grown here, because our protection is not high enough. We want more protection. I am not an extreme protectionist, but I think it is the only solution of the difficulty. In regard to grazing areas in the settled districts, that is a matter which should be taken into serious consideration. The hon. member for Toowoomba, Mr. Groom, said that we ought to retrace our steps in this direction, and I must say I am of that opinion too. In the coast districts grazing areas are detrimental to close settlement. There are thousands of areas taken up as grazing areas within eighty miles of Brisbane or of a railway; that land will be wanted for settlement in the immediate future, and it would be judicious to withdraw the grazing areas in the coast and settled districts for agricultural purposes. There is no doubt that the lands which have been selected as grazing areas will be required, and no matter what Government may be in power they will be asked to repurchase those lands to enable the people to settle upon them. I believe the Bill can be amended in committee so as to make it suitable and adapted to meet the best interests of settlement. I am glad to see there is a desire to settle people on the lands. The Secretary for Lands stated that the Bill had two objects—one to replenish the Treasury and the other to settle people upon the lands. Both of these objects are good and laudable. When the Bill is in committee I intend to move some amendments in regard to grazing areas in the coast districts, and I hope the Government will see their way to withdraw these areas within a certain distance of the coast. There is a great deal of land within a short distance of the railway to Gladstone which could be thrown open for selection, and I hope

that will not be thrown open for grazing areas, but for agricultural selection. I believe the Bill will protect the people and enable them to settle upon the land.

Mr. PALMER said: Mr. Speaker,—I have not had an opportunity of seeing this Bill until this evening, but in looking over it I can see that it requires a great deal of comparison with the original Act for anyone to fully comprehend the meaning and purport of the Bill. From the short look that I have had at it, I can see that we are, as it were, travelling in a very large circle, and we are getting back to original principles. We are now coming back in some degree to the Act of 1868, which I consider was the best Act for selection, and gave better satisfaction to those who took up land than any other, as well as giving us a better class of selection. I know that people who selected under the Act of 1868 have thriven under it, and they occupy their lands now, not only to their own satisfaction but to that of the country. The Act of 1869 resembles that of 1868, and I think those two Acts may be credited with having been the most conducive to settlement of all the Acts which have been passed in Queensland. It is a great pity that the Act of 1884 has not been completely obliterated, and one of more liberal principles introduced instead. I have never heard any one say he approved of it, and its best friends in the House when it was passed are now the most earnest in condemning it. I find hon. member after hon. member getting up on the other side who were on that side when it was passed, and condemning it in the strongest language. They certainly have swallowed all the statements they made then, and a great many more that have been made since. But it does not matter now. We are paying for an experience. I think those who have been in the country, and have seen and known something about selection, are the people who ought to be listened to when Land Bills that are supposed to induce settlement are being discussed. Now, what is selection? All hon. members do not know what selection is—what it comprehends; the enormous amount of labour that is comprised in the life of a selector of land. The energy, the self-denial, and the diligence which a man has to exercise are virtues that are not possessed by all members of the community. I say that a successful selector is rather a rarity. He generally commences in a small way, and depends upon his earnings at some other occupation to keep himself going whilst he improves his land during part of the year. Generally he is a shearer, who goes away shearing for perhaps half the year, leaving his family to hold his land in his absence. Possibly he is a drover, or is engaged in some other occupation in the country. These are the men who are the successful selectors; and they do not aim so much at making money out of their land—which is a great mistake—as they aim at making a home for themselves. The hon. member for Bundamba, in referring to the amount of agriculture in the colony, said that it was not at all in proportion to the population; but how could a colony like Queensland, with, I suppose, only about 80,000 male adults, possibly be supposed to be able to do all the work of this enormous colony, comprising 678,000 square miles, and cultivate all the lands and all the products required in this colony? We have not enough people in the colony to carry on agricultural operations. We have not one-tenth enough. We have not people either with an inclination to go into agriculture. They are better paid at mining, droving, and shearing, and at many other occupations; and their instincts turn them against agriculture, as they have not been brought up to it. To have a leaning to tilling

the land, it is necessary for us to get people who have been brought up to farming, and who have always an inclination to put whatever money they possess into the land and be content with it. These are the people we must settle on our lands; and we cannot have too many of this class. But people who have not been brought up to it prefer to turn their attentions to other occupations, because the land really means the hardest work in the colony. It requires special virtues to be a successful selector. Nor do I think that the panacea proposed by the hon. member for Gympie, Mr. Mellor, will assist the selector—that is, protection. That has been tried in other colonies, and the farmers are now beginning to cry out against protection. They have had a little too much of it. It goes badly against them when they have protection all round, and, if we are going to pile more protection on to what we have already, the poor farmer will find himself in the worst case of all. Referring now to the Bill before the House, I think the price fixed in clause 5 is too high. The minimum is 20s. per acre, which means an annual rental of 1s. per acre for twenty years. No selector can take up land at that price unless he has other means or can in some way supplement his earnings off the land. With regard to clause 15, if I read it aright, I think it opens up a very large field for controversy, and that it is a provision to which hon. members should address themselves. It says:—

“The Governor in Council may, on the recommendation of the Board, declare land open to selection as agricultural farms notwithstanding that it is not within an agricultural area.”

If it is not within an agricultural area it must be within a pastoral holding, and in that case it opens up a very large field to occupy; as, for instance, the choice spots of any land so thrown open, or the resumed portion of a run, which would spoil, perhaps, a pastoral holding without being of much benefit to the holder. If that is the right reading, I think there is nothing whatever in that provision to recommend it to the House. Possibly, however, there may have been another construction given to it, as I was not present when the Bill was introduced to the House. I only hope the Bill will fulfil what has been predicted of it. It is said that it is a liberal measure, but it appears to me that it only tends towards liberalising land legislation; it is not very progressive that way. I do not know whether there is anything in the reports that have been circulated, to the effect that it is the intention of the Government to buy up large estates in the Southern parts of the colony, and resell them to intending purchasers. If such a proposal is introduced to the House, I shall object to it. We have too large an area of land unalienated to increase that by repurchasing land already alienated, and if the private owners cannot find a market for their land, however suitable it might be for agriculture, I do not think it is the province of the Government to step in and find purchasers for them. Let the persons who own large freeholds, and wish to dispose of them, cut them up themselves; they have a better system of advertising than the Government, and it is more in their province.

Mr. GANNON said: Mr. Speaker,—The matter under discussion has been pretty well thrashed out, and I shall not detain the House long in the remarks I have to make. In committee I intend to propose a few amendments, which I hope will make the Bill more workable. Before expressing my views on the measure, I may state that a few days ago I was brought into contact with a gentleman from South Australia, who had come up with the intention of taking up land in New South Wales. He was a gentleman

with a large family of sons and daughters. He went to Sydney from Mount Gambier, in South Australia, for the purpose of taking up land under the New South Wales Act, but found such difficulties put in his way, in the shape of getting particulars as to where land was open for selection, that he was disgusted, and after waiting some days he took ship and came to Queensland. He applied at the Lands Office here, and was immediately given all the information possible, and in a very short time he found himself on a selection in the Burnett district. He is of the class of men that we want to get into Queensland. He comes with a certain amount of capital, and brings what is better, five or six strong sons, who will take up land and settle on it. I simply mention this incident to show that very often the colony may lose a good man through the officials in the Lands Office not being able to give the information desired. With regard to this Bill, I may say that I am a great believer in land alienation for the purpose of putting money into the Treasury. I think the time has come when we must get money by the sale of our lands. We shall not be able to borrow much more; therefore, we must look to the land to tide us over the difficulties that we have to meet. But I am not an advocate for selling good agricultural lands near railway lines or near to places where railways will be built, or close to water carriage; those should be reserved for agricultural homesteads and village settlement. In other respects I am quite in accord with the proposal of the Government. Several questions have cropped up in regard to the unearned increment of lands sold by the Government. I believe that the difficulties which have been suggested can be got over if we embody in this Bill, or in others that may be passed for the sale of land, a provision to the effect that something in the shape of a quit rent should be inserted in the title-deeds, so that, in selling a man 1,000 or 1,280 acres of land, he should be compelled to pay a quit rent of $\frac{1}{4}$ d. or $\frac{1}{2}$ d. an acre. That could go on for ten years or any lesser period, and, at the end of the period fixed on, the rent might be increased to a 1d. an acre. In the course of time that would bring in a considerable revenue, help to keep the finances of the colony in a good position, and the owner of the land would benefit by the unearned increment. I throw out this simply as a suggestion, and think it is one worthy of consideration. The quit rent in every case would be a very small sum indeed; and although it would not, perhaps, benefit us very much, the people who come after us would find that it would run into a large amount of money as the land increased in value. There is another matter in connection with land sales that I would point out. Under the Act of 1884 we have been leasing large areas of 20,000 acres for long terms at very low rentals. I am, as I have said, a believer in land alienation, and I think it would be a good thing if, when we sold land at, say, 10s., 15s., or 20s. an acre, we funded the proceeds. If the land was sold at £1 an acre, we should then get 1s. per acre per annum, whereas at the present time we are leasing them at from $\frac{1}{4}$ d. to $\frac{1}{2}$ d. an acre. Such a scheme, therefore, would be an advantage to the country from a revenue point of view, and would improve our financial position. Under the Act of 1884 no man was able to buy land in this colony, except at auction in 340-acre blocks. But under the proposal now made, people will be able to obtain land without any very burdensome conditions. It is inherent in all men to desire to own land; they like to say that the land they occupy belongs to them; and even if you gave it them on lease for 999 years, they would not take the same interest in it as if it was freehold. We know that a

[Mr. GANNON.

large majority of men who have their property mortgaged, hope some day to have it clear and be able to call it their own. Another question much spoken of at present is the question of village settlement, and I must congratulate the hon. member for Enoggera on the very able speech he delivered the other night on this subject. I shall not tire the House by going into it at length now, but it is coming before the people, and I feel confident the Government will do all they possibly can to formulate some scheme of village settlement by which people will be placed upon the land. I am of opinion we should do something to place the people upon the land, even if the country has to find a certain amount of money to help them when they cannot help themselves. I have seen a good deal of farming on the Downs, and I have been doing something in the direction of village settlement myself; and the people I have put upon the land, from what I can see, are likely to be successful. I know that hon. members who have not been about the Downs lately will see a wonderful change in the 16,000 or 18,000 acres that have been sold there within the last year or two. On that land there have been erected some 120 or 130 miles of the best fencing I have ever seen in the colony, good homesteads have been built, and a great deal of land has been put under cultivation; and I believe in a year or two it will make a big difference in the railway receipts from that part of the country. The town of Clifton has increased threefold within the last twelve months, and I have seen the people willing to go on the land, and I believe able to make a good living out of it. The men who are really good farmers do not only make good homes for themselves, but they make a good living out of farming; and there are many hon. members here who must know that some of the Downs farmers have splendid houses, have made good fortunes, and have very good bank balances indeed. I am not one of those who believe that farming will not pay; on the contrary, I believe that any man with a certain amount of capital can make a living at it and put away a large amount of money also. There is one other question I shall refer to in committee, and that is with respect to homestead selections. I should give the homestead selector having, say, the right to take up 160 acres, a grazing right of 160 or 320 acres adjoining his homestead. That land need not be sold, but it might be held under an occupation license or perpetual lease or something of that sort. I believe with other members who have spoken, that the farmer should not be confined to agriculture alone; and if he has a certain amount of grazing room he will have a much better chance of making a living for himself and his family. There can be no question about the fact that if a homestead selector manages to get 160 acres, and in that area has from thirty to forty acres he can put under lucerne, with 320 acres grazing right, he will do well. This Bill will no doubt be very much discussed and amended in committee, and as I think hon. members must be very tired of the debate, I will leave what I want to do until it can be done in a practical way when the Bill comes before us in committee.

Mr. McMASTER said: Mr. Speaker,—So much has been said about the Bill that I think the subject has been pretty well thrashed out. I simply rise to say I shall give it my hearty support, as I believe it is a Bill in the right direction. Since we have had the 1884 Act, we have heard it praised by some and talked over and abused by others, but so far as my judgment goes I believe the Act of 1884 would be a success in the end if we could wait and give it a longer trial. I never believed it would be an Act that would put the Treasury into the state it ought to be in. I was not in the House when it

was passed, but I stated to the members in power then that, financially, I could not see where we could get any substantial assistance from it for at least ten years. But as we grow, so we learn, and I have not the slightest doubt that this Bill will in a few years require amendment. In a young colony, and so large a colony as Queensland, we shall of necessity require to alter our land laws every three, four, or five years at the outside. A great deal has been said by the hon. member for Bundanba about leasing land and not alienating any, but I know that ninety-nine out of every hundred people who come to the colonies come with the full intention of acquiring a home and getting their fee-simple. I am quite satisfied that if you give a lease of ninety-nine or 999 years for a piece of land it will not be looked upon with the same favour as the freehold and the hope of acquiring the parchment—of having the land in one's possession, and being in a position to say: "This is my own." There is a great deal in what the hon. member for Gympie, Mr. Mellor, stated when he said we ought not to allow large areas of agricultural land to be taken up in the settled districts where railways have been, or are likely to be, constructed; but I do not believe that farming will be successful away from railway or water carriage in such small areas as forty or eighty acres. The areas should be larger in such cases, and I have not the slightest doubt farming will be successful by combining grazing and agriculture. We have heard some strange speeches during this debate, and the hon. member for Oxley seemed to wish us to infer that we had already a sufficient number of farmers settled upon the land, because produce was so cheap. The hon. member told us he bought maize at 1s. 5d. a bushel. Well, maize has been very cheap this season, but I think the day is not far distant when maize will not be taken to the market in the shape of maize.

The COLONIAL TREASURER (Hon. Sir T. McIlwraith): Hear, hear! It will walk there.

Mr. McMASTER: As the Treasurer says, it will walk there. It will be taken in the shape of bacon, cheese, and butter. In the old country I have known more than thirty or forty acres of turnips to be grown, and not a single one of them was sent to the market in the shape of turnips. They were sent as bacon, cheese, butter, beef, and mutton. The farmers of the old country fed their sheep on turnips, and every winter twenty or twenty-five bullocks were fattened and sold; the only agricultural produce sent as such to the market was oatmeal and wheat. I am quite certain the time is not far distant when we shall do the same kind of thing in this colony, and we shall send our produce to market in the shape of cattle, sheep, pork, bacon, cheese, and butter. I believe larger areas should be granted to the settler, so that, in addition to some good agricultural land, he should have some grazing land as well. I notice in last Saturday's *Courier* a lecture delivered by Mr. Wilson, the dairying expert in Victoria, and he points out to farmers the great advantage of going in properly for dairying. I quite agree with him in all his remarks. He says, first of all, that there must be cleanliness, and failing that there would be certain failure. He says further that last year 1,000 tons of butter were exported to England, and that produced a return of £100,000 to the farmers. The hon. member for Bundanba quoted the imports of two years ago into this colony, but if he looks at the statistics relating to butter he will find there was very little imported last season. Butter was then selling in Brisbane at 1d., 1½d., and 2d. per lb. It was what was called butter, but, as a matter of fact, it was spoiled cream.

The travelling dairy is now teaching the people how to make butter, and we ought to be in a position in a very few years not to import a single pound of it into the colony. Up to about the year 1889 we had had two or three very dry seasons, and we were importing lucerne hay and sending it out West for the squatters to feed their sheep on. The hon. gentleman to be honest should show the imports and exports together. He should have shown that we have exported a large quantity of maize to New South Wales. There are seasons when we must import whether we like it or not. At present we are importing potatoes—and why? Simply for the reason that the farmers must have them. We are not importing them for domestic purposes, but for seed, and the farmers are paying from £5 10s. to £6 a ton for them. It is the same with maize. When we have a dry season we import it from New South Wales, but when it is plentiful, if farmers would only put it on the market in the shape of bacon, cheese and butter, and feed sheep with it, they would be much more successful than they are at present, and get a larger price for their produce. It does not pay a farmer to grow maize at 1s. 5d. or 1s. 6d. a bushel, because when the railway freight is taken off there is very little left for him. I know a dairyman, not many miles from Brisbane—a good practical man who comes from Ayrshire, in Scotland—and he tells me that by feeding his cows on maize, pollard, and lucerne he gets a double return. It pays him well to buy the feed and give it to his stock on account of the extra quantity of milk they produce. Now, as to this Bill, I believe it will give an advantage to many persons who are anxious to settle on the land if they can see a prospect of acquiring a good home hereafter. I must say that the numerous village settlement schemes that have been put forward are rather bewildering to me, but I am afraid that scheme will never be a success if it is propped up by Government aid. I believe it would be much better if other facilities were given to the people to go on the land; but if they are given money and rations, we shall find they will spend the money, and when we look for them they will have disappeared. I think it was the hon. member for Bundanba who said he had never known of a farmer to begin farming without any capital.

Mr. GLASSEY: No, I did not say so.

Mr. McMASTER: Some hon. member said so. I have known farmers who commenced on very little, but the best farmers in the colony of Queensland are those who have engaged with others for a number of years, have acquired experience, and saved a few pounds. The great danger of an inexperienced man going into farming is that, if he has capital, he will not improve himself or his position, but will waste his money. I have known people come here with from £200 to £400, and they have made a complete failure of farming. I have known others to go on the land without 20s., and they have made a success of the business. I have some in my mind just now who are driving in their buggies, and who had not 20d. when they went on the land. The great complaint among the farmers around Brisbane—I do not know whether the same complaint exists on the Darling Downs and in the Western districts—is that they cannot depend upon labour. They cannot get men to work as men must work if they are going to make a success of farming. If you are going to apply the eight hours' principle to farming, you will never succeed. The man who succeeds at farming in this colony will have to be at it early and late, because two hours at the beginning or at the close of the day are worth four hours in the middle of the

day. Another thing, a farmer who knows his business will not disturb his plants in the middle of the day in the summer time. But they say now that they cannot get a man to work after 5 o'clock, and many of them would rather leave their farms uncultivated than be bothered with men they cannot possibly keep at work. I am satisfied, however, that if we get the right class of men to settle on the farms, and give them sufficient land to combine grazing with agriculture, farming will yet be a success in Queensland. I shall support the second reading of the Bill.

Question—That the Bill be now read a second time—put; and the House divided:—

AYES, 40.

Sir S. W. Griffith, Sir T. McIlwraith, Messrs. Cowley, Hodgkinson, Unmack, Tozer, Drake, Morgan, Foxton, Philp, Stephens, Watson, McMaster, North, Campbell, Mellor, Smith, Wimble, Annear, Little, Palmer, Cortfield, Luya, Buckland, Goldring, Morry, Sayers, Macfarlane, Grimes, Salkeid, Battersby, Adams, Smyth, Crombie, Archer, Paul, Pattison, Hyne, Barlow, and Murray.

NOES, 3.

Messrs. Glassey, Isambert, and Hoolan.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

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

GRAMMAR SCHOOLS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION (Hon. W. O. Hodgkinson) said: Mr. Speaker,—I rise to move the second reading of a Bill to amend the Grammar Schools Act of 1860. The object of this Bill is very fully set forth in the preamble, and it merely legalises a custom that has been followed in the selection of trustees, in regard to which certain doubts have arisen. There is, therefore, no occasion for me to do more than read the latter portion of the preamble, which is as follows:—

“And whereas doubts have arisen whether persons who subscribe to the funds of a grammar school, and whose subscriptions are made after the first establishment of the school, are persons entitled to vote within the meaning of the said recited provision, and it is desirable to remove such doubts: Be it therefore enacted,” etc.

It is simply to remove a certain doubt as to what the powers of the subscribers legally are with regard to the appointing of trustees in the event of the decease of any of the present trustees. I move that the Bill be now read a second time.

Mr. BARLOW said: Mr. Speaker,—I wish to point out that this Bill has a more extended scope than the Hon. Secretary for Public Instruction has given us to understand. As it has passed the other House, and is in charge of the Government here, it will probably pass this House. But it is right before it does so that I should state what the scope of the Bill really is. Under the old system, or rather under the existing Act, when the original subscribers were reduced to three, the nomination of the trustees would be vested in the municipal council. But this Bill will perpetuate the old system. The vital portion of it is contained in the 2nd clause, and it allows the subscribers to perpetuate their own body, as it were, by permitting additional subscribers of £5 and upwards, thereby keeping its constituency alive and preventing the nomination of the trustees from vesting in the municipal council. That is the scope of the Bill. I believe my colleague is in favour of it; but a number of persons are quite the reverse. I have nothing to say whatever in

regard to the administration of the grammar school in my own town, because I believe it is very creditable and satisfactory; still there is an impression abroad that it would be better that such things should be vested in the municipal council. An argument against that is that the council has too much to do; but I think hon. members will agree with me that in public or private life, if we have important duties confided to us, we rise to the level of the responsibility. For my part I do not see why the scope of the municipal council, such as it is, should not be quite as great in its way as the scope of this House, or why it should be less honourable in degree to be a member of a municipal council than a member of this House. My own opinion is decidedly in favour of allowing the original trustees to die out, and thereby allow the schools to vest in the municipal council.

Mr. ISAMBERT: Or in the Government.

Mr. BARLOW: I have noticed in the report of the University Commission that there has been a great deal said about making grammar schools an intermediate step between the State schools and the university, and no doubt in the early future the scope of these schools will be greatly changed. If I have misstated the scope of this Bill, I am sure the legal gentlemen in the House will correct me; but I am informed that it is as I have stated it.

The CHIEF SECRETARY said: Mr. Speaker,—The hon. gentleman says that the scope of this Bill will be to take the nomination of trustees out of the hands of the municipal council.

Mr. BARLOW: It will prevent its falling into their hands.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: My opinion is that this Bill does not alter the law at all. Some people think it does. One contention is this: A grammar school is not established until after £1,000 has been raised by subscriptions. It is contended that the persons who raised that sum are the only persons ever to be entitled to vote at the election of trustees. The other view is that other people who subscribe a second, or third, or fourth, or fifth £1,000 have an equal right to vote, and in my opinion that is the law. Other gentlemen whose opinions are as good as mine think differently, and the question had better be settled by Act of Parliament one way or the other, instead of leaving it to litigation to determine who is entitled to vote for a trustee and who is not. The Bill proposes to settle it in this way: That it shall not depend upon the accident of who were the persons who subscribed the first £1,000 or £2,000.

Mr. DONALDSON: Who will vote in fifty years?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Fifty years hence perhaps the municipal council will do it. I speak from practical knowledge, having been Secretary for Education, and I know what has gone on in the different schools; and in the case of all these schools subscriptions have been received since their establishment. One view of the matter excludes the later subscribers from any voice in the election of trustees; but the practice has been ever since the first school was established in Ipswich, in 1864, that they should vote, and this Bill proposes to make that practice, which is reasonable, legal.

Mr. MACFARLANE said: Mr. Speaker,—It is well known that the Ipswich Grammar School was the first established in the colony, and that the trusteeship is now reduced to five or six of the original subscribers; and we are told that if this doubt is not removed

when the original subscribers are out of the way, the trusteeship will fall into the hands of the municipal council. I am of opinion that the municipal council have enough to do to mind their own affairs, and that the schools would be better managed by settled trustees than by a municipal council which changes every year. This Bill is intended to give all subscribers of £5 and upwards the same rights as the foundation subscribers. That is the whole matter, and by these means the trustees can be perpetuated in all grammar schools, which are thereby prevented from falling into the hands of the municipal councils. I think it is well that this doubt should be removed at once, so that the trustees should know in what position they are. Besides, if the trusteeship fell into the hands of the municipal councils, very few people would subscribe to the grammar schools. I believe a very considerable sum of money is subscribed in the way of giving scholarships in the different towns, which would not be given if the schools fell into the hands of municipal councils. And I do not see either why ladies should not be trustees. I do not think there are any lady subscribers to the Ipswich Grammar School, and I do not see why there should not be; I should have no objection. I will support the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. DONALDSON said: Mr. Speaker,—The object of this Bill, as I understand it, is to remove certain doubts that have arisen, and to make the law on the subject clear. It has been pointed out to me that hereafter a few persons may subscribe £5 apiece, and may have the full control of the vote for the trustees. The present trustees will not refuse to receive £5 from any subscriber. Supposing half a dozen persons give £5 each, they would have a controlling influence over the votes. I do not think that is intended. I am drawing attention to this now, so that when the Bill gets into committee we may see that it does not give this power to a few persons who may give £5 each for that purpose. I have not the slightest objection to persons who have subscribed when additions are made to schools already established being allowed to vote; but if we allow persons to vote who subscribe simply for the maintenance of existing buildings, I am not so certain that abuses may not creep in under that system. When the Bill gets into committee we may see our way to keep out abuses of that kind. As far as the object of the Bill—the removal of doubts is concerned—I am quite satisfied with it.

Mr. ALAND said: Mr. Speaker,—Clause 2 of the Bill provides that all subscribers of £5 to funds raised for the establishment, maintenance, or enlargement of grammar schools shall be entitled to vote at the choice of trustees for the schools. Does that mean that the £5 shall be subscribed in one amount? I happen to be one of the two or three old subscribers to the Ipswich Grammar School who are still alive, and I know that every subscriber of £5 was entitled to a vote. What I want to know is whether, under this clause, a man who subscribes several amounts of, say, a guinea each, from time to time, is to be considered a subscriber of £5 and upwards? The clause is by no means clear on that point.

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

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

POST AND TELEGRAPH BILL.

SECOND READING.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL (Hon. T. O. Unmack) said: Mr. Speaker,—For years past it has become more and more apparent that an absolute necessity existed to revise our postal

laws, which have been in existence since 1871. The matter was first taken in hand in 1885 by the then Postmaster-General, the Hon. Mr. Macdonald-Patterson, who had a Bill drafted; and it has been under the close and careful revision of every succeeding Postmaster-General, who each in his turn has added some further valuable suggestions and provisions to the Bill; and it has finally devolved upon me to introduce this Bill to the notice of the House. I can say that if the framing of such a Bill as this had been left entirely in one hand it would have been a very heavy labour indeed. But the matter has been made comparatively easy to me inasmuch as I have had the valuable assistance of the whole of my predecessors. Amongst others I may mention the Hon. W. H. Wilson, now a member of the other Chamber, the leader of the Opposition, Mr. Donaldson, and Mr. Powers—all gentlemen who have occupied the position of Postmaster-General, and who have contributed very largely and very beneficially towards putting the measure into such a state that I am very pleased to take this opportunity of acknowledging the valuable services and efforts they have made in this direction. Therefore I anticipate I shall have their cordial assistance in the passing of this measure. Most of the clauses have in this way received their assent, while several others have been required in consequence of agreements arrived at at the various intercolonial postal conferences which have been held. I trust, therefore, to have their valuable assistance in passing this Bill. The Bill ought to be, from a draftsman's point of view, a very good one indeed, because it has been in the hands of no less than five different barristers, each and all of whom have added their quota of knowledge to it, and made improvements in it. I should be wanting in my duty if I did not pay a just tribute to our worthy and respected Chief Secretary—if I did not acknowledge the very valuable services he has rendered in making this Bill the perfect measure which is now presented to the House. I may say that he has spent many evenings of his own time, and has spared no pains in order to make the measure what it is at present. The Bill before you is a consolidation of our postal laws, and it repeals the Acts now in existence—that is, it repeals the Acts of 1871 and 1880, also the Electric Telegraph Act of 1857, and two sections of the Act of 1872. It has been deemed preferable to repeal those Acts rather than to bring in amendments upon them, because it would simplify the law and enable anyone to more easily read and understand the enactments under which the Post and Telegraph Departments are worked.

Mr. DONALDSON: I hope we shall do the same thing with the land laws some day.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: I hope so. This Bill, Mr. Speaker, deals very largely with details, and consists of 129 clauses. The chief features, besides numerous modern improvements, are first, that provision is made for the introduction of a parcels post; secondly, provisions are made for electric lighting and the transmission of electric power; and thirdly, the imposition of postage upon newspapers. As regards the parcels post modern requirements have forcibly impressed the whole of my predecessors for years past with the absolute necessity of providing this accommodation, which is now possessed by almost every community in the civilised world. I may say that we are almost the only colony, or the only country in the world which has not a parcels post; but still there are reasons why we should be very careful indeed in introducing a system of that kind. Our country is of such large extent, our population is so scattered, our means of communication in many places are so difficult, that we must

be very careful in establishing a parcels post for fear of not being able to carry it out as we would wish to do. The Bill gives full power to the Government to establish a parcels post by regulations, and it is my suggestion that we should, in the first instance, go slowly; that we should avail ourselves of the means of communication which exist in various places—railways and steamer services in the first place—and then gradually branch out and feel our way, and extend the benefits of the system to the various centres of population, first by coach service wherever practicable, and subsequently extending it throughout the whole of the colony. I think hon. members will agree with me that a little caution in this matter is well bestowed; that we should not be rash or precipitate in initiating the system. Besides, we have to look at another matter. If this parcels post is to be a success, or the success we anticipate, it will be absolutely necessary to enlarge many of the post offices we have now in use, because the buildings will be inadequate for the additional work to be carried on, and it will add considerably to the cost of management, because at present we are unable to say whether the system will be entirely remunerative or not. We hope it will be, and we trust that the proposal will receive the hearty approval of hon. members. Ample powers are also given, as far as present knowledge enables us to go, to the Government to make provision for the safety of the public in connection with electric lighting, and the transmission of electric power. As we all know, electricity is at present almost in its infancy; it is almost daily being developed to a greater extent, and probably it will be necessary a few years hence to provide further safeguards by way of legislation; but in the meantime we provide as far as possible for the safety of the public in connection with such undertakings. In reference to the proposed postal charge upon newspapers, I think it is due to hon. members that some little explanation should be offered before we ask them to pass the second reading of this Bill. There is no doubt that the Postal Department is at present unduly handicapped in many directions. In the first instance it is being worked, as we all know, at very considerable loss, amounting to between £90,000 and £100,000 a year.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Outside of interest.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: Outside of interest; and a very considerable amount of this is caused in the first place by the British-India Company's so-called mail service, which virtually is not a mail service, but a commercial service. It is only a mail service, but one of great benefit, to the Northern portions of the colony, because even now we are not carrying letters by it to any places south of Mackay. Therefore the large subsidy charged to the Post Office for that service, £32,000, is an undue handicap upon the department, because it does not get all the credit that should be credited to it. The next item which is considered to be an undue burden upon the department is the immense quantity of newspapers that are carried throughout the country free of charge. The amount of money which we are paying for the carriage of mails by coach and horse services is, speaking in round numbers, about £60,000 per annum, whilst we pay another £40,000 to the Railway Department for carrying mail matter. Now, what does this mail matter consist of, and what proportion does it bear to letters? It must be remembered that we are being paid for the conveyance of letters, but that we get nothing for the carriage of newspapers. I have here a statement, which hon. members can gather from the annual report of the Postal

Department, from which it appears that in 1890 we carried 7,683,000 newspapers within the colony free of charge. These newspapers weighed 852 tons 16 cwt.

Mr. DONALDSON: Did you weigh them?

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: That is the average. We could arrive at it pretty well from knowing the weight of newspapers. At any rate it is near enough for my argument.

Mr. DONALDSON: You might throw out the hundred-weights.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: I shall be glad to do so to oblige the hon. member. In fact, if he likes, I will go a little further and call it 850 tons. Then we carried 10,869,000 letters, weighing 128 tons, so that we carried during that year nearly eight times the weight of newspapers that we did of letters. Then, looking at it from the aspect of bulk, I have made a calculation which shows that while the letters could be packed into 3,105 sacks or bags, the newspapers would occupy 29,550 bags. Well, now that is very easily seen and understood. When we are carrying such an enormous quantity of newspapers gratis, this must considerably increase the cost of our inland mail service, because where we have coach services, and where we have horse services, the tenderers will naturally look to the bulk that they have to carry, because they have to provide horses and coaches for themselves, and it is therefore a very serious question whether we are to continue carrying these papers without any charge whatever, whilst we have to pay so much extra for their conveyance by rail service. Some newspapers are taking very high ground in regard to this matter. They put forward the plea that the large circulation which is taking place, is for the purpose of educating the people. They are taking very high moral ground. Well, I am not going to say for one moment that the Press in this colony is one whit inferior to the Press in other parts of the world. I think, taking it on the whole, our Press deserves great credit for the manner in which it is conducted.

Mr. DONALDSON: They will pay you the ½d. willingly after that compliment.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: I hope so; but, after all is said and done, we have to look upon it from this point of view—that the colony is in financial difficulties, in a measure of speaking; that the Treasury is empty; that every part of the community is being called upon to contribute its quota towards the revenue. Then let us ask whether these high grounds which some of the papers are advancing are justified. Is there one of them that will conduct a paper purely from patriotic reasons, and for the purpose of educating the public? They are all carried on by their proprietors for their own purposes and benefit, and whenever a paper ceases to pay, the office will soon be closed. Therefore, we have to consider whether the colony can any longer afford to lose the revenue which we expect from this source, and whether it is fair to the other taxpayers, who are called upon to pay taxes to the greatest possible extent, that we should any longer continue the system of conveying these papers free of charge. I think there will be very little difference of opinion on the subject, and that all will agree that when we are all being taxed very heavily, no portion of the community shall, if possible, escape its fair share of the burden.

Mr. DONALDSON: What do you estimate the revenue will be?

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: The estimated revenue, reducing the circulation very considerably, and supposing we only carry

5,000,000 newspapers, will be between £10,000 and £12,000 per annum—a sum certainly which we cannot afford to let slip any longer. In addition to that, of course, we anticipate a very large saving on the mail contracts for the coach and horse services. That must not be overlooked, and we expect to save, at least, another £10,000 or £15,000 in that direction.

Mr. DONALDSON : Quite.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: I am anxious to put it at the lowest estimate, and not to over-state matters at all, so that, taking it on the whole, we have a right to expect that the small charge of $\frac{3}{4}$ d. on each paper will produce the very beneficial result to the Treasury of some £20,000 per annum. That is the very lowest estimate, and I am quite sure it will be realised, if not very much exceeded. We are told that this is a retrograde movement. Well, if it is, it is a retrograde movement in good company. I shall read a statement to the House to show the position which other countries occupy in reference to the transmission of newspapers. To begin with, first, we have the United Kingdom, in which there is a charge made of $\frac{3}{4}$ d. on every newspaper, and there is no remission for bulk parcels. They have got to pay $\frac{3}{4}$ d. on each newspaper. Now, if in the most enlightened country under the sun, and with the immense number of valuable newspapers which are being circulated in the United Kingdom, they charge a postage rate on papers, surely we are not very far out in doing the same thing. Then we have the United States of America. In America the postage is 1 cent on each paper—that is $\frac{3}{4}$ d.—and bulk is also charged 1 cent per lb. In India the inland postage on newspapers is $\frac{1}{4}$ anna. In Cape Colony the inland postage on newspapers is $\frac{3}{4}$ d. In South Australia and Victoria the inland and intercolonial rate is $\frac{3}{4}$ d., and $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per lb. of bulk. In New Zealand the inland postage is $\frac{3}{4}$ d., and the intercolonial rate 1d.—no bulk charge. In Tasmania and New South Wales they are at present in exactly the same position as ourselves. They make no charge; but on two occasions at intercolonial postal conferences they have agreed at the first opportunity to endeavour to alter their laws in the same direction as we are now doing. They have agreed to impose a charge exactly as we are doing. In Western Australia the inland postage is free, and the intercolonial charge a $\frac{3}{4}$ d.; but they also agreed at the conference to charge the same as the other colonies. In Western Australia they have another charge. They charge 1d. on every newspaper posted for delivery within the city. That is presumably done in order to prevent the Postal Department being burdened with the delivery of newspapers within the city, where the proprietors of the papers could deliver by messengers. I have given the charges in several countries, and there is no doubt the people pay readily enough. The charge is very small, and I may say this, that the gratuitous conveyance of newspapers has led to very considerable abuse. For some time past there has been this abuse: Several newspaper proprietors send certain parcels of newspapers up country on what commercial men call “on approval.” If these newspapers are not sold they are re-posted, and conveyed back free of charge to the owners. Well, that never was contemplated. We are carrying gratuitously large packets of newspapers backwards and forwards for the convenience and profit of these newspaper proprietors. I do not say it is done in every instance, but we have many instances on record where it has been done regularly. We are trying to put a stop to it, but we are not always successful, as there are such an enormous number passing through that it is not possible to prevent the abuse in every instance. These newspapers

are being sent broadcast over the colony. They are sent by wholesale, really because there is no postage charged on them. That is a matter of fact. Hundreds of papers are never read, but are merely thrown into the waste-paper basket, and the country has to pay for their carriage. These are facts which we all know. However, we are in honour bound to the other colonies to introduce a postage on newspapers. The whole of the colonies have agreed that such a charge should in future be made, and we are exposing ourselves to the risk, as regards the intercolonial postage, of having our papers not transmitted if we stand out. In the report of the Postal Conference held in Sydney, in March last, there is, in a recommendation from the permanent heads of the Post Offices of the various colonies, this paragraph. It appears on page 13 of the report:—

“It is true that the convention provides for a half-penny postage on newspapers exchanged between the colonies, but it has for long been a matter of serious complaint by those colonies in which a postage is charged on their own newspapers that they have to deliver those received from other colonies on which no postage has been paid; and it will be borne in mind that it is quite open to the Administrations of those colonies to decline to exchange mail matter except on equal terms of reciprocity—this being the rule which operates in the Universal Postal Union, into which it is proposed that the Australasian colonies shall at length enter.”

There is a distinct intimation that unless we charge the same as they do they will decline to forward our newspapers. If we sent our newspapers free of charge probably double or treble the quantity would be sent than would otherwise be posted, and they would be unduly burdened. Of course you are aware, Sir, that we are now supposed to have joined the Universal Postal Union, and we are therefore bound to comply with the ordinary rules laid down by the union. As I have already said, we anticipate that this proposal, which is a very moderate one, and imposes a very trifling charge on those who require newspapers, will be a source of considerable revenue, and we hope it will be approved by the House. As the Bill is a long one, and full of details, and it is not likely that many members have gone through it, though a few may have done so, I will just glance at those provisions of the Bill which I consider should be brought prominently under the notice of the House. The first provision to which I shall refer is clause 6. This endeavours to do justice to a considerable portion of the employees in the Post Office, who are now placed in a very invidious position—namely, messengers, mailmen, stampers, sorters, letter-carriers, switchboard attendants, and line repairers. The Civil Service Act provides that all those who enter the Government service must enter as probationers, and they must be young people who have passed the required examination. Now, we cannot possibly get any letter-carrier at the age at which these young men who have just left school are allowed to enter the Civil Service as probationers, and the men employed, though very worthy men, and many of them highly educated and worthy of confidence, are in consequence absolutely debarred, being in the unclassified list, from any promotion beyond the position of sorters. Therefore, a man employed in any one of the offices mentioned may continue there until he is ready to go into his grave, as he cannot be promoted beyond the position of sorter. We propose here, and I am quite sure the proposal will meet with the approval of hon. members, to give those men the opportunity of qualifying themselves under the Civil Service Act for a higher position, by passing the prescribed examination. It is but just to those who may be better educated, but whom necessity may have compelled to

take a subordinate position, that they should have a chance of obtaining such positions as their education and energies fit them for. I anticipate that this proposal will meet with no opposition. Clause 9 and clause 25 provide for the introduction of a parcels post. Hon. members will understand that it is utterly impossible in such a matter to introduce all the details in a Bill of this kind. Ample provision is, however, made for framing regulations for carrying out all details in connection with the proposal. In the latter part of clause 9, and also in clause 11, provision is made giving power to the Governor in Council to issue regulations, and alter or vary the different postal rates. That, I think, is a very wise provision. At present the rates are fixed by schedule 4, but power is given, in the clause to which I have referred, to vary those rates; and I hope the time is not very far distant when the financial condition of the colony will permit the Government of the day to propose a 1d. postage all round—that is, a 1d. intercolonial and inland postage. At present, however, the condition of the colony will not allow the Government to make any such proposition, as, unless there is a very considerable increase in the number of letters posted, it would entail a loss upon the colony of not less than £30,000 per annum. Of course we do not feel justified in making a proposal of that sort just now. Clause 17 provides for certain exemptions from postage. The *Queensland Government Gazette* and all parliamentary papers and debates are to be exempted from postage, and, as far as parliamentary papers and debates are concerned, they are not only exempted from postage, but they may be posted at any time during the session in which they are printed, or within one month thereafter. I think that will be looked upon as a very valuable concession, and that it will be agreed that the proceedings of Parliament should be as widely distributed as possible. Clause 19 defines newspapers. I may say that this definition is based upon the Imperial Act.

Mr. MORGAN: And it is very, very faulty.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: It may be, but, at the same time, it is utterly impossible to get everything perfect. The definition, as I have said, is based upon the Imperial Act, and in accordance with the unanimous recommendation of the Intercolonial Postal Conference. Clause 20 defines what is meant by a supplement to a newspaper. I look upon this provision as a very valuable and very necessary one. I may explain that, for some time past, many newspapers have been in the habit of depriving compositors of Queensland of a large share of work, which ought to be given to them, by importing so-called supplements for their papers. They have been paying a price for them in Victoria. They have them sent here, and we are called upon, in addition to the injury that is inflicted upon our artisans, to convey these supplements free of charge throughout the colony. It is time, I think, that such a system as this was abolished. If the proprietors of newspapers want to make their papers attractive, let them do so with their own brains, and not with those of other people. Whether they publish clippings or extracts from other papers, let them provide the labour here if they derive benefit from their circulation in the colony. That is a fair and reasonable provision to protect our own artisans. In section 22 there is an improvement in our present system. Our present system is that newspapers can only be addressed, and there must be no other mark or communication sent by them by the senders.

Mr. DONALDSON: They do, though.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: They do, and of course lay themselves open to having their papers destroyed or not forwarded. Under this section we propose to allow any mark to indicate a report, article, or paragraph therein, and also the name of the sender of the paper. I think that will be looked upon generally as a great improvement. Section 23 provides for the removal from the register of any paper or publication that contains seditious, blasphemous, or obscene words, and prevents their circulation. So that the decision on this point shall rest with the Postmaster-General, and I think that is a very necessary provision to have, in order to stop the circulation of certain publications which hon. members, no doubt, know may do a great deal of harm to certain persons. Section 38 is a new provision, and one which I think has been called for for some time. The present system is that when any letters are not delivered, they must be retained in the post office whence they have been directed for a month. A great many complaints have been made on that subject, because people would like to get their letters returned earlier when they find they are not to be delivered. The provision made here is that if they bear an endorsement that if not delivered they must be returned within fourteen days, they must be returned, and otherwise they will take the ordinary course. That practice is carried out in America, and it seems to have given great satisfaction. Section 39 is another new section, and one which, I think, is a very desirable one indeed. Under the present practice any letters which have been addressed to lodging-houses or hotels are delivered there, and many of those letters are left there for months, and are, perhaps, never delivered. We have a provision in this section compelling the hotel or boarding-house keeper to return to the post office any such letters which have not been delivered within two months after they have been received by them, and then the letters will be dealt with in the ordinary manner. Those letters may contain valuables or important communications, and the senders never know what has become of them. I think this will generally be considered a desirable provision. Section 41 gives power to the Postmaster-General to have newspapers examined to see whether they are posted in conformity with the Act. Section 45 shows how these are to be dealt with, and there is a new provision by which they may be either destroyed, sold, or used for public purposes, or they may be given to an hospital. I think that is a good provision, because under the present law we have no power to give those papers to a charitable institution. Section 48 deals with a subject which is, I think, a most important one. It endeavours to prevent the delivery of letters which are sent for the purpose of encouraging gambling, lotteries and games of chance, or any unlawful games, or foretelling future events. We all know it is impossible to make people virtuous by legislation, because no matter what we do, betting, and gambling will still go on, but I do not think that any country is justified in wilfully allowing the wholesale circulation of circulars—which in many instances do much harm to the rising generation. We have seen this practised all over the country, and we think it full time to try to check the growth of the evil. We trust to have the cordial support of hon. members in this matter. I may say this matter was also fully discussed at the Intercolonial Postal Conference, and this action has been approved of, with the exception of one colony that stood out for the time being, but I think they will also see their way to fall in with this arrangement.

Mr. DONALDSON: What was the objection?

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: The objection was mainly that this gambling would go on, that the circulation of this matter would be sure to take place, and that there was no use trying to stop it. I may say this proposal has been in force for a considerable time past in Victoria, and it is also in force in America. When it is discovered to whom these letters containing remittances or otherwise are sent, the Postmaster-General may, by an order, published in the *Government Gazette*, direct that any such letters shall not be either registered or delivered. They will be stopped and returned to the sender. There is also a provision by which money orders shall not be issued to any person with respect to whom any such order is made, and no money order shall be paid to any such person. All letters of that kind will be immediately sent back to the person from whom they were received. Section 55 is very necessary, and gives power to order the destruction of books of record, telegraph messages, telegraph tape, letter bills, registered letter receipts, money orders, returns, and other matter, when they are a year old, because these records and tapes are absolutely of no value at all when once the transactions are more than a year old, and they accumulate to an alarming extent. Legal power should be given the Postmaster-General to order the destruction of these things, because they only accumulate as so much rubbish.

Mr. MACFARLANE: Suppose they contain valuables, what do you do with them?

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: These are only the office records, telegraph tapes, and so forth; they are not matter posted by anyone else. Section 60 provides the scale of fees for masters of vessels called upon to carry letters and mails without being under contract to the Government. Section 66 is a very considerable advance upon our present arrangements. It provides that money orders which are now only issued to the amount of £10, and postal notes which are only issued to the amount of 10s., shall be extended to £20 and 20s. respectively. So that in future anyone can send a money order for £20, or a postal note for 20s. I may say, as a matter that does not appear in the Bill, being a matter of detail, that a very considerable reduction will take place in the charges for money orders in accordance with the agreement come to at the Intercolonial Postal Conference. Section 70 makes every telegraph line constructed or to be constructed subject to the provisions of this Act. That is, no private lines of telegraph shall be permitted, except with the sanction of the Postmaster-General. I think that is a very necessary provision. Section 74 provides for the removal of trees and underwood standing within thirty feet of a telegraph line; and if they are within the curtilage of a house or within a garden, lawn, or yard, the owner himself may cut them down. If he fails to do so, the Postmaster-General will have power to do so. Section 75 makes provision for laying wires for telegraphic or telephonic communication in tubes or pipes underground. Section 76 provides for compensation to be given to anyone who may be prejudicially affected by either the cutting down of trees or the fixing of wires, so that no injustice will be done to anyone. Section 77 deals with private lighting by electricity and the transmission of electric power, and provides that no person may erect wires for such purposes without obtaining the sanction of the Governor in Council. It also provides that the Government is not to be held liable for any damages which may accrue through the erection of such wires. Section 78 pro-

vides that the Postmaster-General may make and cancel agreements for the construction of private lines. That is, if a person is desirous of erecting a private line, the Postmaster-General is authorised to make an agreement with him, and, if necessary, to cancel the agreement when the occasion arises. Section 80 provides for the transmission of telegrams in the order in which they are received, with the exception of urgent telegrams; and all telegrams relating to the arrest of criminals or the discovery and prevention of crime are to be sent before all others. Section 81 gives authority to a telegraph manager, clerk, or operator to refuse to receive or transmit a message containing blasphemous, obscene, or scandalous matter in its contents, address, or signature. Section 82 relates the purposes for which regulations may be made. It will be found very complete, and will serve all purposes. Subsections 4 to 10 relate to the parcel service, and we consider those provisions will be sufficient. The remaining sections chiefly deal with penalties for offences which may be committed. They are nearly all provided for in the present Act. Some have been increased, and others decreased. Many matters are dealt with which were previously obscure, and I think the sections will be found a great improvement. There are only now left the schedules, and the principal one is the 4th. Under the 4th schedule the present rate of postage is fixed, and outside the colony the postage will be the same except to a foreign country, which is defined to mean a country outside the Postal Union. The packet rate for books and packets is the same, and the newspaper rate, as I have already explained, is, for those published in Queensland, $\frac{3}{4}$ d. for town, inland, or inter-colonial; to a foreign country the postage will be 1d. each; and newspapers printed and published in Queensland, when posted by the publisher or newsvendor in bulk parcels not exceeding 14 lb. in weight, and containing not less than six registered newspapers, with or without supplements, 1d. per lb. In the case of the *Telegraph* eight papers would go to the lb., and they would cost only 1d.; and six papers go to the lb. with the *Courier*, and they also could be sent for 1d., so that there is really a very considerable concession to newspapers when sent in large parcels, although that system is not adopted in every other country. We have not wished to put an unnecessarily heavy tax upon newspapers, but we think the rate we propose to charge will be sufficient. I beg now to move that the Bill be read a second time.

Mr. DONALDSON said: Mr. Speaker,—I rise to move the adjournment of the debate.

Question put and passed.

On the motion of the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, the resumption of the debate was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

ADJOURNMENT.

The CHIEF SECRETARY said: Mr. Speaker,—I move that this House do now adjourn. To-morrow we will go on with the second reading of the Post and Telegraph Bill, after which the other business as it stands on the paper will be taken, with the exception of the Crown Lands Bill, which will not come on to-morrow.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at twenty-eight minutes past 10 o'clock.